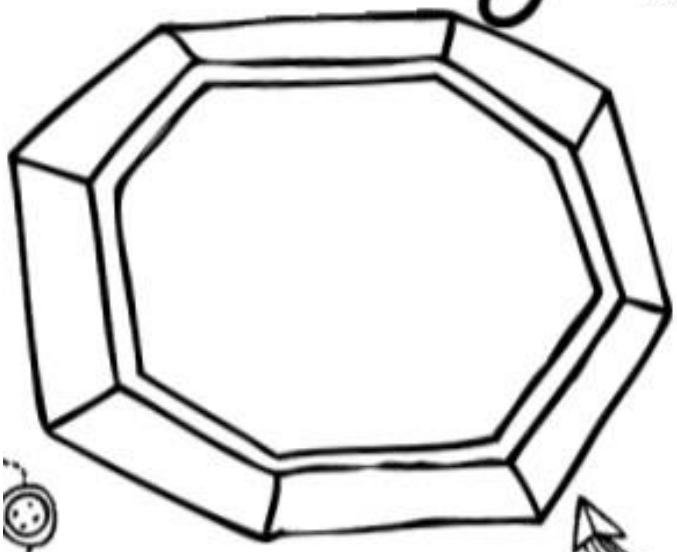
J. K. Rowling

If you have ever read a 'Harry Potter' book, then the name J. K. Rowling should mean a great deal to you. Joanne Rowling is the author behind the astonishingly popular 'Harry Potter' series of books. Today, J. K. Rowling is one of the most successful authors of all time. However, she began her writing career at six years of age, when she wrote a story about an ailing bunny titled "Rabbit." Even at such a young age, she was interested in having that book and other works published. She admits that it was an unusual thing for a child of six to think about. According to Rowling, as a child she "lived for books."

Doodle a cover for J. K. Rowling's first story.

When Rowling was eleven, she wrote an entire novel. The book chronicled seven cursed diamonds and the unfortunate people who possessed them. Rowling's parents and a close friend, Sean, encouraged her writing when she was young. According to Rowling, this support was instrumental in building her confidence. Rowling later honored her friend Sean by including his car, a Ford Anglia, as a character in her book Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.



How did Rowling honor her friend? Answer this question with a doodle.

In 1990, the concept for the Harry Potter stories first occurred to Rowling as she was riding a train home in the evening. She recalls that she had nothing with which to write her idea down, and was too shy to ask her fellow passengers if one of them had a pen she could borrow. She had to wait until she got home to begin recording and fleshing it out. At the time, she had no idea that the spark of inspiration would change her life.

Rowling worked arduously on outlining the seven books in the series. In fact, it took her five years to write the series. Then, bringing the world of *Harry Potter* to readers was not an easy task, either. At the time when she was shopping the book around to publishers, she was unable to afford a computer or the cost of making copies. She wrote out the series in longhand. Eventually, she amassed an enormous collection of notes scribbled on odd bits of paper. In addition, she was forced to hand-type the entire 90,000-word novel, over and over, in order to have multiple copies to send to publishers.

She also had some difficulty finding a literary agent who would take her on. After she found her agent, Christopher Little, it then took him an entire year to find anyone interested in publishing the first *Harry Potter* book. It was rejected dozens of times. Finally, Bloomsbury, a small publishing company in London, gave the book a second chance on the advice of the CEO's eight-year-old daughter. Her publisher suggested that she publish the book under the name J. K. Rowling. The "K" stands for her grandmother's name, Kathleen. According to her publisher, a more mysterious name, and one that was not obviously a woman's, would appeal more to young boys.

What is a challenge that J. K. Rowling faced when trying to get her book published? Doodle your answer.

Today, the 'Harry Potter' franchise is worth an estimated $25 billion, and J.K. Rowling's dream of having a book published came very true. She continues to use writing as an outlet, as well as charity work. As a philanthropist, she has donated over 100 million dollars to various charities dedicated to relief of the poor, orphans, and single parents.

Doodle a word to describe J.K. Rowling.

