





13 Artists

Children Should Know

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PRESTEL

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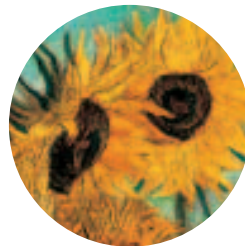
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13 great artists are introduced in this book, which tells you about where and when they lived and what ideas they tried to put across in their paintings. Of course it also shows you some of their most famous pictures. You can answer the quiz questions and find ideas for your own works of art. A timeline gives you an idea of important events which took place during each artist's lifetime. And at the back of the book you'll find an explanation of some of the special words used which are marked in the text with a star*.

Have fun reading and painting your own pictures!

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1473 Oil painting becomes popular in Italy

Leonardo da Vinci 1452–1519

1430

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1485

Mona Lisa, 1503–1506

Musée du Louvre, Paris

The *Mona Lisa* is probably the most famous painting in the world. Today you can only admire it through bullet-proof glass. The lady is thought to have been the wife of a merchant, Francesco del Giocondo, who came from Florence; that is why the *Mona Lisa* is also known by the Italian name *La Gioconda*. Leonardo painted her with a delicate, glowing complexion and a mysterious smile. It doesn't matter which side you approach the painting from—she always looks as if she is watching you. The landscape in the background disappears into a fine veil of mist. The picture belonged to the King of France, Francis I. Leonardo spent the final years of his life in the king's castle in Cloux.



1492 Christopher Columbus discovers the New World

1515 Francis I becomes King of France and conquers Milan

c. 1518 The first spectacles for short-sighted people are invented

1490

1495

1500

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1545

Leonardo da Vinci— Madonnas and Flying Machines

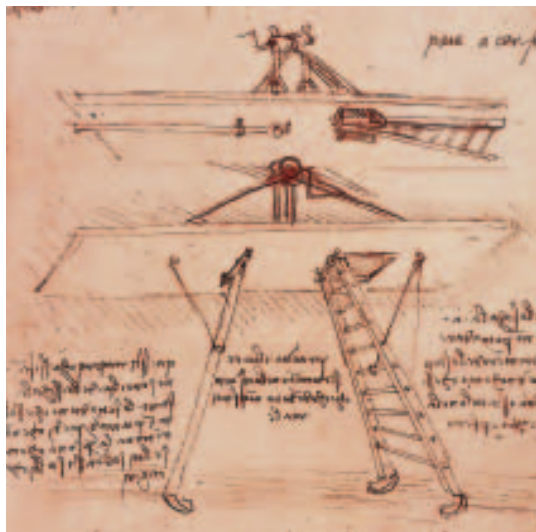
Leonardo da Vinci was what is called a “universal genius”—a brilliant all-rounder: a painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, and scientist all rolled into one.



We are told that Leonardo was handsome and strong, and a talented and clever speaker. His thirst for knowledge was unquenchable. In that respect he was typical of the age in which he lived, the Renaissance*. At that time, people had started to look into the importance of nature and were influenced by the Ancient Greeks and Romans.

Mathematics and geometry, physics, engineering, anatomy, geology, botany and geography, music, sculpture, painting—Leonardo was an expert in all subjects. He invented weapons and machines for the Duke of Milan. He carried out detailed experiments to investigate the movement of water. He was even interested in the idea of flying.

Leonardo made detailed drawings of his discoveries and inventions. However, it was not only as a scientist but also as an artist that he searched for new ideas. For him, painting was the most important of all sciences.



Born:

April 15, 1452 in the village of Anchiano near Vinci, Italy

Died:

May 2, 1519 in Cloux, France

Lived in:

Florence, Milan, Rome, Cloux

Era:

Renaissance*



Aircraft with ladders as landing gear

MS. D. Institut de France, Paris

Leonardo wrote down everything he had discovered in his notebooks—in mirror writing. He was left-handed, and for him it was faster to write that way.

Can you write your name in mirror writing?

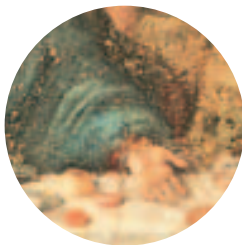


Leonardo was famous even during his lifetime. Monasteries and churches asked him to paint them scenes from the Bible. Princes, the King of France, and the Pope competed for his attention. Leonardo always had big plans, but he did not always manage to complete them—much to the annoyance of his customers.

