Art Masterpiece: Starry Night, 1889
Vincent Van Gogh, 1853 – 1890

Keywords: Movement, Line, Color
Grade: Second
Activity: Watercolor resist landscape

Meet the Artist:

• He was born in 1853 in The Netherlands.
• He wanted to be a preacher, but he was actually a schoolteacher in England, and then he became an art dealer.
• After that period of time, he moved to France and painted or drew 2000 works of art in the next 10 years of his life.
• His closest friend and relative was his brother, Theo, who also supported him financially. He spent his life in poverty, choosing to spend money on paints rather than food to eat.
• While he was strongly influenced by the Impressionists of the day, he became much bolder in his paintings. He was a pioneer for Expressionism. Expressionists profoundly show their emotions through their paintings.
• 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. He was a prolific painter and in the end, produced a painting a day. However, he only sold 1 painting during his lifetime.
• After Van Gogh’s death, it was his brother Theo’s wife who made sure that Vincent Van Gogh got the attention he deserved in his lifetime. His paintings are some of the most expensive in the world to purchase.

About the Art Style:

Expressionism

• Art that is meant to express emotional experience rather than physical reality.

Warm and cool colors

• Warm colors come forward toward the eye and cool colors recede or fall into the distance.
• Think of the sun for warm colors
  o Red   Yellow   Orange
• Think of distant hills or a snowy day for cool colors
  o Green   Blue   Violet
Questions about Starry Night
• What colors do you see? Are they mostly cool colors or warm?
• What do the swirling lines remind you of? What do they represent?
• How does this motion make you feel?
• What is the dark image in the middle of the painting?
• What time of day is it?
• Is Starry Night a good title?
• Would you want it in your room?
• How do you think Van Gogh felt when he painted it? What is he expressing?

Activity
Watercolor resist “Starry Night” landscape

Supplies
9 x 12 White construction paper
4.5 x 12 Black construction paper
Oil pastels
Scissors
By the sink, set up one or two watercolor stations with
Watered-down blue tempera paint
Wide paint brushes or sponge brushes
Give out glue sticks

**As the students finish their oil pastel night sky, have them come to the table to add the wash. Then return to their desks to glue on their trees and village.

Directions
• Give each student one sheet of white construction paper, one sheet of black construction paper and oil pastels.
• Draw a starry night, using orange, yellow, white, and other appropriate “star” colors.
• Draw in lots of swirls to show movement such as swirling clouds, or shooting stars, in the sky of their artwork. Remind students to leave the bottom of the paper empty so they can glue their village under the sky.
• Once they have created their sky they can build their village by cutting out houses from the black construction paper. Remind the students to keep their houses and buildings small and at the bottom of the paper so there is lots of sky showing. Little lit windows can be added to houses and buildings with the oil pastels.
• When they are done with the drawing and cutting, have them go to the paint table to add the watercolor wash. DO NOT COLOR WASH THE LOWEST 2 INCHES OF PAPER SO THE GLUE WILL STICK.
• Give the students glue and have them return to their desks and glue their village on the bottom of their papers.
• Make sure they sign their work.

This example is not colorwashed, but the steps are shown. The color wash will be applied after step 3.