

In 1886, Vincent van Gogh went to Paris. There he encountered two new painting movements: impressionism and pointillism. Under the influence of these movements, Van Gogh's paintings changed radically. A colourful lesson card on dots, dashes and much more!

Find the space in the museum with paintings by impressionists, such as Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet and Paul Cézanne.

1 Imagine that you have to tell your class something about the works in this space. You only have 2 minutes to prepare your speech. What quick notes would you make? And which examples would you show?

1. Main impressionistic subjects/themes:

.....
.....

Impressive example of this:

.....

2. Characteristics of the painting style/technique:

.....
.....

Impressive example of this:

.....

2 Compare your notes with a classmate. Did you choose the same examples? Who would you find most impressive?

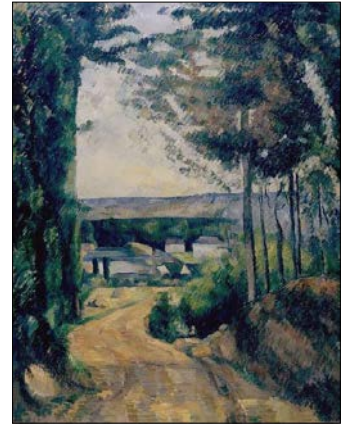
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The paintings by the impressionists may look old-fashioned to you. But in their day, they were revolutionary. The artists went outside to paint nature and their surroundings in a quick, picturesque style with thin paint. People weren't used to that! So the general public was not immediately enthusiastic.

3 Look for a work from the same period, which according to you is not impressionistic.

Artist:

Title:



Paul Cézanne, 1839 - 1906
La route vers l'étang, c. 1880

4 What are the two main differences (that the general public at that time were perhaps enthusiastic about)?

1

2

Now look at the painting *Le Chahut* by Georges Seurat (see map). Seurat is a pointillist.

5 What do you think? Did the painter paint this painting in a nightclub or at home in his studio? Why?

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.....

The pointillists built up their paintings from little dots of different pure colours. The painter didn't mix the colours on a palette, but instead placed them next to each other on the canvas in dots. The eyes of whoever looks at the painting do the rest: that's called 'optical blending'.

6 From a distance, look at *Le Chahut* with squinted eyes. Choose one of the people in the painting. What colours do you see?

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Now look from close up. What colours do you see?

.....

.....

7 Which of the words below apply to pointillism and which to impressionism? Draw a line to the correct movement.

quick

slow

indoors

hazy

thick

dots

pointillisme

impressionisme

no brushstroke

dashes

outdoors

clear

brushstroke

thin

Vincent van Gogh made good use of all these new ideas in painting. He tried the new techniques, began working with more bright colours and developed his own style with them. Look at the self-portrait that Van Gogh made in Paris (or choose one of these landscapes: *La butte Montmartre* or *Moulin de la Galette*)



Vincent van Gogh, 1853 - 1890
La butte Montmartre, April - May 1886

8 How can you see that Van Gogh was influenced by the impressionists? Name two things that you notice.

- 1
- 2

In 1887, Vincent met Paul Signac, who enthusiastically ‘promoted’ his style of painting: pointillism. Van Gogh also practiced with this technique and soon developed his own version of pointillism, but with dashes instead of dots.

9 Look for a painting in which that is clearly visible.

Title: Date:

Van Gogh liked to work with colour contrasts; he placed colours that contrast and reinforce each other next to each other. In the course of time, this kind of contrast appears more and more explicitly in his paintings.

10 Take another look at the portrait/landscape. Can you find an example of colour contrast?

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Do you know the colour circle? Vincent van Gogh certainly knew it well! A quick test:

11 What are the three primary colours?

.....

12 With the primary colours, you can mix three secondary colours, namely:

.....



13 You get a tertiary colour (in the outer circle) by mixing a colour with a

..... colour. For example:



Colours that appear opposite each other in the outer circle give the most contrast (so blue and orange, green and red, purple and yellow). If you paint these colours next to each other, they reinforce each other. We call these colours complementary.

14 Take one last look at the self-portrait/landscape by Van Gogh. Can you perhaps see another colour contrast?

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Van Gogh used a box with coloured balls of wool and threads. In order to test how the colours would ‘work’ next to each other, he first tied the colours side by side on a piece of card. Now, you’ll probably discover colour contrasts everywhere in the paintings by Van Gogh.

15 Find a detail in a painting for each complementary pair of colours:

1. purple – yellow:

Title: Date:

Description of detail:.....

2. green – red:

Title: Date:

Description of detail:.....

3. orange – blue:

Title: Date:

Description of detail:.....

By the way, have you noticed that Van Gogh didn’t sign many paintings? Van Gogh usually saw his paintings as study material. He only signed his name when he was satisfied with the painting.

Look at the painting *Wheat stacks in Provence*.

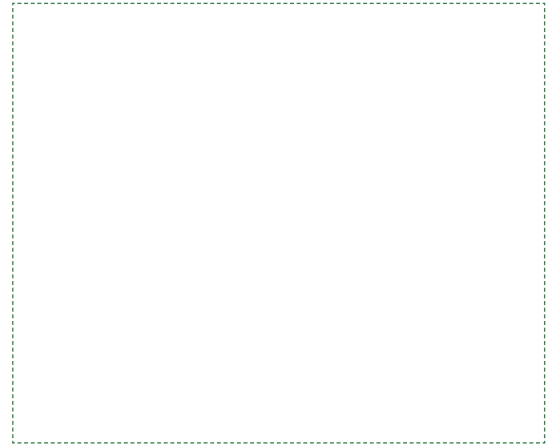
16 What do you notice about the signature? Think back to the colour contrast.

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17 In the box on the right, circle the places where you see the complementary colours orange and blue in this painting.

18 Assignment for pairs: can you see (from a distance) whether a painting is a study, or a work that Van Gogh was satisfied enough with to sign it? Test this by each looking at one wall from a distance, and then checking the answers. Who will win?



19 Thinking question: Vincent van Gogh was not satisfied with all his studies. Nonetheless, they are now hanging in a museum. Do you think that's right, or should the museum only show signed works?

Finally: Helene Kröller-Müller bought no fewer than 91 paintings by Van Gogh, from both his early period (incl. 'The potato eaters') and his French period. She gave the paintings a central place in her museum and called Vincent 'one of the greatest souls in our modern art, on which the spirit of the age had no claim, because his own personality proved too powerful'.

20 Thinking question: if you had to illustrate this quote by Helene Kröller-Müller with two paintings, which would you choose? And why?

1. Title: Date:

Because.....

2. Title: Date:

Because.....