The Last Supper, 1495–97

Monastery of Santa Maria
delle Grazie, Milan

On the evening before he was arrested, Jesus divided the bread and wine among his twelve disciples at the Last Supper. Leonardo shows him in the moment when he tells them that one of them will betray him. The sudden movements show the disciples' surprise. Only Christ himself remains calm. Judas, the traitor, is quite easy to pick out. Can you find him? He is holding a purse of money in his hand.



Leonardo painted this picture on the wall in the refectory of the Dominican Monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. He used a technique which he had invented himself but the painting soon began to peel off the wall and marks started to appear on the picture. It has had to be restored* several times already. Even so, the overall composition is still clearly visible.



Vitruvian Man,
c. 1490
Galleria dell'Accademia,
Venice

Leonardo examined dead bodies in order to find out about the structure of the skeleton and muscles and the position of the various organs. He was convinced that a painter needed to know about the anatomy* of the body in order to be able to paint people properly.



Tips

The Museo Leonardiano in Vinci is full of information about Leonard's scientific research and shows models of his flying machines and apparatus (www.leonardo.com/museo/vincimus). And in Anchiano you can visit the house in which Leonardo was born.

Further reading
Who can crack the Leonardo da Vinci Code? by Thomas Brezina (in Prestel's Museum of Adventures series)



Studies of Cats and Dragons
Royal Collection,
Windsor Castle

Leonardo seems to have been fascinated by dragons. As a boy he scared other children with a toy dragon he had made, and as an old man he stuck wings, horns and a beard on a lizard he had tamed—and used it to frighten his friends.



Born:

October 31, 1632 in Delft, The Netherlands

Died: December 15, 1675 in Delft

Lived in: Delft

Children: Eleven, two of whom died in childhood

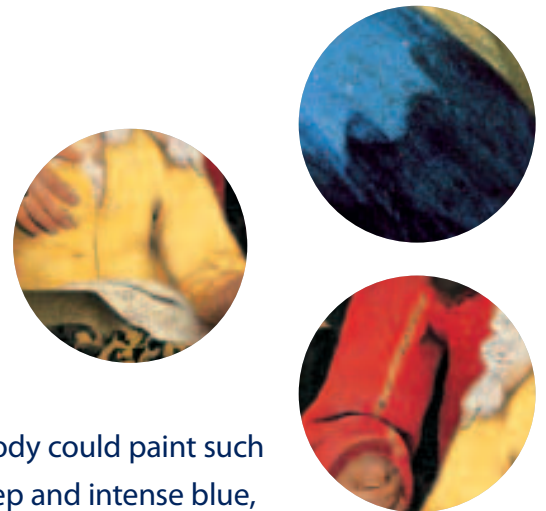
Era: Baroque*

Unusual fact: Vermeer also ran a tavern and worked as an art dealer

Jan Vermeer—The Secret of His Glowing Colors

Jan Vermeer liked to paint at home more than anywhere else. That is where he had his studio, and where he found ideas for his work.

The Dutch painter’s pictures often show scenes of domestic life during his times. We call paintings of this kind “genre paintings”. They were very popular during the 17th century in the Netherlands. Vermeer chose colors that look particularly rich.



Nobody could paint such a deep and intense blue, or such a bright red and brilliant yellow, as he did. Vermeer’s favorite shade of blue is even known as “Vermeer blue” today. In those days, artists used to mix their own colors from pigments* according to their own recipes. Vermeer’s colors glow from within. That is partly because of his special painting technique: He painted several thin layers of color on top of each other. The bottom layers of paint then shine through the ones put on top.

The Art of Painting, c. 1666/67

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

This picture gives us a glimpse of his artist’s studio. He is just painting the laurel garland that his model is wearing. Vermeer left nothing to chance. Each object was carefully selected, and the arrangement and choice of colors carefully thought out.



