

VINCENT: THE MAN AND HIS WORK

Van Gogh Museum
Amsterdam

FROM DARK INTO LIGHT

Vincent van Gogh is world-famous. But why? Do the 11 exercises, become an expert, and decide for yourself.

VINCENT IN FACTS

FIRST FLOOR

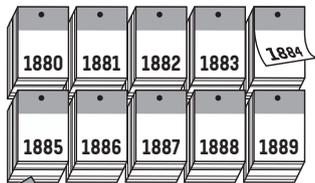
Start on the first floor. Find a quiet spot and get up to speed with nine facts about the man and his work.



Star sign: Taurus.



Often love-struck, never married.



10 YEARS

Vincent was an artist for ten years: from 27 to 37 years old.

800 LETTERS

We know of more than 800 letters by Vincent. Most of them were to his brother, Theo, about everything on his mind:

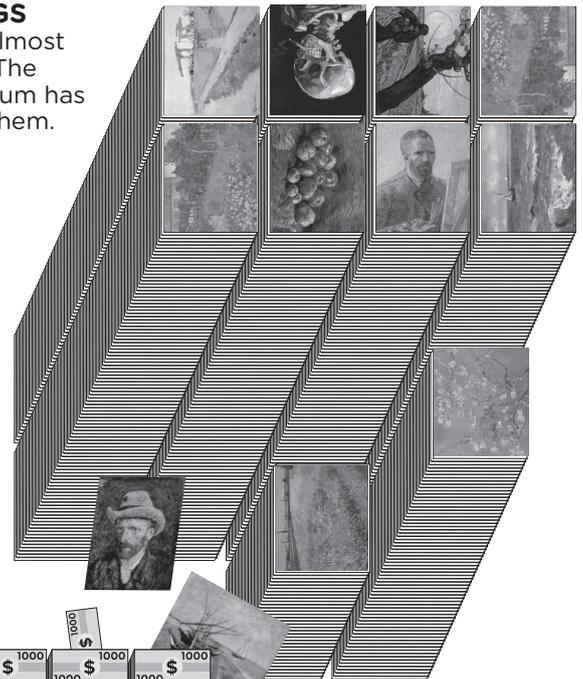
religion, art, literature, money, family issues, existential questions and love.

VINCENT'S MISSION:

To make art that moves people.

900 PAINTINGS

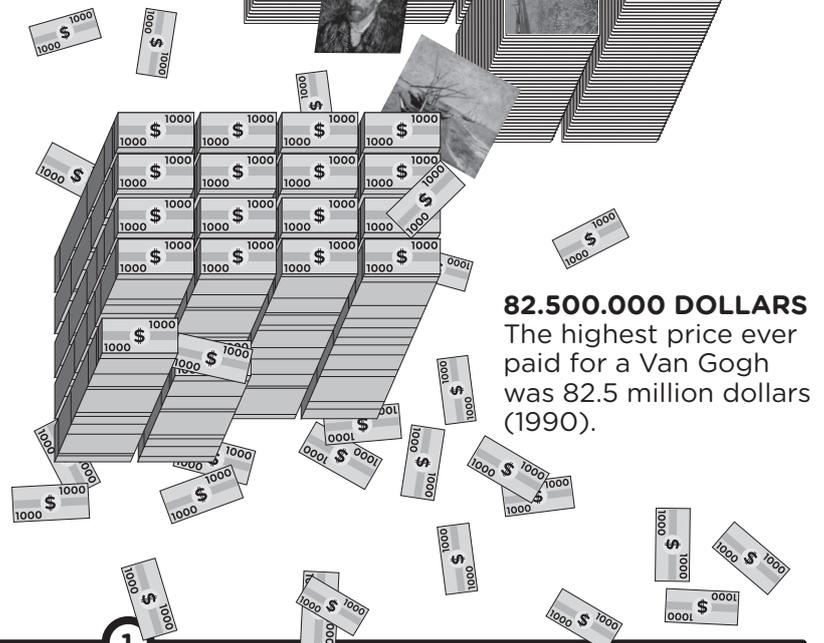
Vincent made almost 900 paintings. The Van Gogh Museum has almost 200 of them.