J. K. Rowling

Name _____

1. After reading this passage, what is the author's purpose for writing this article?
   A. To persuade the reader to read books by J. K. Rowling.
   B. To inform the reader about the author, J. K. Rowling.
   C. To entertain the reader with stories written by Rowling.

2. Finish this statement: The concept for the Harry Potter stories first occurred to Rowling...
   A. When she wrote fanciful stories as a little girl.
   B. After she was encouraged to write by a friend named Sean.
   C. As she was riding a train home in the evening.

3. Which statement is true?
   A. Today, Rowling focuses solely on charity work.
   B. Rowling worked relentlessly on her first novel for six years.
   C. Rowling honored her friend by including his car, a Morris Minor, in her book.

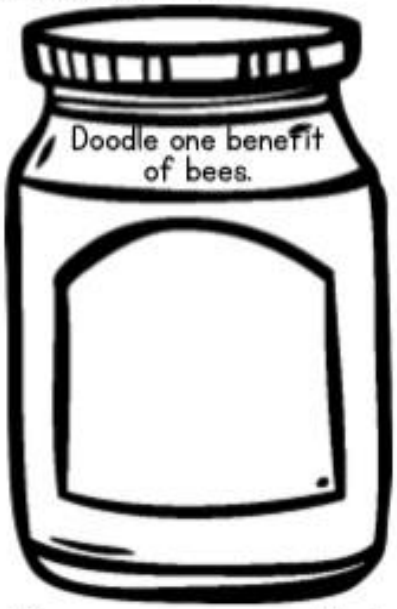
4. Why did J. K. Rowling hand-type all 90,000 words of her first novel?
   A. She lacked adequate computer skills.
   B. Her publisher insisted that her work be hand-typed.
   C. She could not afford a computer or the cost of copies needed to send her book to publishers.

5. Based on this passage, you can conclude that...
   A. It was a challenge for Rowling to get her first book published.
   B. Rowling will retire from writing after the great success of the *Harry Potter* franchise.
   C. Rowling's agent was reluctant to help promote her storytelling abilities.

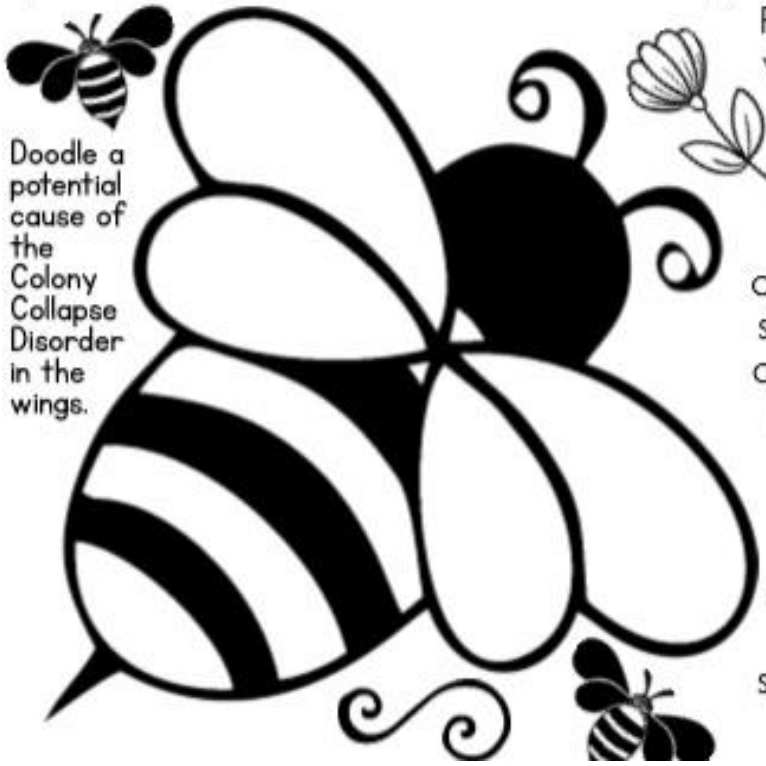
6. Why do you think the author choose to include information about Rowling's charity work?
   A. To show how successful she has become.
   B. To highlight Rowling's generosity.
   C. To prove that Rowling is a great writer.