c. 1675 Paris becomes the cultural center of Europe

1660

1665

1670

1675

1680

1685

1690

1695

1700

1705

1710

1715



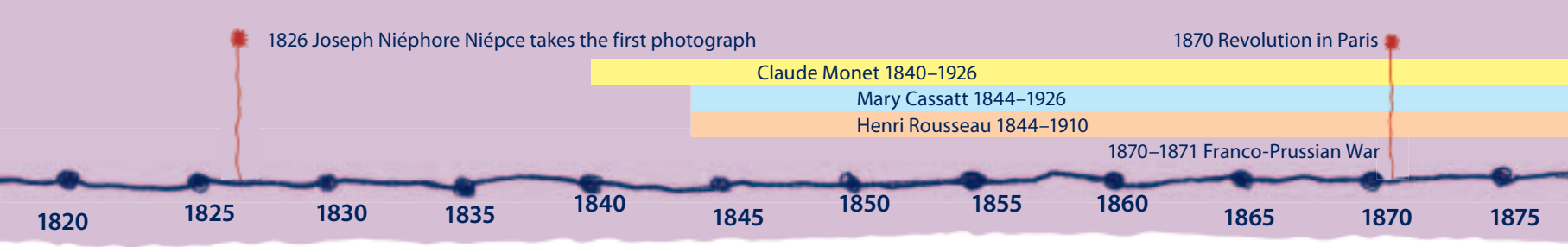
The Girl with a Pearl Earring, c. 1665
Mauritshuis, The Hague

The girl is looking at us and seems to want to tell us something. What do you think it might be? No one knows who she is. Was it perhaps one of Vermeer's daughters? The girl with the pearl earring has roused the imagination of many people. A novel about her became a best-seller that was then made into a film in 2003. The made-up story tells us that the girl was a servant in the Vermeer household.

Quiz

Do you know which stone was used in the olden days to produce a precious blue paint?

(Answer on p. 46)



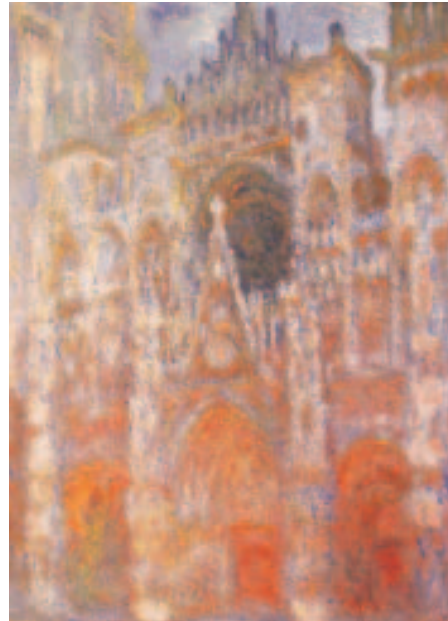
Poppy Field near Argenteuil, 1873
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Complementary colors like red and green, blue and orange, and yellow and purple, glow even more brilliantly when used together. Monet used this to his advantage to paint especially radiant pictures. Here we see red and green together. The red seems even brighter when surrounded by green. The people going for a walk are quite hard to see in the middle of the poppy field. How many are there?

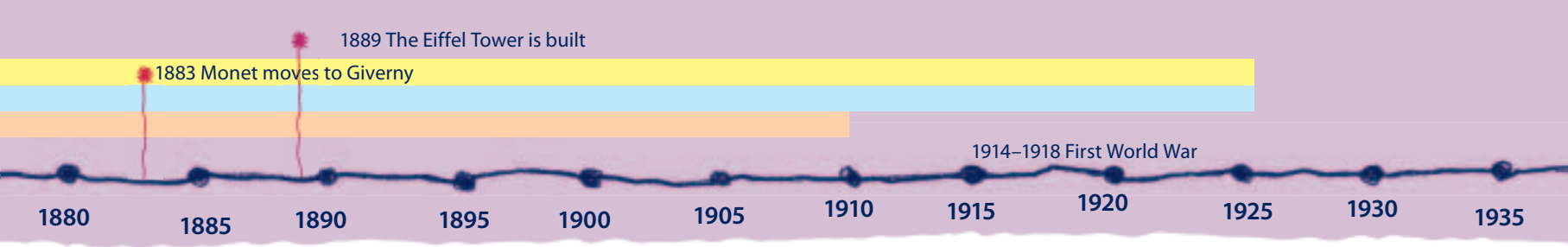


Rouen Cathedral, 1892
Private collection

Monet painted several pictures of the cathedral in Rouen at various times of day. It looks a different color each time. The sharp contours and hard surface of the stone are broken up into colored dots of light.



