



A FOCUS ON VINCENT VAN GOGH'S ART ELEMENTS

YOUTH K-5TH GRADE

Color

"What color is in a picture, enthusiasm is in life." - Vincent van Gogh

Vincent Van Gogh explored color throughout his painting career. His earlier works used more muted tones like greys and browns, shown in *The Potato Eaters* from 1885. Eventually he started expressing himself with more vibrant colors like yellows, oranges and blues like in *Wheatfield With a Reaper* four years later. How do the colors in each painting affect the mood?

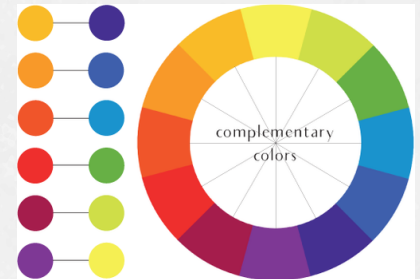


The Potato Eaters, 1885



Wheatfield With a Reaper, 1889

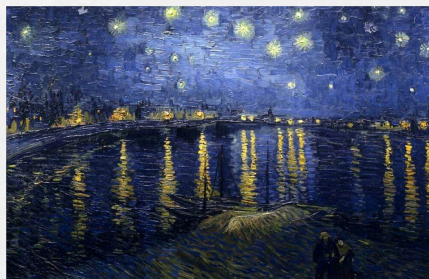
Color wheels are like a rainbow that goes in a circle. A color wheel is an organization of colors that has no beginning or end. Colors are placed around the wheel according to where they fall in the color spectrum. Primary colors - red, yellow and blue are colors that cannot be made but are mixed together to create secondary colors - green, purple and orange. Secondary colors are placed between the primary colors that created them.



Complementary colors are colors that are across each other on the color wheel. When used together, they make each other look brighter, as well as give more contrast to the color scheme. These colors work well together, like a team! Looking at the Van Gogh paintings below, can you tell which pair of complementary colors he used the most?



Irises, 1889



Starry Night Over the Rhone, 1888



Café Terrace at Night, 1888

Line

Vincent Van Gogh was known for his unique use of **Line**, which can be seen in his brushstrokes. This is a technique he developed later in his career. Can you find examples of these types of lines in his brushstrokes: Curvy/Circled, Straight Dotted/Dashed, Wavy, Swirly? After examining these 2 paintings, draw the lines you see in the table below.



Starry Night 1889



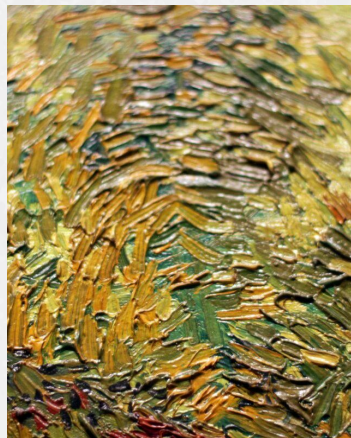
Landscape with Ploughed Fields, 1889

Straight Dashed/Dotted	Wavy
Curved/Circles	Swirly

Now take another look at these lines. Why do you think Vincent Van Gogh chose the lines for each element of the painting? How do they illustrate the sense of movement in the paintings? When you go into the exhibit, see if you notice the brushstrokes and different lines in the paintings while they're blown up really big!

Technique

Vincent Van Gogh used a technique called **impasto** when he painted. That means he used so much paint that when it dried, it was actually raised off the surface of the canvas. In fact, the thick paint was so texturized that it seemed three-dimensional, instead of flat paint soaked into the canvas. To achieve this technique he had to put a lot of paint on his brush, and sometimes even used something called a palette knife to scoop up even more paint! Almost all of his paintings were completed in one short day, which is pretty fast. Since the paint was so thick, it wasn't able to dry before he moved onto different parts of the painting. Can you see which parts of the paintings below have more or less paint on them? Can you imagine what the surface of these paintings would feel like?



Subject

Vincent Van Gogh was inspired by life itself. He observed the people, places, and everyday objects around him. Throughout his travels he met many people and made a few life-long friends. He didn't paint portraits like most artists were, as they were painting almost exactly how they saw things in real life. Instead, Van Gogh tried new ideas, using bold colors and expressive brushstrokes to show the personality of his subjects. His portraits are an example of his connection with other people.



Portrait of Joseph Roulin 1889



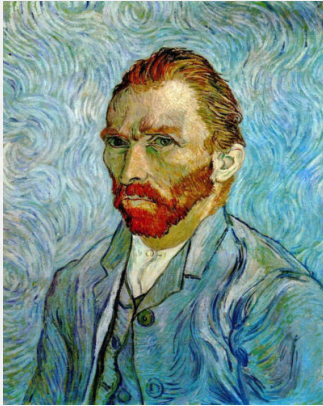
Peasant Woman 1890



Portrait of Pere Tanguy 1887

On a separate piece of paper, draw a portrait of a friend or someone you see in your everyday life. What techniques can you use to illustrate their personality? *Hint:* Think about how he used Color and Line.

Van Gogh also painted 36 **self-portraits** throughout his career, each illustrating a different mood or phase in his life. Looking at the 3 portraits below, how do you think Van Gogh was feeling when he painted each of them? What elements are the same? What elements are different?



Most people recognize Vincent Van Gogh's **landscapes**. He would pack up his folding easel, stool and wooden box of art supplies and trek off into the countryside to paint the beauty of nature. He felt a strong connection to natural environments. He once wrote: "I have nature and art and poetry, and if that is not enough, what is enough?" He almost always finished a single painting in a day, which was impressingly quick, and not typical of most artists.



*Mountainous Landscape Behind
St. Paul Hospital 1889*



*Landscape with Carriage
and Train 1890*