



lingoda

Van Gogh

READING

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_1045R_EN

LANGUAGE
English






Goals

- Can read and understand a lengthy text about Vincent Van Gogh.
- Can speak in depth about my own career path and famous works of art.





Van Gogh is probably one of the most famous artists in the world. His paintings of **sunflowers** can be seen everywhere: on posters, bags, even dish towels. Sadly however, this **renowned artist** didn't have such a happy **personal life**.



Warm up

How do you feel about art galleries? Do you go often? When was the last time you went to an art gallery? Tell your teacher about it!





I remember when I was young...

What are your memories of art from your childhood? Did you like art at school? Did you like drawing and painting? Did you often do craft activities with your family?



fun

messy

chaotic

boring



Tell us!

**Do you know much about Van Gogh?
Can you recognise this picture? Does it inspire you?**





Van Gogh



Today, he's probably one of the most famous artists in the world, but in actual fact, Vincent Van Gogh didn't begin his career as a painter until his late twenties. This knowledge may be of some comfort to those of us who have always harboured the desire to express our artistic talent, but haven't quite got around to it yet!



Van Gogh

Although Van Gogh's family was close-knit, as a young boy he didn't have the happiest of childhoods. He hated his time at boarding school; he had been transferred there from the local village school at the age of eleven, and although he did manage to complete his elementary studies there, perhaps this negative experience weighed upon the young Van Gogh. At the age of thirteen, despite doing well at a secondary school in Tilburg, he quit classes midway through the year. He was never to return to formal education.



Van Gogh



Van Gogh had a very close relationship with his younger brother, Theo. In many ways, Theo was Vincent's rock: he provided constant emotional and financial support to the artist.

Notably, it was thanks to Theo's role as a form of benefactor that Van Gogh was able to pursue his work as an artist. It was also Theo who encouraged Vincent to pursue art as a career in the first place.



Vocabulary review

Look at the words and phrases from the text below. Do you know what they mean? Think about each word's individual meaning and then its meaning in the context of the phrase. Discuss each with your teacher and make an example sentence with each word.

to harbour a
desire

to be close-knit

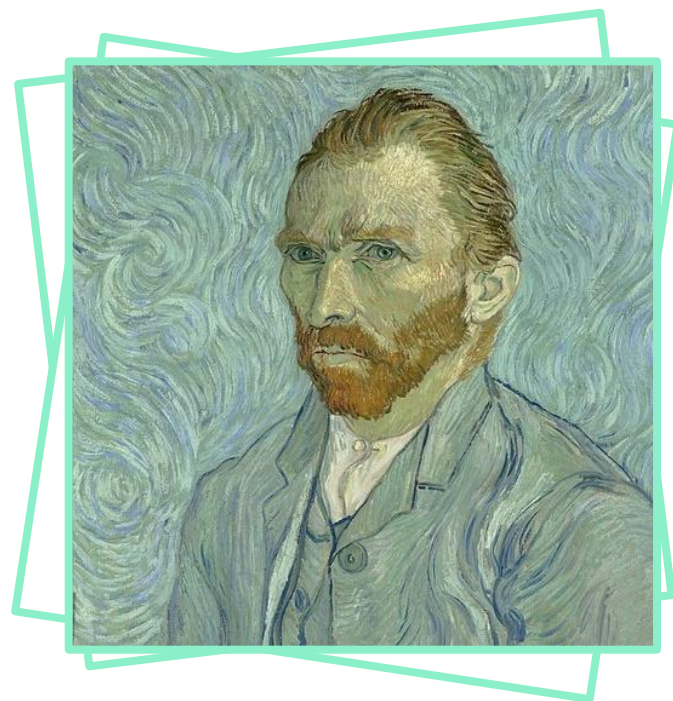
boarding school

to be someone's
rock



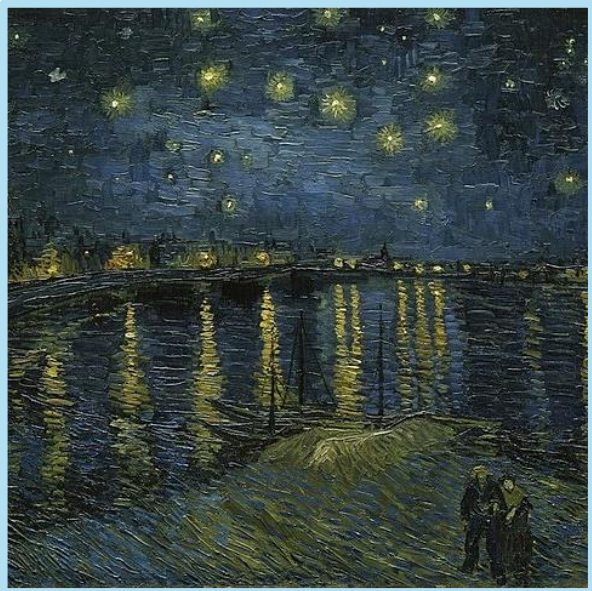
A difficult childhood

The text tells us about Van Gogh's early life. Can you summarise Van Gogh's childhood in your own words?
What about your own childhood: how was it different to Van Gogh's?





