

Downloadable web pages for *I, Van Gogh*: an introduction for teachers

1. INTENDED AUDIENCE

The downloadable web pages on www.vangoghfilm.com website are aimed at young people aged between 8 and 14. The information and suggestions for activities contained in these pages are suitable for individual or group use.

2. OBJECTIVE

The downloadable content is a response to questions raised by the film *I, Van Gogh*. The activity pages enable young people to look in more depth at certain themes raised in the film, for example perspective or complementary colours, through informative elements and game-based activities. The goal is to familiarise children with a number of theoretical concepts, providing them with a sound introduction to the world of drawing and painting.

3. GAMES AND PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

As an accompaniment to the downloadable content, the website vangoghfilm.com offers two interactive games, enabling children to explore:

- + The importance of the background in portraiture, and how a figure is positioned in a particular setting (“Find the occupants of my paintings”).
- + the composition of a picture, and the importance of perspective (“Furnish Van Gogh’s room”).

The downloadable pages provide activities and information which revolve around drawing and painting:

- + A page suggesting that the individual or group should grow a sunflower. While it is growing, the children are invited to draw its growth every ten days, confronting the difficulties of drawing to scale, and making progress through repeatedly drawing the same subject. If this activity is undertaken by a group, once the sunflowers reach maturity they can be made into a bouquet, which the budding gardeners can paint.
- + A page inviting the children to draw their bedrooms, or a single feature of them. Without going into too much technical detail, children are invited to think about their position in space, and about the way in which this position influences the way in which they have depicted their bedrooms (or classroom).
- + A page presenting an approach to the idea of complementary colours.
- + A page explaining how perspective works.
- + A page describing a typical day from Vincent’s life in Arles, helping the children to appreciate the painter’s total commitment to his art and confronting them with their own points of reference.

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTIVITIES...

Van Gogh’s world lends itself to a great variety of activities aimed at discovering art and its history. Van Gogh’s fondness for Japan enables children to explore another culture and a different way of seeing. Van Gogh’s fascination with fields of wheat can be used to explore ideas such as the cycle of the seasons and the realities of agriculture. The symbolism of the wheat which is sown, which germinates and reaches maturity, then is cut down and transformed into food, also lends itself to exploring ideas such as the cycle of life, the acquisition of knowledge, and work on the land. It could be interesting to create a small area for growing wheat near to where the children are working, and involve them in its cultivation.

Van Gogh’s relationships with his colleagues, such as Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard, can be used to study the exchange of ideas, collective working and artistic emulation.

Van Gogh’s correspondence with his brother, Theo, can be used as a starting-point for the introduction of ideas such as patronage, the realities of the artist’s profession, and the art market.