

## VINCENT VAN GOGH, *The Starry Night*



**Primary Focus:** Artistic expression

**Secondary Focus:** Post - Impressionism

Vincent van Gogh's paintings convey an explosion of creativity. His vivid imagination is echoed on each of his canvases as ordinary scenes turn into the extraordinary.

In our present time, it does not seem readily apparent, but the Impressionist painters were brave. They had the courage to forgo the long standing, French traditions of art, and create what they felt. This is what makes van Gogh's paintings so original; he did not just paint what he saw but with all his emotions. This type of bold expression is seen in the *Starry Night* and in the many genres he utilized; it is what makes a van Gogh so unforgettable.

The main point to explore with the class is van Gogh's use of emotion. The two ways van Gogh accomplishes this is through his use of color and brushstrokes. Have the students discover this through the questions you ask.

Give information on van Gogh's life story. Especially the fact that he only sold a few of his paintings in his life time. His work was so original in his time - it was not accepted by most people.

**Map Skills:** Van Gogh was born Dutch and then worked in France. Locate everything in relation to Illinois on the pull-down map in the class room.

**Class room connection:** Encourage the students to use the descriptive words from their literacy lessons to describe what they are seeing.

**Define:** **Post - Impressionism** and **Impasto**

The Black Binder (in the bottom drawer of the file cabinet) has a self-portrait, and *Vincent's Bedroom at Arles* by van Gogh. Those should be shown to the class as well.

### **Some questions to pose:**

- What genre is this painting? (it is a landscape)
- What is in the foreground, background? Students should discover the many natural elements here. The dark Cypress Tree in the foreground, the moon, stars, mountains, etc..
- What if the Cypress Tree was not in the painting? Would the composition be balanced?
- What colors do you see? What colors jump out at you? Squint your eyes: what colors are the brightest?
- How do the colors van Gogh uses make you feel?
- **Do you think these colors are the way van Gogh saw the sky or how he imagined it and why?**
- How do you think this painting would look with dull colors? How would it change this scene?
- Do you see the brushstrokes in this painting? How many directions are they going?
- How do these thick, **impasto** brush strokes make the painting feel? Do they make the painting feel still or moving?
- How do you think these brush strokes would feel if you could touch them?
- How do you think van Gogh applied these types of brush strokes to the canvas?