4 Vincent van Gogh

1. ✓ How many famous painters' names can you think of?
✓ Where are they from? Can you name some of their works?

You can browse through the internet and try to find as many famous painters' names as you can.

2. You are going to watch a video and listen to a song called "Starry-starry Night" by Don Mc Lean. Before listening, read the lyrics of the song and match the underlined phrases with the relevant Van Gogh painting. Then watch the video and put the stanzas in the correct order.

( )

Starry, starry night.
Flaming flowers[1] that brightly blaze,
Swirling clouds[2] in violet haze,
Reflect in Vincent's eyes of china blue.
Colors changing hue,
morning field of amber grain[3],
Weathered faces lined in pain[4],
Are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand.

( ) ( )

For they could not love you,
But still your love was true.
And when no hope was left in sight
On that starry, starry night,
You took your life, as lovers often do.
But I could have told you, Vincent,
This world was never meant
for one as beautiful as you.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

( )

Now I understand
what you tried to say to me
and how you suffered for your sanity
and how you tried to set them free
they would not listen they did not know how
perhaps they'll listen now.

( )

Starry, starry night.
Portraits hung in empty halls,
Frameless heads[5] on nameless walls,
With eyes that watch the world and can't forget.
Like the strangers that you've met,
The ragged men in the ragged clothes,
The silver thorn of bloody rose[6],
Lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow.

( )

Shadows on the hills,
Sketch the trees and the daffodils[7],
Catch the breeze and the winter chills[8],
In colors on the snowy linen land[9].

( ) ( )

Now I think I know what you tried to say to me,
How you suffered for your sanity,
How you tried to set them free.
They would not listen, they're not listening still.
Perhaps they never will...

( ) ( )

Starry, starry night.
Paint your palette[10] blue and grey,
Look out on a summer's day,
With eyes that know the darkness in my soul.

↓

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dipFMJckZOM *or with lyrics* www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxHnRfhDmrk

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3. Work with a partner. Together, you will try to fill in the blanks, correct the wrong words or strike out the extra words. Organise your work before you listen.

Starry starry night
..... your pallette blue and grey
look out on a summer's day
with eyes that know the darkness in my *bowl*
Shadows on the hills and cliffs
..... the trees and the daffodils
catch the breeze and the winter *drills*
in colours on the ..... linen land.

Now I understand
what you tried to say to me yesterday
and how you suffered for your *vanity*
and how you tried to ..... them free
they would not listen they did not know how
perhaps they'll *fasten* now.

Starry starry night sky
Flaming flowers that brightly .....
swirling clouds in violet *days*
reflect in Vincent's eyes of china blue
colours ..... hue
morning fields of amber grain
weathered faces lined in *rain*
are soothed beneath the artist's loving *band*.

Now I understand well
what you tried to say to me
and how you suffered for your sanity
and how you tried to set them free
they would not listen
they did not know how to listen
perhaps they'll listen now and forever.

For they ..... not love you
but still your love was true
and when no hope was left beside
on that starry starry night
You took your life as lovers often do
But I ..... have told you, Vincent,
this world was never meant for one
as *dutiful* as you are.

Starry starry night
..... hung in empty halls
frameless heads on nameless *dolls*
with eyes that watch the world and can't forget them
like the strangers that you've met
The ragged men in ragged clothes
a silver thorn a ..... rose
lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow.

Now I think I know very well
what you tried to say to me
and how you suffered for your sanity
and how you tried to set them *tree*
they would now listen
they're not listening still
..... they never will.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

4. Now read the following questions, discuss them in your groups and then write the answers.

1. Do you think that the song reflects Van Gogh's attitude and feelings? If so, mention specific verses.
2. How does this song make you feel?
3. Write up to 5 sentences giving facts about Van Gogh's life, based on the song.

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

5. Browse the following sites and choose 4 or 5 paintings you like most. Spend some time observing these paintings and write down how each one makes you feel. Finally, note down the following information about these paintings.

http://www.googleartproject.com (Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam) www.vangoghmuseum.nl

- Title: .....
- Type of painting: .....
- Height: ..... cm Width: ..... cm
- Year it was painted: .....
- Viewing notes: .....

.....

.....

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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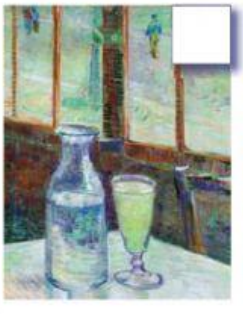
6. Match the following paintings with the viewing notes.



