

# VINCENT VAN GOGH

## TEACHING PACKAGE

AN ARTIST'S STRUGGLE

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED? THE  
COMIC BOOK, A PEN AND PAPER,  
THE PHOTOCOPY SHEET, A PAIR  
OF SCISSORS, GLUE, A COMPUTER  
WITH AN INTERNET CONNECTION,  
A PRINTER AND AN ATLAS.  
HAVE FUN!

EUREDUCTION

Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam

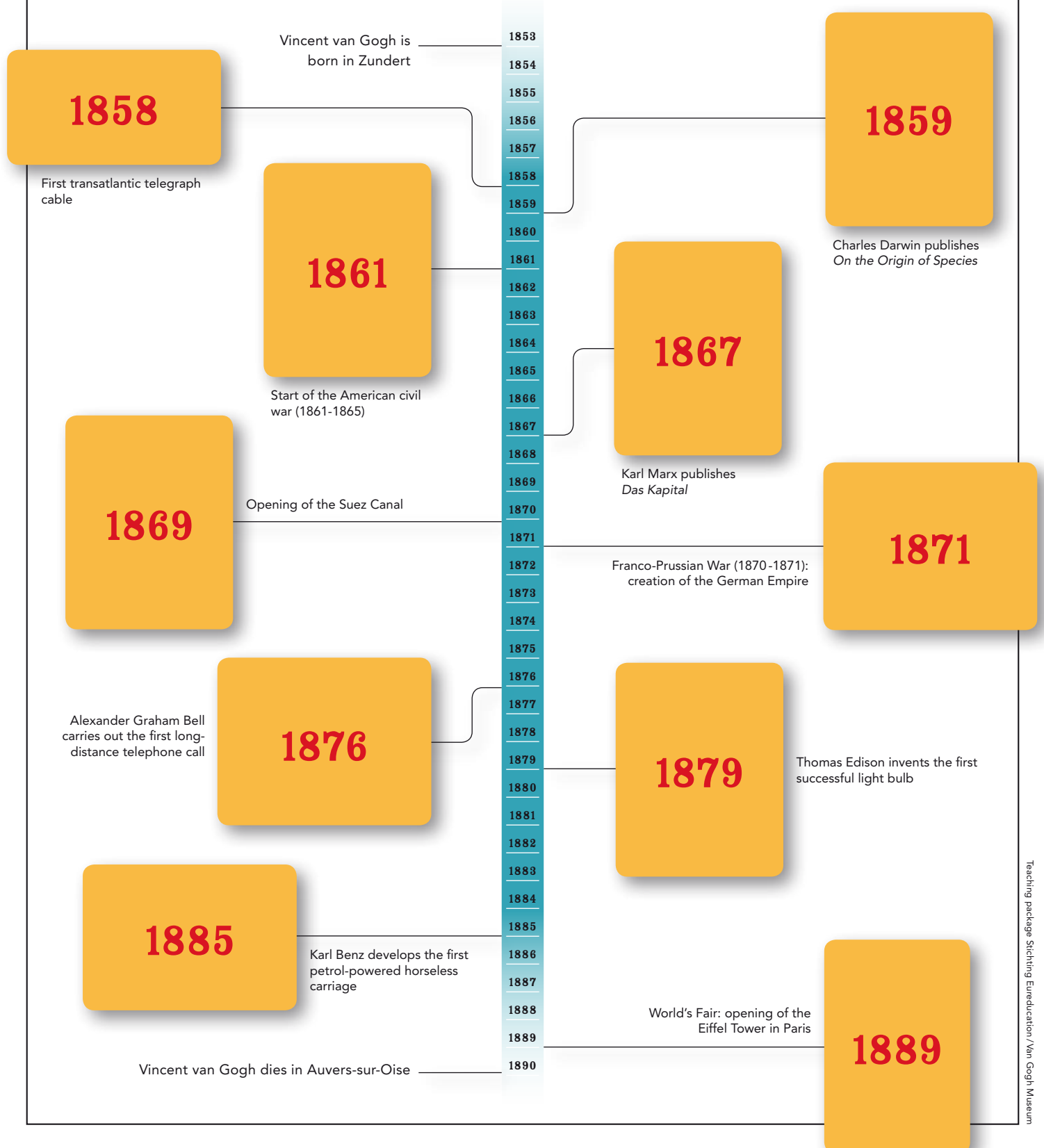
*W. Raaijmakers*

# 1

VINCENT VAN GOGH WAS BORN IN 1853 AND DIED IN 1890. THE TIMELINE BELOW WILL GIVE YOU AN IMPRESSION OF THE PERIOD HE LIVED IN.

