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## Art Masterpiece: *Sunflowers*, by Vincent van Gogh

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**Keywords:** Still life, Texture

**Grade(s):** K - 1<sup>st</sup>

**Activity:** Still life paper collage



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### Meet the Artist:

- Vincent van Gogh was born in the Netherlands in 1853.
- He was a schoolteacher in England, and then became an art dealer.
- Van Gogh was almost entirely self-taught. He spent two years honing his drawing skills before he allowed himself to use color or work with paint.
- His closest friend and biggest supporter was his brother Theo. In 1886 van Gogh moved to Paris, France, to live by his brother Theo. Theo van Gogh was an art dealer and supported Vincent financially. Theo made sure Vincent had enough money for food and rent. Still Vincent spent his life in poverty, choosing to spend money on paints rather than on food to eat.
- Van Gogh's early paintings portrayed the lives of poor farmers and coal miners. The colors he used were dull and dark.
- Later, van Gogh was strongly influenced by the impressionists of the day. With time he became much bolder in his paintings. He began to use slashing brush strokes and clear, BRIGHT colors.

- Van Gogh was a pioneer for a style of art called “**expressionism.**” Expressionists profoundly show their emotions through their paintings.
- Van Gogh would paint continuously, even when the sun would go down he would continue to paint by sticking candles in the brim of his hat.
- Van Gogh never felt that his art was appreciated, which pained him very much. It wasn’t entirely true; many of his fellow painters saw him as a genius.
- Van Gogh was a prolific painter and near the end of his life, painted 70 paintings in 70 days. His career lasted only ten years but during that time, van Gogh created approximately 875 paintings and 1100 drawings.
- **Van Gogh only sold ONE painting in his lifetime**, for \$80. Today, his paintings are some of the most expensive in the world; some have sold for up to 50 and 60 million dollars.
- After van Gogh’s death (1890), it was his brother Theo’s wife that made sure that Vincent Van Gogh got the attention he deserved. She protected Vincent’s artwork from being lost.
- There is now a Vincent van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.

### Looking at the Artwork:

Vincent van Gogh actually painted two series of sunflowers. The first executed in Paris in 1887 depicted the flowers lying on the ground. The second set executed a year later in Arles show bouquets of sunflowers in a vase. One piece went to decorate his friend Paul Gauguin’s bedroom.

Can you see why art dealers 100 years ago did not like this painting? People expected a painting of a vase of flowers to be soft, light and peaceful. Van Gogh’s sunflowers look almost as if they are on fire. Their stems and petals twist and curl, and the flowers look like they’ve been stuffed into the vase rather than artistically arranged. Today, it is the naturalness of the painting that makes it so appealing.

Van Gogh’s quick brush strokes capture the simple beauty of the sunflowers. We wouldn’t feel the same way about these flowers if Van Gogh had chosen the most perfectly-formed blossoms and then arranged them carefully in an elegant vase. That would have emphasized the

artist's skill; instead Van Gogh chose to show joy through the carefree, realness of the flowers.

### **Definitions:**

Texture: an element of art which is used to describe either the way a three-dimensional work actually feels when touched (real texture), or the visual "feel" of a two-dimensional work (implied texture.) Take rocks, for example. A real, three-dimensional rock might feel rough or smooth, and definitely feels hard when touched. A painter, depicting a rock, would create the illusions of these qualities through use line, shape and color. Also the application (brushstrokes) of the paint onto the canvas.

Still-life: A still life is a work of art depicting commonplace objects which may be either natural (food, flowers, plants, rocks, or shells) or man-made (drinking glasses, books, vases, jewelry, coins, etc).

### **Discussion:**

1. What do we see? (Vase of sunflowers sitting on a table)
2. How many are flowers are there?
3. Do all the flowers look the same?
4. If you could reach in and feel the flowers and the vase how would you describe what you feel? In art this is called TEXTURE.
5. How does the artist paint to show different textures? (Study print for different brush strokes.) Sometimes Vincent would apply the paint so thick that it would stick away from the canvas and create a bumpy texture. Other times the movement of the brush would be in long sweeping motion for smooth texture. Or, short dabs for rough.
6. Have students point out different textures displayed in the image.
7. Why did Vincent put candles around the brim of his hat? ( needed to be able to see his painting and work into the night. No electricity.)

