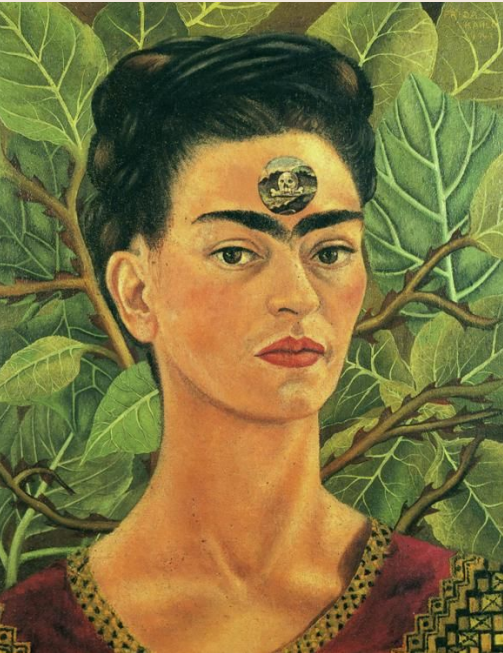


# Comparative Study

By: Alanna Gaziano

## Introduction:



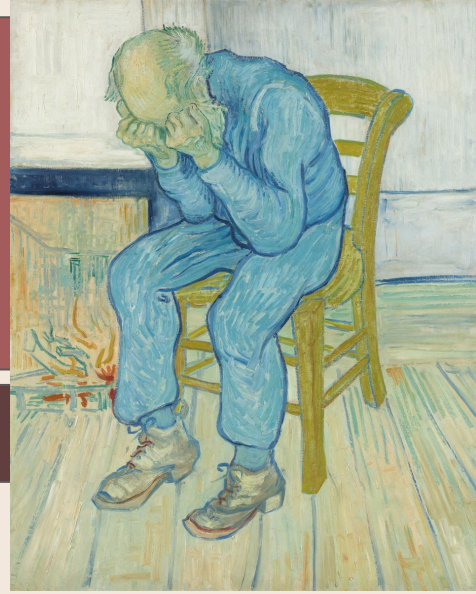
In this comparative study, the artists who I am choosing to focus on are Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh. I have chosen to compare “*Thinking About Death*”, and “*Girl with Death Mask*” by Frida Kahlo with Vincent van Gogh’s piece “*At Eternity’s Gate*”.

Frida Kahlo / “*Thinking About Death*” / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>

Frida Kahlo / “*Girl with Death Mask*” / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>

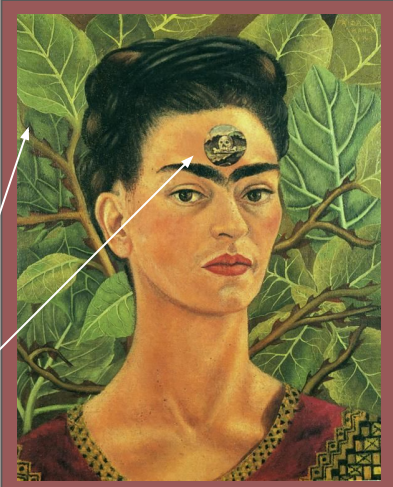
I will be focusing on the **similarities** and **differences** in the way in which these artists chose to portray the idea of death through **form** and **color**. I will also be analyzing how each artist chooses to use **color** and **contrast** in their pieces. I’m interested in how different **cultures** view the idea of death, and the difference between how Frida Kahlo’s culture portrays death versus how Vincent van Gogh’s culture portrays death.

Vincent van Gogh/ “*At Eternity’s Gate*” / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>



I will be analyzing the way that these artists are able to express dark themes while still using **bright**, soft colors. I will also be looking at the similar use of light colors in “*Girl with Death Mask*”, and “*At Eternity’s Gate*” in comparison to the darker color palette in “*Thinking About Death*”. Another aspect I will be looking at through this study is the comparison in form between Kahlo and Van Gogh’s pieces.

# Evaluation of Cultural Significance: Frida Kahlo



Frida Kahlo / “Thinking About Death” / 1943 / Oil  
Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters /  
<https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>

Frida Kahlo was a Mexican painter who was recognized for her portraits, specifically her self-portraits. Her pieces *Girl with Death Mask* and *Thinking About Death* were considered to be a part of the **symbolic** and **surrealistic** art movements. Frida Kahlo often centered her art work around themes of **identity, the human body, and death**. In Mexican culture, death is viewed as a rebirth and another form of life, and this interpretation can often be seen in Kahlo’s own artworks. In her piece, “Thinking About Death”, Kahlo represents death as something that is constantly on her mind since she had been dealing with poor health conditions at the time of this paintings creation in **1943**. This piece was created by Frida Kahlo while she was confined to her home, a time in which she painted many of her self portraits. In this piece the imagery of the skull in the middle of her forehead contrasts to the lively leaves in the background which derives directly from her **cultural** ideas of death being a rebirth.

Death was a very common theme for Frida Kahlo, who throughout her life seemed to be in close contact with it. This theme is reflected in another of Kahlo’s pieces, “Girl with Death Mask”. The subject of this painting is a debate among many people, some believing that it is a depiction of Kahlo in her youth while others debate that it is meant to represent the hardships she was going through at the time due to a miscarriage. The subject of the painting aside, this painting is full of references to items associated with death in Mexican culture. The young girl in the painting is wearing a skull mask which is known to be worn at **Dias**

**De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead)** which is a Mexican festival made to celebrate death and life rather than mourning. The subject of this portrait also seems to be holding a marigold which has connections to Dias De Los Muertos. Marigolds are used as offerings for the dead, and are typically placed on ofrendas during this festival. In addition to these two items, there’s also a tiger mask displayed in the bottom right corner of this piece which replicates a mask that Kahlo has in her own home. This mask is supposed to protect the child from evil, whether that’s the evils of the world or the evil of death. Many see this piece as showing how unfair death can be, especially the death of something as innocent as

a child. Both of these pieces by Frida Kahlo display how she views death through her own personal lens as well as the lens of her Mexican culture.

