



Exhibition Hub

## *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*

### Educator Guide for Grades K-12

“There is nothing more truly artistic than to love people.”

- Vincent Van Gogh

#### About the Experience:

Invite your students on an inspiring educational journey with a field trip to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*. Students will explore the scientific, mathematical, cultural, and social-emotional facets of Vincent Van Gogh’s life and work.

Learn the science behind what makes the colors in Van Gogh’s paintings so striking. Explore the patterns and geometry of some of his most famous artworks. Look closely and observe details of the natural world just as Van Gogh did. Investigate different cultural influences from around the globe that inspired this famous artist. Practice empathy and social awareness through learning about Van Gogh’s life and relationships with himself, his family and friends, and his art.

Give your students an immersive experience that will pique their curiosity, heighten their empathy, and hone their observational skills.

# How to Book the Experience:

Contact Jennifer at JDC Group Marketing at [Jen@JDCgroupmarketing.com](mailto:Jen@JDCgroupmarketing.com) or 619-363-5330 to Book a School Field Trip at a Discount price.

## How to use this guide:

This Educator Guide is arranged by grade band (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) and contains activities and resources for each grade band for Before, During, and After Your Visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*. All activities and resources are aligned with educational standards and social-emotional learning (SEL) standards. Educators are encouraged to use any or all of the activities and resources at any time throughout the school year or in conjunction with a visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*.

## Grades K-5

### K-5 Glossary

**Subject:** a person or object that an artist includes in their artwork. For example, sunflowers were one of Van Gogh's favorite subjects to paint.

**Research:** to study, read, and ask questions to find answers about something. For example, you can use a library or the internet to research an artist to learn more about them.

**Art historian:** someone who studies, researches, and teaches about history through artists and their artwork.

**Exhibition:** a collection of artwork or other objects in a museum, gallery, or other place that people can visit to learn and enjoy.

**Primary colors:** red, yellow, and blue are primary colors. You cannot make these colors by mixing other colors.

**Secondary colors:** the colors that you get when you mix primary colors. Red + Yellow = Orange. Yellow + Blue = Green. Blue + Red = Purple.

**Landscape:** a work of art that shows a big scene looking out over nature, usually featuring fields, trees, hills, mountains, forests, rivers, etc.

**Cityscape:** a work of art that shows a scene looking out over a city, usually featuring buildings, streets, etc.

**Linework:** the way that an artist draws lines.

**Empathy:** a deep understanding of the feelings or emotions of another person.

**En plein air:** painting outside in the open air.

**Conservator:** a person who takes care of, cleans, and restores artworks.

**Sketch:** a quick, simple drawing.

## Before Your Visit:

The following activities will help engage and prepare your students for a visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*.

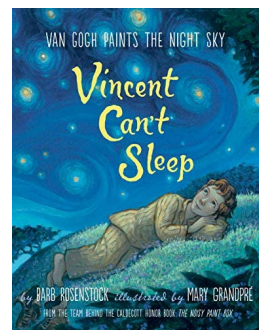
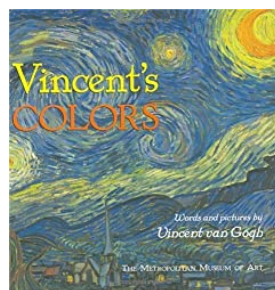
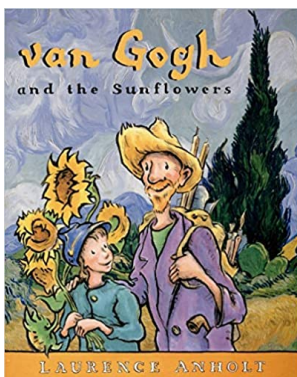
### Who, What, Where, When?

*Curriculum Connections: Map & Globe Skills: Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Social Emotional Learning, Visual Arts*

#### [self-portrait]

Who was Vincent Van Gogh? What do your students already know?

For K-2nd graders, read [Van Gogh and the Sunflowers](#) by Laurence Anholt. This book is based on a true story about a young boy named Camille, who was one of Van Gogh's subjects. A **subject** is a person or object that an artist includes in their artwork.



And/or [Vincent's Colors](#) with words and pictures by Vincent Van Gogh.

For 3rd-5th graders try [Vincent Can't Sleep](#) by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Mary Grandpré.

If you can't find these books in your school or local library, try these YouTube read-alouds: [Van Gogh and the Sunflowers - Read Aloud Story Book Inspired By Vincent van Gogh](#)  
[Vincent's Colors read aloud](#)  
[Reading of "Vincent Can't Sleep" by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Mary Grandpré](#)

Use the following questions and prompts after reading:

- What did you learn about Vincent Van Gogh that you didn't already know?
- How are you like Vincent Van Gogh? How are you different?
- What feelings did Vincent Van Gogh have in the book? What makes you say that?
- What other characters did you notice? How did they help Van Gogh in the story? Who are the characters in your story/your life?
- Have you ever felt lonely or different or sad? Who or what helped you when you felt that way? Who or what helped Van Gogh when he felt this way?

Where did Vincent Van Gogh live and paint?

Use a map or globe to help students find the following places:

- Your own country on the map or globe
- The Netherlands: the birthplace of Vincent Van Gogh
- France, Belgium, and England: places where Van Gogh lived, worked, and painted

Conduct a safe internet image search with your students using Google or KidzSearch.com. Search for the Netherlands, France, Belgium, and England. Have a compare/contrast discussion with students with the images you find and images or memories of your own city, state, or country. Use the following prompts to help begin the conversation.

