



# Vincent Van Gogh

## Self Portraits

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Ms. MacLure

Name:

**Objective:** You will create a self portrait using impressionism and Van Gogh for inspiration and reference.

**Frameworks Objective(6.5):** Students will interpret the meanings of artistic works based on evidence from artists' paintings and letters.



While Van Gogh's drawings are not as well known, they are acclaimed for their rough honesty and quick gestural movements. During his lifetime, Van Gogh only sold one painting. His death is still debated to this day- authorities in the 19th century dubbed it suicide, yet there is little evidence to actually prove it. Van Gogh's contemporaries were Pissarro, Monet, and Gauguin. During one argument in particular, he sliced off a part of his ear. Sources say he was a tough companion to keep and spent much of his life in and out of asylums.

**Impressionism:** Impressionism is a 19th-century art movement that originated in Paris. It became prominent during the 1870s and 1880s, in spite of harsh opposition from the conventional art community in France. The name of the style derives from the title of a Claude Monet painting, *Impression, soleil levant* (*Impression, Sunrise*), which provoked a critic to coin the term in a satirical review published in a Parisian newspaper.

**Materials:** Canvas, acrylic paint, brushes

### Overview:

**Self Portrait:** A drawing, painting, sculpture or photograph of oneself. Self portraits can be representational or abstract.

**Vincent Van Gogh:** (March 1853-July 1890) a post-impressionist painter whose work informed many 20th century artists. Much of our information about Van Gogh comes from correspondence between Van Gogh and his brother Theo. Van Gogh's technique is known for its dynamic brush strokes and vibrant colors. The blending is mostly visual- mixing right on the canvas as opposed to a palette.



### Demos

1. Sketching the proportional facial structure and drawing your own face.
2. Impressionist techniques with acrylic paint.

Impressionist painting characteristics include relatively small and thin, yet viscerally thick brush strokes, emphasizing light's changing qualities through mark making. Van Gogh and his contemporaries painted common people, and every day life, totally transforming art from romantic to real.

Contact: Questions? Email Ms. Mac at [amaclure@valleytech.k12.ma.us](mailto:amaclure@valleytech.k12.ma.us)

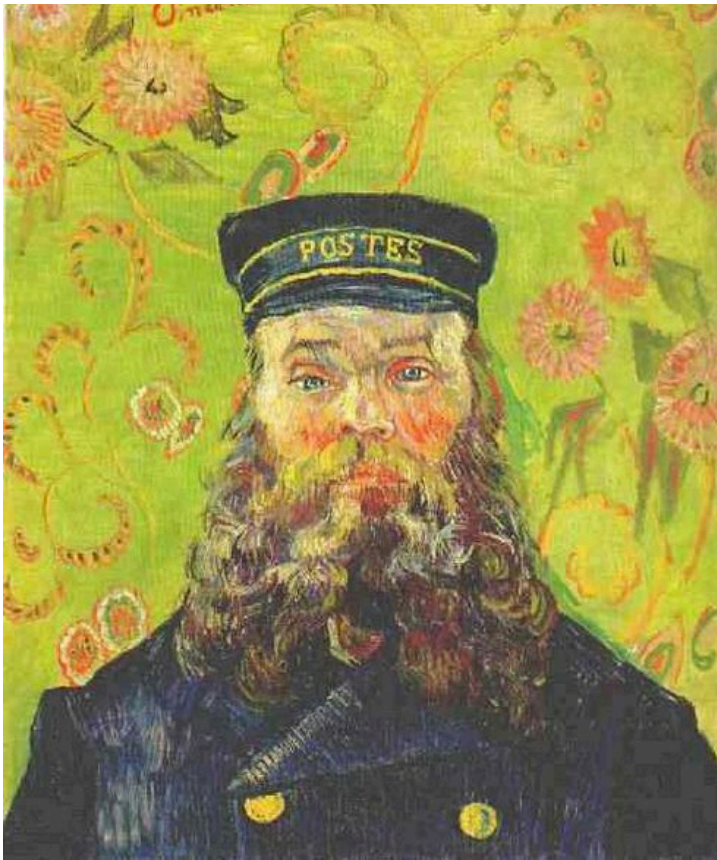
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**Warm Colors:** “sunny” colors- reds, yellows, oranges

**Cool Colors:** “watery” colors- blues, purples, greens

**Complementary Colors:** Two colors that are opposite one another on the color wheel, for example purple and yellow, or blue and orange.