Frida Kahlo / “Girl with Death Mask” / 1938 / Oil  
Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters /  
<https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>



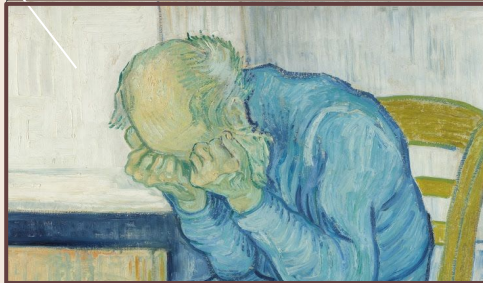
# Evaluation of Cultural Significance: Vincent van Gogh



Vincent van Gogh/ " *At Eternity's Gate*" / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>

Vincent van Gogh was a **Dutch Post-Impressionist artist** who is best known for his figural and landscape work. Van Gogh was also known for the **hardships** he dealt with throughout his life, and many of these emotions can be seen in his artwork. One of those particularly emotional paintings is his piece, "At Eternity's Gate". At the time of this painting's creation in **1890**, Van Gogh was struggling with mental illness and was residing in an asylum. This depiction of death in his painting seems to be completely **different** from the way in which Frida Kahlo has displayed this topic. Rather than the acceptance of death as a rebirth, Van Gogh has instead shown death as something painfully difficult to accept. This painting was actually based off of a **lithograph** that he had previously created in **1882** as a part of a collection, and this was the only drawing that he decided to replicate into oil paint.

"At Eternity's Gate" displays an old man sitting on a chair in a very distraught position. This distraught figure stems from Van Gogh's life of hardships and trying to accept death as he was mentally struggling. In European culture, death is still considered to be something to be celebrated rather than mourned, however Van Gogh seems to deviate from this idea while creating "At Eternity's Gate".

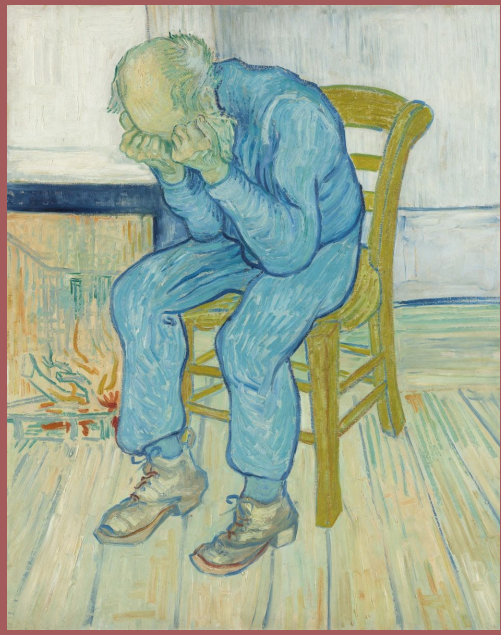


Vincent van Gogh/ " *At Eternity's Gate (Worn Out)*" / 1882 / Lithograph 58.6 x 39 centimeters / <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/849052>

Despite Frida Kahlo and Vincent Van Gogh's cultures having similar interpretations and feelings towards death, they have both chosen to display these feelings in differing ways. Both Van Gogh and Kahlo had been experiencing illness and hardship at the time of their paintings creation, yet still showcase their ideas towards **death** in extremely contrasting ways.

# Comparing and Contrasting Cultural Significance of Kahlo and Van Gogh

Frida Kahlo / *"Thinking About Death"* / 1943 / Oil  
Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters /  
<https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>



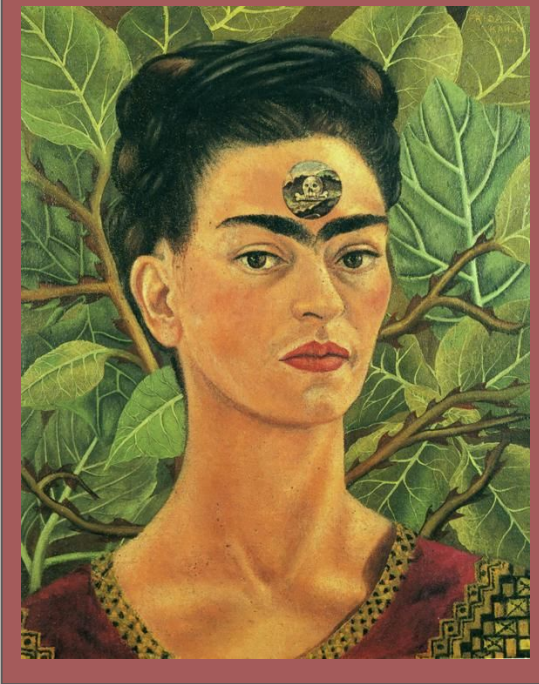
Vincent van Gogh / *"At Eternity's Gate"* / 1890 / Oil  
Paint on Canvas 78.74 x 60.96 /  
<https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sor-rowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>

There's a lot of **similarities** and **differences** between the cultural contexts of Van Gogh's piece and Kahlo's pieces. For starters, these artworks take inspiration from **differing** art movements, Van Gogh taking inspiration from **Post-Impressionism** while Kahlo drew from **Surrealism**. While these artists may have been inspired by different art movements, they did however display the **same theme** in these chosen works, each displaying the theme of death and grief.

Despite discussing similar themes, the way in which each artist chose to **visually** display this theme **differs**. In *"At Eternity's Gate"* Van Gogh displays grief as painful and heartbreaking. **Contrastingly**, in Kahlo's painting *"Thinking About Death"* she has displayed herself as content with the idea of death, not displaying any sort of painful reaction. This is shown in the stoic expression visible on Kahlo's face, in **comparison** to the man in Van Gogh's piece hunched over and overcome with grief and pain.

During the creation of these pieces, Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh were **both** isolated and experiencing some sort of illness. Frida Kahlo was bedridden due to a physical illness, while van Gogh was residing in an asylum. These struggles that they were experiencing at the time are visible in these chosen pieces. Even though they **both** created these pieces while under similar circumstances, the way in which they chose to portray their personal hardships and ideas of loss and death **differs**.