BEES

While some people find bees to be annoying pests, bees are actually an important part of our environment. Bumblebees are excellent pollinators. Therefore, many of the foods we eat are thanks to the work of bees. Bumblebees also pollinate flowers. Since flowers and plants are part of complex food chains, just imagine what would happen to other insects, birds, and mammals if the food that they need to survive no longer existed. Bumblebees may be small, but their impact is enormous.



Unfortunately, an alarming phenomenon is happening in the bee population. Beekeepers in the United States and Europe have been losing bees to a mysterious condition called Colony Collapse Disorder. Beekeepers have found that the colony of bees is fully functioning in the fall, but by the time spring arrives, the colony is completely gone. Some scientists believe that there are several possible causes for the bumblebee disappearance.



First, pesticides that farmers spray on their vegetation weaken the bees. Then, they are too weak to survive diseases and/or pests that they once could survive. In addition, environmental elements like drought or flooding are impacting the availability of flowers, which bees need to survive. Other scientists believe that bees are getting lost. They think that pesticides are changing the bees' brains and bees are forgetting their way home.

The mysterious disappearance of bees continues to be studied. However, there is one thing that scientists know for sure: our environment desperately needs bumblebees.

Name _____

1. Why are bumblebees important?
   A. Bumblebees make honey.
   B. Bumblebees pollinate plants that animals and humans need to survive.
   C. Bumblebees eat other insects.

2. Based on the passage, you can tell that phenomenon means...
   A. A mystery
   B. A celebration
   C. A conclusion

3. What impact do pesticides have on bees?
   A. They weaken bees so that they can't survive diseases.
   B. They damage bees' wings so that they cannot fly.
   C. They poison the bees' honey.

4. What is a possible cause for the disappearance of bees?
   A. Pesticides are weakening bees.
   B. Pesticides are changing bees' brains.
   C. Both A and B.

5. What is a possible effect of the disappearance of bees?
   A. Bees can pollinate more flowers and plants.
   B. Wildflowers will be more abundant.
   C. Food for animals will become scarce, so animal populations may decrease.

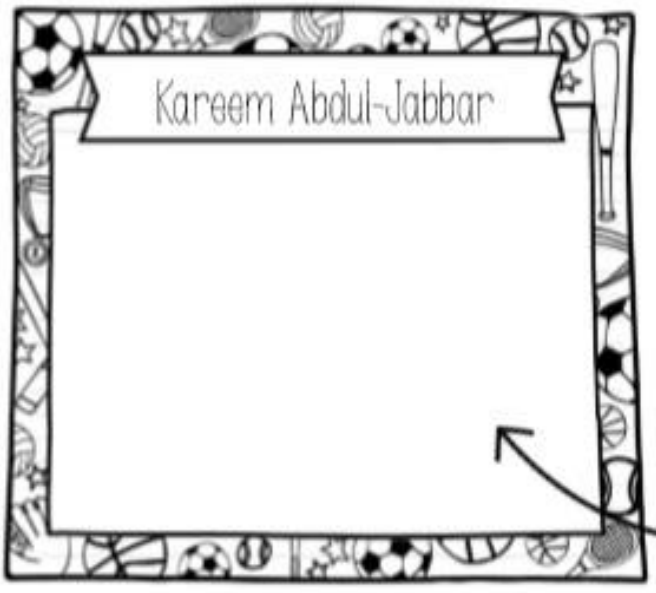
6. Based on this passage, you can conclude that...
   A. Scientists know why the Colony Collapse Disorder is happening.
   B. Bumblebees are important to the environment.
   C. Beekeepers are harming bees.

BASKETBALL

The game of basketball was conceived by a physical education teacher named James Naismith in 1891. Naismith developed the game to keep his gym class occupied while the kids were forced to play inside during inclement weather. At first, Naismith experimented with developing a variety of different games that students could play in a gymnasium. He eventually landed on the idea of basketball. He wrote the 13 original rules for the game. The very first baskets that he nailed up in the gym were peach baskets, and students used soccer balls. His new game would eventually evolve into the beloved sport of basketball.

