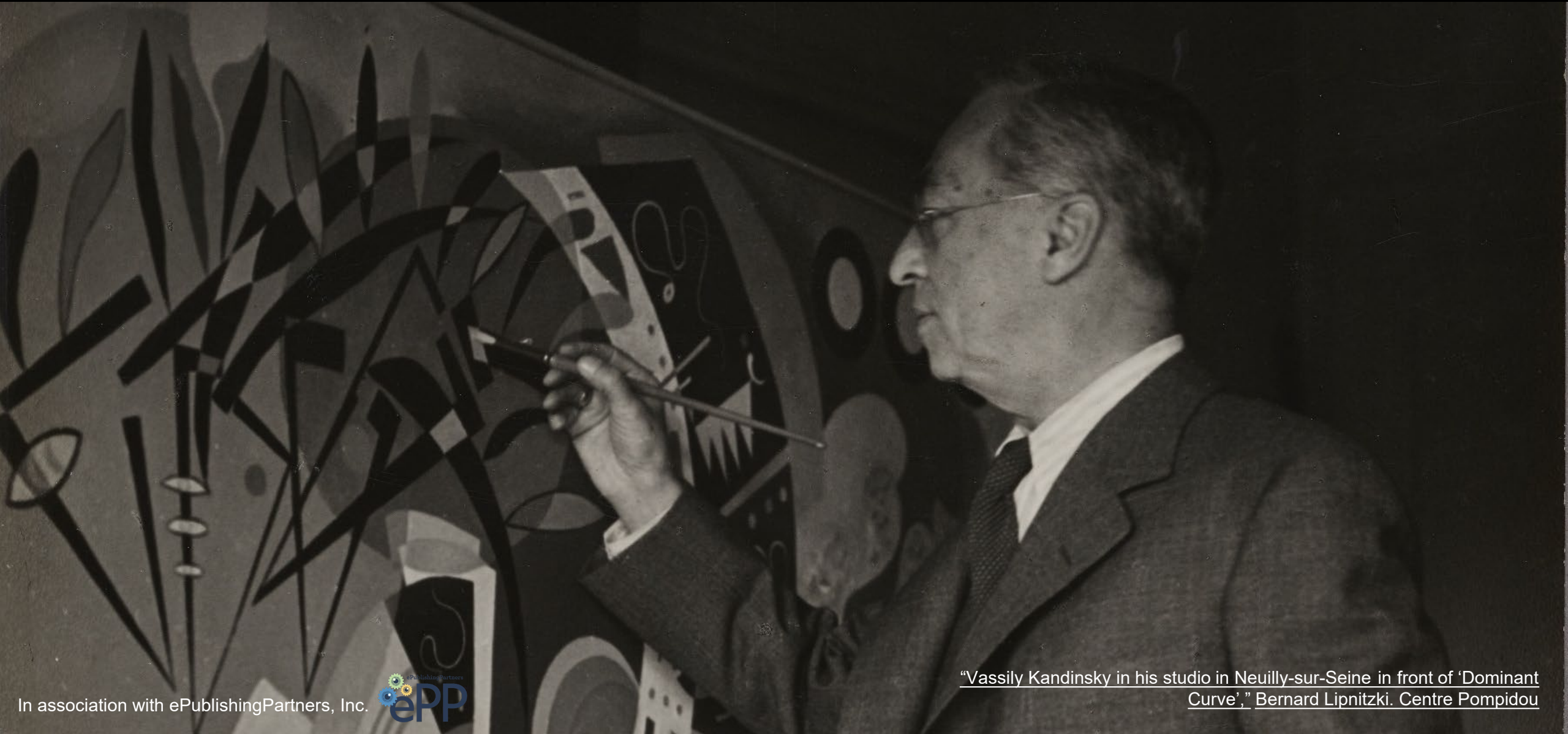
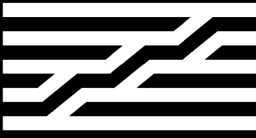


