
TEST CLIL

1 Who was Gauguin?

He was a famous French painter born in Paris who managed to create his own distinctive identity expressing it through his artworks. His art can't be experienced without linking it to his life path. His influences can be found in his travels, such as the period that he spent in Perú and Tahiti. One of his works was accepted into the "Salon of 1876" an important art show in Paris. This exhibition presented him to the public and made him meet Pissarro, Degas, Monet and other artistic greats. Gauguin eventually contracted Syphilis.

When did he meet Van Gogh?

In 1888 Gauguin and Van Gogh spent several weeks together in Van Gogh's home in Arles but their time together ended after Van Gogh pulled a razor on Gauguin during an argument.

2 How did Gauguin call his own style?

He called his own style synthetism

Why?

Because it synthesized observation of the subject in nature with the artist's feelings about that subject, expressed through abstracted line, shape, space and colour.

Do you remember some of these paintings?

For example "The yellow Christ" and "La Orana Maria". He painted many of these artworks during his stay in Polinesia, from 1891 to 1903, where he had originated Synthetism and the symbolism.

3 When did Van Gogh live in Arles?

Van Gogh lived in Arles from 1888 to 1890.

Who organized his stay in Arles and why?

His brother, Theo, worried about Vincent's physical and mental health, tried to satisfy the dream of Van Gogh to create an utopic artistic community where artists could share ideas and opinions.

What did Theo say to Gauguin to convince him to live in Arles with Van Gogh?

Theo promised to pay to him to live there and to paint twelve paintings every year.

4 Why did Gauguin criticise Van Gogh?

Gauguin disliked Van Gogh disorganization also for their financial engagement.

Where would he like to go?

He dreamed to move to Bretagne. He didn't like to stay in Arles.

What happened after an argument between Vincent and Paul?

Gauguin left Arles and never to see Vincent again.

In your opinion were their ways of painting similar?

No, absolutely. Their ways of paintings were finally very different also in the technique choices.

5 Can you talk about the "Yellow Christ"?

One of the most important painting of Gauguin is The yellow Christ. The Yellow Christ is a painting executed by Paul Gauguin in 1889 in Port- Aven. This Painting is considered one of the key works of Symbolism. This painting shows the crucifixion of Christ taking place in nineteenth-century northern France. Gauguin used bold lines to define his figures and the principal colors of the painting are yellow, red and green. Gauguin painted Christ in a cloying yellow because he wanted to convey how he felt about the isolated life and piety of the peasants, several of whom are pictured here dressed in their distinctive regional costumes. The bold outlines and flatness of the forms in this painting are typical of the cloisonnism style, a style of post-impressionist painting really far from impressionism.

6 In which country did Van Gogh spend three years of his life painting a lot of his artworks?

He lived in Arles, French, from 1888 to 1890.

Do you remember the main paintings realized by Van Gogh in that fruitful period?

Yes, I do. I remember "The yellow house" (which Theo rented in order to Vincent could live there); "Bedroom in Arles"; "Gauguin's chair" and "Van Gogh chair"; "Wheat field with crows" (which was the last painting of Vincent); "Starry night" (which was painted when Vincent was at the Sanatory of Reims); "Self-portrait with bandaged ear" (which testify his injury).

7 In your opinion would Van Gogh have been a famous and great artist if he had not been mad?

I don't think so. In my opinion Van Gogh's art was really influenced by his feelings, by his anxiety of living. All of his works and his own technique testify his inquietude and madness. He was able to control his emotions. Van Gogh's inimitable fusion of form and content is powerful; dramatic, lyrically rhythmic, imaginative, and emotional, for the artist was completely absorbed in the effort to explain either his struggle against madness or his comprehension of the spiritual essence of man and nature.

For example?

The deformation of the subjects, the stroke color and his material brushstroke. Everything is vibrant and animated!

8 Can you describe "Self-portrait with bandaged ear"?

In this self-portrait, Van Gogh is shown wearing a blue cap with black fur and a green overcoat, with a bandage covering his ear and extending under his chin. He is in a traditional three-quarter view, and his forward gaze falls slightly to the right, out of the frame. Behind him is an open window, assumedly letting in a winter breeze, a canvas on an easel, with a few indistinguishable marks, as well as a Japanese woodblock print. This shows an important influence of Japonism and wood block print on Van Gogh's work, which also appear in the background of other portraits he had created. The painting is composed of impasto strokes, mostly in a vertical pattern. This creates a texture, which comes up off the canvas and adds dimension to the flat surface. The skin tone is muted with green and yellowish tones. The bandage covering Van Gogh's ear in this painting alludes to his most famous conflict. Van Gogh used a mirror for his self-portraits which is why some mistakenly think that he lost part of his right ear instead of his left.