Rouen Cathedral, 1892
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



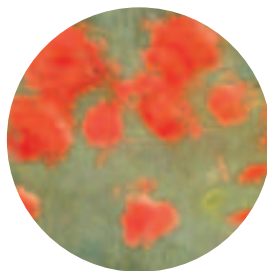
Claude Monet—Light and Colors

Claude Monet preferred to paint outside. That meant that he could always study the countryside, people, and things in the constantly changing light.

Monet was not interested in what color things really were or the material they were made of. He wanted to record the fleeting impression of a particular moment.

Have you ever noticed the way colors change according to the light: That a house, for instance, looks quite different in the cool light of dawn than it does in the

warm evening light of the setting sun? Or how different it looks on a gray day compared to bright sunlight? It was these impressions that Monet wanted to paint: The sparkle of light; the interplay between sun and shadow; dancing colors.



Born: November 14, 1840
in Paris

Died: December 5, 1926
in Giverny

Lived in:
Le Havre, Paris, Etretat,
Giverny

Children:
Two children of his
own with his first wife
Camille (Jean, Michel)
and six from the first
marriage of his second
wife, Alice

Hobby: Gardening
Painting style:
Impressionism*

**Arrival of the Normandy
Train, Gare Saint-Lazare,
1877**

The Art Institute of
Chicago

In Monet's time the rail-
road and automobiles
were new inventions, and
they fascinated him. In
this picture he has con-
centrated especially on
the steam in the station.



When he was still young, Monet became one of the founders of Impressionism*. Many years were to pass, however, before the general public started to like Impressionist painting—years during which Monet and his family lived in poverty and had to put up with a great deal of mockery from the art critics. Later, however, he emerged as one of the most famous artists in Paris and became extremely rich.

Impression: Sunrise, 1872
Musée Marmottan, Paris

This is one of Monet's most famous pictures. It shows the harbor at Le Havre. What the artist found most important was to capture the reflections of the sunlight and to portray the morning mist. The short brushstrokes make the light seem to flicker. It was after the title of this painting, "Impression," that Monet and his painter friends came to be known as Impressionists*. At first the word was not meant nicely, but today Impressionism refers to a movement in art.



Suggestions for further reading

Claude Monet: The Magician of Color by Stephen Koja (in Prestel's Adventures in Art series); *Linnea in Monet's Garden* by Cristina Bjork, Lena Anderson, and Joan Sandin

In 1890 Monet bought a house in the village of Giverny near Paris where he lived with his family. It had a large garden which Monet planted with lots of flowers and blossoming shrubs in bright color combinations. Most important of all, he had a humongous pond dug, planted it with water lilies, and had a Japanese-style bridge built across it. That meant that he could watch the wonderful play of color and light which he needed for his paintings just by stepping outside his front door. Even when he was old and almost blind, Monet sat outdoors and painted impressions of his garden.





After Monet's death his step-daughter Blanche continued to look after the garden. Later it became more and more neglected, but was then carefully restored during the 1970s. Today you can admire Monet's house and garden with the water-lily pond in all its glory in the village of Giverny, about 70 km (44 miles) north of Paris.

Water Lilies, 1916-19
Musée Marmottan, Paris

Some of Monet's water lily paintings are so large that they give us the impression that we could dive right into the picture.

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**Born:**

May 21, 1844 in Laval,
Brittany, France

Died:

September 2, 1910 in
Paris

Lived in: Paris**Children:**

Nine, of whom
only two reached
adulthood: Julia and
Henri-Anatole

Profession:

Customs officer

Painting style:

Naïve

Henri Rousseau— The “Painting Customs Officer”

Henri Rousseau has gone down in art history as “le Douanier,” the “Customs Officer.” He earned his living working for the customs department in Paris and painted in his spare time.

At the age of 49 he retired because he wanted to spend all his time painting. He never attended art college or an academy. In order to learn how to compose a picture he copied paintings by the Old Masters in museums. And more than anything else, he liked visiting the Botanical Gardens in Paris, where he lived. He studied the tropical plants and dreamed of the jungle and faraway lands.