## **ART PROJECT:**

Attention Coordinator or Art Supply Prep Team:

*1.If this is being used in a KINDERGARTEN class or if you feel the cutting skills are lacking by your students please modify the project to use only the LARGE size petals. It will be a more simple flower but still very cute. See sample image.*

*2. Template for the LARGE petal can be sent to school coordinator that shows SEVEN petals and can be used to copy onto size 9x12" paper. Project looks best with seven petals. Or you can create your own template using one of the LARGE petal attached. Another option is to make extra copies and have art guide hand out one extra petal.*

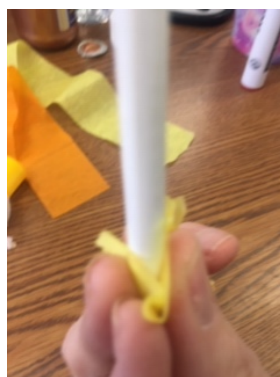
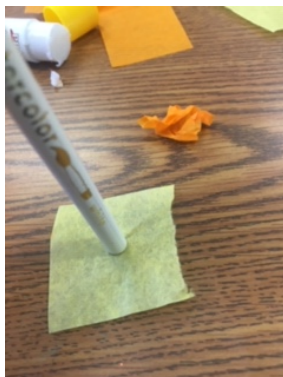
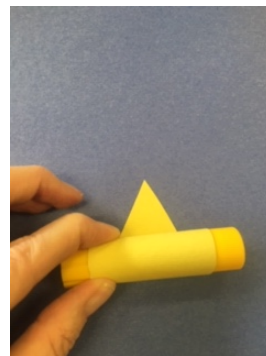
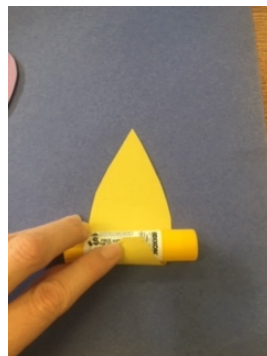
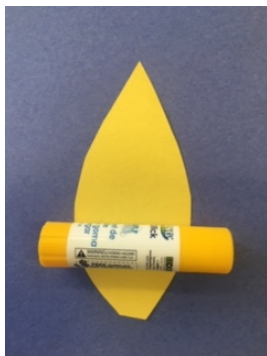
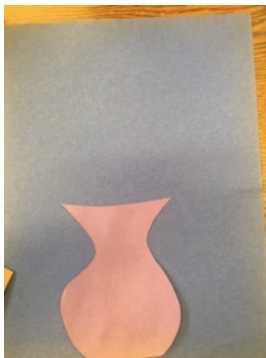
### **Materials Needed:**

- Photocopies of the following templates: (one per student)
  - Vase outline copied onto various colored construction paper
  - Yellow construction sunflower LARGE petals
  - Yellow construction sunflower SMALL petals
- Brown construction paper cut into 3" squares - one per student
- 9 x 12" Blue construction paper - one per student
- Tissue paper (red, yellow, brown & orange) cut into approx. 1 1/2" x 12" strips. Paper cutter works well for this. See photo.
- Glue Stick, one per student
- Scissors, one per student

### **Process:**

1. Hand out a sheet of LARGE petals, a sheet of SMALL yellow petals and one vase to each student.
2. Have the children cut out all the petals and the vase.
3. Remove scraps and distribute the blue construction paper for their background.
4. Instruct the students to turn their blue paper so it is lying on their desk "portrait" style.
5. Glue vase to the very bottom of blue paper.
6. Using the document camera show the students how to roll one petal around their glue stick. Roll it back and forth on desk to help create a slight curl. Students will roll all of their petals in this way.
7. Next show them how to arrange their LARGE petals in a circular pattern on the blue background making sure not to cover their entire vase. Show how to apply glue to only the lower portion of the petal and stick into position. This is the secret to getting the petals to curl up away from the background.
8. Distribute brown construction paper and using doc camera show how to cut the corners off the square to create a circle.
9. Student will glue the brown circle to center of flower. NEXT,

10. Glue the small petals into position tucking the bottom of petals under the brown circle. Applying in this order will help students with location of the smaller petals in relation to the center.
11. Tissue paper strips can now be distributed.
12. Using doc camera show students how to tear a piece of tissue paper off that is about 2 - 3 finger wide.
13. Add heavy layer of glue to center of brown circle.
14. Take torn pieces of tissue paper and form around the end of a pencil and then apply to the sticky brown center. Repeat till center is filled.