**A** Cut out the pictures from the photocopy sheet and put them in the right place on the timeline.

**B** Make your own timeline of Vincent van Gogh's life. Look for more information about Vincent in the comic book and on the internet.

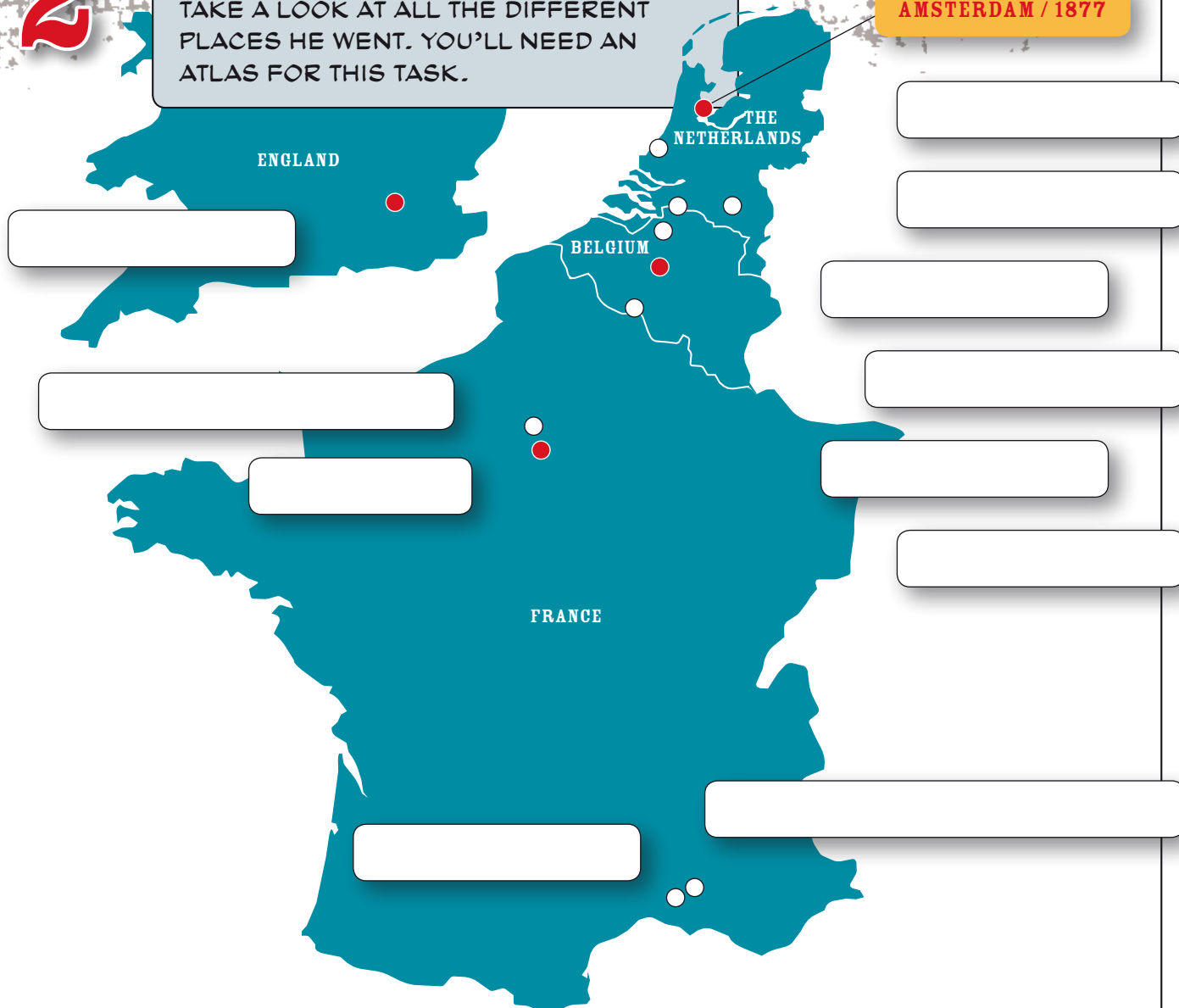




# 2

AS YOU'VE READ IN THE COMIC BOOK, VINCENT VAN GOGH LIVED AND WORKED IN A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES IN EUROPE. IN THIS EXERCISE, WE'LL TAKE A LOOK AT ALL THE DIFFERENT PLACES HE WENT. YOU'LL NEED AN ATLAS FOR THIS TASK.

