

Zara's Post-Impressionist Patterns: Exploring Van Gogh

Learning objective: To analyse the artistic techniques of Vincent van Gogh, focusing on brushwork, colour theory, and emotional expression.

Zara the Zebra is fascinated by the way Van Gogh used 'impasto' (thick paint application) to create movement. Study the characteristics of his work below and complete the tasks to demonstrate your understanding of his Post-Impressionist style.

Word bank: Impasto · Complementary · Vibrant · Rhythmic · Expressionism · Canvas · Palette · Perspective

1. Van Gogh often used complementary colours side-by-side to make his paintings appear more vibrant. Explain why placing blue next to orange creates a stronger visual impact than placing blue next to green. (2 marks)

2. Van Gogh's technique of 'impasto' involves applying paint very thickly. Justify why an artist might choose to use this technique rather than painting with thin, smooth layers. (2 marks)

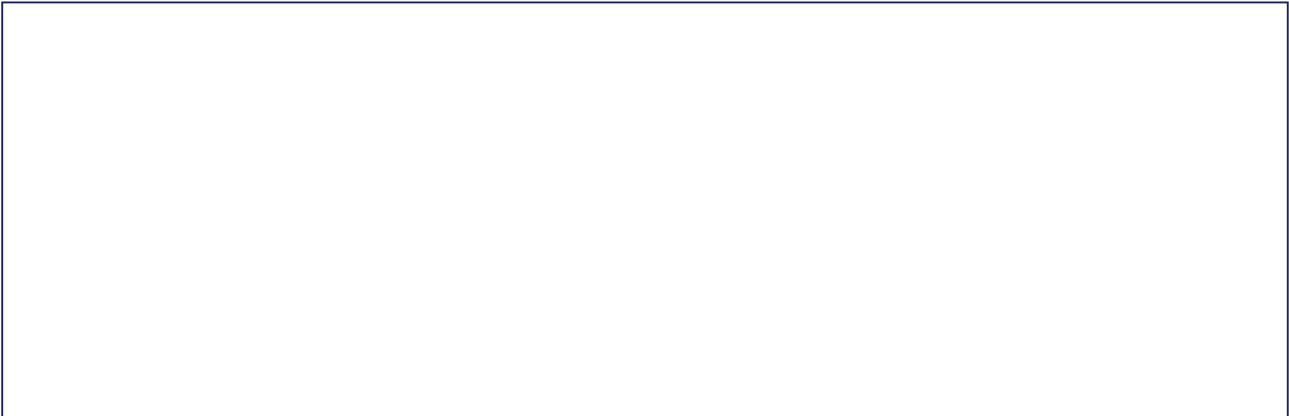
3. Compare and contrast a photograph of a real sunflower with Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers' series. Identify two stylistic choices he made that differ from reality. (2 marks)

4. Van Gogh used short, rhythmic brushstrokes to create a sense of movement. If you were painting a stormy sea, how would you change the length and direction of your brushstrokes to show the water's energy? (2 marks)

5. What might happen to the emotional mood of 'The Starry Night' if Van Gogh had used only muted, dark greys and browns instead of his iconic swirls of yellow and blue? (2 marks)

6. If Van Gogh were to paint a modern-day cityscape, how might his use of colour and line reflect the busy nature of 21st-century life? Explain your reasoning. (2 marks)

Draw: Using a landscape of your choice (a park, a street, or a garden), create a sketch using 'Van Gogh style' marks. Focus on using short, swirling, or directional lines to show movement in the sky or trees. You must include at least one pair of complementary colours in your final design.



Extension challenge: Research the price of Van Gogh's original works today. If a famous painting is valued at £50,000,000, calculate how many sets of high-quality artist paints (priced at £45.00 each) could be purchased for the same value. Write a short paragraph justifying whether art has a 'price' or if its value is purely subjective.