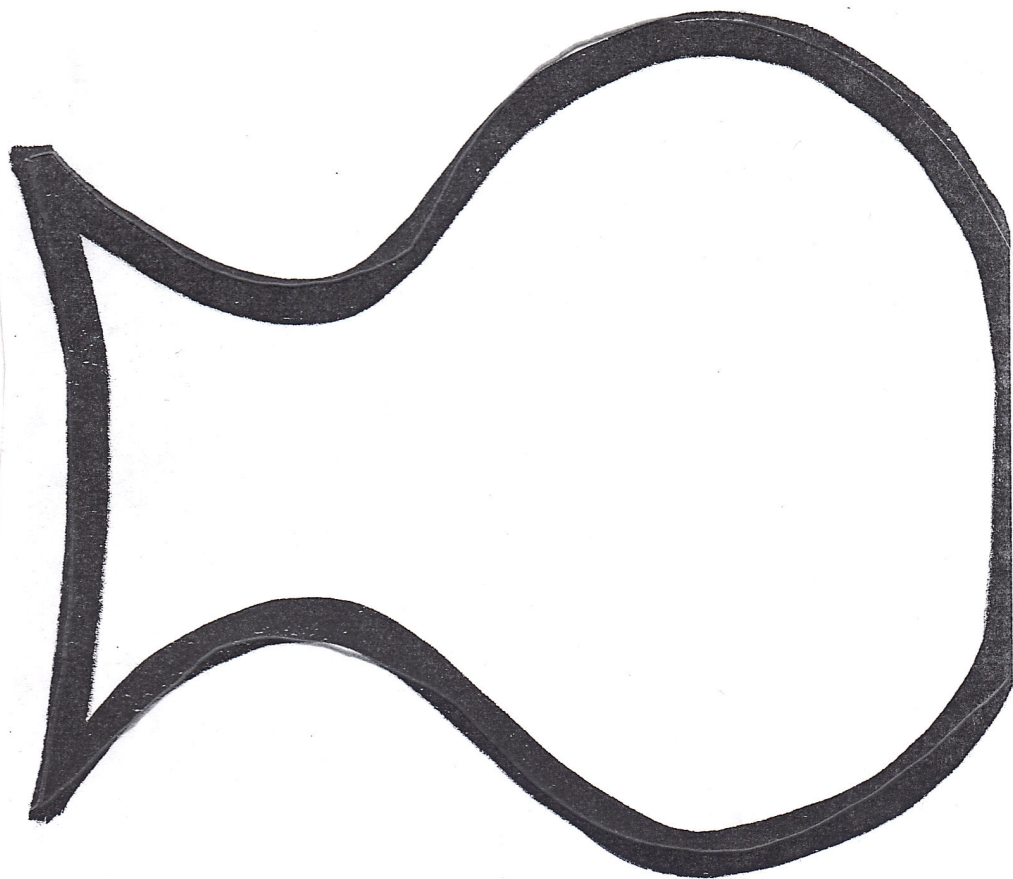
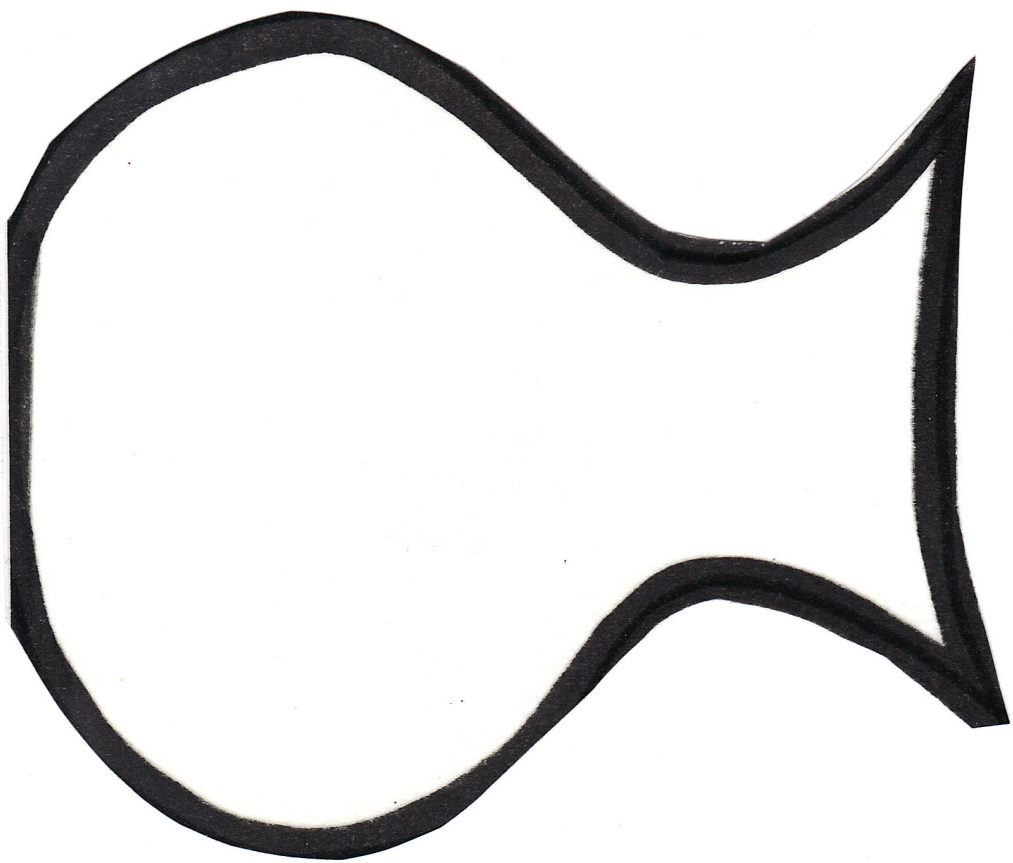




