

Van Gogh's "Starry Night" Lesson Plan

- I. **Talk about expressing your feelings.** (5 min) When you feel happy, you might feel like singing or dancing. When you feel mad or sad, you might act very differently. Today we're going to talk about someone who expressed his feelings in his paintings.
- II. **Introduce *Starry Night*, by Vincent Van Gogh.** (10 min) Van Gogh was very emotional for his whole life—sometimes very happy, sometimes very sad. Can you see a little of both in this painting? Look how he signed it... just "Vincent." He thought that his whole name was too hard to pronounce, and that it was too fancy. Van Gogh was never a very confident person. Although he made over 1700 paintings and drawings, he only sold one in his lifetime! No wonder he didn't feel very confident. Today, this painting is priceless. Observe the medium used in this piece. He used oil paint, with what kind of brushes? Do you think fat or thin? Look at his lines, all the curves and curly swirls. Does that suggest anything about how Van Gogh felt when he was painting? Does this look exactly like a real night sky? Do you think it was still or windy that night?
- III. **Book To Read:** (10 min) *Vincent's Colors* by Vincent Van Gogh, which helps us understand how he felt when he painted. Or try to find an appropriate book about feelings in general.
- IV. **Art Project (30 min)**
 - a. Explain that like Van Gogh, we're going to make paintings that express our emotions. Van Gogh once said that musical notes had colors, like blue and yellow, so we're going to see how music affects our own feelings and our artwork.
 - b. Begin to play a very dark, heavy piece of classic. Hand out white construction paper and yellow, white, and dark blue crayons.
 - c. Ask the kids to use half of the page, and listen to how the music makes them feel. Choose a color that "goes" with the music and draw an object that comes to mind. Does this piece make you want to make light little tinkly lines, or big, heavy lines?
 - d. Now change the music to brighter, lighter music. Ask them to choose another color, and draw the "air" moving around the object, letting the music guide their feelings. Is it windy? Mild and calm? Now draw the "light" around the object. Does it flow, does it dash, does it dance around the object?
 - e. Change the music to very serene violin music. Using foam paint brushes and blue paint, suggest they paint all kinds of different lines all over the paper, so it's almost covered in blue. You might have bouncy lines, wavy lines, spiky lines, whatever! They'll see how the crayon pops out under the blue. This is called a "resist," because wax crayons resist the paint.
- V. **Conclusion: (5 min)** See if volunteers want to tell about their paintings. Did they help show the feeling of the music? You can try other drawings at home, using any type of music you want. Try to let the music make pictures or colors in your mind.