Google Arts & Culture

Learn Together: Seeing Sound with Kandinsky

Centre
Pompidou



"Vasily Kandinsky in his studio in Neuilly-sur-Seine in front of 'Dominant Curve', Bernard Lipnitzki. Centre Pompidou



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Using the lesson plan and Google Arts & Culture resources

This lesson plan is designed to support you as you explore Google Arts & Culture stories and exhibits related to the lesson topic. The images you will see here are just a sample of the media—texts, images, audio, and video—available to you on the Google Arts & Culture website and app. As the lesson uses only resources found on GA&C, it cannot present every aspect of a given topic. A parent or teacher might be guiding you through the lesson, or you might choose to complete it on your own.

All you need to access the lesson is an internet connection and a web browser or the Google Arts & Culture app. You may want to take notes, whether you do that digitally or with paper and pen.

The lesson plan has an **introduction**, which will describe the topic and provide some background information that will help you understand what you are seeing, hearing, and reading. Then the lesson will take you on a journey from one **Story** to another, fill in some details along the way, and pose **questions** that will help you focus on important ideas. A **quiz** and a link for **exploring the topic further** are followed by **ideas for projects** related to the lesson topic that you can do at home or in the classroom.

As noted, the lesson plan includes **questions** about the main stories, and there is also a **quiz**. You will want to write answers to the questions in a notebook or on a piece of paper. Then you can check all your answers when you've finished the lesson.

Resources on the Google Arts & Culture website include Themes, Stories, Museum Views, items, and images.

- ❖ **Themes** bring together stories, exhibits, collections, images, audio, and video files that relate to a topic.
- ❖ In a **Story**, clicking on the arrows on the right and left sides of a slide will move you forward and backward. Just keep clicking to keep moving forward. (Note that in some stories, you scroll up and down.) Audio and videos on slides will play automatically. Clicking on an image title will take you to a page with more information about it.
- ❖ In **Museum Views**, you move through a 3D space. Click to move forward. Click, hold, and move the cursor left or right to turn.
- ❖ An **item** will take you to an individual **image**, where you can zoom in and sometimes read more about the artefact.



In this lesson, you will learn about:

- ❖ The features of abstract art.
- ❖ The well-traveled life of painter Vassily Kandinsky.
- ❖ How Kandinsky's life and travels helped develop his technique and style.
- ❖ What synesthesia is and how it influenced Kandinsky.

You will:

- ❖ Explore some stories and exhibits about Kandinsky and his life and art.
- ❖ Answer some questions about what you have seen and read.

This lesson will take **30–45 minutes** to complete.



Learn Together: Seeing Sound with Kandinsky

In the early 20th century, artists began to turn away from traditional paintings. Instead of copying the world by making realistic pictures of people, events, or landscapes, artists began expressing how they felt. They used bright or unrealistic colors to show a certain mood. They painted simple shapes to show the building blocks of an image. Finally, they stopped painting “things” entirely. The result was abstract art. This new type of painting forever changed how artists could communicate with their audience.

The painter Vassily Kandinsky was born in Russia but traveled across Europe and Northern Africa during the chaotic and war-torn years of the early 20th century. He helped lead a movement of artists who expanded what art could be. His own art gradually became a pure expression of colors, lines and shapes, and his classes at schools such as the Bauhaus in Germany influenced hundreds of others. He also used his unusual brain condition, called synesthesia—which you will learn about in this lesson—to express feelings through art.

Kandinsky’s art is still beloved for its combination of playful colors, shapes, and lines, and his careful, almost mathematical teachings about how to make abstract images.

As you view the exhibits and stories in this lesson, think about these questions:

- ❖ How does abstract art express what the artist feels?
- ❖ How did Kandinsky’s life and travels influence and change his art?
- ❖ How did Kandinsky use his synesthesia to develop abstract art?