- What do you notice in these pictures?
- What are the buildings, roads, and other structures like?
- What do the people look like? What are they wearing? What are they doing?
- How do people get from one place to another?
- What is the food like?
- What does the natural environment look like?
- What is different about the places in these pictures and where we live? What is the same?

When was Vincent Van Gogh alive and making art?

Ask students how old they are and what year they were born. If you feel comfortable, share the year that you were born.

Vincent van Gogh was born on March 30, 1853 – over 150 years ago. That was before your parents, grandparents, and even great grandparents were alive!

What do you think life may have been like back then – over 150 years ago? How was it different from today? How was it similar to today?

To help answer these questions, look closely at these two paintings by Vincent Van Gogh, painted in 1888 in France: *Cafe Terrace at Night* (left) and *The Harvest* (right).

What's going on in these pictures?



What do you see when you look around the room or look outside that you don't see in the paintings above by Vincent Van Gogh?

To give you an idea of what life was like in 1888, telephones, cars, and cameras had only just been invented. And this is what they looked like!



Not many people had these things and there was no such thing as television, cell phones, or video games.

What would you have done for fun if you lived in 1888?

## STEAM Career Connection: Art Historian

Did you enjoy learning about what life was like long ago and what it's like in different places around the world? Are you interested to learn more about Vincent Van Gogh and what his life was like?

If you are curious about discovering history through the lives and works of artists, you may want to be an **art historian**! An art historian is someone who studies artworks, just like the paintings we've looked at by Vincent Van Gogh. They also **research**, or study, read, and ask questions to find answers, about what life was like in the place and time when the artist was working. Art historians use science skills like close looking and research. They also use English/Language Arts skills like reading, writing, and speaking. Art historians teach and write about what they discover so that others can learn, too! Do you think you might want to be an art historian?

## Breathe, Imagine, Paint

*Curriculum Connections: Social Emotional Learning, Visual Arts*

Share this quote from Van Gogh: "If you hear a voice within you say, 'you cannot paint,' then by all means, paint, and that voice will be silenced."

When Van Gogh was alive, lots of people told him that he was not good at painting. They did not understand his artwork. But Van Gogh didn't let that stop him! With the support of close family and friends, like his brother Théo and fellow artists, he painted over 2,000 works of art! And now he is one of the most famous artists in the world. We're going to visit an **exhibition** with lots of his artwork soon!

Share this prompt with your students:

- What is something you've always wanted to do, but are scared, nervous, or just haven't been able to do it? Riding a bike? Climbing a tree? Making a new friend? Sharing your thoughts in class?

Everyone has fears and gets nervous. That's okay! One thing that can help is to imagine ourselves doing that scary or difficult thing. Close your eyes or look down at your lap with a soft gaze. Take a big, deep breath in and out. Picture yourself doing something challenging or something that makes you nervous.

- Where are you?
- Who else is there?
- Is there a special person or people who are helping to support you?
- What sounds do you hear?
- What do you smell?
- What does it feel like?

Take another deep breath. Open your eyes or look up.

- How did you feel before, during, and after this practice?

Our breath and imagination are great tools to help us when we feel nervous or scared. What other activities do you enjoy doing when you feel nervous or scared? Like Vincent Van Gogh, expressing yourself through art may help when dealing with challenging emotions!

Try this! Draw or paint a picture of yourself doing something that makes you nervous or scared or doing something that feels challenging or difficult. Share with your classmates!

## During Your Visit:

The following activities will help engage your students during a visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* and practice their observational, conversational, and critical thinking skills. Several of these prompts were adapted from Harvard's Project Zero Thinking Routine Toolbox (<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>).

Unless otherwise stated, these prompts can be used with any picture in the exhibition. Find a space large enough to accommodate your class or group and gather around a picture, so that everyone can see. Challenge students to take 10 seconds of quiet looking at each new picture. Invite students to let their eyes wander over the whole artwork, from corner to corner, top to bottom. If any hands go up before the 10 seconds are over, encourage students to wait to share.

## Shape Spotters, Color Calculators!

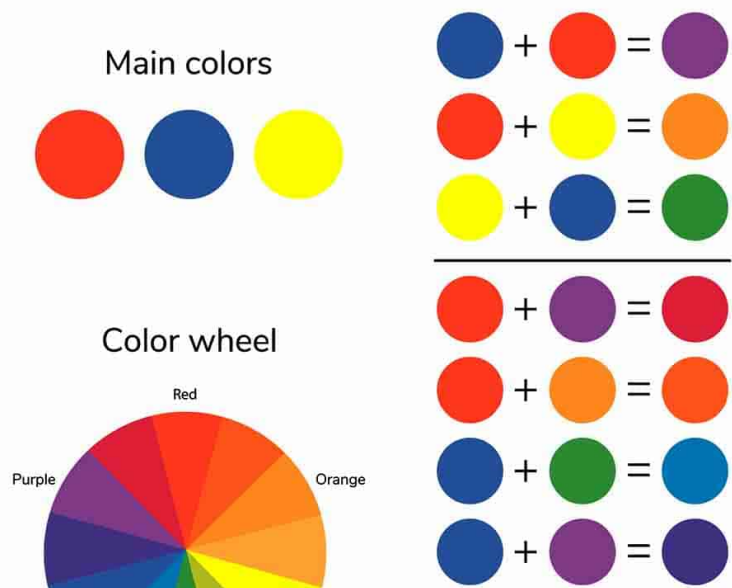
*Curriculum Connections: Math, Science, Visual Arts*

Painters like Vincent Van Gogh paint the real world onto a flat surface to make artwork. They do this by putting shapes together to create pictures. Assign each student a shape from the following list:

- Circle
- Oval
- Square
- Rectangle
- Triangle
- Diamond (Rhombus)
- Trapezoid
- Organic or Free Form Shapes

Color was especially important to painters like Van Gogh. Painters mix **primary colors** (red, blue, and yellow) to create **secondary colors**. Use the following chart for reference, if needed. Assign each student a color from the following list:

- Blue
- Yellow
- Red
- Purple
- Orange
- Green
- Black
- White
- Brown



- Image from [trembelingart.com/color-mixing-absolute-beginners/](http://trembelingart.com/color-mixing-absolute-beginners/)

Invite students to raise their hand each time they see their shape(s) or color(s) in one of Van Gogh's pictures! Bonus points for older students if they can name the correct color equation (example: red + blue = purple).