9 Can you talk about "Bedroom in Arles"?

The painting depicts Van Gogh's bedroom at 2, Place Lamartine in Arles, France, known as the Yellow House. The door to the right opened on to the upper floor and the staircase; the door to the left was that of the guest room he held prepared for Gauguin; the window in the front wall looked on to Place Lamartine and its public gardens. This room was not rectangular but trapezoid with an obtuse angle in the left hand corner of the front wall and an acute angle at the right. In April 1889, van Gogh sent the initial version to his brother

regretting that it had been damaged by the flood of the Rhône while he was interned at the Old Hospital in Arles. Theo proposed to have it relined and sent back to him in order to copy it. This "repetition" in original scale (Van Gogh's term was "répétition") was executed in September 1889. Both paintings were then sent back to Theo.

10 Can you talk about “The yellow house?”. Did it really exist?

The subject of this artwork painted by Van Gogh is the house in which he lived with Gauguin in 1888, trying to realize his dream of a community of artists. We can imagine it had an important meaning for him, because it depicts a key moment of his life. In 1887, at the beginning of their friendship, Van Gogh moved to Arles and soon his brother Theo convinced and paid Gauguin to live with him, thinking that would have been a nice experience to share their artistic and ordinary lives. Actually, their different ideals about art and their different personalities will lead to quarrels, that will end up with the break of their friendship in 1888. Vincent, unable to get over it, will punish himself cutting his hear. In the painting, made with oil on canvas, we see the house from an unusual point of view which makes us move our gaze also to the right side of the scenery, where we notice a locomotive in the background and few people walking in the street. But, as often happens in Van Gogh's paintings, the true protagonist of the canvas is color.

11 Can you talk about Vincent's chair and Gauguin's chair?

Vincent's Chair with a Pipe is, in a way, a self-portrait, since when Vincent Van Gogh painted it he was trying to encapsulate his own essence, in contrast to his friend/rival Paul Gauguin. The one painting cannot be understood without the other, and they were painted at the time when Van Gogh was entering an intense period of psychological crisis – the one that would lead to his infamous self-mutilation

VAN GOGH, “*GAUGUIN'S CHAIR*”, 1888

In the painting the dark tones prevail on warm tones and strong colors of the chair of the artist. The dark tones are diluted in the wall's colors also with the red and the Yellow of the rug. In the chair there is a lit candle and a book, as a symbol of the culture and ambition.

12 Which singers were inspired by Van Gogh's painting "Starry Night"? Do you remember their names and their songs' titles?

Van Gogh's art inspired many artists such as Don McLean who wrote a song dedicated to Vincent: "Vincent, Starry, Starry night". In this song McLean talks about the link between the technique of Van Gogh's art and his personality, his inquietude and anxiety of living, in short, his madness. For example when in the song he wrote: "Now I understand what you tried to say to me and how you suffered for your sanity". Furthermore McLean's song inspired Roberto Vecchioni who wrote another song, "Vincent".

13 Can you describe the painting "Starry night"?

Starry night is an oil canvas painting (92×73 cm), made in 1889 by Vincent Van Gogh. It is conserved in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It shows a starry landscape as seen from the window sanatory above city of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in France; a night vision, though it had been painted during the day.

The paintings Van Gogh produced during the last year testify to his heightened emotional state such as *The Starry Night*: the sky, blazing with exploding stars high above the quiet town, is clearly more a record of what Van Gogh felt. *The Starry Night* is the only nocturne in the series of views from his bedroom window. In early June, Vincent wrote to Theo, "This morning I saw the countryside from my window a long time before sunrise with nothing but the morning star which looked very big". Researchers have determined that Venus was indeed visible at dawn in Provence in the spring of 1889, and was at that time nearly as bright as possible. So the brightest "star" in the painting, just to the viewer's right of the cypress tree, is actually Venus. The moon is stylized as astronomical records indicate that it actually was waning gibbous at the time Van Gogh painted the picture, and even if the phase of the Moon had been its waning crescent at the time, Van Gogh's Moon would not have been astronomically correct.

14 Can you describe "Wheatfield with crows"?

"Wheatfield with Crows" is a July 1890 painting by Van Gogh. It has been cited by several critics as one of his greatest works.

It is commonly stated that this was van Gogh's final painting. However, art historians are uncertain as to which painting was van Gogh's last, as no clear historical records exist. The evidence of his letters suggests that *Wheatfield with Crows* was completed around 10 July.

Wheat Field with Crows, made on a double-square canvas, depicts a dramatic, cloudy sky filled with crows over a wheat field. A sense of isolation is heightened by a central path leading nowhere and by the uncertain direction of flight of the crows. The windswept wheat field fills two-thirds of the canvas. Jules Michelet, one of van Gogh's favorite authors, wrote of crows: "They interest themselves in everything, and observe everything. The ancients, who lived far more completely than ourselves in and with nature, found it no small profit to follow, in a hundred obscure things where human experience as yet affords no light, the directions of so prudent and sage a bird." Kathleen Erickson finds the painting as expressing both sorrow and a sense of his life coming to an end. The crows are used by van Gogh as a symbol of death and rebirth, or of resurrection.