I would love to do that!



Van Gogh didn't start his career as a painter until his late 20s.
What about you?

Do you have any unexplored interests? Do you harbour a secret desire to be a singer, a scientist, or maybe a politician?



Van Gogh



After leaving school, Van Gogh ended up working as a clerk for an art dealer and after several years was transferred to work in the firm's London office. Van Gogh hated this job however, and though he found some solace in the art displayed in London's galleries, he was miserable and extremely depressed.

Eventually, he was fired from his post and there followed a period of several years where he floated aimlessly, searching for a sense of direction in life. During this time he held a variety of positions; he was a bookseller, a teacher, a student, and indeed a preacher. Van Gogh had been growing increasingly religious.



Van Gogh

Throughout this period, he kept a close correspondence with his brother by letter. Van Gogh would sometimes illustrate the pages he wrote to Theo. It was Theo who saw his talent and who eventually persuaded Van Gogh to take these illustrations and develop them further; in other words, turn himself into an artist.



Review this vocabulary with your teacher

to be fired

to float aimlessly

to find solace

firm

preacher

direction in life



Discuss

**What was Van Gogh's
career path?
Does its progression
seem logical?**

bookseller

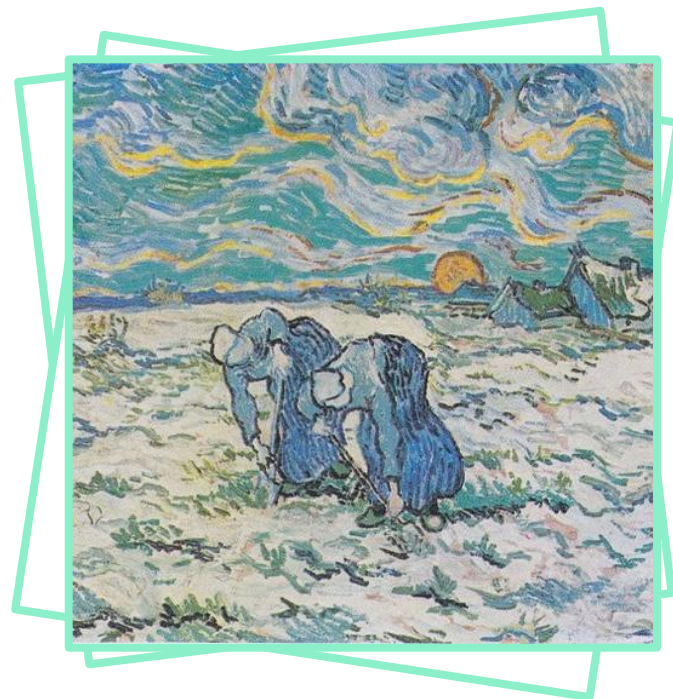
teacher

student



Career and personal happiness

Van Gogh found his job as a clerk particularly depressing. Have you ever had a job which made you very unhappy? Talk about your experience. What about the job did you find unsatisfying? Did you eventually discover what makes you happy?





Over to you

**What has been your
career route so far?
Did you expect it to
take the turns it made?**



Van Gogh



Van Gogh's work is marked by his interest in nature. His interest in the natural world may have been sparked at a young age, since the family often went for walks and spent time in the countryside. Van Gogh had a particular interest in peasants and rustic life. One of his paintings, *The Potato Eaters*, which portrays a group of farmers and labourers seated around a table partaking of a simple dinner, is a striking example of the kind of themes which fascinated Van Gogh.