## Soundscape

*Curriculum Connections: Visual Arts, Music*

Find a picture of a **landscape** or **cityscape**, like *Cafe Terrace at Night* or *The Harvest*. After 10 seconds of slow, quiet looking with your students, ask:

- What sounds might we hear if we jumped inside this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?

Once you've collected 3-5 sounds that relate to the picture, assign a sound to each student or small group of students. Have the students make their sounds separately, then all together, like a chorus! You can use hand motions to prompt students to crescendo (get louder), decrescendo (get softer), etc. You've created a soundscape for the picture! Ask students:

- Do you notice anything new about the picture after we created our soundscape?
- Are there any other possible sounds you might imagine in this picture?

If you completed the activities in the Before Your Visit section, add these prompts about place:

- Remember the images from the places we researched in class: France, Belgium, England, and the Netherlands?
- Where do you think Van Gogh may have been when he painted this picture?
- Encourage students to share visual evidence by following up responses with: What do you see that makes you say that?
- What do you wonder about the place in this picture?
- Would you like to visit this place? Why or why not?

## Squiggle and Wiggle

*Curriculum Connections: Math, Visual Arts*

This is a great activity to let your students wiggle out a bit of energy if they are getting squirmy! Find a picture with lots of Van Gogh's famous **linework**, or ways of drawing lines, like *Starry Night* or *Tree Roots*. After 10 seconds of slow, quiet looking, try these prompts:

- Find one line with their eyes and trace it with their finger in the air from where you are sitting or standing. Follow the line for as long as you can. If you lose it, start over with a new line!
- Can you mimic or copy the shape of your line with your arms, legs, or whole body? Is your line squiggly? Swoopy? Swirly? Straight?



- What sounds do you think this line would make? Make your line's sound while making the shape with your body or while tracing the line in the air with your finger.

## Same and Different

*Curriculum Connections: Social Emotional Learning, Social Studies*

Find the gallery with the 3-D recreation of Van Gogh's painting *The Bedroom*. This is a model of Van Gogh's bedroom that was made for this exhibition based on one of his paintings.

Ask students:

- What does it feel like to be in this room?
- What can you tell about Van Gogh by seeing his bedroom? What do you think was important to him? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How is Van Gogh's bedroom the same or different from your room or a room at a friend or family member's home?

If you completed the activities in the Before Your Visit section, add these prompts about time:

- What do you see that tells you this bedroom is from a long time ago?
- What are some things we might see in a bedroom today that didn't exist when Van Gogh was alive?

## Jump Inside

*Curriculum Connections: Social Emotional Learning, English/Language Arts*

You can 'jump inside' any picture in the exhibition, but this activity may be especially effective in the immersive experience gallery.

Spend a quiet, slow 30 seconds taking in the sights and sounds of the immersive experience. Then ask students:

- What might you smell, taste, touch, if you were inside these paintings?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- For older students, encourage them to describe their experience using as many adjectives, descriptive words, as possible.

## Color Your Feelings

*Curriculum Connections: Social Emotional Learning, Visual Arts*

Remind students that just like every human being, Van Gogh experienced the range of human emotions. Sometimes he felt happy, excited, and joyful. Other times he felt sad, scared, or lonely. Looking at works of art

can help us **empathize** with the artist who created them. **Empathy** is deeply connecting with and understanding another person's feelings or emotions.

Van Gogh often used color to portray emotion through his artwork. Pay special attention to the colors in the works of art you are observing:

- What emotion(s) do you think Van Gogh was feeling when he painted \_\_\_\_\_? What do you see that makes you say that? Compare and contrast with another picture.
- What emotions do you feel when you look at \_\_\_\_\_? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What are some times that you've felt excited or joyful? What about sad or lonely? What colors do you think about when you feel these emotions? No right or wrong answer - emotions are very personal!
- After experiencing the immersive gallery, students are invited to engage in the interactive coloring experience. Invite students to use color(s) that show how they are feeling after seeing the exhibition.

## Reflect and Connect

To wrap up the experience, invite students to answer the prompts:

- My favorite part of the experience was \_\_\_\_\_.
- One question I still have is \_\_\_\_\_.
- This experience made me curious to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_.

Encourage students to share their answers with a partner or small group. Did you have the same answers? Different? Connect with your peers as you reflect on the experience.

## After Your Visit:

The following activities will keep the engagement and learning going after a visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*.

