

Millet to Matisse

NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRENCH
PAINTING FROM KELVINGROVE ART GALLERY, GLASGOW

Millet to Matisse Lesson Plan: High School Level

Lesson Plan:

Letter from Alexander Reid

Grade Level 9-12

Art Class Concept/Objective:

Students will understand Vincent Van Gogh's use of art elements and design principles. Students will connect Van Gogh's style with his personality. Students will understand how the artist's perception of the sitter can influence the portrait.

Questions to Guide Your Instruction

1. What is a portrait?
2. What are some visual clues that tell us this is a posed portrait?
3. Describe Alexander Reid.
4. How has the artist used brush strokes to enhance the subject?
5. Describe how the value and intensity of the colors create form in the figures.
6. Where and how has the artist repeated colors in the painting?
7. Describe the brush marks and colors used in the figures and the background.
8. Do you think the artist tried to express the personality of Alexander Reid?
9. Do you think the van Gogh tried to express his opinion of Alexander Reid?

Core Content Links: AH-H-4.1.31, AH-H-4.1.33, AH-H-4.1.34, AH-H-4.2.31, AH-H-4.2.32, AH-H-4.2.34, AH-H-4.2.36, AH-H-4.2.37, AH-H-4.2.38

Vocabulary:

Portrait	Complimentary Colors
Expressive	Positive /negative space
Impressionism	Consistency of style
Value	Painterly
Intensity	Post- Impressionism
Repetition	Impasto

Materials

A copy of the Portrait of Alexander Reid painting from the digital brochure or another source
Possibly copies of other Vincent Van Gogh's portrait work, such as Portrait of a Peasant 1888
Paper/Pencil/Pens(optional) color wheel/Art History or other books about Van Gogh
Internet access to resources on line

Lesson Plan

During the Impressionist period and Post-Impressionist period artists concentrated mainly on depicting landscapes, landscapes with people, interiors

with people, and still life. Very few artists kept the traditions of portrait painting. Van Gogh, never one to do what everyone else did, painted many portraits of himself, his doctor, his mail carrier and friends. When Van Gogh painted a person he felt he had to not only say something about the person but also about his own personal involvement with the person. (This feeling led to the expressionist art movement)

Van Gogh used bright colors applied with very visible, brushstrokes in his paintings. He often created a pattern with the repetition of his brush marks and the quantity of paint used often created an impasto (paint raised from the surface of the painting). The color plan for many of his paintings, (including the one of Alexander Reid) use complimentary colors (for example, red and green from the opposite sides of the color wheel). The use of complimentary colors often creates an intense visual vibration. Alexander Reid was a Scottish art dealer who was a friend of Vincent and his brother Theo van Gogh. Van Gogh stated he wanted to give the subjects of his portraits "something of the eternal which the halo used to symbolize".

Van Gogh had a great love for people though he and his work were often rejected. He suffered from mental depression and possibly seizures. Through everything he was sustained and supported by his brother Theo Van Gogh.

Assignment

1. Pretend that you live in same area of France where Vincent van Gogh in 1887. You have seen his portrait of Alexander Reid and are thinking about having him paint a portrait of you.
2. You seen Mr. Reid on the street and ask him about the experience, he takes your address and says he will write to you and tell you all you need to know.
3. A few days later the postman brings you a letter from Alexander Reid.
4. Write the letter that Alexander Reid sends to you. Include information about:
a. yourself (as M.Reid) b.van Gogh's painting as it relates to Reid's personality. c. van Gogh's use of colors and brushstrokes
d.van Gogh's working habits and personality e. success of the portrait f. recommendation for someone else to have his portrait painted by van Gogh.

Web links:

<http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/>
http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/van_gogh_vincent.html
Links to images online (some nudity); links to articles and online image archives
<http://biblio.org/wm/paint/auth/gogh/>

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Assessment:

Prompt: Vincent van Gogh, Post-Impressionist/Expressionist painter painted many portraits that showed not only the subject of the painting but the artists relationship to the subject. The student is to pretend to be Alexander Reid writing to someone who might be planning to have his or her portrait painted by van Gogh.

Directions:

1. Students will research the portraits of Vincent van Gogh looking for the person he saw behind the face.
2. Students will study the colors, composition and brushwork.
3. Students will try to determine how van Gogh felt about the subject.
4. Students will research information about van Gogh's life around 1887.5. Students will write the letter as Alexander Reid.
5. A class critique and later teacher evaluation will assess how effectively the students looked at the portrait of Alexander Reid and studied the style of van Gogh and guessed at his personality.

Scoring Guide

4

The student completes the letter-writing project.

The student creates a letter that clearly and correctly discusses brushwork, color plans, composition, and personality of van Gogh.

The student letter seems to be from a real person.

The student letter is interesting and entertaining to read.

The student follows all directions, and asks questions whenever uncertain.

The student is an active participant in the class critique, whose remarks reflect a clear understanding of the project and the critique as a tool for assessment.

3

The student completes the letter-writing project.

The student designs an effective letter that generally reflects an understanding of the brushwork, color plan, composition and personality of van Gogh.

The student letter could be from a real person.

The student letter is somewhat interesting and easy to read.

The student follows most directions, and usually asks questions when uncertain. The student is a good participant in the class critique, whose remarks generally reflect a good understanding of the project.

2

The student completes a letter-writing project.

The student designs a letter that shows some understanding of color, brushwork, and composition and of personality displayed in a portrait.

The letter seems be just an assignment.

The student follows some key directions, and sometimes asks questions when uncertain.

The student is an adequate participant in the class critique, but is one who doesn't usually offer remarks unless called upon.

The student's remarks generally reflect an adequate understanding of the project.

1

The student completes letter-writing project.

The student creates a letter that reflects an inadequate understanding of brushwork, color, composition and personality through painting.

The project reflects a minimum effort on the part of the student.

The student follows a minimum of directions, and tends not to ask questions when uncertain.

The student is an inadequate participant in the class critique.

The student doesn't usually offer remarks, and if questioned, the remarks reflect a minimal understanding of the project.

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Blank, no answer or irrelevant response