AMSTERDAM / 1877

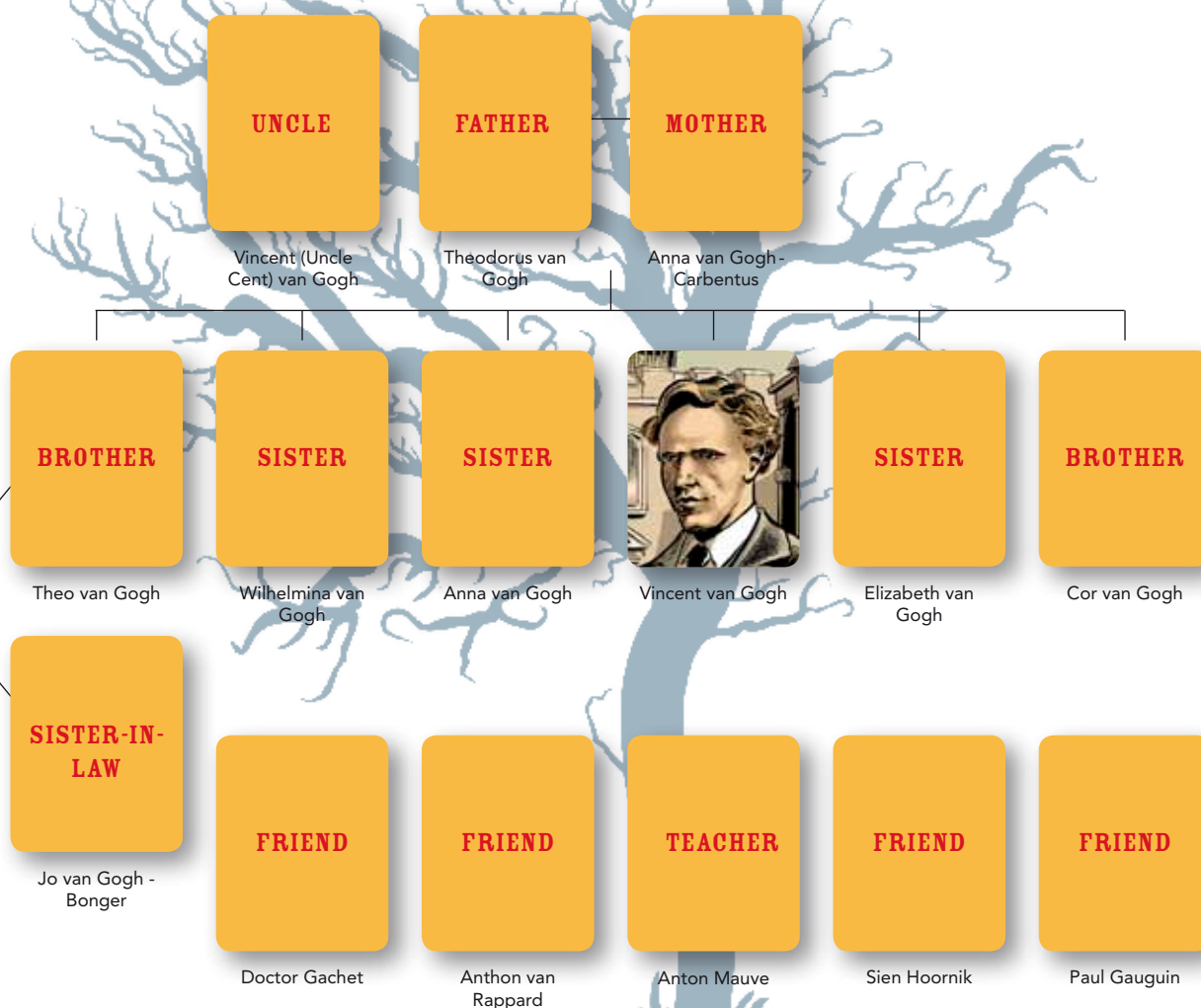


- A** Mark on the map the places where Vincent lived. *Zundert, Brussels, Nuenen, Amsterdam, Arles, London, The Hague, Auvers-sur-Oise, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, Antwerp, Paris, Cuesmes (Borinage)*
- B** Next to the name of the place, write approximately the year(s) when Vincent was there.
- C** What forms of transport could Vincent have used at that time?
- D** Vincent lived and worked in different countries. Can you imagine what sort of practical problems he might have had when he moved abroad to work? Do you think it's easier or more difficult for someone to move to another country to work nowadays? Why?
- E** Nowadays, when people move to different countries, the terms 'emigration', 'immigration' and 'integration' are often used. Can you define these words? Could we say that Vincent 'emigrated' to France?
- F** How easy do you think Vincent found it to adjust to his life outside the Netherlands? What might help people to settle in and feel comfortable when they start life in a new country? What is an 'expat'? Do you think we can describe Vincent as an expat?

# 3

VINCENT DEPENDED ON HIS BROTHER THEO FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND OTHER ASSISTANCE. IN THIS EXERCISE, WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE AROUND VINCENT.

- A** Cut out the pictures of the people from the photocopy sheet and stick them in the right place on the tree below.
- B** How did Vincent earn money to support himself?
- C** What do you think about the way he made his living?
- D** Vincent's brother, Theo van Gogh, always helped and supported him. Explain the way(s) that Theo helped Vincent.
- E** Why do you think Theo always helped out his elder brother? Please give a written response.
- F** If someone doesn't have a job nowadays or finds it difficult to make ends meet, he or she can apply for benefits. What was the situation like in Vincent's day?
- G** Using your previous answers to help, explain why Theo played such an important part in Vincent's life. Write at least ten sentences on the subject.



