# COMPREHENSION

DEAR BROTHER,

You must not take it amiss if I write to you again so soon. I do so only in order to tell you how extraordinarily happy painting makes me feel.

Last Sunday I began something which I had had in mind for many a day:

It is the view of a flat green meadow, dotted with haycocks. A cinder path running alongside of a ditch crosses it diagonally. And on the horizon, in the middle of the picture, there stands the sun. The whole thing is a blend of colour and tone—a vibration of the whole scale of colours in the air. First of all there is a mauve tinted mist through which the sun peers, half concealed by a dark violet bank of clouds with a thin brilliant red lining. The sun contains some vermilion, and above it there is a strip of yellow which shades into green and, higher up, into a bluish tint that becomes the most delicate azure. Here and there I have put in a light purple or gray cloud gilded with the sun’s livery.

The ground is a strong carpet-like texture of green, gray and brown, full of light and shade and life. The water in the ditch sparkles on the clay soil. It is in the style of one of Emile Breton’s paintings.

I have also painted a large stretch of dunes. I put the colour on thick and treated it broadly.

I feel quite certain that, on looking at these two pictures, no one will ever believe that they are the first studies I have ever painted.

Truth to tell, I am surprised myself. I thought my first things would be worthless; but even at the risk of singing my own praises, I must say that they really are not at all bad. And that is what surprises me so much.

I believe the reason of it is that before I began to paint, I made such a long and careful study of drawing and perspective that I can now sketch a thing as I see it.

Now, however, since I have bought my brushes and painting materials, I have slaved so hard that I am dead tired—seven colour studies straight off!... I literally cannot stand, and yet I can neither forsake my work nor take a rest.

But what I also wanted to say is that when I am painting, things present themselves to me in colour, which formerly I never used to see—things full of breadth and vigour.

All this looks as if I were already satisfied with my own work; but I feel just the contrary. Up to the present, however, I have progressed to the extent that when anything in Nature happens to strike me, I have more means at my command than I had formerly for expressing that thing with force.

**Nor** do I think that it would matter much if my health played me a nasty trick. **As** far as I am aware, they are not the worst painters who from time to time feel as **if** they can do no work for a week or two. For their compulsory idleness is probably due chiefly to the fact that they are the very ones who, as Millet says, “*y mettent leur peau*.” That does not matter, and no one should pay any heed to such lapses. For a while you are utterly exhausted, but you soon get right again; and then at least you are the richer for having garnered a number of studies, as the peasant garners a load of hay. But for the moment I am not yet contemplating a rest.

## MCQ Questions

CABC

AACA

CABB

DC

| **#** | **Type** | **Question** | **Results** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Amiss means not quite right or wrong.  I do so only in order to tell you how extraordinarily happy painting makes me feel | "You must not take it amiss" What is Van Gogh trying to say to his brother here?  a) That he did not miss his brother's previous letter  b)That his brother should not worry if he missed Van Gogh's previous letter  c) **That his brother should not worry about Van Gogh writing so soon**  d) That his brother should look for the missing letter that was sent |  |
| 2 |  | What does the phrase “many a day” mean?   1. **A long time** 2. A short time 3. All day 4. A week |  |
| 3 |  | Van Gogh uses the word 'dotted' (line X). What is the effect of this?  a) It makes it sound like haycocks entirely cover the meadow  b) **It makes it sound like haycocks are scattered randomly in the meadow**  c) It makes it sound like the number of haycocks is uncountable  d) It makes it more enjoyable to read since Van Gogh used better vocabulary |  |
| 4 | And on the horizon, in the middle of the picture, there stands the sun.  mist through which the sun peers, half concealed | Which description best describes the sun in Van Gogh's painting?  a) The sun stands out in the middle of the picture  b) The sun is obscured by the clouds near the edges of the painting  c) **The sun is positioned centrally trying to get out of the clouds**  d) The sun is the centrepiece of the painting | Not hard at all |
| 5 |  | What colour is not mentioned?  a) **Orange**  b) Yellow  c) Red  d) Blue |  |
| 6 | It is in the style of one of Emile Breton’s paintings. | Which of these statements is true?  **a) Van Gogh gained inspiration from another artist**  b) The sun is half concealed by the bank of the river  c) Van Gogh is using separate, distinct colours to paint the sun  d) He began his painting on Saturday |  |
| 7 | I thought my first things would be worthless; but even at the risk of singing my own praises, | What does Van Gogh think of his painting?  a) He believes that people won't think it is good  b) He is confident that people will notice it was his first attempt at a new technique  **c) He is self-assured in his attempt at a new technique**  d) He is interested in studying a new technique |  |
| 8 | I believe the reason of it is that before I began to paint, I made such a long and careful study of drawing and perspective t | What does Van Gogh suggest has allowed him to sketch so well?  **a) Diligent study of art**  b) Practising new techniques frequently  c) Never forsaking his work and never resting  d) Buying new brushes and painting materials |  |
| 9 | when I am painting, things present themselves to me in colour, which formerly I never used to see | What happens to Van Gogh only when he is painting?  a) He has fun  b) He is happy  **c) He sees things colour**  d) He cannot stop working |  |
| 10 |  | In line X, he states “ I feel just the contrary.”  How does he feel about his work?  **a) He is not pleased and wants to do better work**  b) He is more than satisfied and incredibly pleased with his work  c) He is disappointed with his work  d) He thinks other people's work is far superior to his own | Old version: What does this mean? |
| 11 |  | Why is nature capitalised?  a) It is a person  **b) He is emphasising that nature has its own personality like a person**  c) He is using hyperbole to exaggerate nature  d) He has mistaken it for a proper noun |  |
| 12 | my health played me a nasty trick | “My health played me a nasty trick”  What language device is used here?   1. Alliteration 2. **Personification** 3. Metaphor 4. Hyperbole |  |
| 13 |  | What does “compulsory idleness” (line X) mean?  a) Voluntarily doing work  b) Voluntary inactivity  c) Obliged to work  **d) Obliged to do nothing** | I can see why students may choose c  I have changed c from ‘forced inactivity’ |
| 14 | Vocaularby in context  That does not matter, and no one should pay any heed to such lapses. | What is a synonym for “lapses” (line X)?   1. Expense 2. Sayings 3. **Failures** 4. People   Explain how you came to this conclusion using evidence from the text. |  |
| 15 | For a while you are utterly exhausted, but you soon get right again; and then at least you are the richer for having garnered a number of studies, as the peasant garners a load of hay | What does Van Gogh mean when he makes the comparison, “as the peasant garners a load of hay”? |  |
| 16 |  |  |  |