

Artist Fact Sheet

Vincent
van Gogh
Born 1853



Vincent Willem van Gogh was a Dutch painter, born in 1853. The 'van' in his name is spelt with a little 'v'. He painted lots of landscapes, but also painted portraits and still life. He only painted for about 10 years, but created more than 2000 artworks! He mostly used oil paints, but also worked with watercolours, and other materials.

As a child, van Gogh was serious and quiet. His school had around 200 pupils, but only one teacher! He enjoyed drawing. As a young adult, van Gogh worked as an art dealer, travelling around Europe, before teaching in England. While working as a teacher in Ramsgate, he used to sketch his view of the seaside.

He was very religious and his ambition was to become a pastor, but he failed the exams that he needed to pursue this career. He began working as a missionary in Belgium in 1879, where he slept on straw in a small hut. He was quite unhappy at this time, and could often be heard crying at night. It was in Belgium that he began to sketch people, encouraged by his brother's suggestion that he become an artist. He travelled to Brussels, where he attended art school. He studied anatomy and learnt more about drawing.

In 1882, he visited his relative, Anton Mauve, who introduced him to painting with oil paint and watercolours. He also gave him money to set up a studio. In 1885, he produced his first major work, called *The Potato Eaters*. His work at this time was sombre and he used dark, earthy colours. He painted with smooth brushwork and fine shading. He rented a small room and ate poorly so that he could spend his money on paint and art materials. Due to working too hard, and his poor diet, he became quite unwell.

In 1886, van Gogh moved to Paris, where he discovered the work of a group of artists called French Impressionists. This style of painting involved using visible brushstrokes and vividly portraying light. He began using bright, contrasting colours, such as blue and orange, and painting the local landscape. Van Gogh moved to the South of France, where he was inspired by the strong sunlight, creating brightly coloured artworks and developing a style of painting that he would become famous for. This style of painting became known as 'Post-Impressionism'.

It was not long afterwards, that van Gogh became mentally ill, and hurt himself by cutting off his own ear. He had to spend quite a lot of time in hospital. He had space for a small studio, and made lots of paintings of the clinic and the garden. He started painting in swirls and created his best-known painting, *The Starry Night*. Unfortunately, van Gogh never returned to full health, and died aged just 37.



Work: *Starry Night*, *Vase With 12 Sunflowers*

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