### En Plein Air: Observing the Natural World

*Curriculum Connections: Science, Visual Arts*

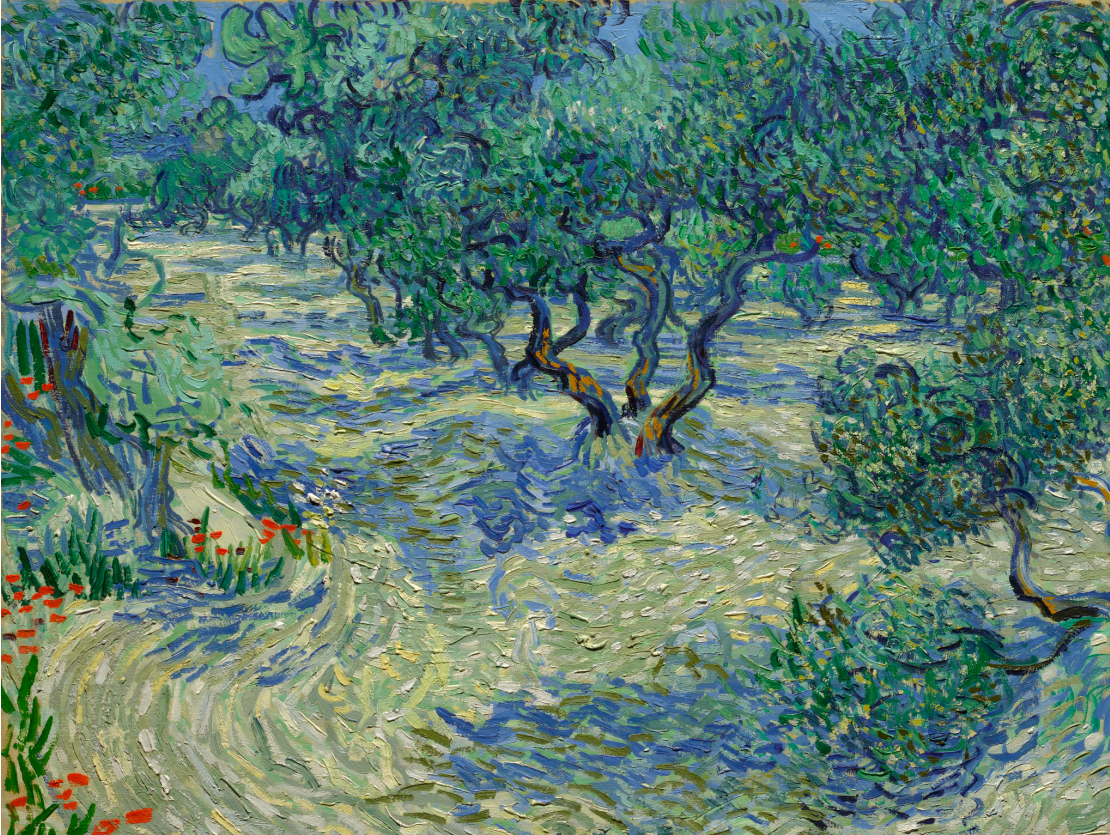
One of Vincent Van Gogh's favorite **subjects** to paint was nature. And he loved to paint **en plein air**, or outside in the open air. Have you ever gone outside to make art?

Take a close look at one of Van Gogh's paintings from 1889, *Olive Trees*, which he painted *en plein air*, or outside.

- What do you think it was like outside when Van Gogh was painting this picture? Think about the weather, the smells, the sensations. What do you see that makes you say that?
- Go outside with any art materials that you have on hand - anything from paper and pencil to easels, canvas, and paint! Find a spot where you can see something that's beautiful to you. Spend some time

looking closely at what you see, like a scientist would. What details do you notice? Take a few deep breaths. Is it hot or cold? Windy or still? Cloudy or sunny? Are there any plants and animals around?

- Spend 10-20 minutes drawing or painting the scene that you see. How can you show that it's hot or cold? Windy or still? Cloudy or sunny? How can you show the movement of any animals or leaves? Think about colors, lines, and shapes, like you observed in the Van Gogh exhibition. Share your *plein-air* masterpieces with your classmates!



*Olive Trees*, Vincent Van Gogh, 1889

## STEAM Career Connection: Conservator

Fun fact! There is a bit of a grasshopper stuck in Van Gogh's *Olive Trees* painting from 1889! Read more about it here:

<https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/researchers-just-found-a-grasshopper-in-a-van-gogh-painting>

Someone found a grasshopper in a painting? From 1889?? Often there are bits of sand, leaves, or dirt stuck in paintings that were made outside, *en plein air*. If you find that fascinating, you may want to be a **conservator**! A conservator is someone who takes care of artworks and artifacts so that folks in the future will be able to enjoy them and learn from them. Conservators use lots of science like chemistry to clean and care for art and historical objects without damaging them. They learn about how artists like Van Gogh mixed paint and made different colors in their time period. They also study history to make educated guesses about what an artwork or object may have looked like when it was new. Conservators help us tell important stories about our history and culture. And sometimes find bugs stuck in paintings!

## Letter to a Friend

*Curriculum Connections: English/Language Arts, Social Emotional Learning*

During his lifetime, Van Gogh wrote over 800 letters, mostly to his beloved brother Théo, sharing his thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Think about a special person in your life, like a family member, friend, teacher, or neighbor. Write them a letter telling the story of your trip to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*. Think about beginning, middle, and end. Share one thing you learned from the experience. And include one thing you think your special person would have loved to see or experience.

For beginning readers and writers, encourage students to **sketch** to tell the story. Van Gogh often drew pictures in his letters, as well.

If students need a head start, they can use the following template:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I wanted to write you a letter to share a story with you about when I went with my class to see *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*.

When we first arrived, I felt \_\_\_\_\_.

Then we walked inside and \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite part of the exhibition was \_\_\_\_\_.

One thing I learned was \_\_\_\_\_.

I think you would have loved \_\_\_\_\_. I wish you could have been there with us!

