

**Exercise 1**

Read the article by student Hannah Bates about the artist Vincent Van Gogh, and then answer the questions.

Vincent Van Gogh

by Hannah Bates

Last week, I visited a new exhibition in my town about the Dutch artist Vincent Van Gogh, who lived from 1853 to 1890. He is often introduced in art lessons as the man who painted 'The Sunflowers', but this wasn't his only famous painting. Art experts believe that Van Gogh created 2100 pieces of art, and that 860 of these are oil paintings. The remaining 1240 consist of drawings, some of which are on display at the exhibition. While I was there, I learned that Van Gogh produced all his work within the space of ten years, which I thought was remarkable.

As a young adult, Van Gogh travelled a lot. I already knew he spent time in Belgium and France but didn't know before going to the exhibition that he lived in England for three years – how interesting! He tried a range of jobs before becoming an artist. He was a teacher for a while and was also employed as a bookseller. He later took up a position as an art dealer. Although this could have led to an interesting career, he soon realised it wasn't right for him and that he really wanted to make art instead.

He returned to his parents' home where he began teaching himself to draw. He often sent drawings to his brother Theo, who encouraged him to make a career as an artist, which is what he decided to do. His parents struggled to accept this, as in those days, being an artist wasn't regarded as a serious profession. Despite this, once he began painting, he painted constantly.

One of Van Gogh's paintings, 'The Potato Eaters', is recognised as a significant piece in his collection. The painting, which shows a family having a simple meal, was key to Van Gogh's development as an artist because he discovered, while working on it, that he was interested in painting people. I already knew that at other times in his career he focused on the places he went to, and he painted the objects around him too. But he also created over thirty self-portraits, which was something I was amazed to learn during my visit.

Later, Van Gogh moved to Paris where he mixed with many other artists. At that time, Van Gogh's paintings tended to be quite dark. However, he was influenced by the work of his artist friends and started using lighter shades. Most people know that many of his later paintings, including the world famous 'The Sunflowers', feature the colour yellow. It's well known that this was sold for millions of dollars after his death, but I was astonished to learn at the gallery that he made hardly any money from his art during his lifetime.



Question 2

What was Van Gogh working as when he decided to become an artist?

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