1. In the 19th century, absinth was a popular drink with many, including artists like van Gogh. This still life shows a soltary glass of absinth on a café table and a bottle of water. Van Gogh combines this with a view through the window. The chosen vantage point makes it feel as though you are yourself sitting at the cafe table where the painter sat.

2. After months of observing the local peasants' daily routines, van Gogh depicted a family gathered around the table for a modest dinner of the potatoes grown in their own garden. He chose his colors purposefully to connect his sitters with the earth that sustained them. The stark interior, their rough hands, and weather-beaten faces were the legacy of their life of labor. Neither sentimental nor romantic, The Potato Eaters expressed the compassionate sincerity of Vincent's aims in art.

3. Van Gogh returned to his earlier panoramic approach to depict the first harvest of the year in The Harvest, which he painted in 1888. His deliberate approach to spatial organization -- the crops in the foreground, the fields above, and the mountains on the high horizon -- reveals his desire to attain some epic grandeur.

4. Vincent van Gogh's Sprig of Flowering Almond Blossom in a Glass is an oil on canvas. He painted a sprig of an almond branch, which he forced into early flowering in a glass of water. The irregular pattern of the little branch, covered with pale, translucent blooms, gave him a subject that recalled the depiction of flowers in Japanese prints. The simple division of the silvery, violet background with a scarlet band pays tribute to the Japanese aesthetic.

5. Location in the artwork: Paris, France On his trips to the areas around Paris, van Gogh often painted outdoors. This view of the Seine river was also made outside. Quite untypically, van Gogh did not complete this work.

6. When van Gogh arrived in Arles in the south of France from Paris, he was immediately inspired by the vast landscape. He painted this simple farmhouse in a cornfield there and then, partly in thick brushstrokes and partly using little stipples. Van Gogh made a sketch of this landscape in a letter to his brother Theo.

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7. Read Vincent Van Gogh's biography and in pairs, answer the questions that follow.

Year of Birth : 1853 **Death Year : 1890** **Country of Origin : Netherlands**

Vincent van Gogh was born in Zundert, Holland. The son of a pastor, was brought up in a religious and cultured atmosphere, a profession that Vincent found appealing and to which he would be drawn to a certain extent later in his life. His sister described him as a serious and introspective child, highly emotional and lacking self-confidence.

At age 16 Vincent started to work for an art dealer in The Hague. His four years younger brother Theo, with whom Vincent cherished a life-long friendship, would join the company later. This friendship is amply documented in a vast amount of letters they sent each other. They provide a lot of insight into the life of the painter, and show him to be a talented writer with a keen mind. Theo would support Vincent financially throughout his life.

In 1880, Vincent van Gogh followed his brother Theo's suggestion and took up painting in earnest. For a brief period Vincent took painting lessons from Anton Mauve in Hague. Although Vincent and Anton soon split over divergence of artistic views, influences of the Hague School of painting would remain in Vincent's work, notably in the way he played with light and in the looseness of his brush strokes. However his usage of colours, favouring dark tones, set him apart from his teacher.

In spring 1886 Vincent van Gogh went to Paris, where he moved in with his brother Theo; they shared a house on Montmartre. Here he met the painters Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, Bernard, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Paul Gauguin. He discovered impressionism and liked its use of light and color, more than its lack of social engagement (as he saw it). Especially the technique known as pointillism (where many small dots are applied to the canvas that blend into rich colors only in the eye of the beholder, seeing it from a distance) made its mark on Van Gogh's own style. It should be noted that Van Gogh is regarded as a post-impressionist, rather than an impressionist, meaning that the artist uses color and lines to express an emotional response to the subject rather than to describing it accurately.

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Vincent was an unstable and volatile man, well known as the 'tortured artist'. His nervous temperament made him a difficult companion and night-long discussions combined with painting all day undermined his health. He decided to go south to Arles where he hoped his friends would join him and help found a school of art. Gauguin did join him but with disastrous results. Near the end of 1888, an incident led Gauguin to ultimately leave Arles, after a number of arguments with Vincent. Van Gogh pursued him with an open razor, was stopped by Gauguin, but ended up cutting a portion of his own ear lobe off.