# 4

THE COMIC BOOK TELLS VINCENT VAN GOGH'S LIFE STORY. THE ILLUSTRATOR HAS INCORPORATED MANY OF VINCENT'S DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS INTO THE PICTURES.

**A** Find the following works of art in the comic book and note down the numbers of the pages they appear on.

**B** Compare the real paintings and drawings with the illustrations in the comic book. Do the pictures look like the original works of art? Explain your opinion in writing.











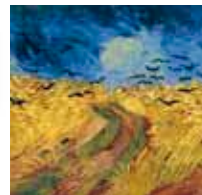















VINCENT VAN GOGH BECAME FAMOUS NOT ONLY FOR HIS PAINTINGS, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF HIS ILLNESS AND TRAGIC DEATH. HE WROTE A LOT OF LETTERS, MOSTLY TO THEO, HIS YOUNGER BROTHER. BECAUSE OF THESE LETTERS, WE NOW KNOW A GREAT DEAL ABOUT VINCENT'S LIFE.

# 5

When Vincent was in an institution, he wrote a letter to his brother Theo: 'And I can see myself already in advance, on the day when I have some success, longing for my solitude and distress here (...) Every cloud has a silver lining.' In one of his last letters, he wrote: 'I risk my life for my own work.'

**A** On the first page of the comic book, what does Vincent think might be wrong with him? And what disorder do the doctors say he is suffering from?

**B** Vincent suffered from attacks that made him so confused that he didn't know what was happening or what he was doing. How has the illustrator depicted this in the comic book?

**C** Towards the end of the book, Vincent speaks to a gravedigger. Has he seen the

gravedigger before? Can you suggest why this particular person might be significant for Vincent at this point in his life?

**D** What does Vincent talk to the gravedigger about?

**E** What does the gravedigger say Vincent will receive if he makes a sacrifice?

**F** What exactly is the sacrifice that they're talking about?

# 6

VINCENT LIVED AT A TIME THAT SAW A GREAT DEAL OF ARTISTIC EXPERIMENTATION. HE EXPERIMENTED TOO, PAINTING IN A WIDE VARIETY OF DIFFERENT STYLES. HE FOUND A LOT OF INSPIRATION IN THE WAY OTHER ARTISTS WORKED. THAT'S WHAT THIS EXERCISE IS ABOUT.

On the right below you can see four works by Vincent. Four works by other artists are on the left. They are accompanied by brief descriptions.