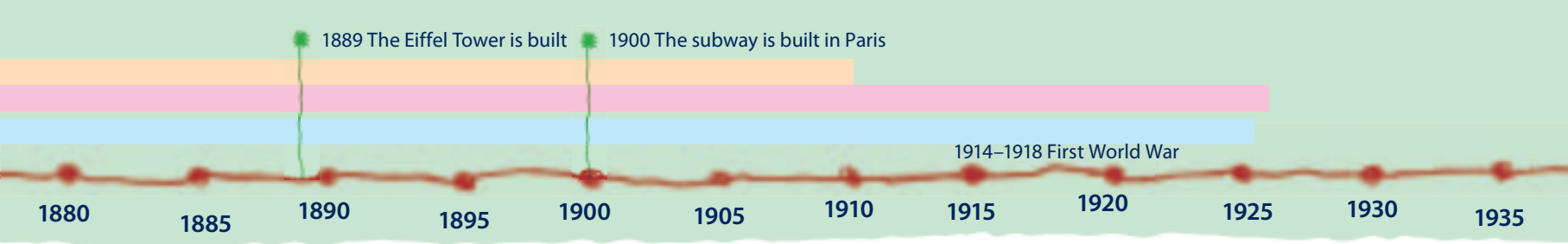


The Sleeping Gypsy, 1897

Museum of Modern Art,
New York

Are the lion and the woman in the moonlight just an apparition or is the woman perhaps dreaming of the lion?





The Dream, 1910
Museum of Modern Art,
New York

Rousseau’s far-off worlds are both magical and mysterious—right down to the animals hidden behind the leaves in the jungle. What creatures can you find in this picture?

To make himself sound more interesting Rousseau made up the story that he was one of only a handful of soldiers who had returned unharmed from a French army expedition to Mexico. In fact, however, the only faraway countries he ever went to were in his dreams!

During his lifetime Rousseau had only one solo exhibition. Many people thought he was a just another hobby painter. Others, however, considered him as a great artist. They were impressed by the mysterious, fairy-tale moods in his paintings, and by his use of unusual colors and the way he saw the world in general. Soon after Rousseau’s death collectors and museums competed to buy his works, which can be seen today in the best museums in the world.

Paint the jungle the way you think it looks!

Further reading
*Henri Rousseau’s
Jungle Book* by
Doris Kutschbach;
*Henri Rousseau:
A Jungle Expedition*
by Susanne Pflieger
(both in Prestel’s
Adventures in Art series)

1865 American President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated

Mary Cassatt 1844–1926

Claude Monet 1840–1926

Henri Rousseau 1844–1910

1869 The railroad is built across the United States from East to West

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Born:

May 22 1844
in Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania, USA

Died: June 14, 1926
in Le Mesnil-Théribus,
Oise, France

Lived in:

United States and
France

Children: none

Painting style:

Impressionism*

Mary Cassatt— An American Woman in Paris

Mary Cassatt was an unusual woman: She managed to become famous as an artist. So you think that's not so special? In the nineteenth century it certainly was!

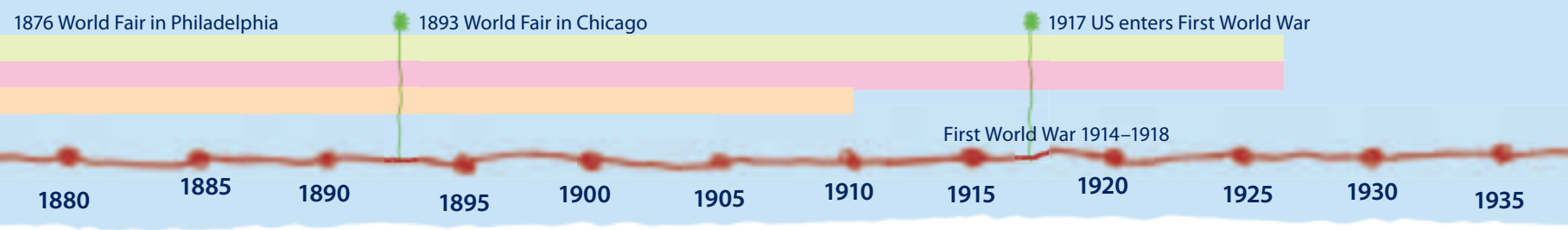
In those days it was not at all usual for women to study and become artists. At art academies* they were not even allowed to take part in the nude drawing classes*. But Mary insisted on having her own way. And she then even became successful in Paris as an American artist!

**Little Girl in a Blue
Armchair, 1878**

National Gallery of Art,
Washington

Take a seat! Mary Cassatt obviously enjoyed painting the blue flowered sofa and chairs with rapid brushstrokes. The child and the dog both look as if they are comfortable in the big cushy armchairs. Or do you think they look bored?