TWELVE Petal Flower with large and small petals.

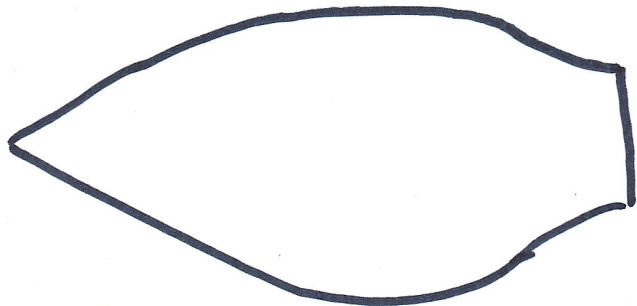
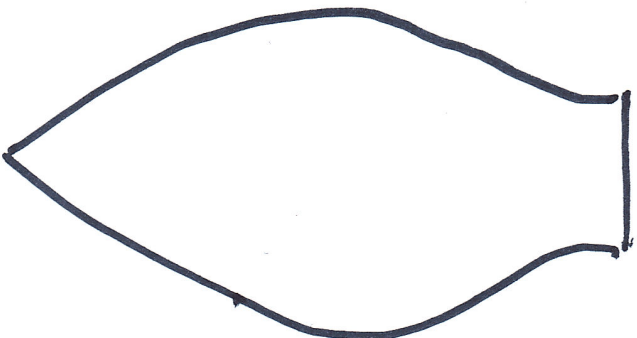
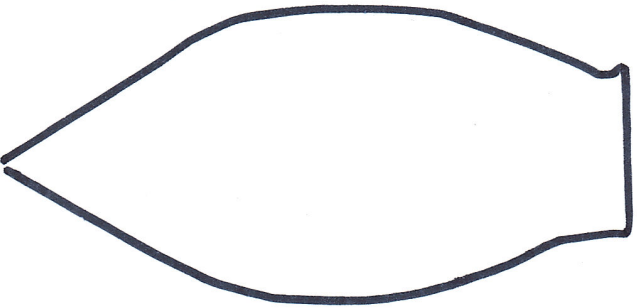
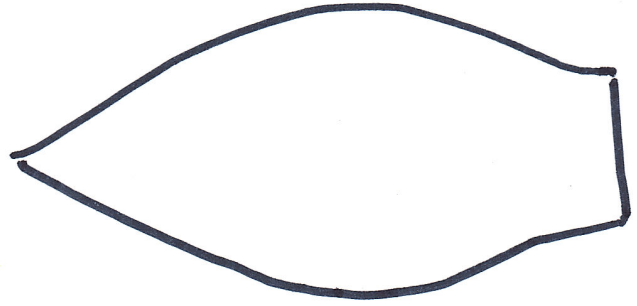
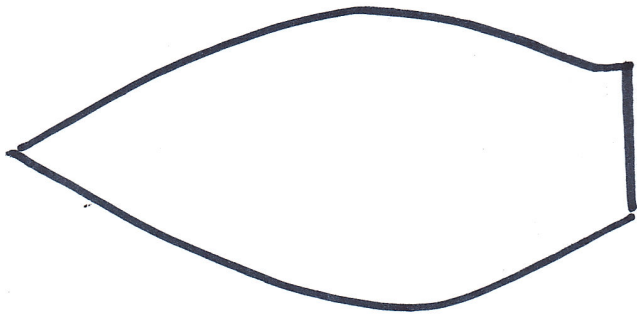


Seven Petal Flower using LARGE petals only.



