

Henri Matisse
Pronounced: Ahin REE Mah TEES)

Born in France on December 31, 1869 (xxx years ago)

Parents owned a general store, they were of average wealth

He was a good student throughout his school years; parents encouraged Henri to go to law school. He was successful as a student and began working as a law clerk (job that leads to being a full lawyer)

However, at the age of 21, he became seriously ill. He had an appendicitis attack and had to have surgery. His mother was worried he'd be bored during his recovery period so she bought him a set of oil paints, brushes and canvas. She thought learning to paint would be a good hobby for him. Boy was she right!

As soon as he was well enough to go back to work as a law clerk...he quit. He decided that his true calling was to be an artist. Art became his passion.

He moved away from his family. He went to Paris to study with well-known art teachers. He began his career copying or re-drawing famous works of art. He would sit in museums and copy other people's work, then sell his copy. His paintings during this time were dark; they included browns, pale yellows, blacks and dark blues and greens. Oftentimes, his paintings were of landscapes, people or still life. (define) This was what was popular at the time and in order to make money he had to paint what people would buy.

This was his life for several years. He got bored and started developing his own style.
-Show print-



As you can see this painting is bright and exciting...if not a little unusual. The style of this painting is Fauvism. Which means "wild beast" in French. Matisse invented this style of painting. Notice the bright colors and patterns. Where do you think he got ideas for this painting? Some of his ideas came from brightly colored fabrics that he would collect on his travels. He often went to places that were warm and near water.

When looking at this painting, Matisse is telling us a story. Part of the fun in looking at his work is trying to figure out what the story is. I have a couple of clues for you...

Blue- heaven or truth

Orange- love or gentleness

Red- excitement or fire

Green- growth or change

Let's guess...

Name of print? Interior with Eggplants (The inside of a room, maybe a living room, with eggplants on the table)

For much of his life he was ill and confined to his bedroom. So he painted the interiors...with a twist ...he imagined fabulously decorated bedspreads, curtains, wallpapers and tablecloths. He paid particular attention to color and pattern. (define) Later in life, as his health continued to decline he had to stop painting. But he couldn't turn off the creative juices. We also have this print:

The Purple Robe



Purple Robe is another example of Matisse's use of vibrant colors, even the facial features of the subject are defined by very bold strokes.

When he was in his 80's, Matisse became ill and was no longer mobile. In this bedridden and wheelchair-bound state, he could not stand up to paint, but he could cut paper, and so he began to "draw with scissors." With the aid of an assistant, he completed many imaginative paper collages known as the Cut Outs. These collages are abstract and full of bright, simple, organic shapes. Students will see that Matisse made abstract art, and re-enact Matisse's process of "drawing with scissors" to stimulate their imagination and create their own paper Cut Outs. He began paper cutting and making collages. He died at the age of 85, famous and with a great number of people collecting his art.

I think that from Matisse we can learn if there is something that we love to do - keep doing it! You may have to change the way you do it - but keep doing it! If you love to play basketball, but people tell you that you are not going to be tall - keep playing! If you love to sing, but people say you are not a good singer - keep singing! Do what makes you happy!

Vocabulary for Matisse art

Collage: An art form where pieces or pictures of objects are pasted together.

Rhythmic: Anything patterned with movement or a beat.

Design: The form or shape of a thing.

Inspired: To be moved with creative energy.

Radial Balance: When a circle has a center point with lines extending from it.

Pattern: When parts radiating from the center are repeated over and over.

Asymmetrical: Unbalanced or uneven; not the same on two sides.

Still Life: in the visual arts, subject matter that is not living, such as apples, flowers, or chairs.

Portrait: A painting, drawing, or photograph that represents a person, real or fictitious.