In addition to the circumstances surrounding the creation of these pieces, the cultures of these artists also share **similar** ideas regarding death. In Frida Kahlo's Mexican culture, death is viewed as a rebirth, and another natural part of life. Similarly, Vincent van Gogh's European culture views death in a **similar** sense, seeing it as something to be celebrated rather than mourned. Interestingly, Kahlo shows the views of her culture in her piece, **whereas** Van Gogh paints a **contrasting** idea of death from his culture.



# Comparing and Contrasting Cultural Significance of Kahlo and Van Gogh

Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask" / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>

Frida Kahlo has also chosen to visibly represent her culture in her piece **whereas** Van Gogh does not visibly show cultural aspects in his piece. In her piece "Girl with Death Mask" she includes cultural pieces associated with death from her Mexican heritage. The skull mask in this piece is a traditional mask worn for Dias de Los Muertos, the flower is a marigold which is also associated with death, and the mask in the foreground in this piece is another cultural object.

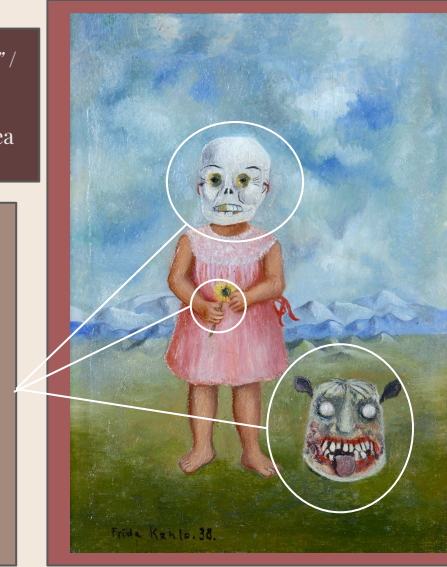
**Contrastingly**, Van Gogh does not display any sort of cultural objects in his piece "At Eternity's Gate". There's nothing visually in his piece that associates with his European cultures idea of death. Kahlo is showing her cultural context in her piece itself **while** Van Gogh's piece does does make direct ties to his culture.

**Furthermore**, the time period in which these pieces were created are **different**. Vincent van Gogh created his piece "At Eternity's Gate" in 1890 whereas Frida Kahlo created both of her pieces in the 1930's- 1940's. There were **differing** events occurring at these times in their own personal lives as well as in the art world. At the time Van Gogh made this painting, Post-Impressionism was rising in popularity which impacted the way in which he created this artwork. He was inspired by the other Post-Impressionist artists of that time period. This can be seen in the strong lines he includes in this piece through brushstrokes. **On the other hand**, Frida Kahlo was said to be inspired by the rising Surrealist art movement, influencing the way in which her pieces looked. This is seen in how she blended her oil paint and created smoot textures.

**Overall**, despite being in **similar** circumstances and points of their lives at the time of creating these chosen pieces, Vincent van Gogh and Frida Kahlo display the theme of grieving and death in **different** ways. Kahlo shows her Mexican cultures of death through the addition of visual pieces that show her culture in her artwork itself. In **contrast**, Van Gogh does not show his European cultures view of death in his piece visually. In fact, he actually shows a **different** perspective through his piece.



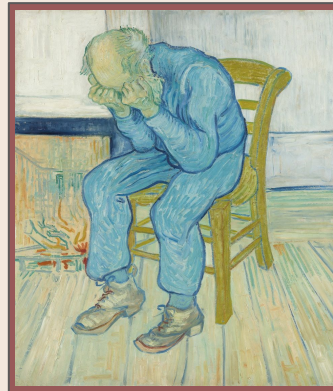
Vincent van Gogh/ " At Eternity's Gate" / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 / <https://kröllermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>



## Comparing and Contrasting the Cultural Significance of my Work to Kahlo's and Van Gogh's

There are a lot of similarities and differences between the cultural significance of my work and my chosen pieces by Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh. For starters, Frida Kahlo focused much of her artwork on form, the human body, and death. In my pieces I also feature a lot of the **human figure** and in my chosen piece in particular, "Solace", I focus on the human form and also the concept of **death**. In addition, our cultures share a similar view on death. My culture views death as a rebirth, and a celebration of life rather than a painful experience. I show this through my piece where I express my grieving process, and how the beginning of the grieving process was painful, but as time went on I was able to better understand death and the process of accepting grief. In Frida's piece, she also seems to be showing herself processing **grief** and death in general. Van Gogh also displays a man grieving in his piece.

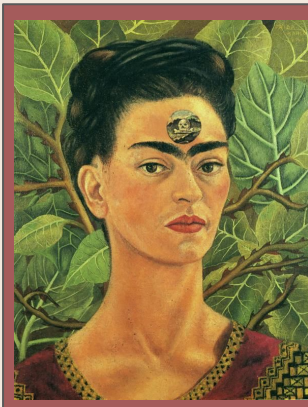
With differences, Frida Kahlo, Van Gogh and I were all inspired by **different art movements**. I found inspiration in the Baroque art movement which can be seen on the darker panel of my painting, whereas Kahlo was a part of the Surrealist art movement, and Van Gogh was a part of the Post-Impressionist art movement.



Vincent van Gogh / "At Eternity's Gate"  
/ 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x  
60.96 /  
<https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>



Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask"  
/ 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x  
10.16 centimeters /  
<https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>



Frida Kahlo / "Thinking About Death"  
/ 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1  
centimeters /  
<https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>

In addition, these artists and I both had different methods of showing that our piece was about death.

Kahlo chose to insert **symbols** into her piece that are universally known as symbols of death throughout a wide majority of cultures. Van Gogh chose to show this through the form of the man in his piece. However in my piece, I chose to make my theme more subtle. There is nothing inherently related to death in my piece, I chose instead to represent my grieving process through my choice of color and the way the forms are interacting in my piece. When creating my piece, I was not in the same circumstances as Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh. Unlike them I was not actively dealing with an illness, and I was not confined to my home or an asylum which is a difference between the cultural significance of our pieces.

