



March 12-14, 1998

# A Study of Van Gogh's "The Starry Night"

**Grade Level:** 7th Grade

**Presented by:** Kitty Peters, Dot Brown, Miller Core Knowledge Magnet Middle School, Macon, GA

**Length of Unit:** 1 Week

## I. ABSTRACT

Vincent Van Gogh was a Dutch painter who lived during the latter part of the 19th Century. While short, his life spanned the European shift into the modern world through the industrial revolution, and his prolific artistic output chronicles his reactions to the people and places of his time. His unique vision of the world expressed in his drawings and paintings provide a window both into the world of the 19th century and into the mind of the artist.

The 7th grade students will look at a reproduction of "The Starry Night" painted in 1889. The discussion will begin with the description of the painting itself including: (1) use of color, (2) line, (3) form, (4) subject matter. An interpretive discussion will follow in which the historical context of the painting will be discussed. This will culminate in a written critique.

Students will later make a painting of their own, using techniques and ideas from the critical discussion.

## **II. OVERVIEW**

A. The painting "Starry Night" will be displayed and discussed.

B. The life of the artist Vincent Van Gogh will be discussed, chronology will be provided, and supporting materials, such as other reproductions of art work will be displayed.

C. The principles and elements of design such as color, line, form, balance, movement, and space will be explored.

## **III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE**

A. Life of Van Gogh

B. Time line of 19th and 20th Century painting, primarily Impressionism and Postimpressionism.

C. Elements and Principals of Design.

## **IV. RESOURCES**

A. Reproductions of Van Gogh's Work.

B. Reproductions of other Post Impressionists, i.e.

Toulouse Lautrec, Cezanne, Gauguin

C. Reproductions of Japanese Prints, i.e. Hokusai

D. Reproductions of Early Dutch landscape.

## **V. LESSONS**

### **A. Lessons One - Five (or Days One - Five): A Critical View of The Starry Night by Vincent Van Gogh**

#### **1. Objective/Goal:**

The student will write an observational description of the painting including:

- a. Use of color, line form.
- b. Use of movement, balance, space.
- c. Subject matter.
- d. Historical context.
- e. Facts about the artist's life.

#### **2. Materials**

- a. Reproductions of "The Starry Night" by Vincent Van Gogh
- b. Video of artist's life.

- c. Chronological handouts.
- d. Reproductions of contemporary artists' work, i.e. Gauguin, Hokusai, Lautrec.

### **3. Prior Knowledge for Students**

- a. Time line of European art history, especially painting.
- b. Elements and principles of design.

### **4. Key Vocabulary**

- a. Post Impressionism
- b. Impressionism
- c. Oil Paint
- d. Asylum
- e. Wood Cut
- f. Landscape

### **5. Procedures/Activities**

- a. Write descriptive phrases.
- b. Write subject matter ideas.
- c. Discuss weather patterns and relate it to science.
- d. Discuss historical context and relate it to social studies.

### **6. Evaluation/Assessment**

Students will be evaluated for description and criticism.

## **VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY**

Students will produce a watercolor painting in the style of Van Gogh using:

- a. Time of day.
- b. Weather patterns (storm, wind, calm).
- c. Place - (forest, urban, rural).

## **VII. HANDOUTS/STUDENT WORKSHEETS**

A. Chronology of Van Gogh's life relating his time to other events of 19th Century.

B. Critique Form.

## **VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

A. Various books on Van Gogh

B. Text Books

1. Mitter, G., & Ragans, R. Understanding Art. Mission Hills, California: Glencoe, 1992. ISBN 0-02-662286-6.

## 2. Exploring Earth's Weather Activity Book.

Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994.

ISBN 0-13-400-755-7.

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