

Artists IN FOCUS

Vincent Van Gogh: Impasto Pioneer



What We Learned:

- On March 30, 1853, Vincent Van Gogh was born in Amsterdam. He had 3 sisters and 2 brothers.
- At age 16 he quit school and began working for his uncle who sold art. He worked as an art dealer in London and then Paris, but he started becoming sad and moody. He was eventually fired.
- Vincent decided to follow in his father's footsteps and become a trained minister, but since he couldn't pass the exam, he became a missionary in a poor mining community. Because of his odd behavior he was fired from this job too.
- Vincent wrote his younger brother, Theo, for advice and support. Theo told Vincent to become a professional artist.
- Van Gogh moved to Paris where his brother lived. This is where he met the Impressionists.
- He took the Impressionist style and by applying vivid and bold colors with textural brushstrokes he expressed his emotion through his art. He created his own unique style called Post-Impressionism or what we would now call the beginning of Expressionism.
- Van Gogh struggled with depression throughout his life. Because of this, his life was cut short, and he died at age 37.



Art Activity:

In 1889 at age 36, Van Gogh painted a series of 15 paintings of olive groves, which were near where he was convalescing at an asylum in southern France. The colors he used in the painting are typical for autumn, and historians observe that "the gnarly shapes of the trees reflected Vincent's artistic and mental journey" at the time.

The students focused on drawing the twisted olive trees. After sketching their scene on canvas, the young artists painted them with acrylic paint.



For Parents

Although today Vincent Van Gogh is considered one of the greatest, most original artists of all time, he only sold one piece of artwork while he was alive. He did not begin his painting career until the age of 27, and he died only 10 years later. During his brief lifetime he created nearly 900 paintings and 1,100 drawings.

Some of his most famous art pieces are his dozens of self-portraits (he used himself often as a model to try out different techniques), *Sunflowers*, *The Olive Orchard*, *Crows Over the Wheatfield*, *The Bedroom*, and *The Starry Night*.

Please note: As M&G's host location for *Homeschool Days*, Mack Library will feature books each month for parents to reference as resources. We hope these additional features will further support your teaching at home.

Connections at Home: Impasto Painting

Impasto is a painting term that refers to the use of thick, textured, undiluted, paint that appears almost three-dimensional on the canvas. The impasto technique is usually associated with the work of Vincent van Gogh. One of the examples of this impasto technique is his painting *Wheat Field with Cypresses*.

SUPPLIES:

- Canvas board
- Acrylic/Tempera paint
- Pencil
- Elmers's glue
- Stiff paintbrush
- Toothpick/Fork
- Baking soda

DIRECTIONS:

1. On a canvas board, draw a simple landscape. Try a simple version of Van Gogh's *Wheat Field with Cypresses*.
2. Make your impasto paint (recipe below). Suggested colors: yellow, orange, green, blue, and brown.
3. Paint your landscape with impasto paint.
4. Before your paint dries, use a toothpick or fork to create lines in your paint such as swirls, horizontal, vertical, and/or diagonals.



IMPASTO PAINT RECIPE

Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Can be stored in mason jars with a tight lid. Repeat the recipe for each color of paint you choose to use.

- 1/4 cup baking soda or baby powder
- 2 Tablespoons of paint (acrylic or tempera)
- 1 Tablespoon of Elmer's glue

Connections at Home:

Sunflowers meets *Starry Night*

SUPPLIES:

- Pencil
- Blue Construction Paper
- Pastels

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Sketch flowers on the construction paper.
2. Using oil pastels mimic Van Gogh's technique of short strokes and his ability to mix colors.
3. Color the sunflowers first then move onto the background trying to recreate *Starry Night* using swirls and wavy lines.



Connections at Home:

Van Gogh Inspired Painted Rice Mosaic



SUPPLIES:

- Black paper or canvas
- Paper plates
- Tempera paint
- Sandwich size Ziploc baggies
- Clear glue or white glue that dries clear
- Uncooked white rice
- Paintbrushes

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Use the glue to create your cypress tree landscape drawing. Allow the glue to dry overnight.
2. Rice painting instructions:
 - Place a small amount of rice in a baggie (about a cup).
 - Squeeze in a dollop of tempera paint (about a tablespoon or so).
 - Close the baggie. Shake and squish the rice around to coat the pieces completely with paint.