Van Gogh then began to alternate between fits of madness and lucidity and was sent to the asylum in Saint-Remy suffering with depression. He spent much time in the asylum, though it was later believed that he suffered from epilepsy. While there he painted some 150 paintings. His most famous work The Starry Night was painted while staying in the asylum.The only painting he sold during his lifetime, 'The Red Vineyard', was created in 1888. In May 1890 Vincent van Gogh left the clinic and went to the physician Paul Gachet, in Auvers-sur-Oise near Paris, where he was closer to Theo, who had recently married. Here van Gogh created the portrait of the melancholic "Dr. Gachet". In two months Van Gogh was averaging one painting per day.

His depression aggravated. On July 27 of the same year, at the age of 37, after a fit of painting activity, van Gogh shot himself in the chest. He died two days later, with Theo at his side, who reported his last words as "The sadness will last forever". He was buried at the cemetery of Auvers-sur-Oise; Theo unable to come to terms with his brother's death died 6 months later and was buried next to him.

In a short period of ten years Van Gogh made approximately 900 paintings. Van Gogh's finest works were produced in less than three years in a technique that grew more and more impassioned in brushstroke, in symbolic and intense color, in surface tension, and in the movement and vibration of form and line. Dramatic, lyrically rhythmic, imaginative, and emotional, for the artist was completely absorbed in the effort to explain either his struggle against madness or his comprehension of the spiritual essence of man and nature.

Van Gogh's influence on expressionism, fauvism and early abstraction was enormous, and can be seen in many other aspects of 20th-century art. Vincent's brother's wife collected Vincent's paintings and letters after his death and dedicated herself to getting his work the recognition it deserved. It would not take long before his fame grew higher and higher. Today, several paintings by Van Gogh rank among the most expensive paintings in the world. On March 30, 1987 Van Gogh's painting "Irises" was sold for a record $53.9 million at Southeby's, New York. His Portrait of Doctor Gachet was sold for $82.5 million at Christie's, thus establishing a new price record.

As mentioned earlier, Vincent van Gogh was also a passionate letter writer. Of the countless letters he wrote to his friends and family more than 800 have been preserved, as well as approximately 80 letters that he received. In one of his letters, he supports that " There are so many people, especially among our pals, who imagine that words are nothing. On the contrary, don't you think, it's as interesting and as difficult to say a thing well as to paint a thing."Van Gogh to Emile Bernard,19 April 1888.

http://www.vincentvangoghart.net/ www.vangoghgallery.com/misc/bio.html

LIVEWORKSHEETS

A. Put the events in Van Gogh's life in chronological order.

..... Vincent moves to Paris sharing a house with his brother Theo.
..... He shoots himself in the chest and dies two days later.
..... Vincent starts to work for an art dealer in Hague.
..... A portion of his ear lobe was cut off after an incident with Gauguin.
..... He takes up painting after his brother's suggestion.
..... He was sent to an asylum in Saint Remy for treatment.
..... He discovers and appreciates impressionist artists.

B. Which statements about Van Gogh are true? Put a tick in the boxes.

a. He was influenced by his father's profession. ☐
b. He was able to make his own money from his paintings. ☐
c. He is not considered to be an impressionist artist. ☐
d. He was close friends with Paul Gauguin, another famous artist. ☐
e. He produced a lot of paintings when he was at the asylum. ☐
f. He managed to sell most of his paintings at high prices. ☐

C. Read the Biography again and find the answer to the following questions.

- What was Vincent's character like?

  .....

- What events influenced Vincent's artistic style?

  .....

- What are the main characteristics of his artwork?

  .....

- Using his last phrase "The sadness will last forever", try to explain the reason why he killed himself.

  .....

- What do you know about "The Portrait of Dr Gachet"?

  .....

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D. Now watch the video "Van Gogh - In His Own Words" on youtube (**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hXMuK5NQEA**).

Single out, note down and discuss two points in Van Gogh's biography or personality which appealed to you most.

.....

.....

.....

.....

E. a. Vincent Van Gogh painted a large number of self-portraits. Watch the following video:

http://videos.howstuffworks.com/discovery/29887-assignment-discovery-van-gogh-video.htm

Some of these portraits appear below.
Compare them in groups and write two similarities and two differences.

.....

.....

.....

.....

b. Write a caption below each portrait and then choose your group's favourite, explaining why.

....

LIVEWORKSHEETS