However, I was in the grieving process when creating my painting, causing death to be on my mind often, this is similar to how death was constantly on Kahlo and Van Gogh's mind due to their circumstances.

# Evaluation of Material and Conceptual Significance of Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh/ "At Eternity's Gate" / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>

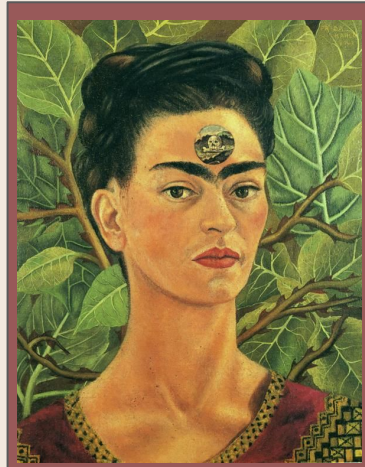


Each of my chosen pieces uses the medium of **oil paint** on canvas. During the time period of the creation of "At Eternity's Gate", the 19th century, there was a huge change for artists who used oil paints. There were new colors being created, and current versions of colors were being **improved**. Many of these new colors were used in Van Gogh's piece such as assorted blues like Cobalt Blue and Cerulean blue. Oil paint was important for Van Gogh to use because since he was **Post-Impressionist**, he needed to use oil paint which was easiest to blend. Post-Impressionists used oil paint because it allowed for the paint to appear brighter on the canvas which was a large factor of Impressionism. Impressionists like Van Gogh also used oil paint in order to make their paintings seem to be **basked** in light, which can be seen in the chosen piece, "At Eternity's Gate".



Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask" / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>

Frida Kahlo / "Thinking About Death" / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>



Frida Kahlo's chosen medium for a majority of her paintings was oil paint. Despite oil paint being mostly used by Western artists during the 20th century, Frida Kahlo also **experimented** with the medium. Oil paint was the primary medium used by most artists because acrylic paint was not invented until the 1950s. At the time of the creation of her pieces "Girl with Death Mask" and "Thinking About Death" even more pigments were being revamped and new colors were being made available to use in pieces. Kahlo was apart of the Surrealist art movement, whose artists often used oil paints to blend things together and make smooth pieces. This **blending** was specifically seen in her portrait pieces where she needed to blend skin tones together to make realistic faces. In her piece "Girl with Death Mask" the results of oil paint is very prevalent with all of the **smooth** parts. For the sky in particular, it was better to use oil paint because it allowed Kahlo to blend together the colors to create movement within the piece. Since oil paint doesn't dry as fast as other mediums, it was easier to blend and get a smooth looking piece.

# Comparing and Contrasting Material and Conceptual Significance of Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh

The most obvious **similarity** between Frida Kahlo's and Van Gogh's materials is that they both used oil paint to create their pieces. Oil paint was very important to these artists process and without the use of oil paint, their pieces would not have come out with the same result. At the time of the creation of **both** of these artworks, there were new colors being added and changed, which allowed for a wider variety of pigments to be used by these artists. Oil paint was the preferred medium for many artists, due to its ability to be manipulated for a long period of time after being placed on the canvas. Frida Kahlo and Van Gogh **both** used this to their advantage to create smooth, dynamic pieces of art that blend together. Both artists used this medium in **similar** fashion to other artists in their art movement. Van Gogh used oil paint similarly to how other Impressionist artists used this medium, just like how Kahlo used her medium in a similar way to other Surrealists.



Since **both** Vincent van Gogh and Frida Kahlo used their medium in the **same** ways as the fellow artists in their movement, their artworks are visually **different**. Vincent van Gogh used oil paint to create a more streaky and layered Impressionist style piece. He used certain shades that made his



piece seem to be bathed in light the same way that many other Impressionists used oil paints. He also used multiple layers of the paint to get the final effect of the piece.

Kahlo used this medium in a **different** way though. Rather than using oil paint to make individual streaks of color like Van Gogh, she blended together her colors to create a very smooth looking piece. This can particularly be seen in the clouds and ground of her piece.

Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask" / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>



Vincent van Gogh / "At Eternity's Gate" / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>

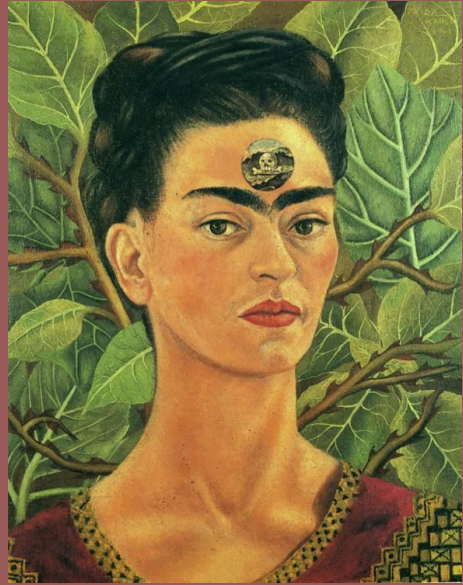


Van Gogh's Impressionist style can particularly been seen in this corner part of his painting "At Eternity's Gate". We can see how the oil paint has allowed him to create smooth, flowing lines. You can also see each of the individual streaks of color in this part of the piece.



# Comparing and Contrasting Material and Conceptual Significance of Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh

The **similarities** between “*At Eternity’s Gate*” and “*Girl with Death Mask*” are the same as the **similarities** between Van Gogh’s piece and the other chosen Kahlo piece “*Thinking About Death*”. Since Kahlo was focused on a lot of blending to create realistic features of her pieces, the oil paint in her piece looks very different to how oil paint was used in Van Gogh’s Impressionist work. Since these artists were inspired by different art movements, they followed the ways that their fellow



Frida Kahlo / “*Thinking About Death*” / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>



artists in their art movements used paint. This difference can most clearly be seen in the smooth blending seen in Kahlo’s piece “*Thinking About Death*”. Specifically with the neck and collarbone area of this portrait, oil paint has been used to create a seamless blending of colors. You can see where all of the different shades of colors work together in this piece. You can even see this **blending** in area like the hairline and ear in this piece. Overall, Kahlo used oil paint to create smooth blending in her pieces.