What is something that you learned about the creation of the sport? Doodle and label your answer inside the backboard.

Today, basketball has evolved into the best sport ever. The sport has a huge following in the United States and around the world. While fans enjoy the exciting and dramatic finishes to many games, part of the draw of the sport is the amazing athletes that have contributed their talents to the game. Players like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Shaquille O'Neal, Bill Russell and LeBron James are some of the best players to ever play the sport. They should be at the top of anyone's list when considering the greatest basketball players of all time.

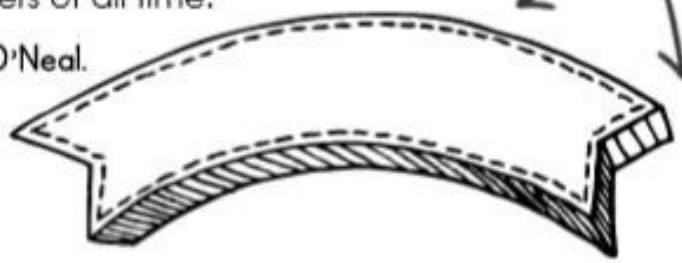


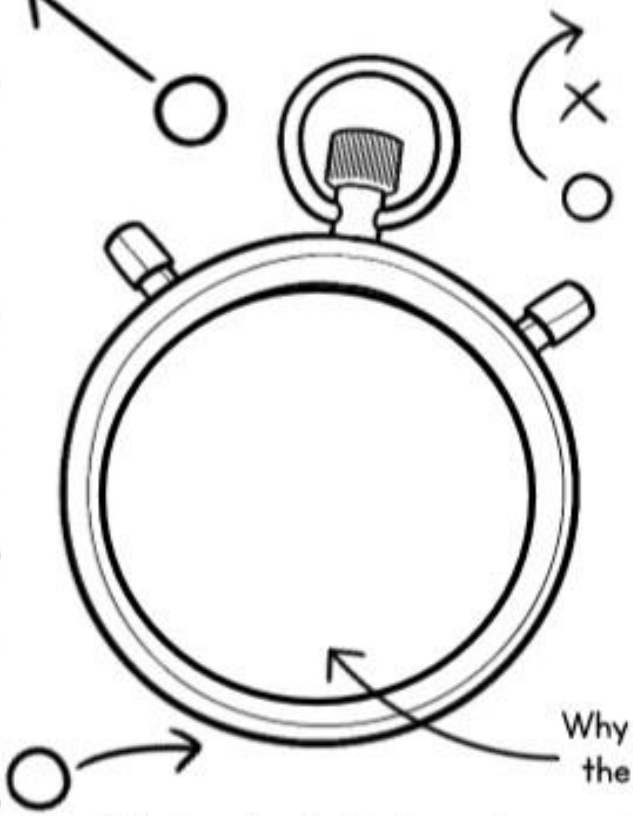
An extraordinary talent is Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. He played professional basketball from 1969-1989. During his 20 seasons, he was the leading scorer in the history of the National Basketball Association (NBA). He scored an incredible 38,387 points in his career. He also has the greatest number of career wins (1,074). Some feel that these records make him the greatest NBA player of all.

Doodle a trophy for Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Be sure to write what he earned the trophy for.

If you're a basketball fan, then you know that another outstanding athlete was Shaquille O'Neal. His playing career began in 1992 and ended in 2011. Shaquille O'Neal would often use his great size (7'1" and 315 pounds) to push his way to the basket and dunk the ball. Using this strategy, O'Neal led the NBA in field-goal percentage 10 times during his career. He was also a successful short-range shooter, and very graceful for his size. His shoe size of 23 gave him a physical power advantage. He was on four NBA championship teams. His skills as player made him one of the best players of all time.

Doodle a word to describe Shaquille O'Neal.





Bill Russell was another amazing basketball player. During his career between 1956 and 1969, he was the biggest winner in NBA history. His team, the Boston Celtics, won the league title 11 times during his 13-year career. Russell was also one of the greatest defensive players of all time, setting records for blocked shots, and averaging an amazing 22.5 rebounds per game. His impressive man-to-man defense was an essential element of his team's success. Russell's talent makes him one of the greatest players of all time.

