

VINCENT VAN GOGH

[1853–1890]

Van Gogh was Dutch painter. His work is sometimes described as “Post-Impressionism,” which means that his style of painting was similar to the “Impressionist” paintings that were being made only a few years before he started, but he added his own ideas that were different from them. His style was very personal, and though he was influenced by many kinds of artists, he made few lasting friendships with any of them and was almost always alone.

Van Gogh lived a troubled life, and his paintings are some of the best records we have of it. Only one of his paintings was sold in his lifetime, and he was never able to financially support himself. His brother, Theo, often helped him, and the friends he would briefly have would help him as well. People who knew him would often describe him as a difficult person and very rarely happy. His paintings, however, use very vibrant colors and sometimes seem joyful.

It was in his paintings that Van Gogh was able to express himself clearly. Most of his relationships in life fell apart quickly or turned out not to be what he had thought they were. There are many sad stories of Van Gogh attempting to get married only to be refused by each woman. The famous painter, Gauguin, went to visit Van Gogh once, after Van Gogh had written to him constantly, requesting a visit. When Gauguin arrived Van Gogh was extremely excited. He had painted several pictures of sunflowers in anticipation of his guest. Gauguin respected Van Gogh’s talent, but the friendship only lasted a few months, the two had constant arguments and it ended when Van Gogh threatened him with a razor blade.

No one had ever painted the way Van Gogh did: his colors were vibrant and the shapes were strange and dream-like. His life was just as unpredictable and strange as his art, and it ended very early. However, since his death, his paintings have gone on to become some of the most famous in the world, and he has been a huge inspiration to artists ever since.



Bedroom in Arles



Starry Night



Sunflowers

VAN GOGH EXERCISE

Try using colored pencils to draw Van Gogh's "Starry Night" painting. What do you notice about the lines and shapes in the painting? What do you notice about the colors?



A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing the painting 'The Starry Night' using colored pencils.