Interestingly, in Van Gogh’s piece “*At Eternity’s Gate*”, he uses a combination of blending like Kahlo, and the style that Post-Impressionists typically used. These techniques can mostly be seen in the upper part of the portrait, where the head and hands are located. You can clearly see the blending done on the top of the head with the highlights on the skin tone in a similar way that Kahlo did.

artists in their art movements used paint. This difference can most clearly be seen in the smooth blending seen in Kahlo’s piece “*Thinking About Death*”. Specifically with the neck and collarbone area of this portrait, oil paint has been used to create a seamless blending of colors. You can see where all of the different shades of



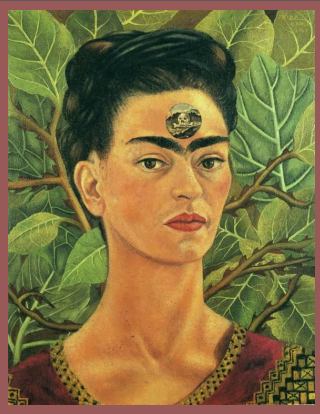
Vincent van Gogh / “*At Eternity’s Gate*” / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>

Van Gogh had to blend together the skin tone used for this portrait as well as the blue shades that he used in this piece. However, you can also see where he used oil paint to create a more streaky look as well, which is something that Kahlo did not include in her pieces because she did not take inspiration from Post-Impressionism.

# Comparing and Contrasting the Material and Conceptual Significance of my Work to Frida Kahlo's Work



Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask" / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas  
15.24 x 10.16 centimeters /  
<https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>



Frida Kahlo / "Thinking About Death" / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas  
45.72 x 38.1 centimeters /  
<https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-a-bout-death/>

However, I did use a different technique than Vincent van Gogh when creating my piece "Solace". He used a Post-Impressionist style of using streaks of paint, whereas I put the paint on smoothly. Differing from Frida Kahlo, the methods I used to paint were not inspired by Surrealism, rather I was inspired by Baroque. The Baroque art movement was known for its use of oil paint to create blending and shadow. In contrast, the Surrealist art movement also used oil paint but instead they used it to create interesting designs and patterns.

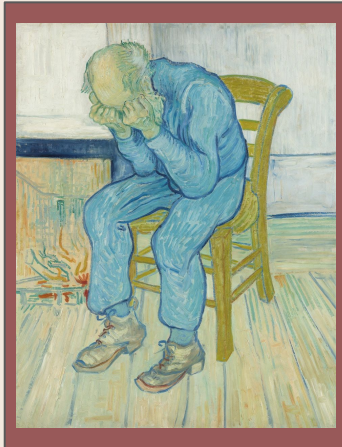
There are quite a few similarities between the materials and conceptual significance of my work and the work of my inspirations. For starters, we all chose to use one of the **most popular mediums** at our time periods when creating our work. Frida Kahlo used oil paint to create her piece "Girl with Death Mask", which was the most popular medium in 1938 when the piece was created. Van Gogh chose to do the same when creating his piece "At Eternity's Gate". However, I chose to use acrylic paint as my medium, which is still a very popular medium but in the year 2023 when my work was created, there is a much wider variety of mediums to choose from.

In addition, since my piece was made many years after Frida Kahlo's and Vincent van Gogh's, I have more access and a much wider **variety** of colors to choose from when creating my piece. When "Girl with a Death Mask" was created, shades like Cobalt Blue had just been created, whereas when I painted mine I had a wide variety of different colors and shades to choose from. Frida Kahlo and I also used very similar methods to using our chosen mediums. We both chose to use **realistic blending** throughout our pieces. A difference between our pieces however is that Kahlo chose to use scumbling in her piece, specifically seen in the sky and the grass, whereas I didn't use any sort of special technique to create texture in my piece.

In addition, both Kahlo's piece and my piece ended up having a very smooth look to them due to the method we used with our paints. Both of our pieces feature a lot of blending that creates an overall smooth look to the piece.

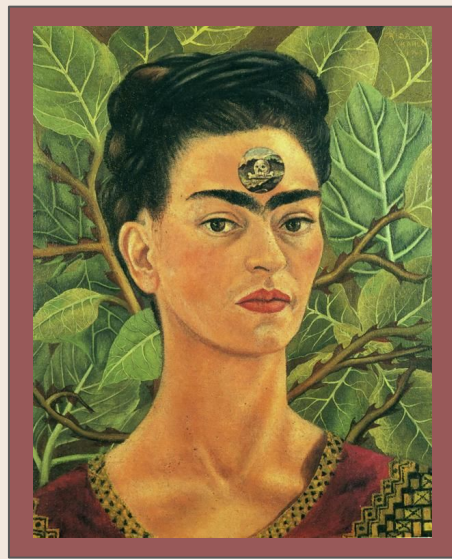


Vincent van Gogh / "At Eternity's Gate" / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 /  
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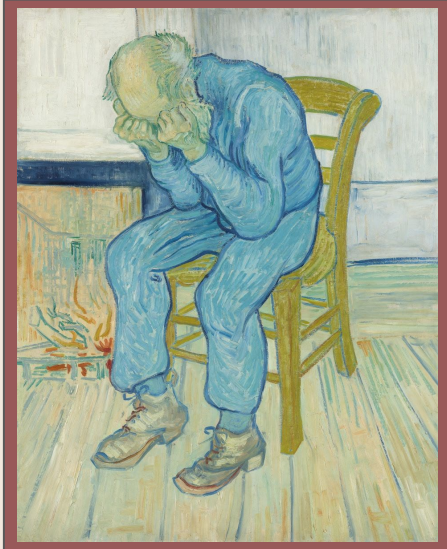


# Evaluation of Function and Purpose of Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh

Frida Kahlo / *"Thinking About Death"* / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>



The purpose of all of my chosen pieces was **self-expression**. Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh both created their pieces while going through a difficult time in their lives, and used these pieces to express themselves and what was going on in their mind. Vincent van Gogh created this piece for himself, and did not originally create this piece with the intention on putting it on display in a gallery or exhibit. Through this piece he was also trying to display some sort of **message** about death. He wanted people to see how he viewed death as he got closer to his passing. This piece functions as a door into Van Gogh's mind at the time of the paintings creation. Through this piece we are able to understand his feelings about death, and the mental space he was in at the time of his passing. Even if he had not painted this piece with that function in mind, that's how it has been taken.

