

Piet Mondrian

- This is Piet Mondrian [**SLIDE**: Photo of Mondrian]
 - Born in 1872 in the town of Amersfoort in the Netherlands [**SLIDE**: map showing Netherlands]
 - Given the name Pieter Mondriaan [**SLIDE**: Pieter Mondriaan].
 - Later he changed his name to Piet Mondrian [**SLIDE**: Piet Mondrian]
 - His father and uncle were both artists and he also had a talent for art
 - When he was 14 years old, he studied drawing and got a diploma to teach drawing to elementary and secondary schools
 - When he was 20 years old he was accepted at the Royal Academy of the Netherlands to study painting
 - Mondrian lived at a very exciting time in the art world – there was a huge shift going on from representational art to abstract art
 - What is representational art? [**SLIDE**: Representational] (Discuss what representational means)

Mondrian was Dutch and the country where he grew up had a wonderful tradition of incredible painters. And all of it was representational art. [**4 SLIDES**: a Rembrandt self-portrait; Return of the Prodigal Son; Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring; and a still life.]

So when Mondrian began painting, he painted mostly landscapes and still lifes. (Discuss, what is a landscape? What is a still life?)

At first, his paintings were very traditional, but as he was exposed to some of the new ideas in the art world, his landscapes started to change. He started using a different color palette and the compositions were more simple and focused on basic lines [**3 slides**: "Red Cloud," "Woods near Oele", 1908, "Windmill in Sunlight", 1908]

In 1911, Mondrian's life and his art started to change. He moved to Paris, which was the center of the art world [**SLIDE**: picture of Eiffel Tower]

- In Paris, he saw art that was totally new to him, made by two artists who were changing the way everyone thought about art: Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. [**SLIDE**: Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque].
- Let me show you what they were painting [**2 SLIDES**: Picasso's "Factory, Horta de Ebbo" and Braque's "Woman with a Guitar"] This style of painting is called cubism – can you guess why it's called that? Cubism was the first style of abstract art.
- Cubism had a big influence on Mondrian. [**SLIDE**: "Still Life with Gingerpot."] He started experimenting with this style of painting

After three years in Paris, Mondrian went home to visit his father who was sick. And then World War I broke out (explain a little about WWI). Because of the war, he had to stay in Holland until 1919, and he continued to make increasingly abstract art. What is abstract art? Here's an example of a painting from this period [**SLIDE**: "Pier

and Ocean”]

During this time when he was living in Holland during the War, he went to an artists’ colony and met two artists who would have a big influence on his work, [Bart van der Leck](#) and [Theo van Doesburg](#). [SLIDE: Bart van der Leck, Theo van Doesburg]. Van der Leck used only primary colors in his work and this idea had a big influence on Mondrian’s work. (who can tell me what the primary colors are?) Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg started a magazine called *De Stijl*, [SLIDE: De Stijl] where they wrote about their theory of artistic expression. Mondrian rejected all use of all objects (anything you could see with your eyes in the real world) in his work, and wanted to limit his work to the most basic elements: straight lines, primary colors, and neutrals (black, white, and gray). He called this style of painting Neoplasticism [SLIDE: Neoplasticism] This was the style of painting that he would become famous for.

After the War ended, Mondrian moved back to Paris and Mondrian began making paintings that would become his signature style [SLIDES:

Later, he moved to New York City and his paintings became a little more colorful and more full of movement: [SLIDES: Broadway Boogie-woogie, etc.]

Victory Boogie Woogie was left unfinished when he died of pneumonia in 1944. Mondrian’s work represents a movement toward total abstraction in art. Mondrian wanted his work to be “pure” above all else, both clean and beautiful. And these ideas had a big influence on artists who would come after him.

Art Project: Cut out different sized squares of blue, yellow and red construction paper, and strips of black construction paper in varying widths. Give each student a sheet of white construction paper, and have them compose their own Mondrian-style picture. Use glue sticks to stick everything down, and they can cut the black strips to whatever size they want (or just use a wide black magic marker).