Love,

*Your Name*

*[include images of one of vg's letters with sketch?]*

# Grades 6-8

## 6-8 Glossary

**Japonisme:** a French term from the late 1800s used to describe the high interest in Japanese art and design.

**Color theory:** a set of rules and guidelines about producing harmonious color combinations that please the eye.

**Optics:** scientific study of light.

**Reproduction:** a copy of another work of art.

**Conservator:** a professional who cares for and preserves artistic, historic, and cultural materials guided by a code of ethics intended to protect the integrity and authenticity of works of art.

**Exhibition Designer:** a professional who designs components of exhibitions, like lighting, structures, layout, and more.

**Scale model:** a model that has been reduced (or enlarged) so that the dimensions are proportional to the actual object or structure.

## Before Your Visit:

The following activities will help engage and prepare your students for a visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*.

### Who, What, Where, When, How?

*Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Social Emotional Learning, Visual Arts*

#### [self-portrait]

#### Who, What, How?

Use these prompts to start a conversation with students about Vincent Van Gogh to find out what they already know, think, and feel about this famous figure.

***[Note to teachers: Vincent Van Gogh's life story involves self-harm and suicide and these topics may appear in articles and conversations with your students about the artist and his life.]***

- Who was Vincent Van Gogh?
- What do you know about his life? His art?
- How have you seen Vincent Van Gogh show up in popular culture? In the news?

To further students' understanding, encourage some light research during class. The following are good places to begin:

#### Van Gogh's Life and Art

- <https://www.youtube.com/@VanGoghMuseum>
- <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/art-and-stories/vincent-s-life-1853-1890>
- [https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/vincent-van-gogh-the-starry-night-1889/](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/vincent-van-gogh-the-starry-night-1889/)
- [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gogh/hd\\_gogh.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gogh/hd_gogh.htm)

#### Van Gogh in the News

- <https://hyperallergic.com/782923/just-stop-oil-protesters-guilty-of-criminal-damage-van-gogh-frame/>
- <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/11/18/a-crate-of-40-van-gogh-paintings-was-once-sold-for-less-than-1>

#### When and Where?

Reflect with students on when and where Van Gogh was living and painting. Use the following prompts to start the conversation:

- Van Gogh was born in The Netherlands in 1853. He lived and painted in England, France, and Belgium in the 1880s. He was also heavily influenced by Japanese art. In fact, Van Gogh once said in a letter to his brother Théo, "All my work is based to some extent on Japanese art."
- What was happening politically, economically, socially, artistically in these places during this time?

Consider:

- The Industrial Revolution
- Trade between Japan and Europe
- Science: Innovations in photography and optics

Here are some places to begin:

- <https://www.britannica.com/place/Japan/The-emergence-of-imperial-Japan>
- <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/japans-encounter-with-europe-1573-1853>
- <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/impressionism/a/japonisme>
- <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-asia/art-japan/japanese-art/a/a-brief-history-of-the-art-of-japan-the-meiji-to-reiwa-periods>

#### Same Different Connect Engage

*Curriculum Connections: English/Language Arts, Social Studies, Social Emotional Learning*

Based on student research or what they already know about Vincent Van Gogh, use this thinking routine to build student empathy and connection with this 19th century Dutch artist.

- **Same:** In what ways might Van Gogh and you be similar?
- **Different:** In what ways might Van Gogh and you be different?
- **Connect:** In what ways might Van Gogh and you be connected as human beings?
- **Engage:** What would you like to ask, say, or do with Van Gogh if you had the chance?

## Eye See Color

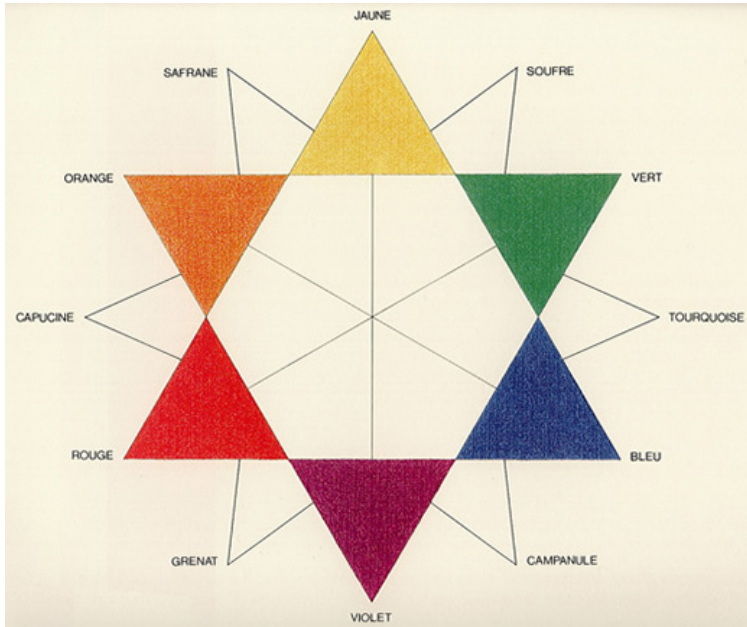
*Curriculum Connections: Science, Social Emotional Learning*

“I know for sure that I have an instinct for color, and that it will come to me more and more, that painting is in the very marrow of my bones.”

-- Vincent Van Gogh

Van Gogh is famous for his use of vivid, exaggerated color in his later paintings, such as *Iris* from 1890. His use of color was no accident or merely artistic vision - it's science! Van Gogh read extensively about color theory and the science of how our eyes perceive color.

Van Gogh became familiar with the theory that complementary colors (those opposite each other on the color wheel) intensify one another.



Color Star by Charles Blanc, French art critic, 1867

### Experiment:

Take a sheet of blue construction paper. Have students hold up one at a time against a white wall. Stare at the sheet for 1-2 minutes, then remove it quickly, leaving just the white wall. Students should see an afterimage of the construction paper's complementary color: orange. Ask students if they have any thoughts as to why or

where this afterimage comes from.

