

10th DAY

20th DAY

30th DAY

40th DAY

50th DAY

60th DAY

The sunflower:

Originating in Peru and introduced into Europe at the end of the 17th century, the sunflower is a plant whose name is wonderfully apt as it turns towards the sun from morning till evening. Its botanical name, *helianthus annuus*, comes from the Greek *helios* (sun) and *anthos* (flower). *Annus* indicates the duration of its life; the sunflower is an annual plant.

The sunflower can reach up to 3 metres in height. At the beginning of May, you can plant your seeds directly in the soil. By July the flower will be as big as a dinner-plate!

Activity:

Vincent van Gogh painted sunflowers several times. For him, these flowers were a symbol of gratitude. In his letters, he sometimes called them “suns”.

Sunflower seeds are readily available in the shops. Plant your own sunflower and draw its portrait every ten days! Make sure to expose it to the sun and water it regularly!

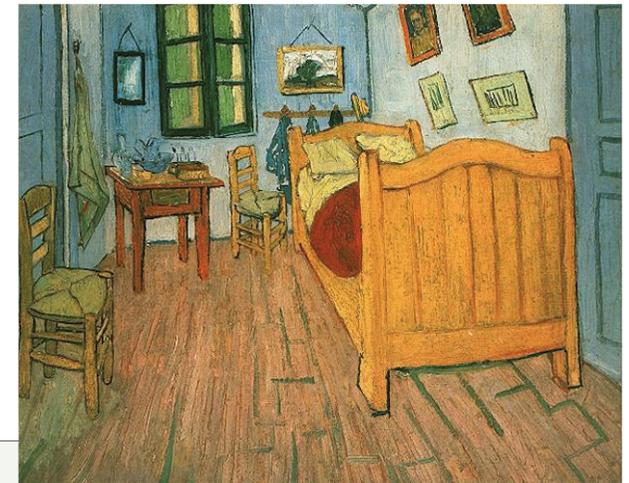


Draw your bedroom!

Vincent van Gogh painted three versions of his bedroom in Arles.

The dominant object in the room is the bed : solid and simple, it suggests warmth, comfort and security. In this painting, Vincent sought to express rest, tranquillity, order and calm.

People used to think that he distorted the perspectives of his bedroom. In fact, he faithfully depicted a room whose back wall is at an angle.



Exercise :

Both in painting and drawing, what you depict depends upon what you see, and what you see depends on where you are standing...

Take the test! In your bedroom or classroom, draw what you see, trying to take account of the position of the furniture. To begin with, after you have sketched the walls, you may wish to depict just one item of furniture (table,

chair, desk, etc.).

If this seems too difficult, try copying the picture of Van Gogh's bedroom. Feel free to use the Perspective sheet to remind you of a few fundamental elements of drawing :

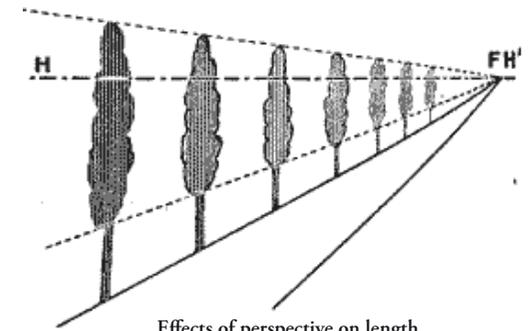
- Items seem smaller when they are further away from you.

- You can only draw what you see, which depends on how high up your eyes are!

Perspective



When you look at a distant object, it seems smaller than the objects which are closer to you. The artist who paints or draws what he sees takes account of this effect, which is called perspective. In the painting opposite, the figures in the foreground seem larger than the blue figure which is moving towards the back of the room. Also, the walls seem to get closer together, quite simply because the back of the room seems smaller than the front. This reduction obeys strict rules which can be translated into lines which meet at a dot, the vanishing point.



Effects of perspective on length, volume and scale.

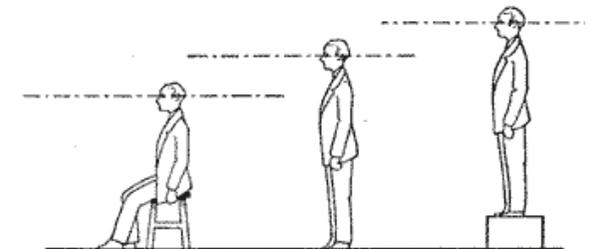
Van Gogh and perspective

Vincent van Gogh had a very good command of the rules of perspective, but played with them by using them in a completely personal way.

In the painting above, the vanishing point is situated to the left of the door at the back, which means that Van Gogh is seated when he paints the background. On the other hand, in order to paint the

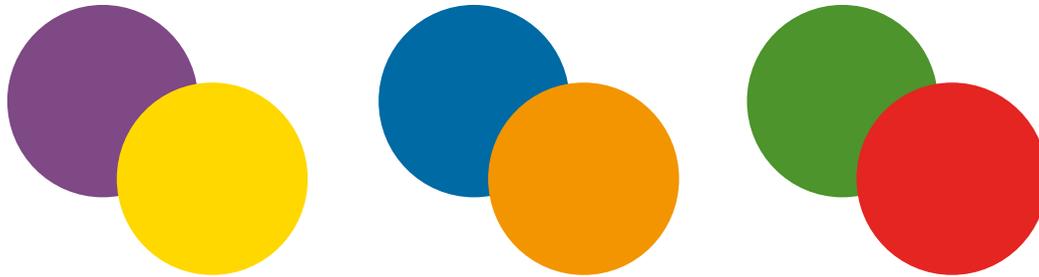
group of figures who are seated around the stove, he must have stood up. This effect is found in a large number of his paintings, and it gives them an effect of extraordinary depth.