Vassily Kandinsky, A Pioneer of Abstract Art

Abstract art does not portray a specific scene or object. (Art that shows objects, like portraits and landscape paintings, is called *figurative art*.) Instead, it uses color, shape, and line to directly express ideas or feelings. Though abstract art is considered “modern,” abstract designs are as old as prehistoric decorated pottery or symbols carved into ancient ruins.

Kandinsky began his career painting figurative scenes. But as he explored traditional Russian folk art, Islamic decorative arts, and European art movements such as Impressionism, he gradually developed a style using pure shapes, lines, and colors that helped pioneer abstract art.

Click [here](#) to learn about early abstract art.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What painting first inspired Kandinsky to consider abstract art?
2. How did Kandinsky and the Fauves first move away from painting realistic images?
3. How does figurative art express ideas, and how does abstract art express ideas?

To learn about the theories of abstract art Kandinsky taught at the Bauhaus, click [here](#).



Russian Folklore: An Everlasting Source of Influence

As a young man, Kandinsky traveled to traditional Russian villages. Though he wasn't an artist yet, he was immediately struck by how the villagers surrounded themselves with colors and shapes painted or carved onto their homes, churches, and everyday objects.

Kandinsky found especially captivating the use of color on a dark background, which creates a "stained glass" effect. Years later, he revisited this technique to depict characters from folklore and to experiment with the relationships between color, shape, and line.

Click [here](#) to learn about Kandinsky's experiences with Russian folklore.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What materials did Kandinsky use to re-create traditional Russian folk images?
2. What types of images did Kandinsky create using his techniques?
3. What other folk techniques and folklore did Kandinsky incorporate into his art of this period?

To learn about Kandinsky's use of color-on-black, click [here](#).



How Travelling Inspired Kandinsky's Painting

Kandinsky traveled throughout his life. As a child and young man, he journeyed throughout Russia. After deciding to become an artist, he traveled to Germany and to various European capitals. As an artist, he went on many long trips through Europe and North Africa. World events such as the Russian Revolution and the two World Wars also forced him to move.

Kandinsky was inspired by both the landscapes and the local art everywhere he went. Each place he visited contributed to his changing outlook on art and abstraction.

Click [here](#) to learn about Kandinsky's art and travels.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. Why did Kandinsky leave Russia?
2. What kind of art did Kandinsky produce while he was on the road, and why?
3. How did Kandinsky's travels contribute to his abstract art?

To learn about the places Kandinsky lived, click [here](#).

["Arabische Stadt \(Arab Town\)" \(detail\), Vassily Kandinsky, 1905. Centre Pompidou](#)



Hearing Colors/Play a Kandinsky

Kandinsky had a condition called synesthesia. People with synesthesia experience more than one sense at once. When they hear sounds, they might also see colors. Colors, shapes, letters, numbers, or even days of the week might make sounds.

Kandinsky used his synesthesia to form theories about abstract art. For Kandinsky, each shape and color made a certain sound that helped communicate his feelings and ideas.

Click [here](#) to learn about Kandinsky's synesthesia.

Click [here](#) to experiment with what Kandinsky may have heard in one of his paintings.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What senses did Kandinsky experience together?
2. How are the elements in Kandinsky's art similar to the elements that make up music?
3. Do you think people with synesthesia get more out of abstract art than people without it? Explain.

To learn about how music inspired Kandinsky's art, click [here](#).