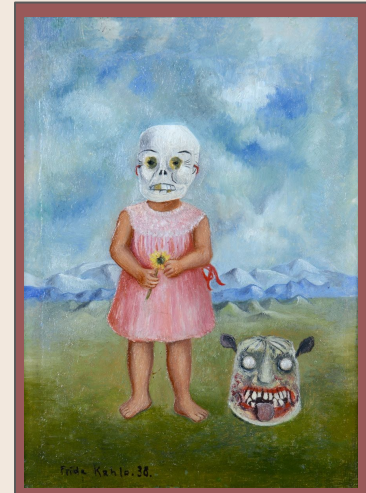


Vincent van Gogh / *"At Eternity's Gate"* / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>

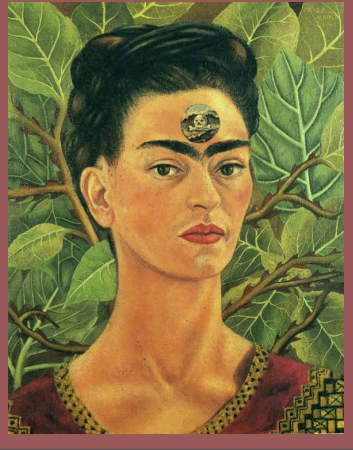
Frida Kahlo's purpose of her pieces *"Thinking About Death"* and *"Girl with Death Mask"* was also self-expression. Kahlo was in a difficult time in her life when she made these pieces, and used this pieces to **express** her sadness and grief. It's said that the purpose of her piece *"Girl with Death Mask"* was to help her grief the loss of her baby after she had a miscarriage. The purpose of her piece *"Thinking About Death"* is to help her acknowledge how death is something that is constantly on her mind. Similarly to Van Gogh, Kahlo created this piece with the intention of it being something private and **personal** to her. She didn't create this piece to cater to a specific audience for a gallery or exhibition, she simply created this piece to express what she was

struggling with at the time of the piece's creation. The function of this piece is the same as Van Gogh's. Kahlo's pieces allow us to see in her mind and see how she views death, and provides her perspective on the matter.

Frida Kahlo / *"Girl with Death Mask"* / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>



# Comparing and Contrasting the Function and Purpose of Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh



Frida Kahlo / “Thinking About Death” / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>

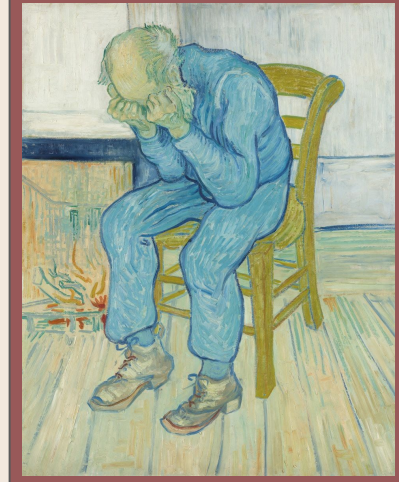
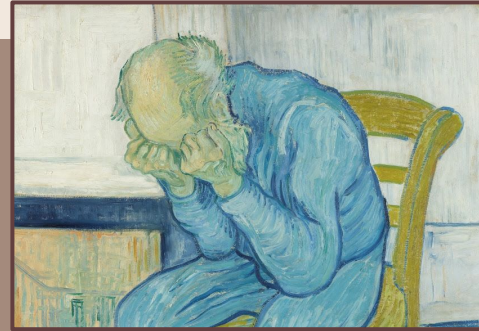


The purpose of Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh’s pieces were very **similar**. Both artists chose to use their pieces as ways for them to express how they were feeling at the time of the artworks creation. Both artists also wanted to share how they felt about death through their art. Van Gogh’s purpose was to show how distraught he felt over the idea of death, **whereas** Kahlo

represented her feelings about death in a much **different** way. She wanted to show that she was content with death, and she had already accepted it. These differences can be seen in the figures shown in their pieces “*At Eternity’s Gate*” and “*Thinking About Death*”. Specifically in Frida Kahlo’s piece, “*Thinking About Death*” her purpose was to express how she was content with the thought of death, and actually viewed it as a rebirth. Contrastingly, in

Vincent van Gogh’s piece, “*At Eternity’s Gate*” his purpose is to express the painful grief that he is feeling towards the idea of death, and how difficult death can be to accept as a part of life. This is displayed by the man in the painting being hunched over in agony and pain, showing that Van Gogh clearly doesn’t view death in the same way as Kahlo.

The function of both of these pieces are very similar as well. The both function as a way for us to see Kahlo’s and Van Gogh’s perspectives on the idea of death and grief in general. Through their pieces we are able to understand that they view death in different ways based on their cultures and lifestyles. In addition, these pieces function as a way for people to see the difference between cultural beliefs surrounding death. Viewers are able to see how in Frida Kahlo’s Mexican Culture, death is seen as being a rebirth and a new chance, whereas through Vincent van Gogh’s work, we see that death and grief is a much more painful thing for him.