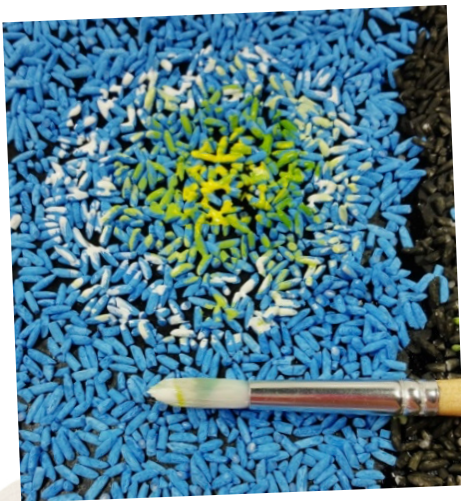


- Check the color. If it's not what you want, add a little more paint to change it. Be careful not to get the rice too wet with paint.
- Once you have the color you need, spread the painted rice out on a paper plate and allow it to dry.



3. Apply your painted rice to the drawing.

- Coat the area you'd like to cover with a good layer of glue and pour your rice over the glue area to completely cover it.
- Pat the rice down gently to make sure it adheres to the glue well and all glue is covered with rice.
- Shake the excess rice off the paper once you fill in each area.
- One by one, fill each area of your landscape with the colors indicated by our inspiration piece.



- ### 4. Once your painting is dry, use your paint brush and tempera paint to add a few details in the sky and any other areas you would like based on the inspiration painting.

Book Nook

Vincent Van Gogh
by Amy Guglielmo



Additional Resources

To learn more about Vincent Van Gogh, click on the links below:

- View a short video from the Van Gogh Museum of Vincent Van Gogh's life story:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3q5fuVFWe0Q>
- To learn about all things Vincent Van Gogh, visit: <https://www.vincentvangogh.org>
- Read about a Van Gogh painting found at a garage sale:
<https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/30/style/garage-sale-van-gogh-elimar-scli-intl/index.html>
- Vincent Van Gogh Facts for Kids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=degyOhWy7Uk>
- Vincent Van Gogh: 8 things you didn't know about the painter:
<https://www.vogue.fr/fashion-culture/article/vincent-van-gogh-8-things-you-didnt-know-about-the-painter>
- Visit *Who Was Vincent Van Gogh? For Kids* to hear a summary of his life and view some of Van Gogh's most famous artwork: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnnUNw61MFg>

Due to the changing nature of web resources, M&G strongly urges you as the parent to preview these sites before your child accesses them. The fact that these sites are available on this handout does not imply that M&G endorses their content from the standpoint of morals, philosophy, theology, or scientific hypotheses.

Just for Fun—A Few “Punny” Jokes:

Did you know the painter Vincent Van Gogh had a very large family?

- There's his dizzy aunt, Verti Gogh
- The brother who worked at a convenience store, Stop N Gogh
- The really obnoxious brother, Please Gogh
- The grandfather from Yugoslavia, U Gogh
- His magician uncle, Wherediddy Gogh
- The nephew who drove a stagecoach, Wellsfar Gogh
- The bird lover uncle, Flamin Gogh
- The fruit-loving cousin, Man Gogh
- An aunt who taught positive thinking, WaytoGogh
- The little bouncy nephew, Poe Gogh
- His niece who travels the country in an RV, Winnie Bay Gogh
- And, his pet dog, Van Dogh

Why did the art thief's van run out of gas as he drove away from the museum?

A: Because he had no Monet to buy Degas to make the Van Gogh.

M&G Educational Mission:

Through tours, events, and publications, the Museum & Gallery seeks to partner with educators in fulfilling all of the National Visual Arts Content Standards. By integrating art into the core curriculum, M&G's goals are to teach children to value the arts, to communicate through the arts, to become creative problem solvers through the inclusion of STEAM-related concepts and fully-developed STEAM units, to understand history and culture in light of the arts, to improve literary interest and understanding through visual storytelling, to critique the arts, and to develop an aesthetic awareness of the arts. Through fulfilling the mission, M&G is able to help develop citizens who have the ability to think, feel, and understand the world in which they live.

