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## Art Masterpiece: *Tahitian Landscape,\** by Paul Gauguin

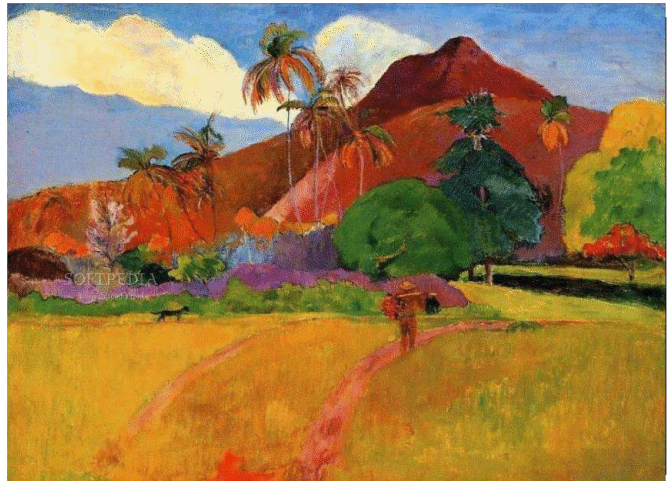
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**Keywords:** Color Wheel, Primary Colors, Secondary Colors, Tint, Hue, Shade, and Value.

**Grade(s):** 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

**Activity:** Secondary color landscape painting

\*Other landscapes by Paul Gauguin can be used instead, for example: *Chemin a Papeete, Matamoe, Tahiti, 19Th C, etc.*



### About the Artist:

- Paul Gauguin was born Eugene Henri Paul Gauguin in 1848. His father was a journalist and his mother was a writer who was a member of a noble Peruvian family. Gauguin's father died when he was very young and his mother moved him and his sister back to her family in Peru.
- When Paul was seven years old, they moved back to Paris. When he grew up, Gauguin spent six years working as a sailor before his stepfather found him a job working as a stockbroker in a bank.
- Gauguin married and had five children. It was then, at about age 35, that he became interested in art and painting.
- At first, Gauguin painted like the Impressionists, but was soon influenced by Japanese woodcut art and developed his own unique style. Like his one-time roommate and friend, Vincent van Gogh, Gauguin rejected the Western style of painting and instead simplified his form in the style of Primitive Art.
- In the South Seas, Gauguin discovered a beauty of color and a simple way of life. He eventually abandoned his former life setting for a life of poverty

and isolation in Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands. His painting reflected the beautiful landscape and the peaceful, natural life of the people of the South Pacific.

- Gauguin exaggerated his colors and arranged them to seem brighter. He was known for changing the actual color of everyday things for both decorative and emotional purposes to express mood. His works are filled with bands of flat, beautiful colors and simple, two-dimensional images.
- Gauguin died in 1903 of what was most likely a heart attack, and is buried in Calvary Cemetery on Atuona, French Polynesia.

### **About the Artwork:**

This landscape painting features large areas of bold color with little attention to detail, like the Impressionist painters Gauguin admired. Not all colors are realistic or relate to colors found in nature. Gauguin believed that there was an emotion that matched exactly each color in the painting. Gauguin often used colors in unusual ways to express emotion and capture the inner self.

**About Color:** *(A classroom set of color wheels are available for checkout at the Instructional Resource Center.)*

The **color wheel** was developed by Sir Isaac Newton by taking the color spectrum and bending it into a circle. If you follow around the color wheel, you will find the same order of the color spectrum- red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo (blue-violet), and violet. Some remember it by the acronym ROY G. BIV. The color wheel is made up of three different types of colors - Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary.

The **primary colors** are red, yellow, and blue. They are called primary for a couple of reasons. First, no two colors can be mixed to create a primary color. In other words, primary colors can only be created through the use of natural pigments. Secondly, all other colors found on the color wheel can be created by mixing primary colors together.

The **secondary colors** are orange, green, and purple. Secondary colors are created by mixing equal parts of any two primary colors. Yellow and blue will give you green. Red and blue will create purple (violet). Red and yellow will give you orange.

**Value** is the darkness or lightness of a color.

Another name for “color” is **hue**. If I ask, “what color is this?” I could also ask “what hue is this?” and I would be asking the same question. So, when dealing with pure color (hue), value can be affected by adding white or black to a color.

