Spot the difference

Language level:	Elementary; Pre-intermediate (A2)
Learner type:	Young learners; Teens; Adults; CLIL
Time:	45 minutes
Activity:	Dictation; Making questions
Topic:	Art
Language:	Present simple; Present continuous; Question forms
Materials:	Images

Preparation, materials and equipment

For this activity, you will need a colour copy of each of Vincent Van Gogh's two portraits of Dr Paul Gachet, the French physician who treated the artist during the last weeks of his life. The images are included on the last two pages of this lesson plan.

Alternatively, they can be downloaded at Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Dr_Gachet

Decide how you are going to display the images. Possibilities include:

- Laptop or desktop (good for small groups)
- Computer, projector + screen
- iPhone or other mobile device (good for one-to-ones/intimate classes)
- Make colour prints. Laminate them if possible.

Lesson plan

1. Show your learners the first portrait of Dr Gachet. Ask them if they can identify the artist and find out what they know about him.

Portrait of Dr Gachet
Vincent Van Gogh
1890
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

2. Tell students a bit about the painting.

- Van Gogh painted it in 1890 in Auvers-sur-Oise, 17 miles from Paris.
- It is one of the last paintings he did in his life.
- Dr Paul Gachet was a French physician who treated the artist during his last weeks.
- Van Gogh described the portrait as "*Sad but gentle, yet clear and intelligent*".
- It is housed in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris

3. Remove the picture from your students' view and tell them that you are going to carry out an observation test. Tell them that you are going to dictate a number of statements about the painting. Some of these statements are true and some of them are false. During the dictation, if a student thinks that a statement is true, he or she should write it exactly as you say it. If on the other hand the student thinks that it is false, he or she should amend it accordingly. Demonstrate with the following example:

Teacher says: *Dr Gachet is wearing a green hat.*

Student could write:
Dr Gachet is wearing a green hat.
Dr Gachet is wearing a yellow hat.
Dr Gachet isn't wearing a hat.
Dr Gachet is wearing a hat but it is not green.

True and false statements to be dictated

- Dr Gachet is wearing a green hat.
- He is resting his head on his right hand.
- He is looking directly at us.
- He has blue eyes and a moustache.
- You can see three buttons on his coat.
- The table is bright red.
- There are two yellow books on the table.
- There is a flower in Dr Gachet's left hand.
- He looks unhappy (subjective of course and open to argument)

4. Once all statements have been dictated, allow everyone to share and compare their answers. Offer corrections wherever necessary.

5. Your students will want to see the painting again in order to find out how well they did. You are now going to play a trick on them: Rather than show them the image that they have already seen, show them the second version.

Portrait of Dr Gachet
Vincent Van Gogh
1890
Private collection

6. If nobody notices the discrepancy, tell your students that they have all failed the true observation test and ask if anyone can tell you why. Once it has been established that you switched pictures, your students will want to see the original version. Tell them that although you are not going to show it to them, you are willing to answer any questions about it. Have your students pre-prepare the questions that they are going to ask about the original version of the painting.

For this step, your students will have to convert all of their statements into questions. Elicit or demonstrate how this is done with one or two examples before allowing your students to do the rest on their own or in pairs. Example questions:

- *Is Dr Gachet wearing a green hat?*
- *Does he have blue eyes and a moustache?*
- *Is there a flower in his left hand?*
- *How many buttons can you see on his coat?*

7. Answer your students' questions but only if they have been constructed correctly.

8. Let students see both versions, and decide which one they prefer. This can give rise to discussion while they identify differences in mood, colour, etc between the two versions. Alternatively, the two versions could be used to explore comparative adjectives.

