Vincent van Gogh
Teaching & Activity Pack

The Sky That Wouldn’t Sit Still | Ages 5–8



Read, discuss and try

Use alongside *History Hopping with Vincent van Gogh*. This pack contains a session plan, discussion prompts, a child worksheet, adult answer guidance and six original learning pages from the book.

Find what you need

Session plan: page 2. Discussion: page 3. Child worksheet: page 4.
Adult guidance: page 5. Original book learning pages: pages 6–11.
Print page 4 for each child; display or share the book extracts as needed.

One session: 45 minutes

Read for 15 minutes, discuss for 7, try the activity for 17 and share for 6. Split or extend the session to suit your group.

Every child can take part

Read instructions aloud. Children can answer by speaking, drawing or pointing. An adult may write down their words. Follow the preparation and supervision instructions on page 2.

Real people, imagined adventures

The children’s visit and dialogue are fictional. Factual notes explain the history and ideas. Activities supplement the story; they are not a complete curriculum.

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Van Gogh session

The Sky That Wouldn’t Sit Still | Adult guide



Aim

Use lines to suggest movement and turn an unexpected mark into a new picture.

Materials

Book; worksheet 4 or plain paper; blue, yellow and other crayons.

Prepare

Show the real painting reproduced in the book. Children choose their own marks. No paint is needed.

Step		Time
Read	Read the story and Turn a Smudge into a New Idea. Pause when Daniel turns his paper.	15 min
Discuss	Use page 3. Find a curve, a bright circle and a dark shape in the real painting shown in the book.	7 min
Do	Draw a circle and sweeping blue mark. Turn the sheet and add an idea. Companion extension: add curls, dashes or swoops that make the picture feel windy.	17 min
Reflect	Invite children to show a change they chose. There is no single correct picture.	6 min

Ask permission before adding to a child’s picture. Offer a fresh sheet if they want one.

Van Gogh discussion

Ask the question, then use the suggested answer if needed

1. What colours did the children notice besides black?

Sarah saw blue and purple; Daniel saw gold.

2. How did Daniel use the blue smudge?

He turned the paper and added curves. It became part of a windy sky.

3. How did Sarah change her stars?

She moved them from a straight row to a winding path towards the Moon.

4. Was their night visit real?

No. Van Gogh painted The Starry Night by day, using observation, memory and imagination.

Make it easier

Use chunky crayons or a larger sheet. Offer a starter mark only if the child agrees.

Try more

Companion extension: draw two small skies, one with straight lines and one with curves. Discuss how they feel.

Optional family activity

Each person turns a mark into a picture on their own sheet. Ask before drawing on someone else's work.

What could this mark become?

Name _____ Date _____

Draw a circle and a sweeping blue mark.
Turn your sheet. Add your idea.

Tell someone what your mark became.

Companion extension

Show a line that makes your picture feel windy.

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Adult answers and teaching notes

Van Gogh worksheet

There is no required picture. Ask the child to show how a mark became an idea, or point to a line that suggests wind. A still drawing can suggest movement. Children may answer by pointing, drawing or speaking.

7 Amazing Facts About Vincent van Gogh

1. Vincent van Gogh was born in the Netherlands in 1853. He later lived and worked in France.
2. He decided to become an artist at 27. He spent years practising drawing and painting.
3. He painted The Starry Night in June 1889, in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France.
4. He made around 150 paintings during his year at the hospital in Saint-Rémy.
5. Van Gogh made more than 35 self-portraits. That means pictures of himself.
6. His letters often included little sketches. Many were written to his brother Theo.
7. Sometimes his paint was so thick it stood up from the canvas. That is called impasto.

Original book page numbering retained. Read factual notes with an adult.

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Vincent van Gogh: A Life in Art

1853	Born in Zundert, in the Netherlands.
1880	Decides to become an artist, aged 27.
1885	Paints The Potato Eaters.
1886	Moves to Paris. Tries brighter colours.
1888	Moves to Arles, in southern France.
1888-1889	Paints his famous Sunflowers pictures.
1889	In Saint-Rémy, paints The Starry Night.
1890	Dies in France, aged 37.

Our night-time visit is invented. Van Gogh painted The Starry Night during the day, using observation, memory and imagination.

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Look at the real painting



Vincent van Gogh, The Starry Night, June 1889.
Oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Find a curve, a bright circle and a dark shape.

Public-domain painting. Reproduction: Google Art Project / Wikimedia Commons.

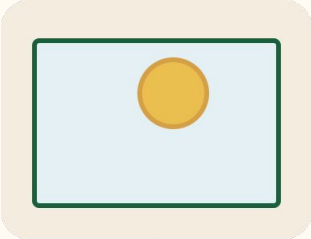
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Make Art Like an Explorer

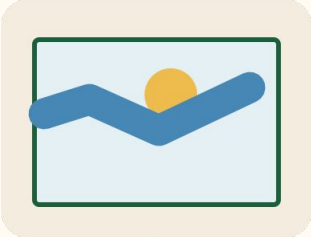
Turn a Smudge into a New Idea

You need: paper, crayons and an adult to join you. Ready to turn a stray mark into something new?



1 Make a mark

Draw a big circle. Add one sweeping blue mark across the page.



2 Look again

Turn the paper. What could your mark become: wind, water or a path?



3 Add your idea

Draw around it. Show someone how your picture changed.

There is no single right picture. You can change the marks and colours.

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3 Questions to Explore Together



1 The changing night sky

Which colours did the children find in the dark sky? What colours would you use for yours?



2 The blue smudge

What did Daniel try after his paper escaped? Can you think of two different ways to change an accidental mark?



3 Vincent's night sky

Find something Vincent saw, remembered or imagined. What did we make up for our adventure?

Talk, draw or act out your answers together.

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Sources and Useful Reading

Explore with an adult. Tap a title in the digital edition. These sources support the facts, not the fictional visit.

The Museum of Modern Art
Vincent van Gogh: The Starry Night
The painting, observation and imagination.

Van Gogh Museum
The Life of Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890
His life and decision to become an artist.

Van Gogh Museum
Hospitalization 1889-1890
His stay and artistic work in Saint-Rémy.

Van Gogh Museum
Van Gogh's Self-Portraits
His pictures of himself.

Van Gogh Museum
Van Gogh's Letters
Correspondence and sketches.

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