

Meet the Masters

March Program

Vincent Van Gogh "Postman Joseph Roulin"**About the Artist:**

See the following page.

Artwork Overview:

Vincent Van Gogh was an artist known for his use of brilliant, directly applied colors. The painting "Postman Joseph Roulin" is an example of his thick painting application. Notice how the beard appears to be very textural, like a beard would be. The hands are thick and rough, the kind of hand that have known a lot of work. Notice the gold buttons and gold trim on the sleeves that is repeated in the cap. This helps to break up the large blue areas of the uniform and serve to bring your eye throughout the surface of the painting. Van Gogh made many drawing and several painting of his friend the postman.

Topics for Discussion:

1. What do you think of this painting?
2. Is the man in the painting old or young? How can you tell?
3. Which colors are warm and which are cold?
4. Do you know anyone who wears a uniform? (police officer, boy scouts, girl scouts)
5. Would you like this man to deliver your mail?
6. Do you think Joseph Roulin was Van Gogh's friend?
7. Van Gogh wrote and received many letters, so do you think the postman was important in his life?

Hands-on Art Activity: Paint a Portrait of Someone You Know

Materials: Stiff paper or cardboard
Tempera
Soft brushes
Water tubs
Paper towels
Newspaper for tables

Directions:

1. The portraits can be of themselves, their teacher, a parent, sibling or someone else important in their lives.
2. Each child should have their own paint set, water and brush.
3. Have the children take a few minutes to think about the way this special person looks. This time for reflection helps them develop visual images before they begin painting.
4. These paints do need plenty of water, so tell this to the children and ask them not to dig the brush into the paint.
5. Have the children paint the background and fill in the entire surface of the paper.

Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1910)

Vincent Van Gogh was born on March 30, 1853 at the parsonage of Zundert, a village in Dutch Brabant near the Belgian frontier. His father and grandfather were Protestant ministers. Among his ancestors were a sculptor and several goldsmiths. Three of his uncles were art dealers, and on Vincent was instrumental in giving him his start in life as an artist. He was born into a family penetrated with art and religion, the two aspirations he continually ventured and eventually fused together.

When Van Gogh was 16 he went to The Hague to work for his uncle. His brother Theo stayed in the family art dealer business and became Van Gogh's dealer. In 1876, Van Gogh tried to become a preacher but failed his theology exams. Although he was not ordained, in 1876 he became a preacher in a poor coal-mining district in what is now southwestern Belgium.

In 1880, Van Gogh began painting as a profession. His early works were still lifes and scenes of peasant life. He used dark somber colors. By 1886 he moved to Paris. He became a part of the intellectual excitement of the Paris art scene. He made contacts with many French impressionist painters such as Camille Pissarro, Emile Bernard, Paul Gauguin, and Georges Seurat. He experimented with Impressionism while painting scenes of suburban and city life. Van Gogh collected Japanese prints, which no doubt influenced his work.

In 1888, Van Gogh moved to Arles in southern France. The sunlight and colors of the French countryside inspired him to experiment with rich vibrant colors. His paintings became strong with rich tones and bold shapes. His commitment to God and to showing the beauty of God's creations permeated his paintings. His heavy, thick (impasto) technique reveals the flurry of his painting technique. He must have painted very quickly with great precision in application,

Van Gogh suffered from alternating bouts of depression and flurries of painting activity. His mental illness was never diagnosed. The last 19 months of his life were spent in a mental hospital. When he realized his mental condition would not improve, he committed suicide.