Paris in those days was the art capital of the world. It was there that artists developed new ideas which then spread throughout Europe and the United States. From the 1870s it was the Impressionists* who attracted all the attention. Mary Cassatt joined them and some—like the painter Edgar Degas—became close friends.



Mary Cassatt mostly painted women, and especially liked to paint mothers with their children. And yet she had no family of her own and never married.



The Boating Party,
 c. 1893/94
 National Gallery of Art,
 Washington

Here, it really is as if you are sitting in the boat too! The artist has moved in really close to her choice of subject in this picture. Other Impressionists also zoomed in on the scene to make their paintings look as lively as possible.

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**Self-Portrait with
Bandaged Ear, 1889**
Courtauld Institute
Galleries, London

Following a violent argument with his artist friend Paul Gauguin, van Gogh was so worked up that he cut off part of his left ear and painted this *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*.

Quiz

Why is the bandage in van Gogh's self-portrait on the right?

(Answer on p. 46)



1888 Van Gogh moves to Arles

1914–1918 First World War

1880 1885 1890 1895 1900 1905 1910 1915 1920 1925 1930 1935

Vincent van Gogh— The Power of Color

Vincent van Gogh never tired of looking at colors. He used colors to express his feelings.

His moods often got the better of him. Sometimes he was very depressed and in despair, and othertimes he was full of joy and hope.



Van Gogh did not paint things exactly as they really looked. He exaggerated the colors or even changed them. In his pictures we can see the powerful brushstrokes very clearly. His pictures often tell us about his feelings.

Unfortunately no one wanted to buy his paintings back then. For that reason his brother Theo, who was an art dealer in Paris, always had to support him. During his lifetime van Gogh was best known by young artists. Only after his death did he become really famous. Today van Gogh's paintings are among the most expensive in the world.



Born:

March 30 1853 in Groot-Zundert, Brabant, The Netherlands

Died: July 29, 1890

Lived in: Paris, London, The Hague, Antwerp, and Arles amongst other places

Children: none

Painting style:

Late Impressionism*

Importance:

The forerunner of Expressionism*

Père Tanguy, 1887
Musée Rodin, Paris

Père (Father) Tanguy ran a paint store in Paris. Van Gogh painted his friend sitting in front of a wall covered with pictures by Japanese artists. These were very popular at the time, and they provided many artists with lots of new ideas for their own paintings. Van Gogh was also fascinated by them.

The Bedroom, 1888

Van Gogh Museum,
Amsterdam

Is your bedroom as bright and colorful as this one? Van Gogh painted his bedroom as yellow as the sun in the South of France and with strong colors. For the picture he chose various complementary colors*. They make the picture glow and at the same time give it a sense of balance. How many complementary pairs of colors can you find?



One day Vincent van Gogh set off for the South of France. He wanted to live and work in peace in a place where the light makes the colors glow. He rented a yellow house in the town of Arles.



Van Gogh planned to make his dream come true and lead the life of an artist. But he also wanted to live and work together with other artists. His painter friend Paul Gauguin accepted his invitation, but the two of them could not get on with each other living at such close quarters. Gauguin only stayed with van Gogh for two months.

Van Gogh then spent a long time in a psychiatric clinic and received medical treatment. He was incurably mentally ill, and in 1890 he committed suicide.



Sunflowers, 1888
Neue Pinakothek,
Munich

Van Gogh was looking forward to Gauguin's arrival in Arles and excitedly prepared everything for his friend's stay. He painted pictures to decorate the guest bedroom. It looks as if the sun itself is shining out of this picture! The cold turquoise in the background increases the effect of the warm yellow tones. Sunflowers were van Gogh's favorite flowers. He painted four pictures of sunflowers in rapid succession, and another three the following year.

Tip

The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam (www.vangoghmuseum.nl) and the Kröller-Müller Museum (www.kmm.nl) in Otterlo (The Netherlands) own the largest collections of Van Gogh paintings in the world.

Further reading

Visiting Vincent van Gogh by Caroline Breunese (in Prestel's Adventures in Art series); *Who Can Save Vincent's Hidden Treasure* by Thomas Brezina (Museum of Adventures series)

Do you have a favorite flower? Paint a picture of it in real bright colors!