## **Assessment:**

-Effort: **20 points**

-Exhibits proportional facial features: **10 pts**

-Masters the art of the impressionist brush stroke: **10 pts**

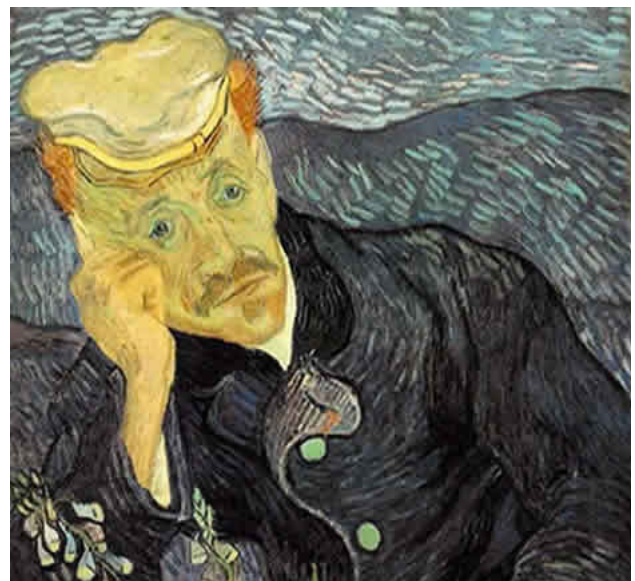
-Demonstrates exploration of color: warm, cool and complementary: **10 pts**

-Demonstrates a purposeful use of the negative space/background behind face and shoulders: **10 pts**

-Establishes a mood or feeling: **10 pts**

-Used published sources to research artist and present findings in homework: **10 pts**

-Used care with art materials: **20 pts**



## **Use the following steps...**

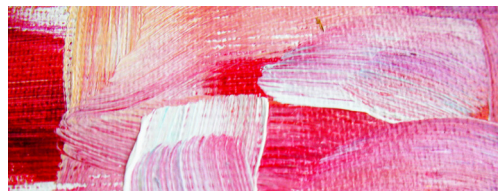
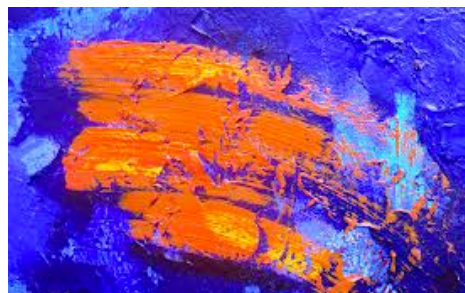
-Using a mirror, sketch your face using the techniques learned in class. (DEMO).

-Practice some brush strokes on scrap paper using acrylic paint. (DEMO)

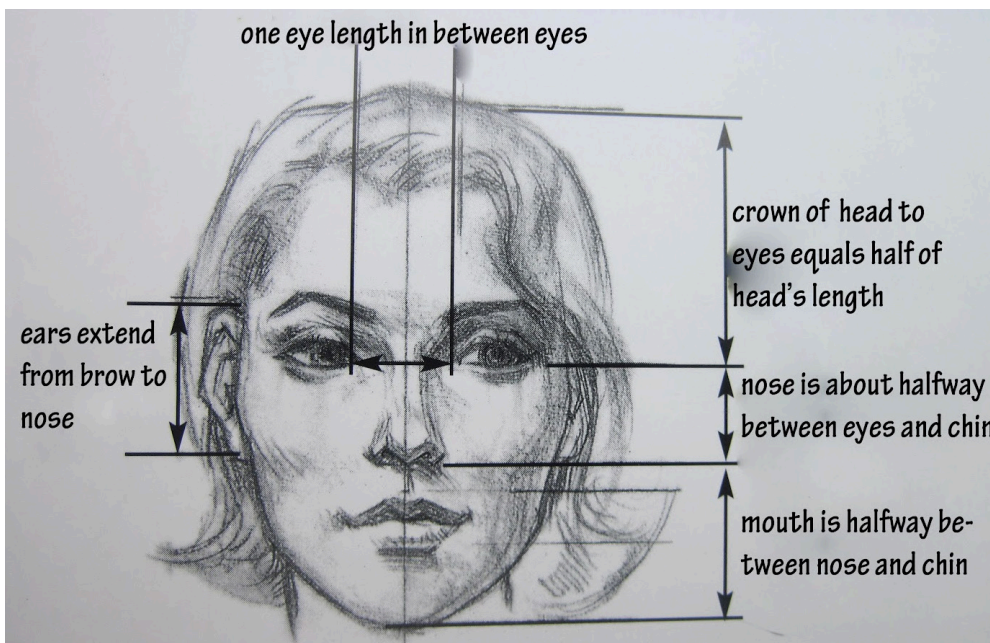
-Still using the mirror, begin to paint your drawing using expressive warm and cool colors with impressionistic strokes. (DEMO)

# Van Gogh Self Portraits: Examples

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In Impressionist painting- the strokes are often mixed right ON the canvas like the examples above. They are layered and create visual mixing. You are aiming for this effect in your self portraits.



Getting features in the right place is half the battle. Practice drawing a generic face with the facial proportions you see above- in the boxes to the right. Use pencil.