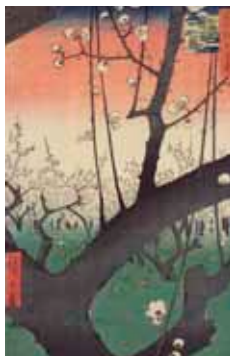
Your task is to link two of the works to each description: a work by Vincent van Gogh and a work by one of his sources of inspiration.



**REALISM** Reproducing an object in paint as precisely as possible, so that it looks the same as it does in reality.



**JAPONISM** The influence of art from Japan on Western artists.



**IMPRESSIONISM** Changes in the light make colours shift and constantly change appearance. Impressionist artists paint a subject as they see it at a particular moment in time, not exactly as it is in reality.



**POINTILLISM** Painting with dots in different colours. If you look at a work from a distance, your eyes 'mix' the colours.



When he was creating his paintings, Vincent van Gogh used brushes of different thicknesses. He often used to spread the paint thickly onto the canvas. This technique is called 'impasto'. The oil paint he used was in tubes - a recent invention in the nineteenth century! These tubes made it easy for Vincent to take his paint with him whenever he wanted to paint outside.



# 7

VINCENT VAN GOGH MADE A LOT OF PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS. NOWADAYS HE'S A WORLD-FAMOUS PAINTER AND HIS PAINTINGS ARE WORTH A HUGE AMOUNT OF MONEY, BUT THAT CERTAINLY WASN'T THE CASE IN VINCENT'S LIFETIME.

- A** Why do you think the works of Vincent van Gogh cost so much money now?
- B** Vincent never became very wealthy from the sale of his works. Can you explain why?
- C** The price of a painting depends on a number of factors. Suggest three different factors that can influence the price of a painting.
- D** Look at the following painting by Vincent van Gogh. It's a portrait of the owner of a café in Arles: L'Arlésienne. In 2006, this painting was sold to a private collector for over forty million dollars (£22m). Write an explanation of why you think this painting went for such a high price.
- E** If you look carefully, you can find this woman in the comic book too. On which pages?



VINCENT VAN GOGH PAINTED A LARGE NUMBER OF SELF-PORTRAITS. SOME OF THESE APPEAR BELOW. PAINTING SELF-PORTRAITS ALLOWED VINCENT TO PRACTISE PAINTING FACES, WITHOUT HAVING TO PAY A MODEL.

# 8



- A** Compare these portraits with the way the comic-book illustrator has depicted Vincent. Note down at least two similarities and at least two differences.
- B** Make your own self-portrait in the style of Vincent van Gogh. Here are a few suggestions to help you:
  - Use a good **MIRROR**, as Vincent did.
  - Enlarge a **PHOTOGRAPH** of yourself, hold it up to a window and trace the outline onto a sheet of paper.
  - Thicken your paint with **FLOUR** and use the impasto technique.
  - Try painting stripes in different **COLOURS**.

# 9

THE AMERICAN SINGER DON MCLEAN WROTE A SONG CALLED 'VINCENT', WHICH IS ALL ABOUT VAN GOGH. FIND A RECORDING OF THE SONG AND LOOK ONLINE FOR THE LYRICS. LISTEN TO THE SONG AND THEN ANSWER THE QUESTIONS.

- A** How can you tell that the singer admires Vincent van Gogh? Put your answer in writing.
- B** The singer also feels sorry for the painter. How do you know? Why do you think he feels that way?
- C** Don McLean found inspiration for this song in various paintings by Van Gogh. Read the

lyrics again. Then look online for pictures of Vincent's paintings that you think fit well with Don McLean's song. Are you allowed to print them? If so, cut out the pictures and write the verse or chorus of the song next to the painting that you think is the best match for those words. If you can't print the picture, just note down the titles of the paintings next to the relevant verse or chorus.

SEARCH ON THE INTERNET OR LOOK IN A BOOK FOR A PICTURE OF A PAINTING BY VINCENT VAN GOGH. CHOOSE THE PAINTING THAT APPEALS MOST TO YOU. THEN ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS.

# 10

- A** What material(s) did Vincent use for this painting?
- B** Describe the picture: what can you see?
- C** Describe the following aspects of the painting: colour, composition, space, light, form, structure
- D** Try to find out why Vincent created this particular work of art.
- E** How did Vincent paint this picture? What did he paint first and what style and technique did he use?
- F** What do you think of this painting? Give reasons for your opinion.



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All of the featured works of art by Vincent van Gogh are in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum and are the property of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, with the exception of the painting in exercise 7.