Modern optics tells us that this afterimage appears because of how the cones, or cells that help us perceive color, in our eyes function.

For more on the science of how our eyes perceive color, including more fun optical illusions, try this video and website:

[The Colour After Image Illusion \(best full screen\)](#)

<https://www.animations.physics.unsw.edu.au/jw/light/complementary-colours.htm>

Further reading:

Why do complementary colors look good together?

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/the-scientific-reason-complementary-colors-look-good-together-114030051/>

Van Gogh Museum: Looking for Contrast

<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/stories/looking-for-contrast>

## STEAM Career Connection: Conservator

You may be wondering ... if Van Gogh intended to place complementary colors side by side, why did he choose yellow and blue? The opposite of yellow on the color wheel is ... violet. It turns out, Van Gogh originally painted these irises purple, but over time the particular red pigment that he used, plumbonacrite, broke down into white crystals, fading the red pigment and leaving the irises to appear blue.

Have you ever had a work of art, piece of clothing, photograph, or other object that faded or changed over time? How did this change your relationship to the object?

Find out more about the research on Van Gogh's original colors from the Met Museum exhibition *Van Gogh: Irises and Roses*.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2015/van-gogh>

Why might it matter to know that Van Gogh's paintings have changed over time? How does your aesthetic or emotional reaction to the images change knowing that the colors may have been different when Van Gogh originally painted them?

If these questions interest you, you may want to be a **conservator**. A conservator cares for and restores artworks and artifacts to preserve them for future generations. They use research, art historical knowledge, chemistry, and technical art skills to make lots of informed decisions about how to clean and care for artworks



without damaging them or changing them in a way that isn't historically or artistically accurate. Conservators help tell important stories about history. Choices that conservators make can drastically change our perception of the past and reveal much about our present cultural values and perspectives.

## During Your Visit:

The following activities will help engage your students during a visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* and practice their observational, conversational, and critical thinking skills. Several of these prompts were adapted from Harvard's Project Zero Thinking Routine Toolbox (<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>). Unless otherwise stated, these prompts can be used with any picture in the exhibition. Find a space large enough to accommodate your class or group and gather around a picture, so that everyone can see. Challenge students to take 60 seconds of quiet looking at each new picture. Invite students to let their eyes wander over the whole artwork, from corner to corner, top to bottom. If any hands go up before the 60 seconds are over, encourage students to wait to share.

### See, Feel, Think, Wonder

*Curriculum Connections: Visual Arts, English/Language Arts, Social Emotional Learning*

After a minute of quiet looking, ask students to share:

- what they see. (objects, colors, shapes, lines)
- what they feel. (emotions, sensations)
- what they think. (what's going on in the picture, what story might it be telling)
- what they wonder. (questions they have about the picture)

### Outside the Frame

*Curriculum Connections: English/Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts*

After a minute of slow quiet looking, ask students:

- What do you imagine is happening outside of the frame?
- What do you think happened right before this picture? Right after?
- Follow up responses with: What do you see that makes you say that?
- Why might Van Gogh have chosen this particular scene/moment to depict?

These questions may be interpreted literally or in terms of social, historical, or political context. Neither is right or wrong! These are simply prompts to get students looking closely and considering the artwork as part of a larger story.

## Color, Line, Shape

*Curriculum Connections: Visual Arts, Social Emotional Learning*

Van Gogh is famous for his use of bright, vivid colors. He read extensively on the science of color theory and learned that complementary colors placed side by side intensify each other. Find works of art that display his famous use of color. He is also well known for expressive lines and thick strokes of paint laid on with a brush or palette knife. Take one quiet minute to look at a work of art and pay close attention to the colors, lines, and shapes in the painting.

- How do the colors, lines, and shapes in this work of art compare to nature?
- Why do you think Van Gogh used color, line, and shape in this way?
- What emotions do Van Gogh's use of color, line, and shape evoke for you?

## After Your Visit:

I used to think... Now I think...

After reflecting on your visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*, fill in the following sentence:

I used to think \_\_\_\_\_; now I think \_\_\_\_\_.

Share your insights with a partner or small group. Compare and contrast your takeaways from the exhibition.

## STEAM Career Connection: Exhibition Designers

White walls are boring! What wall color would you choose to display your favorite Van Gogh painting? How can you totally immerse people in Van Gogh's artwork? What are other ways you could bring Van Gogh's paintings to life using animation, music, and other technology?

If you are curious about the answers to these questions, you may want to be an **exhibition designer**. Exhibition designers usually work on a team of experts in lighting, construction, wayfinding, writing, research, digital and graphic design, and more. An exhibition design team tells stories about our collective history and culture through the display of art and artifacts. They create engaging physical or digital interactions to inspire and educate audiences. Keep this in mind next time you visit a museum or exhibition. Each wall color, ceiling light, or other element in an exhibition or gallery represents a choice someone - likely an exhibition designer - made. Would you have chosen differently?

## In Your Own Words ... and Pictures

*Curriculum Connections: Math, Science, Social Studies, Visual Arts, Social Emotional Learning*

What did you like about *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*? What would you change about the exhibition? Now it's your turn to tell the story of this famous artist. What story would you like to tell about Vincent Van Gogh? Which parts of his life and work do you find most interesting or most important? Which paintings do you find most beautiful or intriguing?

Create a **scale model** of your own exhibition about Vincent Van Gogh. Will you include art by other artists? Letters or quotes from Van Gogh? Maps and photographs? Digital experiences? Music? Let your creativity flow and show what *you* find most interesting about this famous artist.