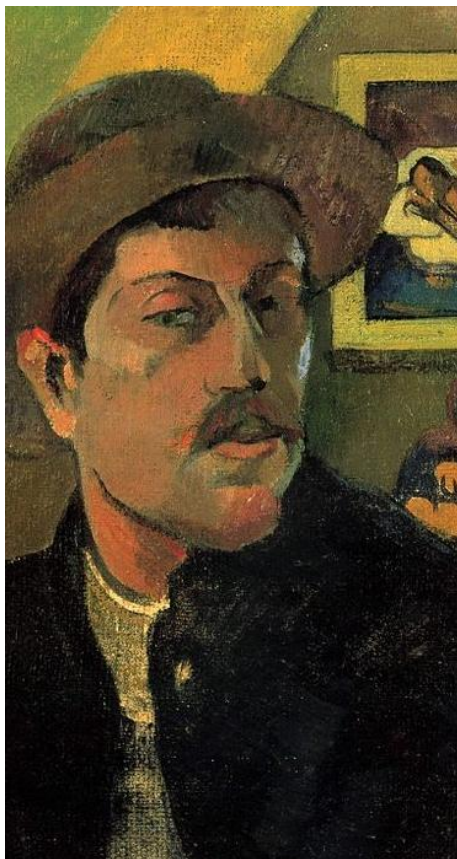


Van Gogh

His work is also distinctive for its usage of light. Although initially Van Gogh painted in rather muted and dark tones, when he moved to live with his brother Theo in Paris his work transformed. He developed a keen interest in Japanese woodcuts, which were popular in Paris at the time, and he also struck up friendships with fellow painters such as Emile Bernard and Toulouse-Lautrec, whose brighter paintings influenced him. After a visit to Arles, Vincent decided to move to the south of France. He was drawn to this area by the light that he found there which quite bewitched him.



Van Gogh



Sadly though, Van Gogh was never to rid himself of the depression which had reared its head in his younger years. His brother Theo had hoped that moving to the south of France might be good for Vincent, given his hopes of trying to form a colony of artists there.

However, the only other artist who was ever to visit Vincent in Arles was Paul Gauguin, an unsuccessful venture. The two quarrelled furiously and the fight culminated in the renowned ear incident, where Van Gogh sliced off his own ear. Tragically, after a period of hospitalisation Van Gogh committed suicide in 1890.

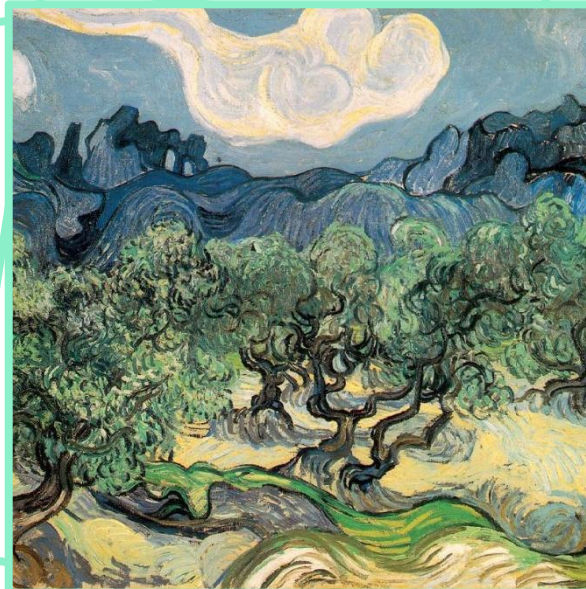


Rustic life

peaceful

Rustic life refers to a simple, basic way of living that is more closely associated with nature and the countryside. Which other words, ideas or artists do you associate with rustic life?

peasant





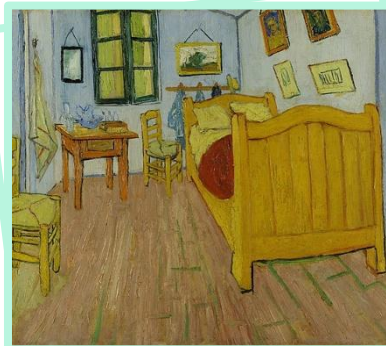
What about you?

What things or scenery do you find visually inspiring? If you were a painter, what kind of things would you paint?

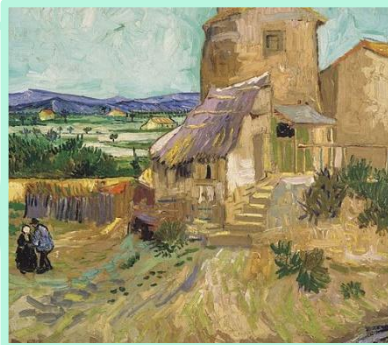
still life



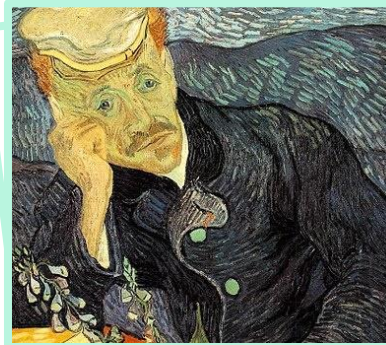
everyday situations



nature



portraits





The paintings of Van Gogh

The text refers to the painting The Potato Eaters. Do you know this painting? Which other paintings by Van Gogh are you familiar with? Are they very different from one another?





Describing art

In the text we read about how Van Gogh used light and colour in his paintings. Look at the photos below. Imagine them as paintings and describe them to your teacher.

