

## Lesson Title

Sunflowers Drawing Lesson with Oil Pastels (Van Gogh-Inspired) for Grades 2, 3, 4, & 5

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## Grade Levels

Grades 2–5

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## Lesson Objective

Students will create a **balanced composition** by drawing **three sunflower blooms in three sizes**, intentionally scaling them **so large they extend off the page**, and using **radial symmetry** to build petals around a center.

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## NCAS Visual Arts Standards

*(Condensed where the same skill shows up across grades.)*

- **VA:Cr1.1.2/3/4/5a:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
  - **VA:Cr2.1.2/3/4/5a:** Experiment with materials and tools to explore personal ideas in artmaking.
  - **VA:Cr2.2.2/3/4/5a:** Demonstrate safe and proper procedures when using materials, tools, and equipment.
  - **VA:Cr3.1.2/3/4/5a:** Revise and complete artistic work.
  - **VA:Re7.2.2/3/4/5a:** Perceive and analyze artistic work (how choices like size/placement affect meaning).
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## Lesson Description

This is your **composition confidence-builder**: three flowers, three sizes, **big enough to go off the paper** (kids LOVE being “allowed” to do that). Students practice **radial symmetry** for petals, then use oil pastels to fill bold color—Van Gogh vibes without the stress of painting.

**Teaching note:** The “off the page” rule solves the classic tiny-drawing problem instantly. You’re welcome. 😊

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## Vocabulary

- **Composition:** How parts of an artwork are arranged on the page.
  - **Balance:** When the artwork feels visually even (not “heavy” on one side).
  - **Scale:** The size of something compared to the page or other objects.
  - **Overlap:** When one shape covers part of another (creates depth).
  - **Radial Symmetry:** A design that repeats around a center point (like petals).
  - **Foreground/Background:** What’s in front vs. what’s behind.
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## Materials

- 9x12” **white drawing paper** (thicker is better, but copy paper can work)
  - **Pencil** + eraser
  - **Black marker** (optional for outlining; great for boldness)
  - **Oil pastels** (best color payoff)
  - **Crayons** (perfect substitute)
  - Paper towels (for oily fingers)
  - Scrap paper “hand-rest” sheets (to prevent smudging)
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## Lesson Sequence

Choose-your-own-adventure timing, because real life is loud.

### Option A: 40 minutes (ideal)

1. **Introduction (5 min):** Van Gogh + composition challenge
2. **Guided Practice/Demo (10 min):** 3 centers + radial petals + “off the page” rule
3. **Independent Practice (18 min):** draw + color
4. **Clean Up (4 min):** pastel wipe-down + bins
5. **Closure (3 min):** gallery glance + reflection prompt

### Option B: 30 minutes (speed round)

1. Intro (3)

2. Demo (7)
  3. Work time (16)
  4. Clean up (3)
  5. Closure (1)
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## Student Art Examples

Show a **range**: one with huge blooms, one with more space, one with dramatic overlap, one with wild backgrounds. Kids need to see that “same directions” ≠ “same results.”

Little script you can borrow:

- “Your sunflower does not need to match mine. Mine is just one possibility—yours should look like *you* made it.”
  - “Big flowers are brave flowers. Let them go off the page!”
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## Step-by-Step Instructions

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## Lesson Videos

- [One short overview video](#)
  - [One longer step-by-step lesson video](#)
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## Google Slides

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## Cross-Curricular & Extension Resources

1. **Art History (Van Gogh + purpose of sunflowers):**  
Use a quick “museum moment” to connect sunflowers to meaning (friendship, gratitude, color experiments).  
Source: Van Gogh Museum overview ([Van Gogh Museum](#))
2. **Science (Sunflowers are composite flower heads):**  
Great mini-connection: a sunflower “face” is made of many tiny florets.

Source: Phipps Conservatory explanation (Asteraceae/composite flowers) ([Phipps Conservatory](#))

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## Differentiation Strategies

1. **Break it into “checkpoints” (especially for 2nd grade):**

- Checkpoint 1: 3 centers placed
- Checkpoint 2: petals on 1 flower
- Checkpoint 3: all petals done
- Checkpoint 4: coloring + background

2. **Guided petal helpers:**

For kids who struggle with symmetry, let them draw **8 “tick marks”** around the circle first (like a clock), then put petals between marks.

3. **Early finisher extensions:**

- Add a **second layer** of petals behind the first
  - Create a patterned background (checkerboard, spirals, stripes)
  - Write a tiny artist statement: “My sunflowers feel \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_.”
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## Assessment & Reflection

### Simple Rubric (4–3–2–1)

Criteria	4	3	2	1
<b>Composition (3 sizes + off-page)</b>	3 sizes + confident off-page + strong balance	Meets goal, mostly balanced	Missing size variety or balance	1 flower only or very small/tiny composition
<b>Radial symmetry petals</b>	Clear repeating petals, full and consistent	Mostly repeating petals	Some petals uneven/incomplete	Petals unclear or minimal
<b>Craftsmanship</b>	Careful coloring, fills background, clean work	Mostly filled, minor gaps	Many gaps or rushed	Very incomplete

**Two assessment options (choose what fits your day)**

- **Quick & informal:** “2 Stars and a Wish” partner share (2 things you like, 1 thing you’d change).
  - **More formal:** 3-question exit slip:
    1. What makes your composition feel balanced?
    2. Where did you use overlap?
    3. What would you change if you made a second version?
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## Call to Action

If you try this lesson, I’d love to see it in action—snap photos of **kids drawing big blooms off the page** or a few finished pieces on a bulletin board. Send them in so we can celebrate your artists (and inspire the next overwhelmed teacher scrolling at 10pm).