Craft a scale model of an exhibition hall and galleries using cardboard or foam board. Print images of the works of art you wish to include. Find the real measurements of the artworks you wish to use online and use this to help you accurately print the artworks to scale. Use this model to map out how you want your exhibition to look, feel, and flow. **Exhibition designers** create scale models of museum galleries to test their ideas before beginning construction and installation on a new exhibition.

There is always the option to tell a story about another artist altogether - do you have a favorite artist that you feel inspired to honor through their own exhibition? Get designing! Tell their story.

## Grades 9-12

### 9-12 Glossary

**Primary Source:** immediate first-hand account of something.

**Realism:** an artistic movement from the 19th century focused on subjects and scenes from everyday life.

**Naturalism:** an artistic movement from the 19th century focused on representing things closer to the way that our eyes perceive them.

**Impressionism:** an artistic movement from the 19th century characterized by small, visible brush strokes and an emphasis on capturing the essence or "impression" of a moment.

**Interpretation:** an explanation of the meaning of an artwork. There are often many different ways to interpret an artwork and a person's interpretation can depend on lots of things, including their background, interests, education, and life experiences.

**Curator:** a professional who manages a collection of artwork or other cultural objects and chooses works to present exhibitions on specific topics or themes.

# Before Your Visit

The following activities will help engage and prepare your students for a visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*.

## In Vincent's Words

*Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Social Emotional Learning, Visual Arts*

**[image of one of Vincent's letters with sketch?]**

Use these prompts to start a conversation with students about Vincent Van Gogh to find out what they already know, think, and feel about this famous figure.

**[Note to teachers: Vincent Van Gogh's life story involves self-harm and suicide and these topics may appear in articles and conversations with your students about the artist and his life.]**

- Who was Vincent Van Gogh?
- What do you know about his life? His art?
- How have you seen Vincent Van Gogh show up in popular culture? In the news?

Now, encourage students to find out more about Van Gogh through research, especially through primary sources, the over 800 handwritten letters that Van Gogh sent during his lifetime: [vangoghletters.org](http://vangoghletters.org)

After some time researching, ask students to reflect on what they've learned about Van Gogh and complete the following:

I used to think \_\_\_\_\_; now I think \_\_\_\_\_.

## What the *ism*?

*Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, Art History, Visual Arts, Social Emotional Learning*

Vincent Van Gogh was inspired by many different artists, contexts, and life circumstances. He is largely considered a post-impressionist, but his work doesn't fall neatly into any one "ism" or movement within art history.

The following are several examples of artists and movements that inspired Van Gogh over his lifetime.

### Realism

Artists like Jean-Francois Millet rejected the idealized imagery of previous artistic movements like Romanticism and were drawn instead to depict real, ordinary people doing everyday things, especially those who were part of the lower classes and had previously been rejected as artistic subjects. Note that realism is not to be confused with naturalism. Naturalism was concerned with portraying the world as visually realistic-looking as

possible, while realism was not as concerned with the visual, but more with the reality and truth of the subject matter.



Jean-Francois Millet, *The Gleaners*, 1857

Can you find a painting by Vincent Van Gogh that seems inspired by Realism? What do you see that makes you say that?

## Impressionism

Artists like Claude Monet became deeply interested in capturing their “impression” of a moment, especially regarding the transient effects of natural light while painting outdoors. The impressionists often used short, thick brushstrokes with minimal color mixing in order to capture the illusion of movement and spontaneity.



Claude Monet, *La Grenouillère*, 1869. Oil on canvas, 29 3/8 x 39 1/4 in. (74.6 x 99.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929, 29.100.112. Image: [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)

Can you find a painting by Vincent Van Gogh that seems inspired by Impressionism? What do you see that makes you say that?

## Ukiyo-e

Ukiyo-e, meaning pictures of the floating world, is a Japanese genre of art from the 17th-19th centuries. Van Gogh was very inspired by the flattened spatial sense, unexpected framing, and flat colors of the woodblock prints and paintings.



Utagawa Hiroshige (Ando) (Japanese, 1797-1858). *Sudden Shower Over Shin-Ohashi Bridge and Atake (Ohashi Atake no Yudachi)*, No. 58 from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 9th month of 1857. Woodblock print, Sheet: 14 3/16 x 9 1/8 in. (36.1 x 23.1 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Anna Ferris, 30.1478.58 (Photo: Brooklyn Museum, 30.1478.58\_PS1.jpg)

Can you find a painting by Vincent Van Gogh that seems inspired by Ukiyo-e? What do you see that makes you say that?

Can you find a Van Gogh painting that shows inspiration from multiple styles? What do you see that makes you say that?

## Truth and Beauty

*Curriculum Connections: Art History, Social Emotional Learning, Visual Arts*

Artists like Van Gogh were not interested in capturing the world as our eyes perceive it. Instead they interpret the world through their own lens of experience and emotion. Use the following prompts to uncover truths that may be hidden within any number of Van Gogh's paintings.

- Can you find beauty in this image?
- Can you find truth in this image?

- How might beauty reveal truth?
- How might beauty conceal truth?
- How might truth reveal beauty?
- How might truth conceal beauty?

In Van Gogh's own words: "Painters understand nature and love it, and teach us to see."

What do you think Van Gogh is "teaching us to see" about nature in his paintings of the natural world?

*[include an image of a landscape painting from the exhibition]*

## During Your Visit

The following activities will help engage your students during a visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* and practice their observational, conversational, and critical thinking skills. Several of these prompts were adapted from Harvard's Project Zero Thinking Routine Toolbox (<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>). Unless otherwise stated, these prompts can be used with any picture in the exhibition. Find a space large enough to accommodate your class or group and gather around a picture, so that everyone can see. Challenge students to take 60 seconds of quiet looking at each new picture. Invite students to let their eyes wander over the whole artwork, from corner to corner, top to bottom. If any hands go up before the 60 seconds are over, encourage students to wait to share.

