

Colorful van Gogh Landscapes

by Josey M. Brouwer



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Elementary students will ...

- explore the art of Vincent van Gogh.
- use color, line, and texture to create a landscape.

NATIONAL ART STANDARDS

- **CREATING:** Experimenting and developing skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches. Demonstrating quality craftsmanship through care and use of materials, tools and equipment.

MATERIALS

- 11" x 16" heavyweight tagboard
- Black Sharpie markers
- Red, yellow and orange watercolor crayons
- Blue and brown watercolor paint
- Crayons, colored Sharpie markers

VOCABULARY

- Landscape
- Horizon line
- Concentric circle
- Visual texture
- Color

▲ Eden

< Meghan

Amelia ▲

Keelan >

Looking for a project that covers multiple areas of your art curriculum? This color-filled landscape project has it all! Like many art teachers, I try to squeeze as many student learning opportunities into my projects as possible, and this van Gogh piece provides everything from the study of a well-known artist to explorations in texture, color, and a variety of media.

I INTRODUCED MY STUDENTS to Vincent van Gogh by reading Laurence Anholt's *Camille and the Sunflowers*. My second-grade artists immediately sympathized with van Gogh's struggle to create art and to be accepted by others, and we enjoyed a lively discussion of his famous *The Starry Night* painting.

They easily located the landscape's foreground, middle ground, and background; we then continued with a special focus on the night sky. I asked if

anyone had ever dropped a pebble into the water and noticed the circles radiating from the center.

I snuck in a bit of math as I explained how van Gogh's sky is made of circles with a common center, or concentric circles. Soon my second grade artists were ready to try drawing their own concentric circles and adding flowing lines around their circles to show the blowing wind.

I used a "directed draw" approach to help my students begin their landscapes, demonstrating each step as they drew along with me using their Sharpie markers. We measured "two sideways fingers up" from the bottom of the paper, drawing a wavy line for the water; three more fingers up for the ground, adding a little village and finishing with mountains behind their buildings. We left plenty of room at the top to add the starry sky. Next came

the fun addition of visual texture—spiral ocean waves and a sandy beach dotted with "C" shells, fancy details on their village buildings, and interesting lines on the mountains.

RESOURCES

- Reproduction of Vincent van Gogh's painting, *The Starry Night*.
- Book: Anholt, Laurence, *Camille and the Sunflowers* (Barron's Educational Series; 1994).



Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889. Oil on canvas.

OUR FOCUS DURING THE NEXT CLASS

was on color as we reviewed warm and cool colors, and talked about the neutral tones on the mountains and beach. My students had opportunities to use many different media as they added color to their landscapes, including watercolors for the ocean and beach, neutral brown crayons for mountains, and colored permanent markers to complete their village.

A new media, watercolor crayons, quickly became their favorite, especially when they blended the crayons with a bit of water to bring out vibrant colors in their starry skies!

As we wrapped up our van Gogh project, I challenged the children to list everything they learned while creating their landscapes. They did a "ripple review" by first writing down their thoughts, then sharing their ideas with their table groups, and finally



moving around the room to share with one other person.

I listened in, happy to hear them using key words like texture, concentric circles, warm and cool colors, and landscape. This project really did cover it all—a famous artist, a little

math with the use of concentric circles, landscape drawing, texture, new media ... and color! ■

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