

**Art Masterpiece: *Thatched Cottages at the Roadside*
by Maurice de Vlaminck**



Keywords: Fauvism, Texture, Color

Activity: Thatched Cottages Crayon Rubbings

About the Artist:

- Maurice de Vlaminck was a French Fauvist artist. He was born in 1876 in Paris. His father was Flemish and taught violin, and his mother was French and taught piano. His father taught him to play the violin. In addition to his work as a famous artist, Vlaminck was an author, a poet, a professional violinist and a professional cyclist in his lifetime.
- Vlaminck began painting in his late teens. In 1894 he married Suzanne Berly. The turning point in Vlaminck's art career was when, at age 23, Vlaminck met an aspiring artist, André Derain, with whom he struck up a lifelong friendship. When Vlaminck completed his army service in 1900, the two rented a studio together. He painted during the day and earned money by giving violin lessons and performing at night. At this time, Vlaminck was primarily a printer who worked in black and white.

- In World War I Vlaminck was stationed as a member of the French army in Paris, and began writing poetry. After the war, he settled in Paris and married his second wife, Berthe Combes, and had two daughters.
- Along with André Derain and Henri Matisse, Vlaminck is considered one of the principal figures in the Fauve movement, a group of French modern artists who from 1904 to 1908 were united in their use of intense color. *Fauves* translates in French as "Beasts." Their style of painting was reflective of Impressionism, though much wilder, and almost animal like in nature. These artists used pure saturated color straight, un-mixed and right from the package. Fauve painters would paint in an aggressive manner, leaving brush strokes and globs of paint in their wake. This method of painting would result in what some critics would call a messy, yet powerful scene.
- His favorite subjects seemed to be flowers, the French countryside, the sea, forests and agriculture. If people appear in any of Vlaminck's landscape pictures, they are usually given less detail than the landscape in the painting, and are not dominant.
- Later in Vlaminck's life, changes in his style become evident in his French village scenes. Vlaminck was fond of roads, and used them often as seen in *Thatched Cottages at the Roadside*. At this point in his career, his colors were not nearly as wild and his brush strokes much less fierce than his earlier Fauvist style. He died in 1958.

Possible Questions:

- What are some textures that you see in this painting?
- What is a thatched cottage? What is the roof made of? (straw)
- What colors stand out? Notice the contrast between the bright yellow field and the bold blue sky.
- Does it look like the artist used a lot of paint? Do you think that you would feel the globs of paint if you could touch the actual painting?
- Do you like to look at the scenery when taking a long car ride? Why do you think Vlaminck liked to paint roads and the French countryside?

Activity: Thatched Cottages Crayon Rubbings

- 1) Explain to the students that they will be exploring different textures and colors by creating a "crayon rubbing" image of a thatched cottage.
- 2) Pass out the *Shade-Tex* plates and the "Thatched Cottage" copies.
(There are two different cottage pictures to choose from. If students have extra time, they can do both.) Have the students write their names on the back of their papers.
- 3) Demonstrate how to use the *Shade-Tex* plates by putting a piece of paper on top and rubbing the side of a crayon across the page with firm pressure. The texture will magically appear on the paper.
- 4) Show the students how to restrict their crayon rubbing to a particular section of the page by only moving the crayon across that specific section. Explain that students will only shade a portion of their picture with that particular texture and color before trading plates with another student and using a different texture and color crayon for another section of the picture. The goal should be to use at least **4 different textures** and **4 different colors** of crayon on their picture.
- 5) Pass out the (unwrapped) broken crayon pieces and allow the students to begin the crayon rubbings. Make sure the students trade texture plates at regular intervals so they all get to try the different textures.
- 6) When students have finished their Thatched Cottage crayon rubbing picture(s), they can experiment with all the different textures by using half-sheets of copy paper and additional texture surfaces (sun-catcher blanks, small texture squares, flat molded figurines, etc.).

Materials Needed:

- *Shade-Tex* texture plates, one per student, trade at intervals
- White copy paper with images of cottages (1-2 per student)
- Broken crayons with the paper wrapping removed
- Additional half-sheets of copy paper for texture experimentation
- Additional surfaces for texture experimentation (in *Texture Plates* bin)

Artwork Examples:



- **Additional Works by Vlaminck:** Note the bold colors and brush strokes.



Tugboat on the Seine



Sunset in the Forest of Senoches