## Creative Titles

Take one minute to quietly look at a work of art. Scan the image from corner to corner, top to bottom. Pay close attention to color, texture, and line. Notice if any emotions come up.

What title would you give this artwork? Why?

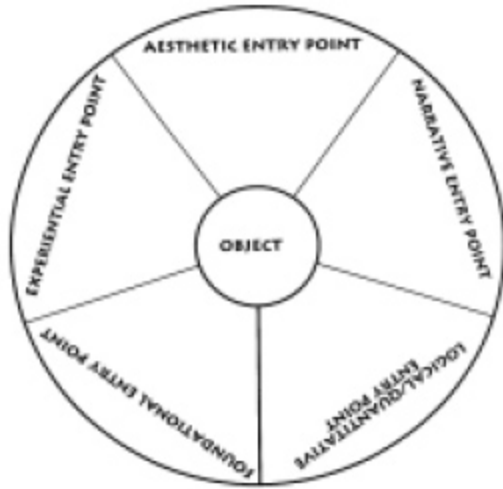
Use creative adjectives to make a descriptive title.

Can you think of a title that tells a story?

Share your titles with your classmates. Which title do you find most creative? Most surprising?

## Entry Points

There are lots of different ways to **interpret** artwork. In the diagram below, think of each entry point as a window through which to view the artwork. Try looking through each of these windows with one artwork and notice how many ways you can connect with one painting. Which entry point do you enjoy the most? Does it differ from painting to painting?



(image from: <https://www.museum-ed.org/looking-at-art/>)

**Aesthetic Entry Point:** Observe and respond to the formal elements (lines, shapes, colors, textures, composition, pattern) of the work of art. Notice how these elements interact with one another in the work of art and how they differ from painting to painting.

**Narrative Entry Point:** What’s going on in the picture? Is there a story? What is it? Who are the characters? Where is it set? What might it feel like physically and emotionally to be inside the painting?

**Logical Entry Point:** What is the history of the creation of this work of art? What went into the making of the object? What were the decisions and situations in the artist’s life that led to this work of art?

**Foundational Entry Point:** Consider the broader philosophical issues or concepts related to this work of art. What makes this a work of art? What is the significance of this artwork now/at the time it was created? Who should care about this work of art and why?

**Experiential Entry Point:** Engage your hands in the experience of creating based on the work of art. If sketching materials are available, sketch the lines and contours of the painting. If not, use your finger to trace in the air. Respond to the experience of engaging with the art in this way.

## Immersive Gallery Investigation

*Curriculum Connections: Media Arts, Visual Art*

Compare and contrast your experience viewing the paintings on the wall and viewing Van Gogh’s artwork in the immersive gallery.

Think about a work of art that you love - it could be a photograph, a painting, an album cover, a book, or even a song. Describe how you would reimagine this work of art in a different medium.



## After Your Visit

The following activities will keep the engagement and learning going after a visit to *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*.

### Know Thy Self-Portraits

‘People say – and I’m quite willing to believe it – that it’s difficult to know oneself – but it’s not easy to paint oneself either.’ – Vincent Van Gogh



Vincent van Gogh, Selfportrait with Bandaged Ear, 1889. The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London



Vincent van Gogh, Self-Portrait, 1887

Van Gogh painted over 35 self-portraits during his lifetime. Take a look at these self portraits or look for more online. Pay close attention to color, line, shape, texture, and symbols. What does each self portrait tell you about Van Gogh’s personality? His emotions? His values? His worldview? What elements do you see that make you say that?

How would you like to be seen? Create your own self-portrait. Use these prompts to help compose your self-portrait, if they are helpful.

- Choose colors that you feel best represent or capture the essence of your personality or emotions.
- Choose lines and textures that you feel best represent or capture the essence of your personality or emotions.
- Choose a symbol that you feel best represents or captures the essence of your personality, values, or worldview.

## Life is Art

Inspired by the artistic movement of Realism, and his own life experience of poverty and working low-paying jobs, Van Gogh was very interested in portraying the reality of the working class in his artwork. Now these works of art hang in elite museums, institutions, and homes of wealthy patrons around the world. What does it mean for artwork to portray everyday scenes of everyday people, especially those who are marginalized in our society? Has Van Gogh avoided stereotypes in his artwork? How so?



*The Potato Eaters*, Vincent van Gogh, 1885, Oil on Canvas, Kröller-Müller Museum



*A Pair of Shoes*, Vincent Van Gogh, 1888, Oil on Canvas

What is an everyday scene, person, or topic that you care deeply about? Is there a topic that you wish more people cared about or saw? Van Gogh chose to highlight the lives of working class people through artmaking. How would you like to honor a person or topic that you care deeply about?

You could create a drawing, painting, story, poem, or something else.

How is your style similar or different from Van Gogh's? Than your classmates'?

How does your writing or artmaking style express your way of seeing the world?

## STEAM Career Connection: Curator

How come Van Gogh is so famous? Why should we care about him and his artwork? Why is he still such an iconic figure?

If you have thoughts on these questions, you may want to be a **curator**. Curators study, research, and tell stories about our collective history and culture through the display of art and artifacts. They make decisions about who and what are important and tell those stories in ways that engage broad audiences.

Why do you think it might be important for society to have curators from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds?

Write a pitch for an artist (visual artist, writer, musician, etc.) who you think deserves to have an exhibition about them! Why should we care about this artist? How are they important to our collective culture?