

Vincent van Gogh never completed an art study. With this lesson card, you'll learn more about the young Vincent and how, with a little help and (above all) a lot of perseverance, you can still become a world-famous artist!

As a child, Vincent already made many drawings, as did his brothers and sisters. They regularly gave each other and their parents their self-made drawings as gifts. Even when he was older and got a serious job, Vincent continued to draw. For his own enjoyment, but also to practice. Because he dreamed more and more of one day becoming a real artist.

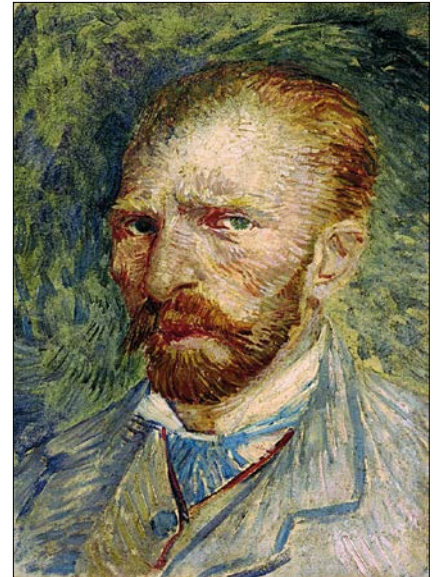
**1 At about what age were you drawing the most?**

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**2 Back then, did you ever practice something specifically, until you got good at it (or better)?**

.....

.....



Vincent van Gogh, 1853 - 1890  
Self-portrait, April - June 1887

In 1882, Vincent received some money from his brother Theo. With this extra money, he bought oil paints and had a wooden perspective frame made (check google/images), which you can use for drawing depth. He began working with it immediately and painted *Girl in a wood* (see map).

**3 Look at the work and name two choices that Vincent made to get depth in his painting:**

1 .....

2 .....

Vincent made the painting while sitting in the wood. You can see that by the high horizon, but the conservator of the museum also found more evidence: the paint actually contains the remains of leaves and the forest floor.

**4 How would the composition have looked if Vincent was standing? Make a mini sketch in the box on the right (and try to create some depth too!)**



Vincent van Gogh was an enthusiastic letter writer. He wrote most letters to his brother Theo: about financial worries and love, but mainly about art and the paintings that he made. Referring to *Girl in a wood*, he wrote that he wanted to make a painting ‘that one can breathe and wander about in it — and smell the woods’.

**5 What do you think? Did Vincent succeed in this?**

.....

.....

**6 This card is about practice and painting lessons. How would you score this painting on the line below?**

Painting student ← ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ → World-famous artist

Main reason:

.....

The museum also has a large number of Vincent’s drawings. Helene Kröller-Müller bought 190 in total! Unfortunately, they are not always on display.

**7 Look at the image (right). Which words do you think best fit Van Gogh’s drawing style?**

Quick / slow / detailed / careful / rough / big / small

**Which word would you add?**

.....



Vincent van Gogh, 1853 - 1890  
Sorrowful old man, November - December 1882

The drawings show how Vincent always continued to practice and experiment with, for example, poses (how you stand/how you bend etc.) and the use of light and dark. Sometimes he even ‘practiced’ so hard that he went through the paper!

**8 Do you find this drawing a good example of ‘practicing poses’?**

Yes / no, because .....

**9 Imagine for a moment that you are Vincent. Is the drawing (and the pose) successful?**

No, needs more practice ← ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ → Yes, absolutely!

Because: .....

.....

**10** When Vincent van Gogh was 27, he decided to concentrate completely on becoming an artist. He asked the well-known painter Anton Mauve to give him some lessons. Mauve agreed and the studious Vincent made his first still lifes in oil paints in Mauve's studio.

**11** Look at *Still life with clogs*, from 1881. This is not a random collection of objects. Mauve made Vincent practice with as many different surfaces and textures as possible. That's why we see, for example, the shiny bottle and the wooden clogs. Which object would you find most difficult to paint?

**12** What do you think: did Vincent succeed in painting this object?

Yes / no, .....

.....

.....

Vincent van Gogh is also called the 'peasant painter'. If you look around, you can probably understand why. One of his influences was the French artist Jean-Francois Millet, who caused quite a stir by making paintings of 'ordinary people': of strong, hardworking farmers and their honest and simple life in the countryside.

**13** Look at his painting *Woman baking bread* (see image) from 1854. What can you say about:

The use of colour? .....

.....

.....

The composition? .....

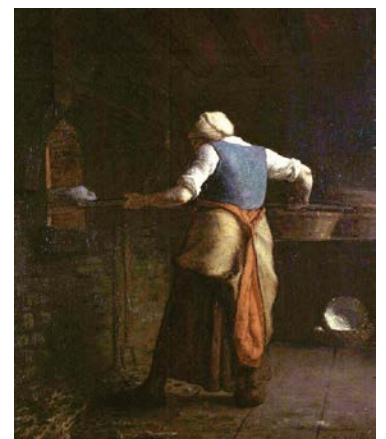
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**14** Which of Vincent's works reminds you most of the *Woman baking bread*?

Title: .....

Because, .....



Jean-François Millet, 1814 - 1875  
*Woman baking bread*, 1854

Vincent's most famous 'peasant painting' is *The potato eaters*: a 'portrait' of a poor farming family eating a meal together. The family shown is the De Groot family. They posed for Vincent for three evenings and drank coffee to stay awake.

**15** Vincent writes that he was not interested in a very precise painting technique. He wanted to paint the family in 'their roughness' and show how hard their life is. How did he do that?

If you look at the painting technique: .....

.....

.....

If you look at the details: .....

.....

.....

Millet was one example for this work, but so was his great predecessor Rembrandt! Vincent studied his prints, to learn more about Rembrandt's speciality: working with light/dark and dramatic lighting.

**16** Squint your eyes and look at the painting. In the box on the right, make small and large circles in the places where you see light in the painting.



The De Groot family posed for Vincent on several occasions, as did some other farmers. That was fortunate because he had no money to pay for models and people were often unhappy with his dark portraits. They were absolutely not 'flattering'.

**17** Look at the portraits in this space. Do you recognize the people who also appear in 'The potato eaters'? Which member of the De Groot family do you see the most?

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**18** What would you think if Van Gogh made this kind of portrait of you?

.....

.....



**19** Finally: you've seen how Vincent continued to practice and always learnt something new. From Mauve, but also from Millet and Rembrandt. Take one last look at *The potato eaters*. How would you score this work?

Painting student ← ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ → World-famous artist

**X!** Extra assignment: You saw how Mauve composed Vincent's first still life: with everyday objects, selected for their different shapes and surfaces. Can you compose a still life of 5 different objects with different textures taken from the paintings in the Kröller-Müller Museum?

1. object: .....

from the painting: ..... by: .....

2. object: .....

from the painting: ..... by: .....

3. object: .....

from the painting: ..... by: .....

4. object: .....

from the painting: ..... by: .....

5. object: .....

from the painting: ..... by: .....