



Vincent van Gogh

Starry nights and sunflowers, self-portraits and café settings- all painted in bold, intense colors. Today, people all around the world immediately recognize these as the work of Vincent van Gogh, the Dutch painter. Probably no other artist, at any time in any culture, has achieved such popularity.

An artist is born

Vincent van Gogh was born on March 30, 1853, in a small village in southern Holland. As a child, he was serious and sensitive. He loved drawing, and his work showed talent; however, no one encouraged him to become an artist. Instead, his father thought he should take a “sensible” job such as a salesclerk or carpenter. Yet, in 1880, something changed inside van Gogh; he realized that he was meant to be a painter.

Discovering color

In 1886, van Gogh moved from Holland to Paris in order to learn more about color techniques being used by Impressionist artists there. Instead of grays and browns, his work began to emphasize blue and red, and then yellow and orange. Owing to his innovative color combinations, van Gogh showed his viewers how to better appreciate a flower, the night sky, or a person’s face.



Descent into madness

Nevertheless, few who lived in Van Gogh's time appreciated his work. Many laughed when they saw his paintings, which hurt the sensitive artist terribly. Following an argument with fellow artist Paul Gauguin, van Gogh took a razor and cut off his own earlob. He never explained why, but by now, many were convinced that he was crazy, and indeed, his mental health started to decline. Subsequently, he was sent to a mental hospital in St. Remy. No one knows what he was suffering from for sure even though some now think it may have been a form of manic depression. Indeed, van Gogh's illness both inhibited and inspired his creativity.

Final Days

Following his release from hospital in 1890, van Gogh took a room in a town north of Paris. For the 70 days that he lived there, he produced a painting a day. Nonetheless, he was unable to sell a single one until his death. On the afternoon of July 27, 1890, he committed suicide at age 37. Undoubtedly, people are buying great art when they purchase one of van Gogh's paintings. But they are also buying a piece of his story, which like his work, will live on forever.



Read and answer. Write T for true or F for false.

1. Van Gogh was a popular painter whose paintings were sold all over the world in his time.
2. The reason why he moved to Paris was to learn more about painting.
3. He lived in Netherlands and France.
4. He painted "The Scream".
5. His paintings which consist of outstanding color combination illustrated cafe settings, sunflowers, and starry nights.

