

VINCENT VAN GOGH, *TATCHED ROOFS NEAR AUVERS*

“In my opinion, the most marvellous of all that I know in the sphere of architecture is huts with their roofs of moss-grown straw and a smoky hearth,” wrote van Gogh in one of his letters. The picture *Thatched Roofs near Auvers* is one of van Gogh’s very last paintings; in the last letter he sent to his brother Theo, three days before committing

suicide, he sketched out the composition with its daringly exaggerated lines of force. Seen from a symbolic psychological perspective the boundless preponderance of falling diagonals is overwhelming. The children – the red-haired boy has been interpreted as a reference to van Gogh himself – appear to be trapped in a thoroughly hopeless situation.

Vincent van Gogh,
Thatched Roofs near Auvers, 1890;
oil on canvas;
Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich,
Switzerland.



LIST OF TECHNICAL TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE A PAINTING

- **Background:** the surface against which objects are seen.
- **Composition:** the combination of elements in a painting that provides structure to the scene.
- **Focal point:** the area in a pictorial composition to which the eye returns most naturally.
- **Foreground:** the part of a picture depicted as nearest to the viewer.
- **Horizon line:** the line where sky and earth seem to meet.
- **Landscape:** a view of natural scenery.
- **Linear perspective:** real or suggested lines converging on a vanishing point on the horizon line.
- **Middle ground:** the part of a picture depicted as the middle to the viewer.
- **Outline:** an imaginary line which marks the boundary of an object or figure.
- **Self-portrait:** an image of the artist, especially one showing the face.
- **Still life:** depicting inanimate objects.
- **Warm colour:** a colour which suggests sensations of warmth, such as red or yellow.

PAINTING ANALYSIS

- Describe van Gogh’s painting.

SCRAMBLED SENTENCES

- The following sentences go together to form a biography of Vincent van Gogh. Working in small groups put them into the right order.

- ① In February of the following year van Gogh moved to Arles, where he painted in isolation, depicting the Provençal landscape and people.
- ② Van Gogh admired the work of Jean François Millet and Honoré Daumier, and his early subjects were primarily peasants depicted in dark colours.
- ③ By 1877 van Gogh had begun religious studies, and from 1878 to 1880 he was an evangelist in the Borinage, a poor mining district in Belgium.
- ④ Vincent van Gogh was born on March 30, 1853, in Groot-Zundert, in the Netherlands.
- ⑤ Van Gogh shot himself on July 27, 1890, and died on July 29 in Auvers-sur-Oise, France.
- ⑥ Beginning in 1869, he worked for a firm of art dealers and at various short-lived jobs. While working as an evangelist preacher, he decided to become an artist.
- ⑦ Flowers, portraits, and scenes of Montmartre, as well as a brighter palette, replaced his earlier subject matter and tonalities.
- ⑧ Van Gogh worked briefly at Fernand Cormon’s atelier, where he met Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.
- ⑨ Gauguin joined him in the fall, and the two artists worked together.
- ⑩ He lived in Brussels and in various parts of the Netherlands before moving to Paris in February 1886.
- ⑪ In December of 1888, after the two artists had a falling out, van Gogh suffered his first mental breakdown.
- ⑫ In 1890 van Gogh was invited to show with Les Vingt in Brussels, where he sold his first painting.
- ⑬ In Paris he lived with his brother, Theo, and encountered Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting.
- ⑭ Numerous seizures and intermittent confinements in mental hospitals in Arles, Saint-Rémy, and Auvers-sur-Oise followed from that time until 1890.
- ⑮ Van Gogh often worked in Asnières with Bernard and Signac in 1887.