The troubled life of Vincent Van Gogh

1. Warm up

Vincent Van Gogh was a Dutch post-impressionist painter and one of the most important artists of the 20th century. Though he produced beautiful artwork, he was often sorrowful and depressed due to his mental illness.

1. What do you know about Van Gogh?
2. Which of his paintings are you familiar with?
3. How would you describe his paintings?

2. *Van Gogh created over 2,000 pieces of art during his lifetime. He painted a variety of subjects: landscapes, still lifes, portraits, or self-portraits.*

How would you define each of these painting genres?

_____- the depiction of natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, and forests

_____- a representation of an artist that is drawn, painted, photographed, or sculpted by that artist

_____- a work of art depicting mostly inanimate subject matter, typically commonplace objects which are either natural or man-made

- a painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression are predominant

3. Watch the video about Van Gogh's life and discuss the questions:

Vincent van Gogh's long, miserable road to fame

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Did you learn anything new about Van Gogh from the video?
What surprised you the most?

4. Are these statements true or false?

1. Van Gogh died from a gunshot wound.
2. Van Gogh was very rich.
3. Van Gogh wrote letters to his brother.
4. At one time Van Gogh lived in Spain.
5. Van Gogh had many different jobs.

5. Match these words from the video with their definitions:

1. Wanderlust	a) Described in an idealized or unrealistic fashion.
2. Reputation	b) Intense and passionate feeling.
3. Influential	c) The beliefs or opinions that are held about someone or smth.
4. Fervour	d) A twisting movement or course.
5. Flourish	e) A strong desire to travel.
6. Romanticised	f) To grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way.
7. Tumultuous	g) Having great influence on someone or something.
8. Asylum	h) Excited, confused, or disorderly.
9. Winding	i) An institution for the care of people who are mentally ill

6. Fill in the blanks with the correct words:

wanderlust / reputation / influential / fervour / flourish

1. By 1886, in Paris, you can see his skills_____, influenced by impressionism.
2. He quit working at a school to pursue his religious_____.
3. Van Gogh had a_____for failure.
4. Van Gogh lived thirty-seven years of poverty and_____.
5. He left behind some of the most_____artistic works of his generation.

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7. Continue to match the words to the correct sentences:

romanticised / tumultuous / asylum /winding

6. His life took a_____path.

7. It was during these_____years he created his most famous paintings.

8. He was the_____idea of a struggling starving artist.

9. He finally entered an_____in Saint Rémy during May 1889.

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8. Fill in the blanks below using the vocabulary we have been learning.

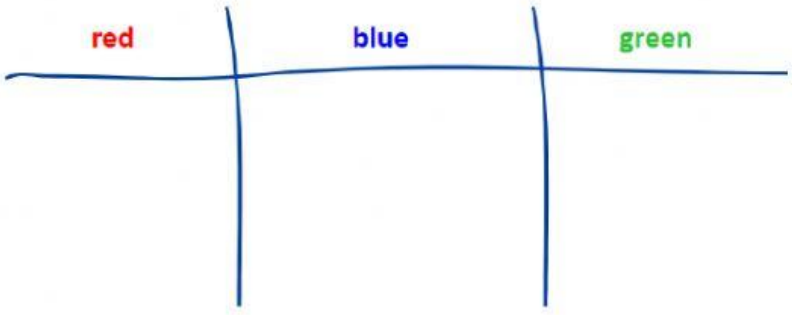
Yellow, **blue**, and **red** are primary colors. You can make other colors by combining them. **Pastel** colors are pale shades of color – pink, mauve (pale purple) and baby blue, for example.
The opposite of pastels are **strong** colors.
Harsh colors are colors that are unpleasantly strong.
Vivid colors are strong, bright colors like **scarlet** or turquoise.
Fluorescent colors are very bright colors that are so saturated that they seem to glow in the dark.
Electric blues or greens are extremely bright blues or greens.
If white has a **tinge** of green, there is a very slight shade of green in it. If something is **monochrome**, it uses only one color or hue.
The suffixes **-y** and **-ish** show that a color is partly present, e.g. bluey green, reddish brown.

9. Check how well you know colors by choosing the correct answer:

1. Which of the following colors is pastel?
   a) beige b) scarlet c) yellow
2. Which of the following colors is primary?
   a) turquoise b) green c) red
3. If a woman says that the color of an eyeshadow palette is harsh, what does she think of it?
   a) 'I love it! Shut up and take my money!' b) 'I don't like it. It doesn't go well with my skin tone.'
4. Which is the closest synonym of a bright red material?
   a) a reddish material b) a material with a tinge of red c) a vivid material

10. Read the scenario and make a sentence using a phrase from the list of phrases we discussed earlier to give your opinion:

ruby / jade / sapphire / scarlet / lime / navy / turquoise / crimson / coral / emerald



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11. GRAMMAR TIME!

Now we will look at some grammar, whilst also learning some more about Van Gogh's life. We are going to be looking at active and passive tense.

e.g. Experts describe Van Gogh's letters to his brother as having a 'diary-like intimacy'.
e.g. Van Gogh's letters to his brother are described as having a 'diary-like intimacy'.

In the first sentence, the subject performing the action is emphasised. 'The Experts' are performing the action of the sentence.

However, the second sentence uses passive voice. Passive voice is used to show interest in the subject that experiences an action. In this sentence it is 'the letters'.

Here's another example:
e.g. Vincent painted the picture. => The picture was painted by Vincent.

12. There are a few reasons to use passive

voice. #1: The object of the verb is more

important.
Living with Vincent was almost unbearable.
instead of
Theo found living with Vincent to be almost unbearable.

#2: We don't know who the subject is.
After severing his ear, Van Gogh was found unconscious and taken to hospital.
instead of
After severing his ear, someone found Van Gogh unconscious and took him to hospital.

#3: The subject is obvious so you don't need to say it.
Van Gogh's artwork is found to be impressive.
instead of
People find Van Gogh's artwork to be impressive.

13. Now it's your turn. See if you can change these sentences about Van Gogh into passive tense.

1. Van Gogh painted 'The Starry Night' in 1889.

2. His brother, Theo Van Gogh, provided him with financial and emotional support. (Make 'Financial and emotional support' the object of the verb 'provided').

3. His mother gave birth to Van Gogh in the Netherlands. (Make 'Van Gogh' into the object of the sentence).

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4. Impressionism and post-impressionism movements in France influenced his work.

5. Felix Rey, his doctor in Arles, first blamed his mental condition on his lifestyle with too much alcohol, coffee, tobacco and poor food.('His mental condition' should be the object of the verb 'blamed').

6. When the episodes returned, Rey further suggested epilepsy as the cause. ('Epilepsy' should be the object of the verb 'suggested').

7. Art historians believe that Van Gogh suffered from at least three episodes with psychotic symptoms.

('Art historians' need not be mentioned).

14. Read and discuss:

As we know, Van Gogh eventually succumbed to his mental illness and died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. He achieved no commercial success during his life, and it was not until after his death that he became famous. Today his paintings are some of the most expensive in the world, and his work is widely known.

Why do you think creative people often suffer from mental illnesses? Are creativity and mental illnesses somehow associated?
Do you think Van Gogh deserves to be considered as a great artist?
How do you think Van Gogh would feel about being remembered as a great artist?

15. Let's take a look at a couple of Van Gogh's paintings.Can you believe both of these paintings are by the same artist? They are very different. How would you describe these paintings?





What are the subjects of these paintings?
Which painting uses more realistic colors? How would you describe the colors in the paintings? How do the paintings make you feel?
Are the brush strokes long or short?

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