

In his lifetime, Wassily Kandinsky changed the face of art world and was one of the pioneers of abstract modern art. In a time where everything represented what was seen, Kandinsky wanted to explore the relationship between colour and form to create a visual experience that engaged the sight, sound, and emotions of the public.



### **Early life**

Wassily Kandinsky was born in Moscow, the capital city of Russia, in 1866. As a child, Wassily was very talented and played the piano and cello he also enjoyed drawing and writing poetry. It is easy to imagine the early influences on the young boy with his keen eye for colour and love of music. Moscow was famous for its outstanding architecture with imposing buildings like the Kremlin, and the future artist would have soaked it all up. His family were very well off (his father was a tea merchant) and the fortunate Kandinsky family would often travel to Italy to visit places like Venice, Rome and Florence. He would have visited a great many monuments and art galleries and must have seen some amazing art as a youngster.

### **Early Career**

Originally, Kandinsky's heart was set on becoming a lawyer and between 1886 and 1892 he studied law and economics at the University of Moscow. However, during his time there, he was sent to Vologda (a village in north-western Russia) to study the lives of the people who lived there. Whilst he was there, he became extremely impressed with the colourful ways they decorated their village houses and by their folk art. These forms and colours truly inspired him and had a huge influence on his artwork. When he was thirty years old, he decided to be an artist and gave up law and enrolled at the Munich Academy of Art. Kandinsky's early work was based on folk art and was heavily influenced by pointillism and fauvism – which is impressionist art. His most famous picture of this period was *The Blue Rider* (1903). He then discovered the work of Monet who did not use fine detail but emphasised colour more than the subject and in 1910, Kandinsky produced his first abstract watercolour.

### **Abstract Art**

Kandinsky was certainly one of the earliest and most influential abstract painters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He did not want to paint pictures of what people could see but wanted to convey feelings and emotion and even the sound of music through the colours and shapes in his paintings. Kandinsky thought that yellow conveyed the crisp sound of a brass trumpet and certain colours placed together could create harmonies like the chords on a piano. The shapes he thought most interesting were the circle which created a spiritual feeling, the triangle which created aggressive feelings and the square which created calm feelings.

### **Der Blaue Reiter**

Der Blaue Reiter (*The Blue Rider*) was an art movement formed by a number of Russian and German artists - including Kandinsky - that lasted from 1911 to 1914. The group of artists

Year 5 English Week 1 Day 1 ANSWERS MILD/SPICY/HOT

wanted to promote modern art. Although they all painted in their own different styles, they all had one thing in common, they wanted to express spiritual truths through their art and said, 'The artist must train not only his eyes but his soul.' Like Kandinsky, they believed that there was a connection between the spiritual and symbolic associations of colour and the link between visual art and music. Unfortunately, the group was disbanded by the first world war and Kandinsky was forced to move back to Russia.

### **Bauhaus**

When World War I ended, Kandinsky was invited to teach at the Bauhaus Art School in Germany. The school was opened by Walter Gropius in 1919. Gropius felt that a new period in history had begun and wanted to create a new architectural style that reflected the new era. However, the Nazi party (who ruled in Germany at the time) were very critical of this new modern movement and closed it down in 1933. Even though the artists were forced to leave Germany, they had a major influence on art and architecture in Western Europe and the USA in the following years. Because they had been exiled under the Nazi regime, they had been forced to move to other parts of the world and were able to spread their talents far and wide.

Kandinsky's art and ideas have inspired many generations of artists, from his students at the Bauhaus to the Abstract Expressionists after World War II and are still greatly admired to this day.

**How to ensure you get full marks in your comprehension.**

For 1 mark, you must retrieve one piece of information from the text.

For 2 marks, you must retrieve one piece of information from the text OR give your opinion and then explain your point.

For 3 marks, you must make your point, give evidence and then explain how the evidence proves your point.

Please ensure that you take the time to add enough detail to your answers, paying close attention to the suggested marks at the side of each question.

**Mild questions**

1. When was Kandinsky born? (see Early life) (1)

Kandinsky was born in 1866.

2. Which instruments did he play? (see Early life) (1)

Kandinsky played the piano and cello.

3. What job did Kandinsky want to have in his early life? (see Early career) (1)

Kandinsky wanted to become a lawyer.

4. How old was he when he went to Germany to study art? (see Early career) (1)

When he was 30 he went to Munich, Germany and began to study art.

5. What happened in 1910? (see Early Career) (1)

In 1910, Kandinsky produced his first abstract watercolour.

6. Which art movement was formed by Kandinsky along with other artists? (see Der Blaue Reiter) (1)

Der Blaue Reiter was an art movement formed by Kandinsky along with other artists.

7. What did Kandinsky think the colour yellow conveyed? (see Abstract art) (1)

The colour yellow conveyed the crisp sound of a brass trumpet.

8. What does Der Blaue Reiter translate to in English? (1)

Der Blaue Reiter translates to The Blue Rider.

9. Where did Kandinsky teach when World War 1 ended? (see Bauhaus) (1)

Kandinsky taught in Bauhaus Art School in Germany.

10. What do you notice about the organisation of the biography? Give an example. (2)

There are subheadings to organise the biography. Early life is an example of a subheading.

11. Would you have liked to meet Kandinsky? Explain your answer. (3)

I would/would not like to meet Kandinsky because...

**Spicy/Hot**

1. When was Kandinsky born? (1)

Kandinsky was born in 1866.

2. Which instruments did he play? (1)

Kandinsky played the piano and cello.

3. What was Kandinsky's ambition in his early life? (1)

Kandinsky wanted to become a lawyer.

4. Find and copy one word that is synonymous with the word link? (1)

The word relationship is a synonym for link.

5. Number the facts 1-5 for the order that they appear in the text. (5)

- The Blue Rider was painted.
- He studied law and economics at the University of Moscow.
- When he was thirty years old, he decided to become an artist.
- Walter Gropius opened his art school.
- Kandinsky produced his first abstract water colour.

The statements appear in the text in the following order:

He studied law and economics at the University of Moscow.

When he was thirty years old, he decided to become an artist.

Kandinsky produced his first abstract water colour.

The Blue Rider was painted.

Walter Gropius opened his art school.

6. What tense is the biography written in? Why is this tense used? (2)

The biography is written in the past tense because biographies are about things that have already happened.

7. What person is this biography written in? Why is this person used? (2)

The biography is written in the third person. It is used because the author is writing about someone else.

8. Write down all the correct features of biographies from the list below. (1 mark for each correct (2))

- Varied sentence lengths
- Conjunctions
- Subheadings
- Rhetorical questions

Conjunctions and subheadings are features of biographies.

9. Why are biographies written in chronological order? (1)

Biographies are written in chronological order as they organise the person's life in time order.

10. Write down alternative subheadings for each paragraph? (5- 1 per subheading)

The subheading '.....' could be ...

Early life – His childhood

Early Career – His future career

Abstract Art – His artistic technique

Der Blaue Reiter – His art movement

Bauhaus – Later life

11. Summarise the early life paragraph in three sentences. (3)

Kandinsky was born in 1866 to well off family. As a young boy, he was a talented musician but also enjoyed art. He often travelled to Italy and visited many monuments and art galleries which influenced his future as an artist.