Try to find the vanishing lines (lines of perspective) in the painting above, starting from the main vanishing point.

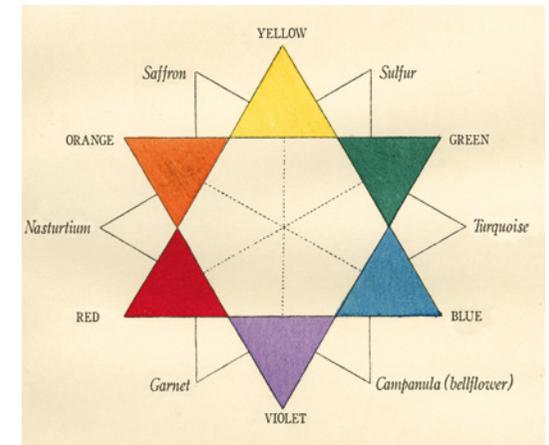
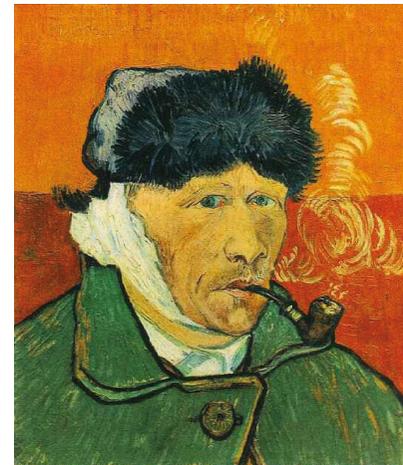


The height of the horizon varies with the position of the observer.

Discover colours !



In the 19th century, scientists discovered that two different colours could be strengthened when they were placed side by side. For example, a red flower like the poppy appears brighter on a green background than on a yellow one. Painters like Vincent van Gogh used this discovery in order to create stronger colour effects.



Van Gogh and colours

Van Gogh wanted to become a colourist painter, that is to say a painter who seeks to express himself through colour as much as through drawing.

Up to the age of 33, Van Gogh painted with dark colours. During the last four years of his life, which he spent in France, he tried to put as much light as possible into his painting. His goal was to express in colour the emotions he felt, and which he wanted people who looked at his paintings to feel too. By settling in the

south of France in 1888, he gave himself the means to paint under a stronger sun, enabling him to attain what he called the high yellow note. For Van Gogh, colours were like musical notes, with which he could compose veritable symphonies.

Vincent's typical working day

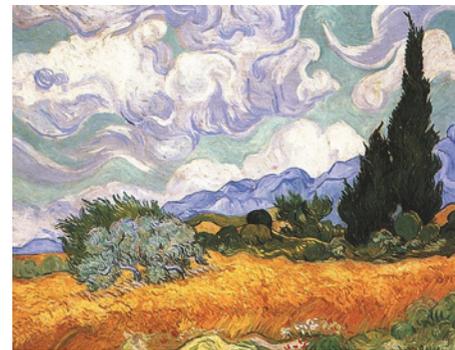
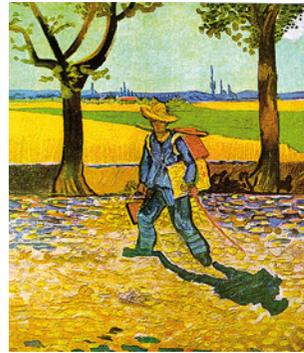
Vincent van Gogh got up early. After eating, and drinking a cup of coffee, he put on his workman's clothes, then set out his materials: his tubes, his brushes, his easel and his canvases. He kept all these materials in a case which he could carry on his back, a bit like a satchel!

He was quite willing to walk up to 20 km in search of a subject. Once he was satisfied with what he had found, he set up his



perspective frame, drew a preparatory sketch, then carried out a series of difficult mental calculations to work out the best colour associations.

Once he was ready, he began painting like a maniac for hours on end, stopping only to drink and eat what he had brought with him. He might produce several canvases and drawings in a day, alone, talking only to the peasants and the people who passed by. He returned home at nightfall, often exhausted. He ate at the restaurant and went to bed late, sometimes after continuing to paint into the night. When all



the world was asleep, Vincent painted out of doors to capture night effects, or in his studio in order to create the effects which wind or rain had prevented him from obtaining during the day.

At the restaurant, he chatted with his friends, such as Roulin the postman in Arles, or Gustave Ravoux in Auvers-sur-Oise. He also liked to sit in cafes and restaurants to write letters to his friends and his brother.

Vincent van Gogh was known for his great capacity to work. His profession as a painter took up all of his time. Indeed, he did nothing but progress along an artistic road which he could see clearly, stretching out ahead of him. There were no holidays or weekends for him! His free time was time spent working; painting and drawing were his only passions.



Discover colours: activity

Now that you have discovered the secrets of complementary colours, Use the painting below to fill in the right colours!