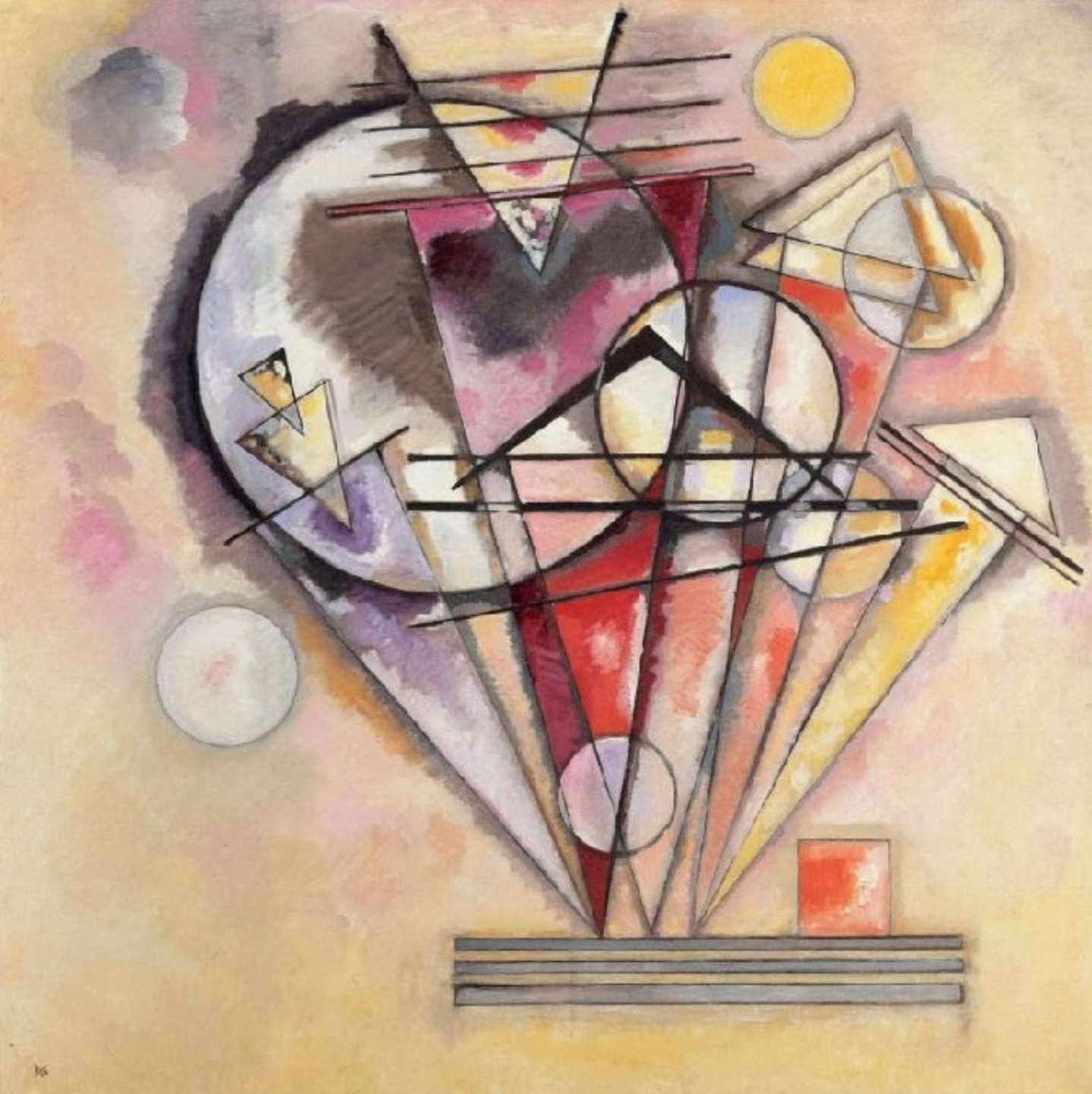
Quiz

Read the questions and write your answers in your notebook or on a piece of paper.

1. What visual elements did Kandinsky use in his abstract art, and what did those elements express?
2. Describe at least two ways that Kandinsky's figurative art gradually changed to become more abstract.
3. What techniques are used in both traditional art, such as Russian folk art, and abstract art?
4. What elements of folk art did Kandinsky use in his own paintings?
5. How did Kandinsky's travels move his art in a more abstract direction?
6. How did war and other world events affect Kandinsky's art career?
7. How did music inspire Kandinsky's career throughout his life?
8. How did Kandinsky's synesthesia influence his art and teaching?