Use the words foreground, middle and background to describe placement.



striking colours
muted colours
colour palette
colour tone



dappled light
texture
soft lines
hard lines



Talking about art

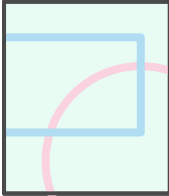
What is your favourite painting? What do you like about it?



A life changing vision

You are on holidays at the moment and went to an art gallery this morning. There, you saw a painting which really struck you.

Write a postcard to a friend who is an art enthusiast and describe the painting, the artist and the impact the artwork had on you. Use your description from the last activity to help.

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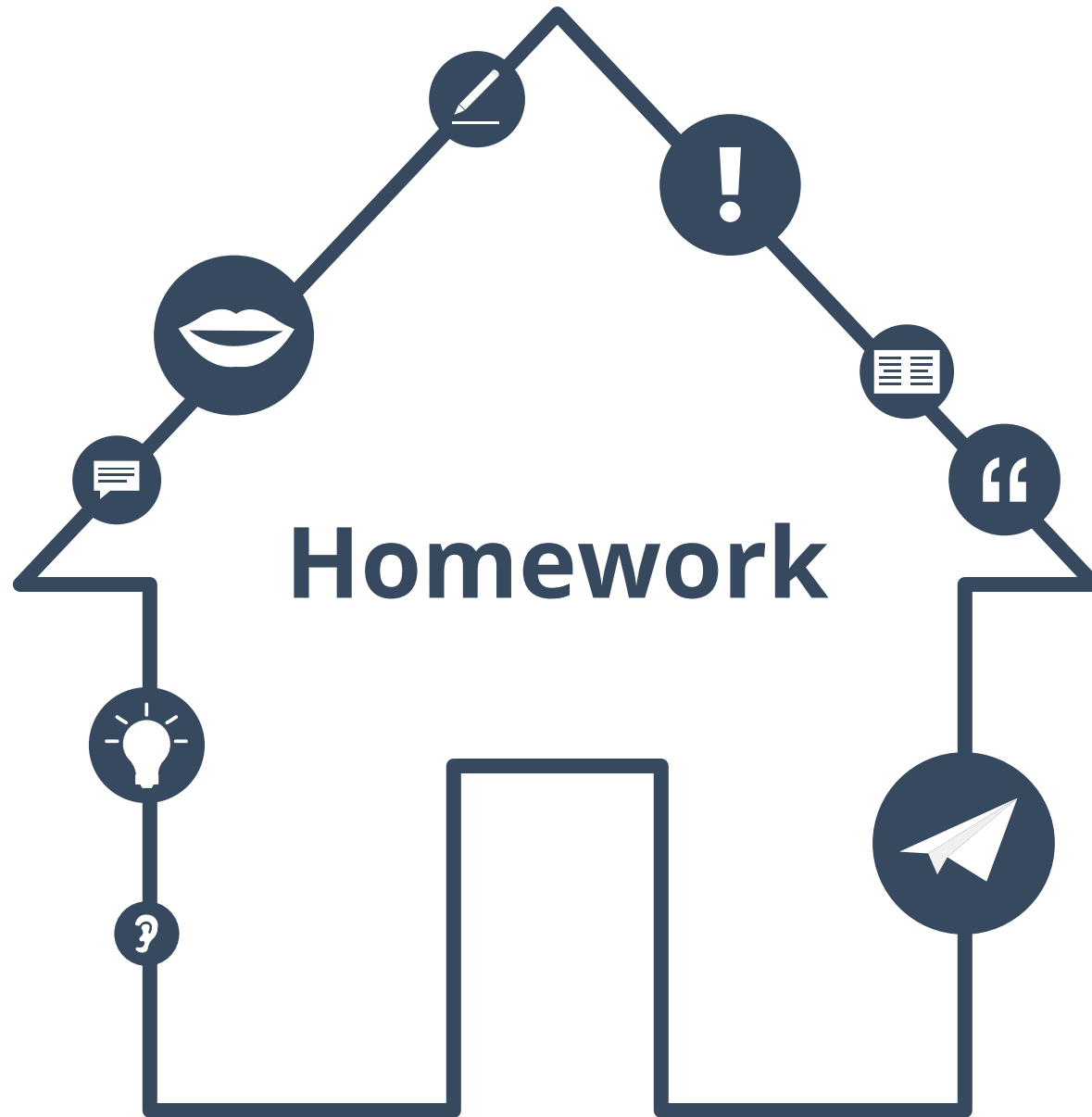


Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!







Who's your favourite artist?

You learnt a lot about the life of Van Gogh in this class. Who is your favourite artist? Write a brief text about their life and work here.

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Reflect

How did you find this class? What was the most difficult part, and what was easiest?



A vertical stack of lined paper with a spiral binding on the left side, intended for writing reflections.