Why does the author believe that Bill Russell was one of the greatest players of all time? Doodle your answer.

The talent on basketball courts around the world is awe-inspiring. It's not a simple task to determine who the greatest players of all time were. However, when considering the best basketball players of all time, LeBron James must be on the list. In fact, many enthusiastic fans believe that LeBron is actually the best ever to play the game. James averages 27.5 points, 7.2 rebounds, and 6.9 steals per game against modern teams full of elite athletes. In 2019, he already earned four NBA MVP Awards, and was the all-time NBA playoffs scoring leader. His records are impressive!

Players like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Shaquille O'Neal, Bill Russell, and LeBron James have taken James Naismith's original game idea and made basketball the best spectator sport. Their talent, skill, and devotion to the sport has helped them set records while setting them apart from the thousands of other professional athletes that have played in the NBA. Abdul-Jabbar, O'Neal, Russell, and James each deserve a spot on anyone's list of the top athletes to ever play the sport.

Name _____

1. Which statement is true?
   A. James Naismith created the game of basketball in 1893.
   B. Naismith used peach baskets when he first created the game.
   C. Naismith wanted to create a game that students could play outside.

2. Which statement is an opinion?
   A. Today, basketball has evolved into the best sport ever.
   B. The sport has a huge following in the United States.
   C. James Naismith was a physical education teacher.

3. Which basketball player scored 38,387 points in his career?
   A. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
   B. Shaquille O'Neal
   C. Bill Russell

4. Which statement includes an opinion about Shaquille O'Neal?
   A. He played professional basketball from 1992 - 2011.
   B. He was a successful short-range shooter.
   C. His skills as a player made him one of the best players of all time.

5. Why does the author believe that Bill Russell is one of the greatest players of all time?
   A. He was a graceful player for his height and size.
   B. He averaged 27.5 points per game.
   C. He set records for blocked shots making him a great defensive player.

6. Which statement from the passage is a fact?
   A. LeBron James is the best ever to play the game.
   B. His records are impressive.
   C. In 2019, he already earned four NBA MVP Awards.

JAGUARS vs. LEOPARDS

Deciphering the difference between jaguars and leopards is not always an easy task. Most people have a hard time telling the difference between jaguars and leopards. It's easy to mistake one for the other, since they both ambush their prey and have similar physical similarities. However, there are significant differences between the two cats.

Jaguars are native to the jungles of South America. Their scientific name is Panthera onca. They are classified as "big cats." Jaguars are apex predators. This means that they have no natural predators. Jaguars also have beautiful spotted coats, usually gold marked with black "rosettes" that have spots in the middle. They have large, stocky bodies with short tails. They have powerful jaws and canines, adapted for piercing the skull of their prey. They often kill with a single bite to the head. The jaguar's preferred habitat is the dense rainforest. They like to swim to hunt for fish and turtles.

Doodle a characteristic of a jaguar.

The Panthera pardus, or leopard, can be found throughout Africa and Asia. The leopard is the smallest of the "big cats." Leopards have extra-long tails that help them keep their balance and provide warmth when wrapped around their bodies. A leopard's fur is gold, with unspotted rosettes. Leopards can swim, but avoid water when possible. They would rather spend time up in a tree! These apex predators often drop from a branch onto their prey, break its neck, and drag it back up into the tree to eat. These solidary animals are fierce and ferocious animals.

Doodle a characteristic of a leopard.

At first glance, leopards and jaguars seem similar. However, upon closer examination, it is easy to tell them apart. Just don't get too close!

What is something that jaguars and leopards have in common? Doodle your answer.

Name _____

JAGUARS vs. LEOPARDS

1. Why do people often confuse jaguars and leopards?
   A. The cats share similar physical characteristics.
   B. They live in the same habitat.
   C. Jaguars and leopards are the same size.

2. What is an apex predator?
   A. An animal that consumes plants.
   B. An animal that does not have any natural predators.
   C. A nocturnal animal that hunts its prey at night.

