



INTRODUCING VINCENT VAN GOGH
Dutch 1853-1890 (GOE)
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

PROPS

AUDIO: Script, “*Vincent*” by Don McLean

CARD: Artist Name – Date

PRINT – Large Van Gogh Poster

VOCABULARY

Self-Portrait, Brushstrokes, Background, Foreground, Outline, Texture, Spirals, Warm/Cool Colors

SLIDES

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| 1. Artist Name/Date | 11. <i>Starry Night Over the Rhone</i> |
| 2. <i>Letter to Theo</i> | 12. <i>The Starry Night</i> |
| 3. <i>Photos of Theo & Vincent</i> | 13. <i>Close-up: Starry Night</i> |
| 4. <i>Self-Portrait</i> | 14. <i>Close-up: Cypress Tree</i> |
| 5. <i>Close-up: Self-Portrait</i> | 15. <i>Peach Trees in Bloom</i> |
| 6. <i>Pere Tanguy</i> | 16. <i>Close-up: Peach Trees</i> |
| 7. <i>Pere Tanguy's Hands</i> | 17. <i>The Red Vineyard</i> |
| 8. <i>Sidewalk Café at Night</i> | 18. <i>Warm/Cool Colors</i> |
| 9. <i>Night Café</i> | 19. <i>Self-Portrait at Easel/Vocabulary</i> |
| 10. <i>Photo of Night Sky</i> | |

1. SLIDE – ARTIST NAME/DATE

MOTIVATION

Do you have a brother or sister? If your brother or sister went away, would you write to them? Would you like to receive texts or emails from them? I want you to listen to a letter one brother wrote to another about 100 years ago in Holland. If you listen carefully you will find out the names of the two brothers and what kind of work each does.

2. SLIDE – LETTER TO THEO (Tay-o) (Written in Dutch)

AUDIO

SCRIPT: “*Dear Theo,*

I’m hoping this finds you happy and well, brother! Is Paris treating you well? I would think running an art gallery is fascinating work but very troublesome, too. I like to read in your letter about the different new artists you meet and their work.”

“I am discouraged with my own paintings, and think it’s time I try something new. I find I am unable to work as a minister after studying so long and hard. It’s too sad to see the suffering of the poor farmers and coal workers. I feel the need to escape! Could I come to Paris and live with you while I paint? I’ll anxiously await your answer. Your brother, Vincent”

Can you tell me the names of the two brothers? (THEO AND VINCENT) What kind of work does Theo do in Paris? (RUNS AN ART GALLERY) What does Vincent do? (AN ARTIST, A MINISTER) How was Vincent feeling? (DISCOURAGED, LONELY)

DEVELOPMENT

3. SLIDE – PHOTOS OF THEO & VINCENT

Vincent van Gogh wrote many, many letters to his brother Theo. They were very good friends and loved each other very much. Because of Vincent's many letters, we know a lot about his private thoughts and feelings. Today we're going to learn all about Vincent van Gogh by listening to his letters to his brother, and by looking at his paintings.

Would you like to see a picture van Gogh painted of himself? It is called a SELF-PORTRAIT when a person paints himself.

4. SLIDE – SELF-PORTRAIT

While you look at Vincent, listen to his letter to Theo about his self-portrait. He was in a hospital suffering from problems when he wrote this.

AUDIO

SCRIPT: "Dear Theo,

The desire I have just now to make portraits is terribly intense. I am working on two portraits of myself at this time - for want of another model - because it is more than time that I did a little figure work.

I am working like mad and feel a blind rage to work more than ever. And I believe that this will contribute to my recovery. Then I can leave this hospital and be with you again. Love from your brother, Vincent"

Do you think Vincent looks quite old in this portrait? (YES) He was only about as old as your parents. All those lines you see in his face are not wrinkles, they are his BRUSHSTROKES. That's how he applied color. He didn't smoothly blend his brushstrokes.

5. SLIDE – CLOSE-UP: SELF-PORTRAIT

Do you see any colors in his face that are not normal skin color? (YES) Vincent always placed great importance on showing feelings in his paintings. How would you describe how he was feeling here? (SAD, UNHAPPY, TIRED, LONELY, DISCOURAGED)

Let's meet a friend of Vincent van Gogh's.

6. SLIDE – PERE TANGUY (Tan-gee)

Here is van Gogh's portrait of a good friend, Pere Tanguy, a paint salesman. Van Gogh traded his paintings for paints, brushes, and canvasses. He never had enough money for supplies.

What do you see in the BACKGROUND behind this man? (ASIAN, CHINESE, JAPANESE LADIES) Van Gogh had a collection of Japanese prints for decoration in his home. Even though he was poor, he was able to buy them, because they cost very little. Japanese art fascinated van Gogh and he used some of the techniques in his own work.

If the Japanese scene is the background, what is in the FOREGROUND? (MAN) Look carefully around the figure of the man. What do you see as an OUTLINE? (A RED LINE AROUND THE MAN) Does that red outline seem to separate the man from the busy background? (YES)

Do you see a lot of brushstrokes in the foreground? (YES) If you could touch Mr. Tanguy's beard, how would it feel? (BRISTLY, STIFF)

7. SLIDE – PERE TANGUY'S HANDS

How would his hands feel? (ROUGH, RUGGED, WRINKLED) The words you just gave me to describe his beard and hands are TEXTURE words. Van Gogh used a lot of texture in his painting.

