

Zara's Swirling Masterpieces: Exploring Van Gogh

Learning objective: To analyse the artistic techniques of Vincent van Gogh, focusing on his use of bold colours and expressive, rhythmic brushstrokes.

Zara the Zebra sees patterns everywhere she looks. She has been studying Van Gogh's famous paintings. Use the 'questions' section to evaluate how his unique style creates emotion. Then, follow the drawing prompt to create your own piece in his signature 'impasto' style.

Word bank: Impasto · Rhythmic · Complementary colours · Expression · Texture · Vibrant

1. Van Gogh often used 'impasto' (thickly applied paint). Explain why this technique makes his paintings look different from a smooth, flat photograph. (2 marks)

2. Look at the colours often used in his night scenes. Compare and contrast how the use of yellow stars against a blue sky creates a sense of movement. (2 marks)

3. Justify your answer: Does Van Gogh's use of short, dashed brushstrokes make a painting feel calm or energetic? Why? (2 marks)

4. If Van Gogh had used only dull, grey tones instead of his signature vibrant colours, how would the 'mood' of his paintings change? (2 marks)

5. What might happen if you painted a picture using only long, straight, rigid lines instead of his typical swirling, curved lines? (2 marks)

6. Choose one object in your classroom. Describe how you would paint it using Van Gogh's style. Focus on the brushstrokes and colour choices. (2 marks)

Draw: Imagine a view from your bedroom window. Draw the scene using short, thick, dash-like strokes of colour. Use at least three pairs of complementary colours (e.g., blue and orange, or yellow and purple) to make your drawing pop with energy.



Extension challenge: Research Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers' series. Create a mini-presentation explaining why he chose to paint the same subject multiple times and how he used different shades of yellow to convey his emotions.