Vincent van Gogh/ “*At Eternity’s Gate*” / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>

# Comparing and Contrasting the Function and Purpose of Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh

Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask" / 1938 / Oil  
Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters /  
<https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>

The purpose is once again the same within van Gogh's piece "At Eternity's Gate" and "Girl with Death Mask". Both pieces were created as a form of **self-expression** for the artists, and expressed their feelings towards death in a time of hardship. A major difference

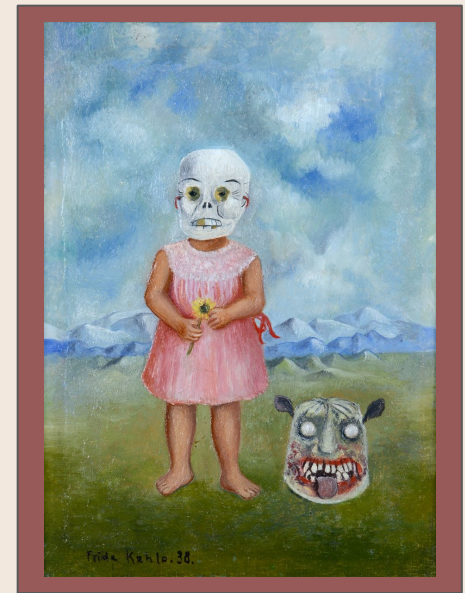
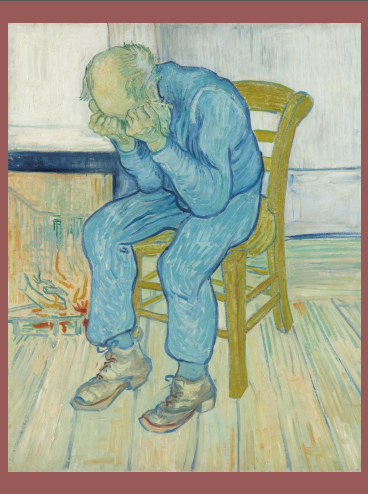
in their purposes though is once again how they have chosen to display death in the pieces. As mentioned before, Van Gogh chose to display death as very tragic and painful, his purpose was to show the pain that comes with grief. However in Frida Kahlo's piece "Girl with Death Mask" she has taken a completely

different approach to the idea of death. Her purpose is to show the **peace** is death due to the fact that she views death as a

rebirth. This viewpoint is really highlighted in the background of her piece. Despite death typically being viewed as dark, Kahlo has chosen to use very light colors in this piece, and chose a very serene background as well. The vast landscape of the open fields and mountains shows Frida Kahlo's main purpose of this piece, to show the peace of death. In addition, her perspective on death can also be seen in the outfit that she has chosen for her main figure to be wearing in this piece. She has chosen to paint the little girl wearing a light pink dress, a color often associated with peace and other positive things. Through the choices that Frida Kahlo made through painting, she was able to accomplish her purpose to show the idea that death can be peaceful and a rebirth rather than dark and scary.

The function of the paintings "At Eternity's Gate" and "Girl with Death Mask" are also similar in the same way as "Thinking About Death". As I mentioned before all of these paintings give us perspective into how Vincent van Gogh and Frida Kahlo view the concept of death and grief. In "Girl with Death Mask" specifically, we are able to even better view how Frida Kahlo views death in **comparison** to Vincent van Gogh.

Vincent van Gogh/ "At Eternity's Gate" / 1890 / Oil  
Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 /  
<https://kröllermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>



## Comparing and Contrasting the Function and Purpose in my Work with Kahlo and Van Gogh's Work

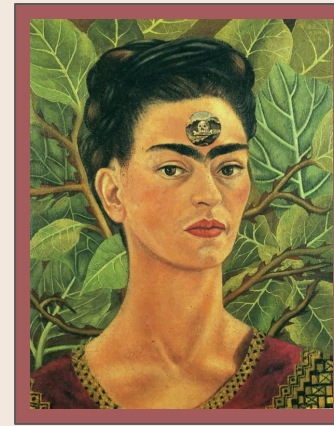


Death” and “Girl with Death Mask” in order to communicate that the theme of the piece was death and grief. Vincent van Gogh chose to make the form of the man featured in his piece insinuate sadness by having him be hunched over with his head in his hands. The only choice I made in my piece that reflects my purpose is my choice to have my face be pensive, showing that I’m lost in thought.

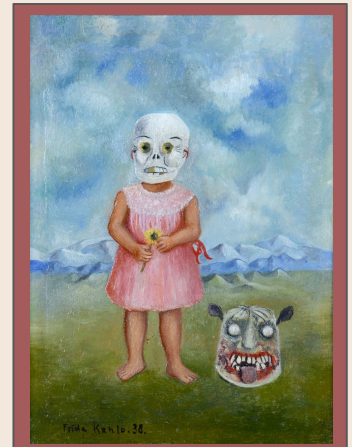
There is a very similar function and purpose between my piece and the work of Vincent van Gogh and Frida Kahlo. The purpose of both of Frida Kahlo’s pieces were **self-expression and showing her thoughts of death and grief**. The purpose of Van Gogh’s piece was the same, him using “At Eternity’s Gate” to communicate his thoughts on grief and to express his mental state at the time of creating the painting. Similarly, the purpose of my piece was self-expression and to express how I felt at the time of creating the piece. However, the purpose of my piece did not involve death or grief.

All of our pieces function as an insight into our mind and emotions. Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh’s pieces function a way to see how they grieve and view death. Each piece functions as a way for the viewer to see how each artist felt towards the idea of death. However, my piece does not function as a way for the viewer to see how I feel regarding death, rather it functions as a way for them to see how I feel during summer when I’m at my happiest.