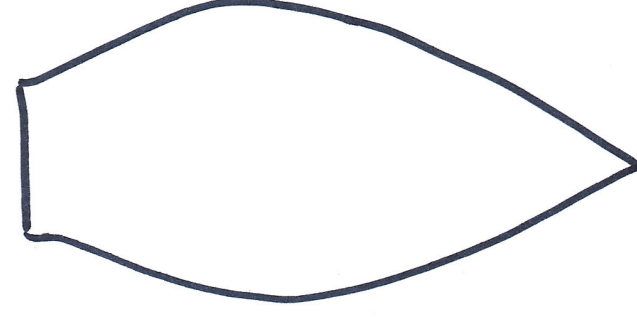
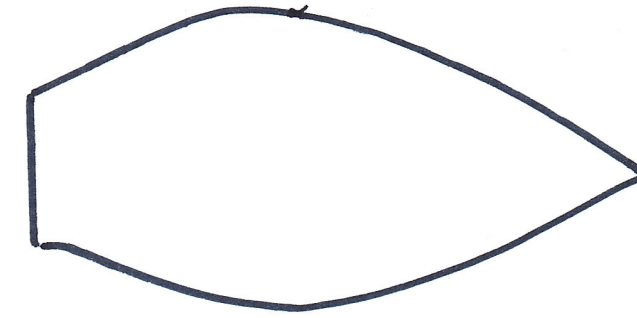
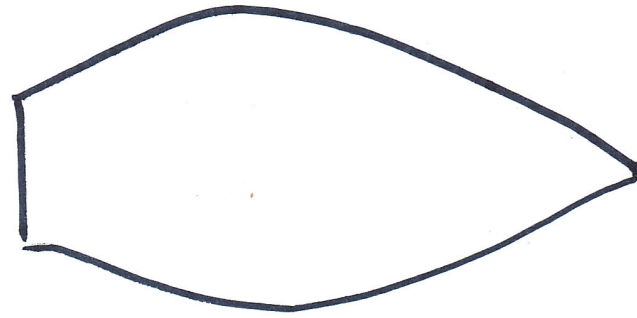
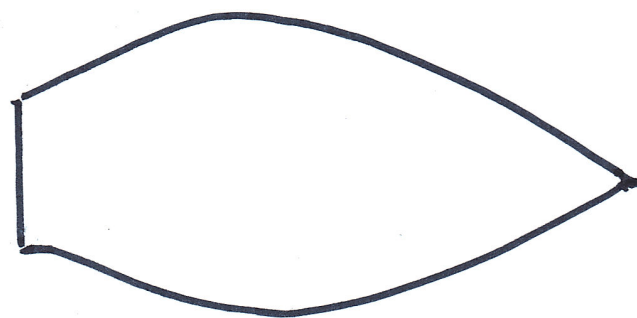
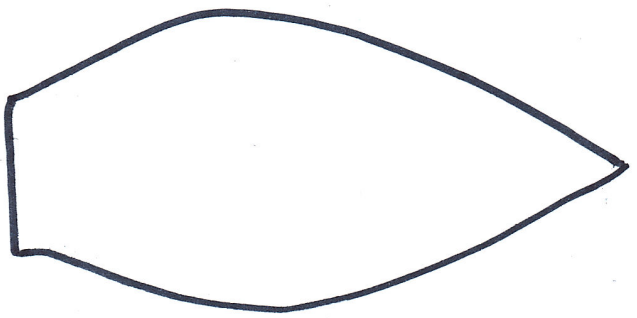


LARGE PETAL



Student 1

SMALL Petal



Student 2

SMALL Petal

Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890) was a major Post-Impressionist Dutch painter whose work—notable for its rough beauty, emotional honesty, and bold color—had a far-reaching influence on 20th-century art. Van Gogh began to draw as a child but did not begin painting until his late twenties. He produced more than 2,100 artworks, including self-portraits, landscapes, still lifes, and portraits as well as paintings of cypresses, wheat fields and sunflowers.

Today in Art Masterpiece, students created texture in their own sunflowers still life.



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