3. Which of the following is a similarity between jaguars and leopards?
   A. They are both apex predators.
   B. They prefer to hunt from a tree.
   C. They are found in the dense jungles of South America.

4. Leopards are different from jaguars because…
   A. Leopards are solitary animals.
   B. They are considered "big cats."
   C. Leopards can swim.

5. Which of the following is a difference between jaguars and leopards?
   A. Jaguars have short tails. Leopards have long tails.
   B. Jaguars have golden fur. Leopards have "rosettes."
   C. Jaguars avoid water. Leopards hunt in water.

6. Which statement is true about jaguars?
   A. They use their long tails to help with balancing.
   B. They like to swim to hunt for turtles and fish.
   C. They are the smallest of the "big cats."

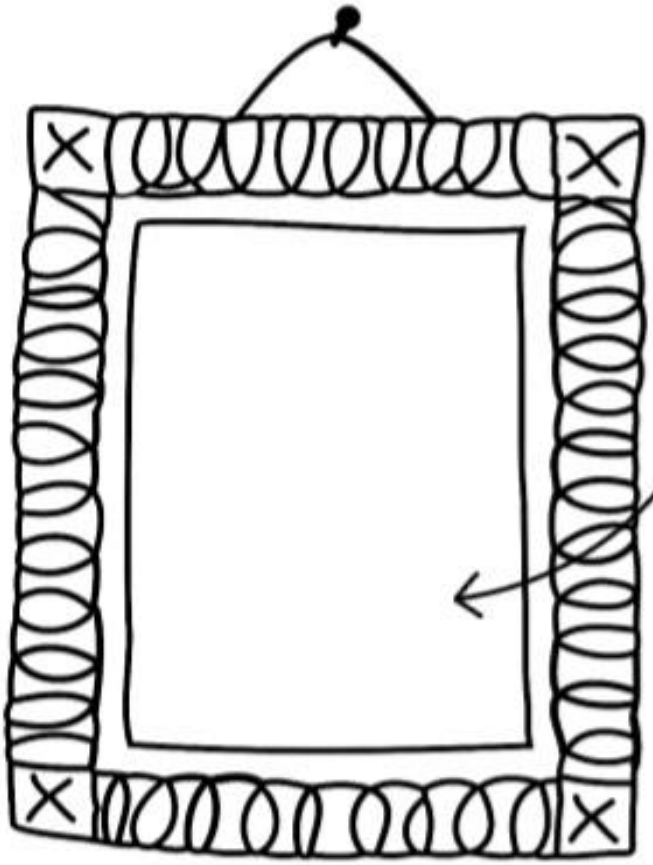
Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh was a Dutch Post-Impressionist painter. Today, he is considered one of the most influential artists in history. He was born on March 30, 1853 in the Netherlands. When he was eleven years old, he went away to boarding school. In 1869, at the young age of sixteen, van Gogh took a job at an art firm as an art dealer. After seven steady years working with the art firm, he moved to Borinage, Belgium. Then, he moved once again from Borinage to Brussels in 1880. It is here where he began learning the skills needed to be an artist. In 1885, his first work, *The Potato Eaters*, was completed. Even though he would go on to paint many more paintings, he considered *The Potato Eaters* his masterpiece.

