

Starry Starry Fun: Exploring Vincent van Gogh!

Materials Needed:

- Pictures or prints of Van Gogh's paintings (e.g., "Starry Night," "Sunflowers," "Bedroom in Arles"). You can view these online or use printed copies.
- Heavy paper, cardstock, or a small canvas board.
- Thick paints (tempera or acrylic are great!) in various bright colors, especially blues, yellows, greens, and oranges.
- Paintbrushes of various sizes (medium to thick ones will be especially useful).
- A container of water (for rinsing brushes).
- Paper towels or a rag.
- Optional: Oil pastels or chunky crayons if you want to try a different texture.
- Optional: A palette or paper plate for mixing paints.

Lesson Steps:

1. Meet Vincent! (10-15 minutes)

Hello! Today, we're going on an adventure to learn about a very famous and super interesting artist named Vincent van Gogh. Have you ever heard of him?

Vincent lived a long time ago (born in 1853, died in 1890). He loved to paint and used bright colors and exciting brushstrokes to show the world how he saw it and felt about it. He wasn't super famous when he was alive, but now he's one of the most well-known artists ever!

Let's look at some of his paintings. (*Parent/Teacher: Show pictures of "Starry Night," "Sunflowers," and perhaps "Bedroom in Arles" or a self-portrait.*)

- What do you see in "Starry Night"? Look at the sky, the stars, the village. How does it make you feel?
- What about his "Sunflowers"? What colors do you notice? How do the flowers look?
- When you look at his paintings, what stands out to you the most? (e.g., the colors, the way the paint looks on the canvas, the shapes).

2. Vincent's Super Style! (15 minutes)

Vincent had a very special way of painting. Let's talk about some of his cool techniques:

- **Thick Paint (Impasto):** Vincent loved to put paint on his canvas very thickly, so much so that you could see the brushstrokes and the paint looked almost like frosting on a cake! This is called 'impasto'. It gives the painting texture. Can you imagine touching it (gently, if it were real and dry!)?
- **Swirling Lines and Movement:** Look at "Starry Night" again. See how the sky seems to swirl and move? Vincent used his brushstrokes to create a sense of energy and movement. It's like the painting is alive!
- **Bold, Bright Colors:** Vincent wasn't afraid to use bright, bold colors, sometimes straight from the tube! He used colors to show his feelings and make his paintings vibrant. He loved yellows and blues.
- **Painting Feelings:** Vincent painted what he saw, but also how he felt. If he was happy, his colors might be brighter. If he was thoughtful, his scenes might be calmer. His paintings are full of emotion.

Can you point out these things in the pictures of his paintings we looked at?

3. Your Turn to Shine: Create a Van Gogh-Inspired Masterpiece! (30-45 minutes)

Now it's your turn to be an artist like Vincent!

1. **Choose your subject:** What do you want to paint? You could paint:
 - Your own version of a starry night.
 - A vase of your favorite flowers.
 - Your bedroom (like Vincent did!).
 - A landscape you like (your garden, a park).
 - Or anything else that inspires you!
2. **Think like Van Gogh:** Remember his techniques!
 - Use **thick paint**. Don't be afraid to glob it on a bit (but not too much that it takes forever to dry!).
 - Create **swirling lines and movement** with your brushstrokes, especially if you're doing a sky or something with energy.
 - Use **bold, bright colors**. Think about what colors make you feel happy or excited.
3. **Start painting!** Have fun with it. There's no right or wrong way, just your way, inspired by Vincent. Try to show your feelings in your painting through your colors and strokes.

Parent/Teacher: Encourage the student to experiment. If using thick paint is new, demonstrate a dab or two. Remind them to rinse brushes if switching to a very different color.

4. Show and Tell (5-10 minutes)

Wow, look at your amazing artwork!

- Tell me about your painting. What did you choose to paint and why?
- Which of Van Gogh's techniques did you try to use? (Thick paint? Swirls? Bright colors?)
- What was your favorite part of making this painting?
- What did you learn about Vincent van Gogh today that you found interesting?

Great job being an artist today! You explored the world of a famous painter and created something beautiful and unique.

Extension idea: You could try this again with oil pastels or crayons to see how you can create texture and bold color with different materials. You could also read a children's book about Van Gogh.