4 COUNTRIES

Vincent lived in four countries: the Netherlands, England, Belgium and France.

Favourite music: Wagner.



82.500.000 DOLLARS

The highest price ever paid for a Van Gogh was 82.5 million dollars (1990).

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

FIRST FLOOR

Find the gallery with the dark paintings that Vincent made in the Netherlands. The paintings in this gallery are about farming life. Vincent wanted to show hard-working people. He had respect for them. And he wasn't the only one. There are also paintings by other artists in this room.

1. Choose a painting by Vincent and one by someone else:

A. What are the two biggest differences in your view?

1

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2

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B. What do you think the painters can learn from each other?

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Style

Vincent liked to use *complementary colours*. These are colours that, when used next to each other, make each other brighter and more radiant. Yellow and lilac, red and green, and orange and blue do this. Vincent even used them in his dark paintings. You can see it if you look carefully.

CHEATING ALLOWED

Vincent moved to Antwerp to learn more about painting. Exit the gallery of Dutch paintings and do exercise 2.

2. Find the painting which includes the parts in this heap. Make a meme to go with it.



DID YOU KNOW...

... that this work was a rebellious joke by Vincent? He painted it at the art academy in Antwerp, where he attended lessons for a while. The academy was terribly serious. He pushed back against that.

Stay on the first floor and find the gallery with the paintings Vincent made in Paris.

Style Vincent borrowed his famous brushstrokes - the dots and dashes - from the French Impressionists in Paris. Can you see what else Vincent took on from his French peers?

3. Vincent didn't fill his days in Paris just with painting. He also went to cafés with his friends. There, they talked about the latest developments in art. What do you see of café culture in his work?

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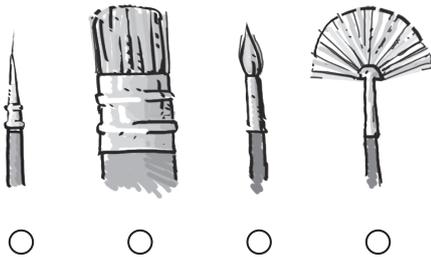
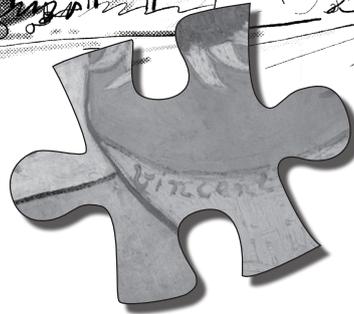
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**BOLD
COLOURS**



After two years in Paris, Vincent moved to the South of France. There, he saw landscapes with bright colours and painted many famous works.