Explore Further

This lesson has given you some vocabulary to talk about abstract art and Kandinsky's work. To learn more about Kandinsky and abstract art, click [here](#).



It's Your Turn!

In this lesson, you learned about how Kandinsky translated his life, his experiences, his travels, and his senses into art. Now it's your turn to do something. Here are some ideas for projects that you can do at home or in the classroom.

- ❖ Listen to your favorite song. Choose several colors and shapes that remind you of the music. Create a piece of art to express the music and how it makes you feel.
- ❖ Find a photograph or a figurative painting you like. Try to simplify the shapes or change the colors to make it abstract. You can even reproduce the image using a collage of simple colored shapes cut out from construction paper.
- ❖ Make your own “key” or guide to how colors or shapes make you feel. Arrange blocks of colors or types of shapes in a notebook or on poster paper. Below each, list the feelings you associate with each color or shape.

Answers

Wassily Kandinsky, A Pioneer of Abstract Art

1. Kandinsky was inspired by Claude Monet's painting, *Haystacks (Les Meules)*.
2. Kandinsky and the Fauves both painted scenes but used unrealistic colors that expressed feelings rather than lifelike accuracy.
3. Figurative art expresses ideas through the subject of the painting. For example, a portrait of a person wearing jewelry might express the idea of wealth. Abstract art uses lines, shapes, and colors to express feelings directly.

Russian Folklore: An Everlasting Source of Influence

1. Kandinsky used tempera paint on dark cardboard.
2. Kandinsky made paintings of stories from Russian and European folklore and also landscapes of Moscow.
3. Kandinsky incorporated images and folklore from his travels in North Africa. He also incorporated Viking (Norse) and German folklore to create a combination of images.

How Traveling Inspired Kandinsky's Painting

1. The first time Kandinsky left Russia was to study painting in Germany. He left the second time because of political and artistic disagreements with the Bolshevik regime.
2. Kandinsky created quick studies of landscapes, often using oil paints and a palette knife. These materials are easier to use while traveling.
3. Kandinsky saw examples of abstract images such as architectural decoration in Russia and in North Africa. Buildings and light in different places also influenced the shapes and colors in his art.

Hearing Colors/Play a Kandinsky

1. Kandinsky associated colors and shapes with sounds and feelings, such as yellow with trumpets and repeating lines with restlessness.
2. Kandinsky tried to create interaction and harmony between colors, lines, and sounds that represented interacting moods, similar to how sound and rhythm create emotion in music.
3. People with synesthesia might experience sensations when viewing abstract art that people without the condition do not. However, everyone can relate to abstract art based on the emotions evoked by colors and shapes.

Answers

Quiz

1. Kandinsky used broad areas of pure color, dark lines and shapes, and repeated elements in his abstract art to create a musical interaction of moods and playful feelings.
2. Kandinsky changed his figurative art by using different, brighter colors and by simplifying shapes.
3. Russian folk art and other traditions such as Islamic art can be considered abstract because they use simple shapes to express feelings without showing realistic objects.
4. Kandinsky used both subject matter and painting techniques from Russian folklore in his art. He painted pictures of stories and characters from folklore, and he used the traditional color-on-black style of some traditional Russian art.
5. As Kandinsky traveled, he used elements of Russian folk art, the bright colors and flat shapes of Mediterranean art and architecture, and the bright colors of the Fauves and Impressionists he saw.
6. World events often forced Kandinsky to move. In the case of the Russian Revolution, he found that his art thrived when he left Russia for Germany. However, the Nazis shut down the Bauhaus, where he had been a productive artist and teacher.
7. Kandinsky was inspired to make pictures based on the colors he saw when he heard music, and he played music and worked with composers.
8. Kandinsky's synesthesia made specific links between colors, shapes, sounds, and feelings. He developed and taught theories that showed others these links and how to use them to create emotion in art.