Adding white to a color produces a **tint**.

Adding black to a color produces a **shade**.

### **How to mix Primary Colors into Secondary Colors –**

Red + Blue = Purple

Red + Yellow = Orange

Blue + Yellow = Green

(Note to Art Guides: if students want to make brown, it is a mix of orange and green. This is a tertiary color.)

### **Possible Questions:**

What colors do you see?

Find the primary colors. (Reds, yellows, and blues.)

Find the secondary colors (Orange, green, and purples)

What emotion do you think Gauguin wanted you to feel when you look at this painting?

How do the different colors make you feel?

Are there any colors that surprise you? (Yellow palm leaves, pink roads)

What do you see in the foreground?

What do you see in the background?

How would you describe this landscape? Detailed or simplistic, realistic or abstract?

### **Materials Needed:**

- Tempera paint in blue, yellow and red, white, black
- Paintbrushes, one per student
- Large disposable plate or paint palette, one per student
- Plastic cups for water, one per student
- Paper towels

- White construction paper, 9" X 12", one per student
- Classroom set of individual color wheels, available for check-out from the Instructional Resource Center.

**Troubleshooting:** Make sure the students do not focus on details in the landscape but rather a simple scene with mountain, sky, trees and water for example. Also, distribute paint in small amounts to prevent waste. You can give more as needed.

**Process:**

1. Hand out paper. Remind students to write their name on the back.
2. Instruct the students to draw a VERY simple landscape that could be seen on a Tahitian tropical island. First, they should draw horizon line to separate the earth and sky. Then, add tropical landscape elements such as mountains, volcano, palm trees, ocean, sun rise/set, etc.
3. Remind students NOT to get too carried away with details. Details are not important in this project; the important part is in the color mixing. Stress that their landscapes should be kept simple to mirror the style of Gauguin.
4. Pass out paint plates/palettes. Two paper plates can be shared between two students: one with blue, yellow and red, the other with white and black. Use about a tablespoon of each color.
5. Pass out the small color wheels as a guide to mix their colors.
6. Remind the students how to mix secondary colors and encourage them to begin this process. Remind them that they can add white to "tint" their colors and black to "shade" them.
7. As students paint their landscapes, remind students to use "surprise" colors, for example, yellow palm fronds, pink grass, an orange river, etc. If students choose they can paint their entire landscape using "surprise" colors.
8. Make sure that they fill their entire page with color in their scene. Gauguin loved color!

Examples:



**Parent Note:**

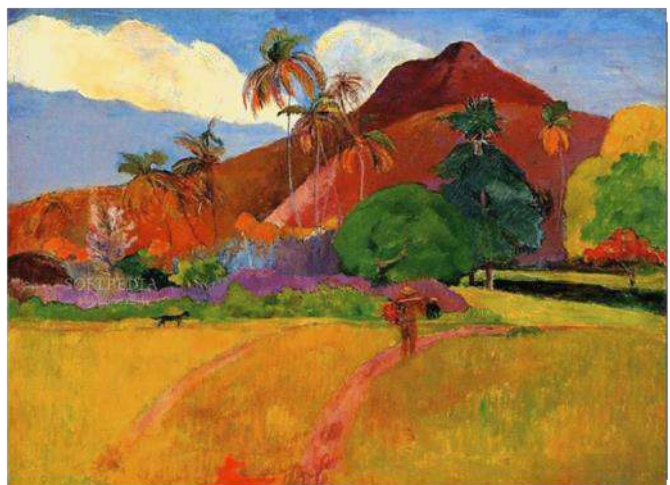
Paul Gauguin (1848 – 1903) was a French Post-Impressionist artist, recognized for his experimental use of color. His work was influential to many modern artists, such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

Today in Art Masterpiece, students mixed primary colors into secondary colors and painted a tropical landscape using these unexpected colors.



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**“Messy Art” Note:**

Our next Art Masterpiece lesson might be a little messy. We will be using \_\_\_\_\_. Most art media is “washable” but it still might leave a faint stain. Please don’t send your child to school in new clothes on this day: \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.  
*(date)* *(time)*

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Extra Help Needed Note:

# We need extra hands!!

The next Art Masterpiece lesson could use some extra helping hands. If you can, please come and lend your hands on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.  
*(date)* *(time)*

# Thanks so much!

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