4. Find the painting which includes this detail.

A. Have a closer look. Which of these brushes do you think he used the most?

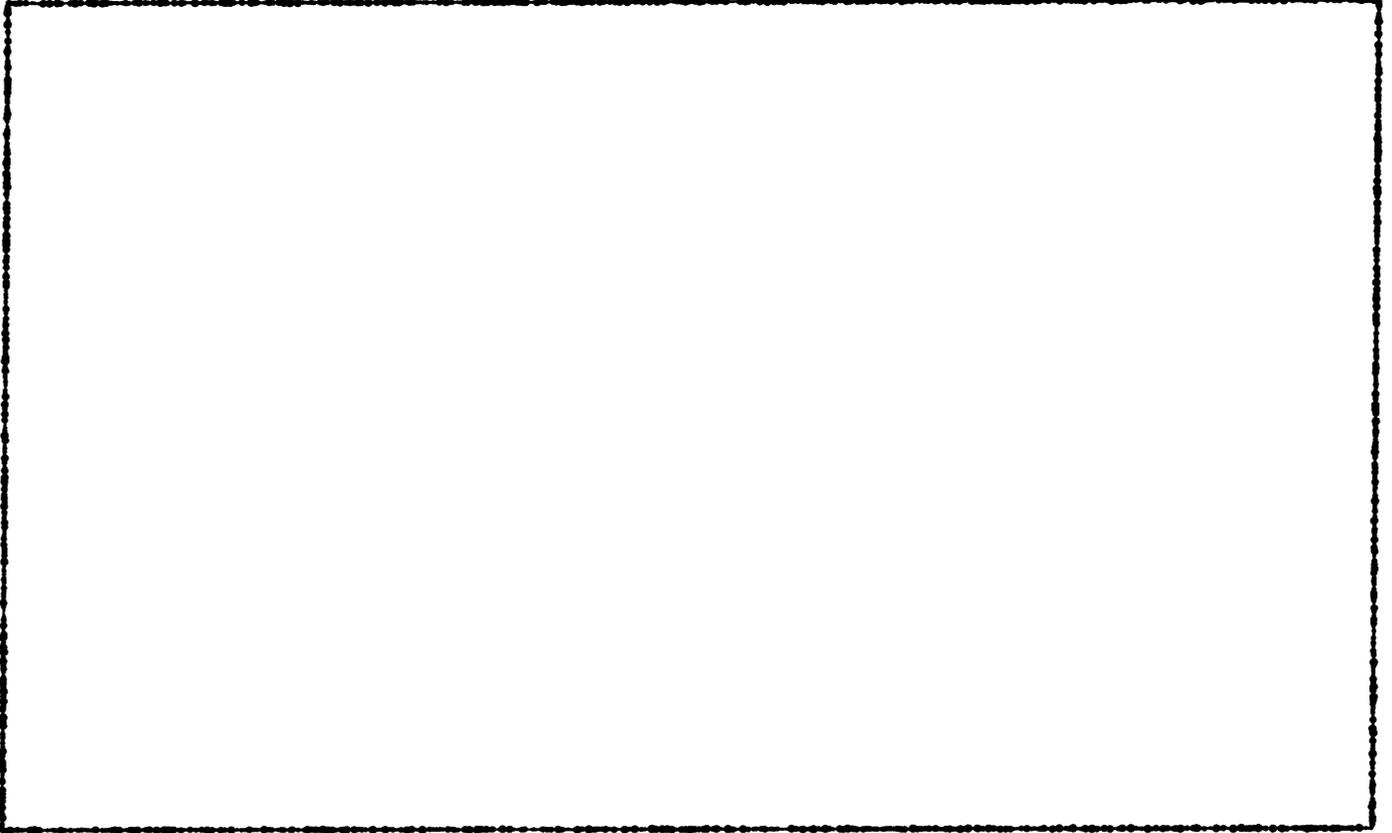
B. Which colour contrast did Vincent use? Tick the box.

- Purple and yellow
- Red and green
- Blue and orange

DID YOU

KNOW... ... that this is one of Vincent's most famous works? It was deeply modern for its time. The flat planes, simple shapes, bright colours, bold outlines and lack of shadows were revolutionary.

5. Vincent seems to tell stories with his paintings. That's what you're going to do. Have a look around the gallery of works made in the South of France. Choose a painting to make into a story or comic strip. Choose a quiet spot and write your mini-tale with Vincent's work as the opening scene. NB: it doesn't have to be about him.



Style Vincent loved Japanese prints. He found them so beautiful that he used aspects of them in his own work. The bold outlines, for example, along with bright colour fields and no shadows. You can see this clearly in the gallery of paintings from the South of France.



All the exercises done for this floor? Go to the third floor. Start in the gallery with paintings made by Vincent in Saint-Rémy.

