

Illustration © 2014 by Mary GrandPré

AS A CHILD, VASYA KANDINSKY was expected to be a proper Russian boy. When his parents sent him to art classes, he was expected to paint pretty landscapes and still-lives—properly, like everyone else. But Vasya was different: He could *hear* bold, swirling colors. He could *see* vibrant sounds. And he wanted to paint *music*.

Kandinsky grew up to be one of the first creators of abstract art. He wrote about hearing a hissing sound while mixing colors in his paintbox as a child, and it's believed he had a condition called synesthesia. The way Kandinsky saw and heard life greatly influenced his art—and his art greatly influenced the world!

This guide is aligned with the Common Core Curriculum with the following standards for the 1st grade. If you teach another grade, you can easily find the coordinating standard at this website for your grade level: [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS

### Key Ideas and Details

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.1** Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.2** Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.3** Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

### Craft and Structure

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.4** Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.5** Explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information, drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types.

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.7** Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

### Phonological Awareness

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.1.2c** Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in spoken single-syllable words.

### Phonics and Word Recognition

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.1.3e** Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables.

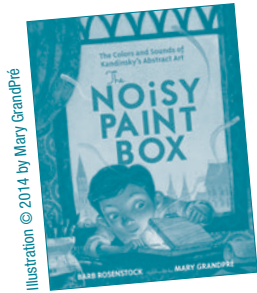
## PRE-READING

**ART AND MUSIC**—Provide students with the opportunity to listen to classical music while they paint. Show them pictures of Kandinsky’s work for inspiration, and perhaps even have them listen to Richard Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin* as they begin.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did Vasya Kandinsky grow up? List the things he did to be considered a proper young boy.
2. Did Vasya grow up rich or poor? How do you know? Find the sentence that tells the reader so. What other clues can a good reader look for?
3. What gift changed everything for Vasya? What was your favorite gift? Why?
4. Explain what happened when Vasya the colors together. Did his father believe him?
5. Describe the way Vasya painted. What two senses is he using?
6. Summarize the reaction Vasya got from his family when they saw this first painting.
7. What did Vasya learn in a “proper” art class? Do you think he was disappointed by the lesson? Why?
8. When he grew up, what did Vasya decide to be first? What does it mean to “live the way people expected”?
9. As an adult, what night changed his life and made him turn back to art? Have you ever felt this type of connection to a piece of music?
10. When Vasya studied art as an adult, it didn’t make him happy at first. Why? What group of people agreed with Vasya that “art should make you feel”? Do you agree with him?
11. Explain what inspired the names of Vasya’s paintings. What was the new name for the type of art he was creating? Why do you think it took so long for people to understand his art?
12. What can we should by reading about Vasya Kandinsky’s life?





**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**USING SENSES**—Good writers use details that appeal to as many senses as possible. Look back into the story and find details that appeal to each of the five senses. Then brainstorm details for a story you will tell about something you like to do (like Kandinsky loved to paint and listen to music).

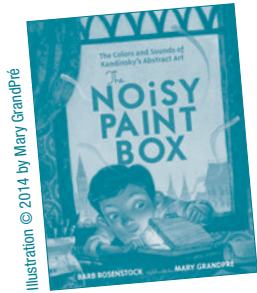


SENSE	Example from the story	Details for a story of my own
SIGHT		
HEARING		
SMELL		
TASTE		
TOUCH		

**HISTORICAL FICTION**—Historical Fiction is a genre that blends both facts and imagined elements. This picture book is an excellent example of the genre. After reading the story and the author’s note, fill out the following graphic organizer:

Facts about Kandinsky and his art	Fictional, or imagined, parts of the story





**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONEMIC AWARENESS**—Using the chart below, have students place a token (a penny, a game piece, or even a small candy), in the column where they hear the initial sound of the word read aloud. Stop and check their work along the way.

Read from the following two lists in random order:

/P/ words: paint, pig, porch, pal, pet, pond, pest, pop, pen, pot, pat, punt.

/B/ words: boy, bat, ball, bid, bore, bind, base, build, bet, born, bib, bird.



Words that begin with the /p/ sound like PAINT	Words that begin with the /b/ sound like BOY

Divide the following words from the story into two syllables:

WORD	First syllable	Second syllable
proper		
studied		
science		
dinner		
wooden		
polite		
whisper		