He created texture with his use of color and his brushstrokes. Where else do you see texture in this painting? (SHIRT, HAT, COAT, FACE)

Let's now visit a café in France where Vincent lived.

8. SLIDE – THE SIDEWALK CAFÉ AT NIGHT

AUDIO

SCRIPT: *"Dear Theo,*

I have painted two canvasses, one is the ugliest thing I have ever done! I painted a café, first from the outside view, then from the inside view.

The outside view is very different, because it is a night scene without any black in it. I tried to make it inviting-looking with the yellow lights and the bright, hopeful stars shining down."

9. SLIDE – NIGHT CAFÉ (Switch to this slide when script matches description of slide)

SCRIPT: *"But once you get inside, in the second canvas, I tried to show that the café is a place where one can ruin oneself, go mad, or commit a crime. I used red and green to show opposing sides of man. I also painted with other clashing colors to show no comfort can be found here. In all my paintings, the study of color is wonderful! I am anxious, dear brother, to hear what you think of my two paintings. I worked for three nights on them, and tried to sleep during the day. Work is destroying me. An artist needs to save himself and not give all he has to his work. I am weak and rather uneasy and frightened. I feel the need to see you Theo. Love, Vincent"*

I don't know what Theo thought of his paintings, but let's hear what you say. Do you think that van Gogh was successful at showing his feelings about the café? (YES) Is this a place you would like to go? Does it seem warm and inviting? (NO) Which of the two paintings do you think is the uglier one van Gogh talked about? (THE INDOOR SCENE) Do you think his choice of colors helped him do this? (YES)

10. SLIDE – PHOTO OF NIGHT SKY

When you look up at a starlit sky, does it make you feel peaceful? (YES) Twinkle, twinkle little star.....

11. SLIDE – STARRY NIGHT OVER THE RHONE

Vincent frequently painted at night, wearing a special hat with candles to light his canvas. He liked to capture the pretty reflections and dramatic lighting of night scenes like this. But his night scenes weren't always so peaceful.

12. SLIDE – THE STARRY NIGHT

One night Van Gogh looked out his hospital window at the starry night, and painted this exploding picture. He didn't see peaceful, quiet stars. He felt the power of stars as great suns whirling in space. Is this a "Twinkle, twinkle little star" type painting? (NO)

13. SLIDE – CLOSE-UP: STARRY NIGHT

How does he show the motion and action of the sky? (SWIRLING BRUSHSTROKES, WAVES OF LINES, BRIGHTNESS IN NIGHT SKY) He painted SPIRALS in his exciting sky. A spiral is a circle that keeps on going around and around.

Do you see much texture? (YES) His swirling brushstrokes and thick paint created so much texture that your eye never rests while looking at it. This painting was a favorite of Vincent's. Do you like it? It is one of his most popular and famous paintings throughout the world today.

14. SLIDE – CLOSE-UP: CYPRESS TREE

Vincent painted a large cypress tree in the foreground of his painting. Cypress trees are typical trees in the South of France where he was painting. Raise your hand if you've seen a cypress tree in your neighborhood. Notice the many curving lines of color he used to make it stand out from the sky.

15. SLIDE – PEACH TREES IN BLOOM

Have you ever seen a large original oil painting up close in a museum? When we look at a slide of an original painting, it is hard to really see the true color, texture, and brush work. Many times the real painting is very large. In a museum you can stand up close and see all those things so clearly. It makes it so much prettier and interesting.

Let's pretend for a moment that you are in a museum. You walk into a room featuring paintings by Vincent van Gogh, and this picture, titled *Peach Trees in Bloom*, immediately catches your eye. Let's walk up closer to see just how he applied the color and see the texture and the brushstrokes. Focus on the fence in the foreground. Ready?

16. SLIDE – CLOSE-UP: PEACH TREES

Does it look different close up? (YES) Except for the fence, what else do you see now? (THE PEACH TREES IN BLOSSOM) Raise your hand if you see more texture, since we moved closer. (YES) Can you tell what is creating that texture? (THICK PAINT, UNBLENDED BRUSHSTROKES, USE OF COLOR)

Today we've met Vincent van Gogh through his letters to his brother, and by looking at his paintings. He painted for only ten years, but during that time he painted furiously and produced about 1700 pieces of art. That amounts to nearly a picture every other day for ten years! Do you know how many of all those paintings he was able to sell? Van Gogh sold only one during his lifetime! Would you like to see it?

17. SLIDE – THE RED VINEYARD

These are farm workers picking grapes in the field. What colors jump out at you? (RED, YELLOW, ORANGE) These are the colors of autumn when these grapes were being harvested. Are they WARM or COOL COLORS? (WARM)

18. SLIDE – WARM/COOL COLORS

Most of us notice WARM COLORS like red, yellow, orange first in a painting. They are exciting and bold. The COOL COLORS of blue, green and purple are calm, peaceful colors.

CONCLUSION

19. SLIDE – SELF-PORTRAIT AT EASEL/VOCABULARY

It was only after he died, at the young age of thirty-seven, that he became popular and was given credit for having great talent. Let's listen to a song written about Vincent van Gogh's life as we look, once again, at his masterpieces of art. Listen carefully and you might hear about some of the paintings we saw today!

Play song, "Vincent," by Don McLean. Show all slides while playing music, stopping with the slide, Self-Portrait.