Ear

You've probably heard that Vincent

cut his left ear off. That's correct. Not a little bit, but the whole lot. He did it after the tension got too much between him and his flatmate and artist friend, Paul Gauguin. Vincent was sick. Afraid of more episodes, he committed himself to an institution. He stayed there a year. Despite his illness, he painted 150 works there. The paintings in this gallery were made at the institution.

THIRD FLOOR

6. Everybody has feelings. Vincent's work appeals to these for many people. That's special. One painting might make people happy and another calm. It was the same for Vincent.

A. Choose a painting and select the feeling that you think fits it best.

- Sad Calm Annoyed Angry Happy Afraid
- Proud Lonely In love Vulnerable

B. Describe briefly why this feeling fits the painting.

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C. What did Vincent do to reinforce the atmosphere of the painting? Cross out the answers that don't apply.

- Extra dark/extra bright colours
- Many/not many different colours
- Lots of/not much contrast between dark and light
- Brushstrokes in all directions/in one direction

D. What music do you think would fit well with the atmosphere of this work?

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Go to Vincent's last works on the other side of the third floor. He made them in the village of Auvers, near Paris. You can see from these landscapes that he really loved nature.

7. Choose the loveliest and the ugliest paintings in this room. What makes one beautiful and the other ugly? Note your answer here.

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Go to the ground floor for the final questions. If you would like to know more about Vincent's working methods, letters or social life, you can stop off on your way for a look around the second floor.

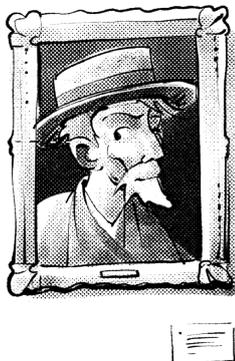
UPS AND DOWNS



GROUND FLOOR

Walk to the gallery filled with Vincent's self-portraits. Some people get the feeling that he watches you from his portraits, wherever you are in the room. Do you get that too? Give it a go.

LOOK AT ME!



8. Choose a self-portrait and look Vincent in the eye. Look carefully. How do you think he was feeling? You can tick more than one answer.

- Happy
- Miserable
- Tough
- Proud
- Insecure
- Sad
- Stressed
- Tired
- Angry
- Self-confident
- Important

9. Vincent made self-portraits largely to practise techniques and colour combinations without going to the expense of a model. You probably make selfies. What makes a selfie successful, in your opinion?

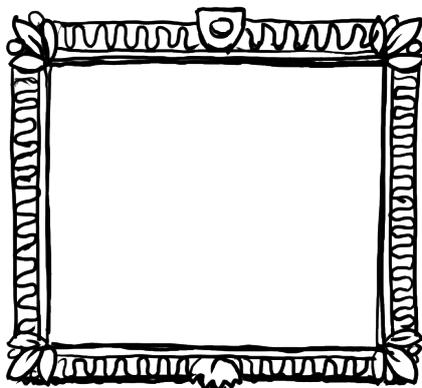
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10. What do you see in Vincent's paintings that reminds you of your own selfies?

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11. Do you notice that the self-portraits are in different styles? Look at the colours and brushstrokes.



A. Now choose a portrait in a style which differs from question 1. Draw the brushstrokes in the frame.

B. Now connect the words below to the portraits they match.

- Narrow dashes
- Brushstrokes in one direction
- Lots of different colours
- Thick paint
- Dots
- Dark colours
- Not many different colours
- Light colours
- Thin paint
- Fat lines
- Bright colours
- Brushstrokes in every direction

PORTRAIT 1

PORTRAIT 2

C. Can you see which portrait was painted first? Take note of the years and locations given for portraits 1 and 2.

Done! You're now a Van Gogh expert. If you've got time left over, feel free to take a look around and pick out your favourite painting.

DID YOU KNOW...

...that Vincent made nearly 40 self-portraits? He messed around endlessly with his look, but his expression was always serious. That was nothing to do with his mood - it was normal in the 19th century. Lots of people had bad teeth, so smiling for a painting wasn't the done thing.