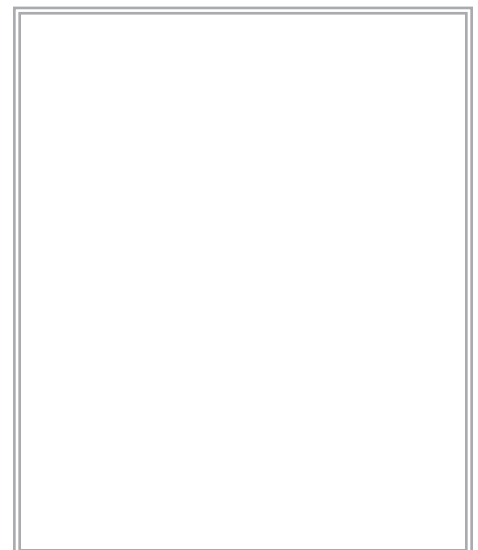
**“In spite of everything I shall rise again: I will take up my pencil, which I have forsaken in my great discouragement, and I will go on with my drawing.”**

**-Vincent Van Gogh**

# Vincent Van Gogh: Homework

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1. Read Van Gogh's letter to his brother Theo on the next 2 pages. What key remarks does he make about Impressionism and the project he is working on? **20 pts:**
2. What can you gather about Theo and Vincen'ts relationship from this letter(**20pts**)?
3. Why might self portraits be more popular today than they were in the late 1800's? (**20 pts**)
4. Impressionism began to emerge at a time when most painters were creating very romanti-cized pieces. Why were the art critics resistant this new style at first? **20pts:**
5. In the thumbnail spaces below, practice sketching your face from different angles using proper facial proportions. **20 pts.**



# Vincent Van Gogh: Homework

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My dear Théo,

Vincent to Théo, Arles,  
September 1888, Letter 540 in French

Many thanks for your letter and the 100-fr. note it contained. Milliet also came this morning, bringing me the package of Japanese stuff and other things. Among them I very much like the cabaret in two sheets, with the line of violet girl musicians against the yellow lighted wall—I did not know that print, and there are several others which were unknown to me; there is one, a woman's head, which must belong to a good school.

I have just bought a dressing table with everything necessary, and my own little room is complete. The other one, Gauguin's or another lodger's, still needs a dressing table and a chest of drawers, and downstairs I shall need a big frying pan and a cupboard.

There is no hurry for any of this, and already I can see myself earning enough to be safe for a long time to come.

You cannot think what peace of mind it gives me, I am so set on making an artist's home, but one for practical use, and not the ordinary studio full of knickknacks.

I am also thinking of planting two oleanders in tubs in front of the door.

After all we shall probably spend several times fewer hundreds of francs than Russell, for example, will spend thousands. And truly, even if I could choose between the two, for my own part I shall rather have the hundred-franc method, so long as every piece of furniture is solid and big.

But the room where I shall put up anybody who comes this way will be like a boudoir, and when it is finished, you will see that it will not be a haphazard production, but a deliberate creation.

The text of Bing's *Japon* is rather dry, and leaves something to be desired; he says there is a great individual art, but though he gives a few scraps of it, he gives you no real impression of the character of that art.

Have you read *Madame Chrysanthème* yet?

The sense of tranquility that the house has brought me mainly amounts to this—that from now on I feel I am working to provide for the future, so that after me another painter will find a going concern. I shall need time, but I am obsessed with the idea of painting such decorations for the house as will be worth the money spent on me during the years in which I was unproductive.

Mother's photograph gave me very great pleasure, because you can see that she is well, and because she still

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has such a lively expression. But I do not care for it at all as a real likeness; I have just painted my own portrait, in my own ashen coloring, and unless we are painted in color, the result is nowhere near a speaking likeness. Just because I had taken a terrific amount of trouble to get the combination of ashen and gray-pink tones, I could not like the portrait in black and white. Would Germinie Lacerteux really be Germinie Lacerteux without her color? Obviously not. How I would like to have painted portraits of our own family.

For the second time I have scraped off a study of Christ with the angel in the Garden of Olives. You see, I can see real olives here, but I cannot or rather I will not paint any more without models; but I have the thing in my head with the colors, a starry night, the figure of Christ in blue, all the strongest blues, and the angel blended citron-yellow. And every shade of violet, from a blood-red purple to ashen, in the landscape.

I have been to get five size 30 stretchers, so I have even more ideas. I'm having the pictures that I'm keeping here framed in oak and walnut.

It will take time, but you'll see later one.

I hope that you will give me some details of your visit to Maurin. I like the drawing of the two women in the carriage tremendously.

Even if it is some time before anyone comes here to stay with me, it won't make me change my mind about this step being urgent and being useful in the long run. This art that we are working in, we feel it has a long future before it, and one must be quietly settled, like steady people, and not like decadents. Here my life will become more and more like a Japanese painter's, living close to nature like a petty tradesman. And that, you well know, is a less lugubrious affair than the decadent's way. If I can live long enough, I shall be something like old Tanguy.

After all, we don't really know anything about our own personal future, but we nevertheless feel that impressionism will last. Good-bye for the present and good luck, and many, many thanks for all your kindness. I think that I shall put the Japanese things downstairs in the studio. A handshake.