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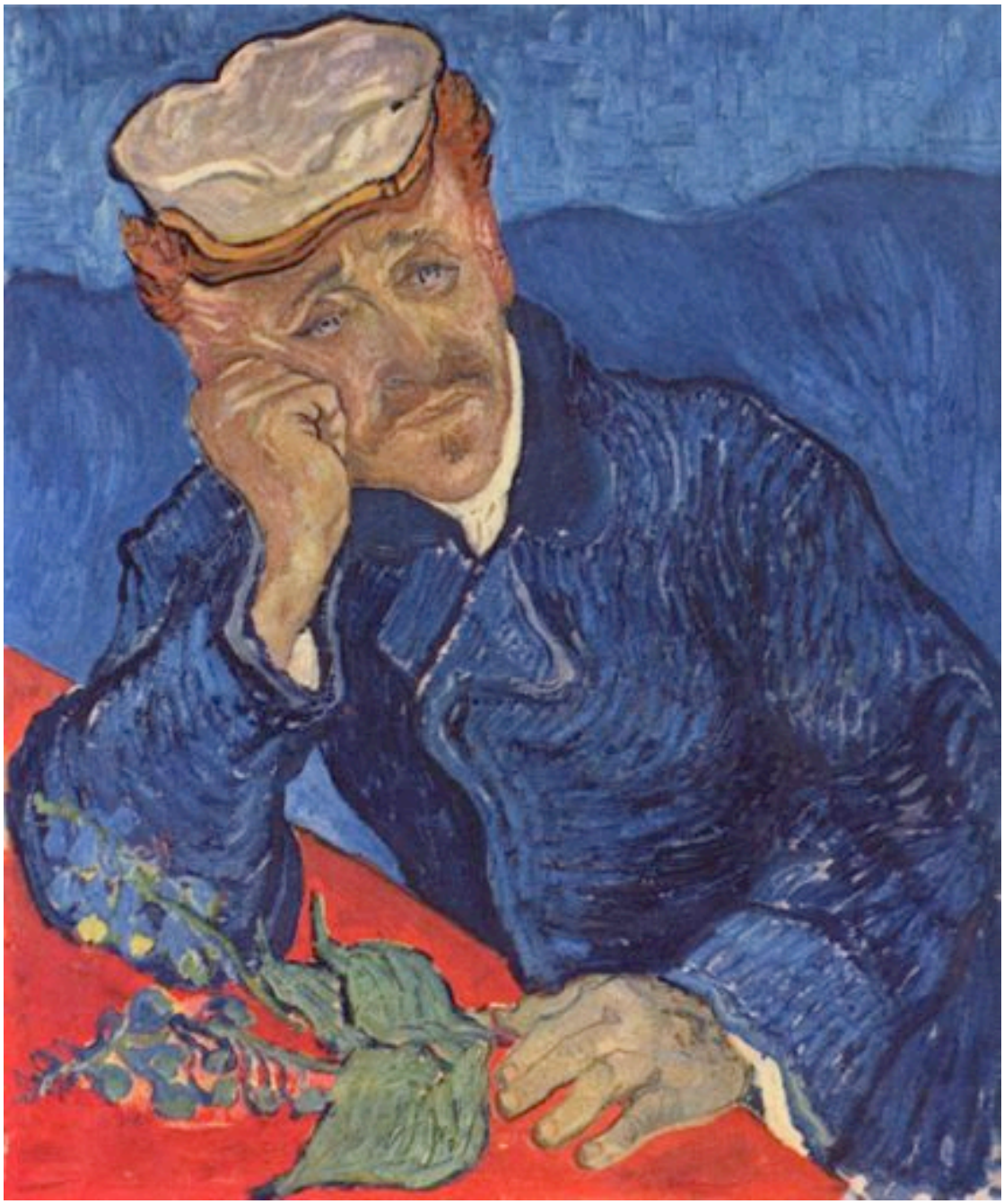
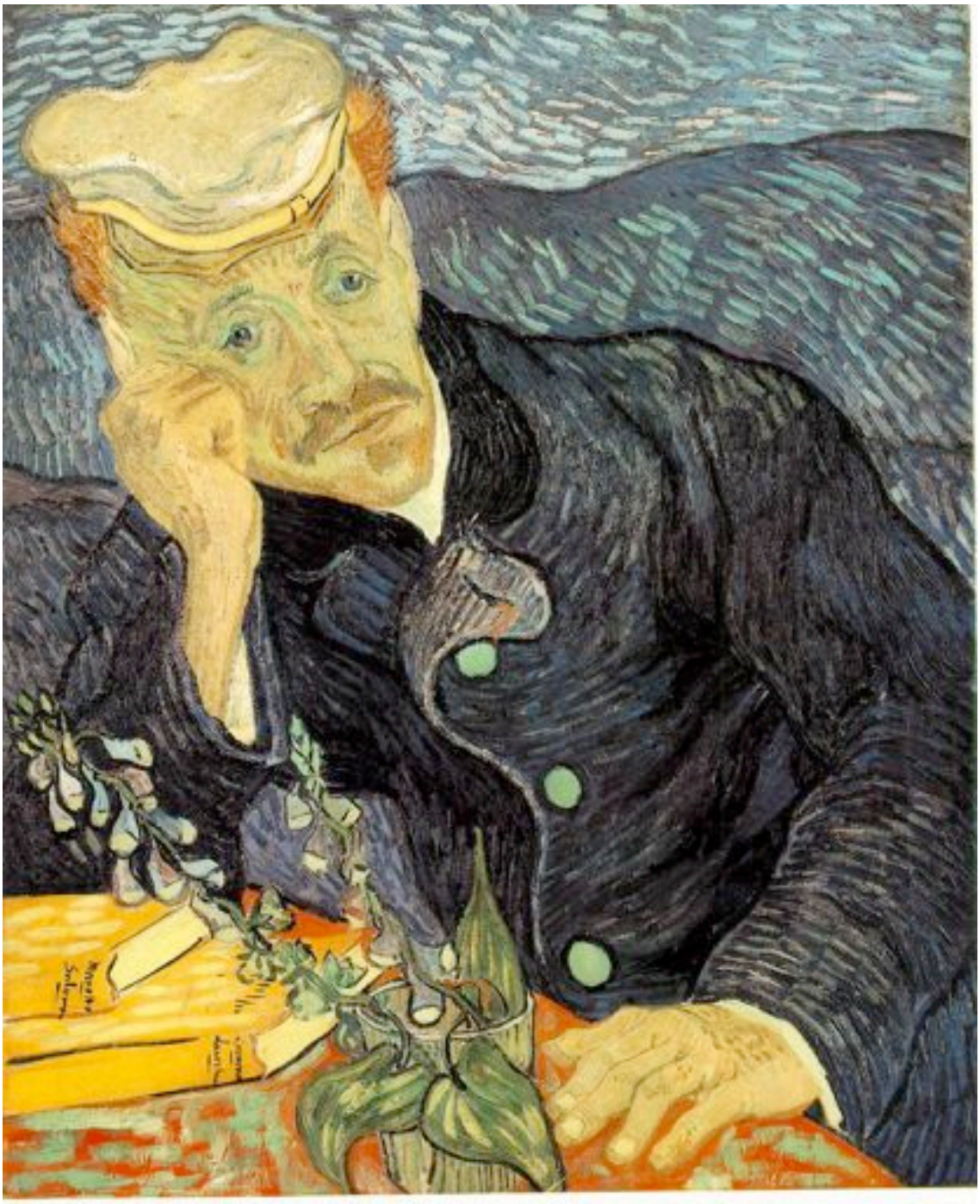
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