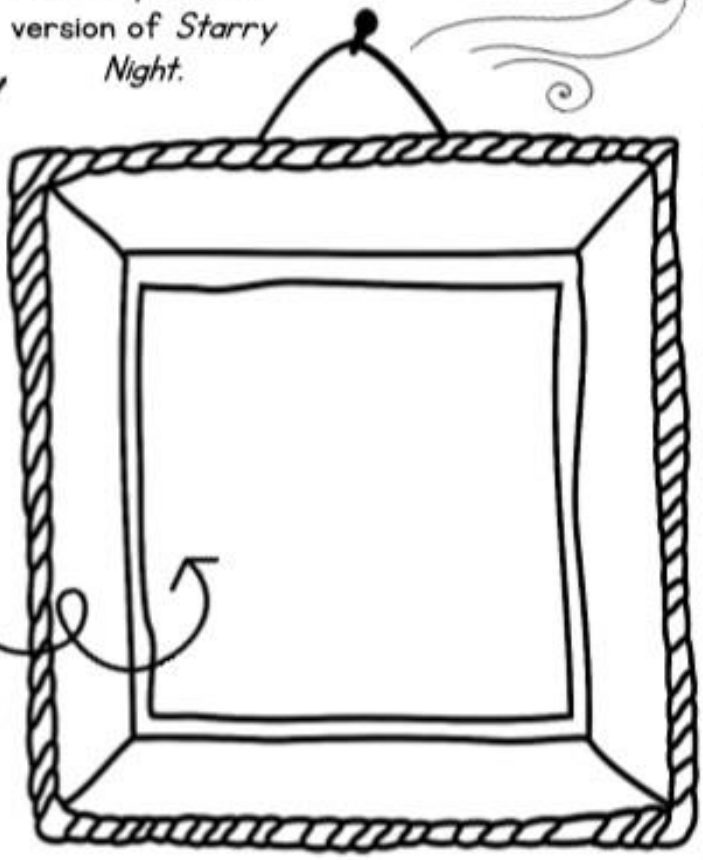
Doodle an event from Vincent van Gogh's early life.

In March of 1886, Vincent van Gogh moved to Paris, France. While in Paris, the artist discovered the Post-Impressionist artists working in the city. He was inspired by other artists. He painted portraits and still life paintings. In February 1888, at the age of 35, he moved to Arles, France. He moved into the "yellow house" and spent his money on paint rather than food. Between September and October 1888, he completed a multitude of paintings and drawings.

By December of 1888, the artist's mental state began to decline. He checked himself into a mental institution. While in the mental hospital, he painted one of his most famous paintings, *Starry Night*. The painting depicts the view from the window of van Gogh's room. It includes a hushed village beneath a moon and a star-filled sky. The sky takes up most of the background with swirling, flowing lines.



Doodle your own version of *Starry Night*.



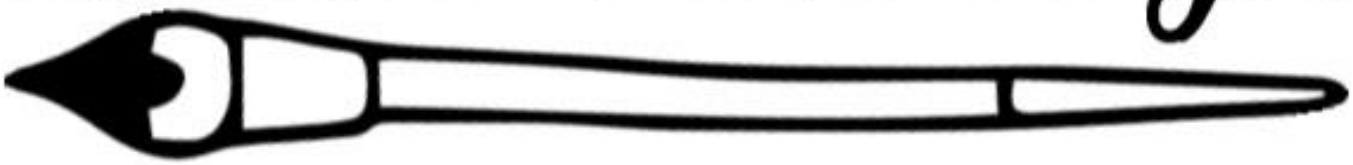
Doodle and explain something that you learned about van Gogh.

Vincent van Gogh left the mental hospital in May 1890 under the care of Dr. Paul Gachet. Gachet tried to help the artist overcome his anguish and depression. Van Gogh felt sadness and extreme loneliness during this time. Sadly, on July 29, 1890 at the age of 37, the artist died.

Doodle a word to describe van Gogh.

Name _____

Vincent van Gogh



1. Which event happened first?
   A. Vincent van Gogh moved to Arles, France.
   B. Van Gogh painted *Starry Night*.
   C. Vincent van Gogh moved to Paris, France.

2. What happened right after Vincent van Gogh moved to Paris, France?
   A. He completed *Starry Night*.
   B. He discovered Post-Impressionist artists in the city.
   C. He moved into the "yellow house."

3. What did Vincent van Gogh accomplish in 1885?
   A. He painted *The Potato Eaters*.
   B. He worked with Dr. Paul Gachet.
   C. He took a job as an art dealer.

4. According to the passage, which painting did van Gogh consider to be his best work?
   A. *Starry Night*
   B. *Irises*
   C. *The Potato Eaters*

5. What did van Gogh do while living in Borinage, Belgium?
   A. He began learning the skills needed to paint.
   B. He completed a multitude of works.
   C. He attended boarding school.

6. When the passage states that van Gogh, "Spent his money on paint rather than food," it shows that...
   A. He was not very hungry.
   B. He was devoted to his craft.
   C. Paint was less expensive than food.