In addition, Kahlo and Van Gogh specifically chose to use certain **formal elements** in order to show their purpose in creating their artwork. For example, Frida Kahlo specifically chose to use imagery of skulls in both her piece “Thinking About

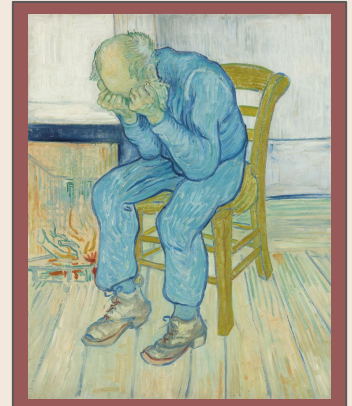


Frida Kahlo / “Thinking About Death” / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>



Frida Kahlo / “Girl with Death Mask” / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>

Vincent van Gogh / “At Eternity’s Gate” / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>



# Evaluation of Formal Qualities of Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo / "Thinking About Death" / 1943 / Oil  
Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters /  
<https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>

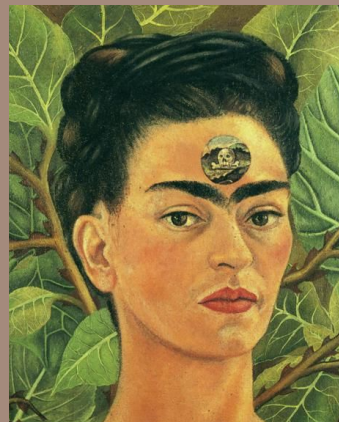
In addition, Kahlo also features a **skull** in the middle of her forehead. This skull is **symbolism** for the idea that death is constantly on her mind and something that she can not escape. This directly connects to the title of her piece, "Thinking About Death". By displaying herself front and center of the piece, Kahlo is emphasizing herself as an **important** part of the piece. Our eyes are instantly drawn to her portrait, and the skull in the middle of her face.

The leaves in the background of the piece also seem to have some thorns attached to them.



These thorns show that despite death being seen as a rebirth, Frida Kahlo still recognizes that there is a pain that comes with death. Even though she is willing to accept her death, she still is impacted by the pain of her illnesses, and the pain she experiences everyday.

A lot of the formal qualities of Frida Kahlo's piece "Thinking About Death" help to express her thematic topic of the acceptance of death. In Kahlo's self portrait, she has shown herself with a very **blank** expression. Despite knowing that death is a part of her life, she doesn't seem to visibly show any pain or grief over this.

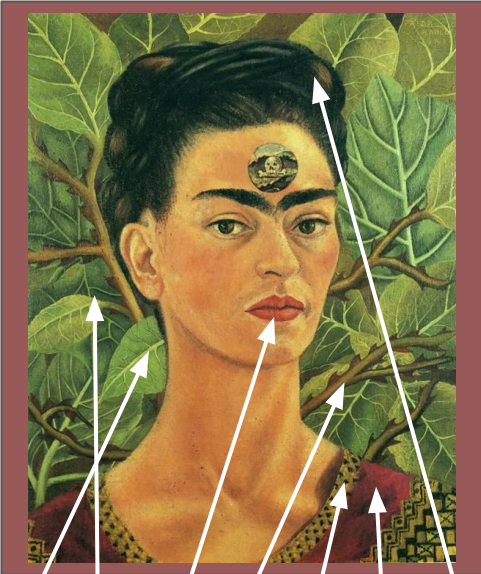


The **texture** of the piece, "Thinking About Death" is also very smooth. It's clear that Frida Kahlo used a lot of blending in her piece in order to make everything look very smooth and realistic. The skin is very smooth, and has a lot of contour and highlights on the neck and face of the portrait.

Another key feature of this piece is the shirt that Frida Kahlo has depicted herself wearing. This shirt is a **cultural** shirt from her Mexican culture which further emphasizes



that the way she views death is heavily influenced by her culture. Overall, Frida Kahlo used a lot of **natural** colors and natural imagery to depict the idea of death being a rebirth and a natural part of life. She did this by using a lot of greens, browns, and yellows throughout her piece "Thinking About Death". In addition, she features leaves in the background of her piece to show the natural aspect of death.



The **earthy tones** that Frida Kahlo used emphasizes her theme that death is just another part of life, and death is a rebirth. The leaves in the background of the piece also help to reiterate the same theme. By surrounding herself with lush leaves, Kahlo is showing that death is natural and a part of her life that she's accepted.

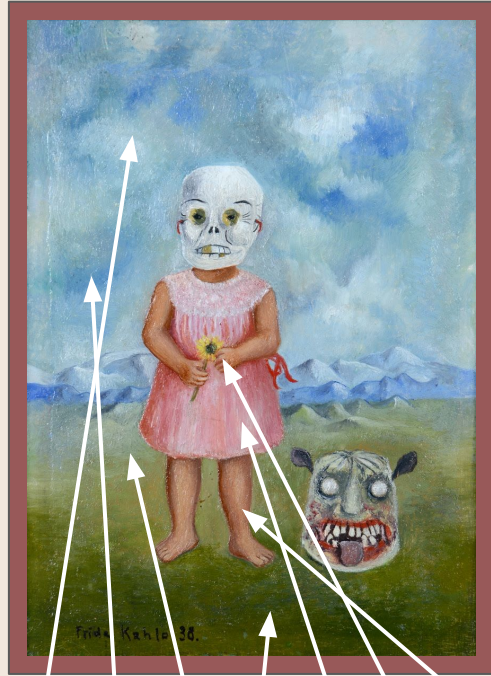
# Evaluation of Formal Qualities of Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask" / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15,24 x 10,16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>



In "Girl with Death Mask" by Frida Kahlo, an eerie atmosphere is created through the vast background of the painting. This background **emphasizes** the little girl in the center of the piece and makes her seem secluded and isolated. The large sky in this picture also emphasizes this feeling of **vast** open space.

The colors that Frida Kahlo chose to use in this piece are interesting because they contrast the idea of what many think of when they first think of death. She chose to use a lot of very **light** and pastel colors. These colors are not only featured in the background of the piece in the mountains and sky, but are also featured on the little girl with her light pink dress. These colors represent the **innocence** of the little girl, and represent Frida Kahlo's idea that death and tragedy takes anyone. The colors represent the innocence of Frida Kahlo's life before she experienced all of the tragedies that occurred to her throughout her life. There are a lot of other aspects of this painting that represent the idea of innocence as well such as the little girl's pink dress and the flower she's holding. In addition, the mask that she's pictured wearing is shielding her from the tragedies of her world.



There is a large **contrast** between the two main focuses of this piece. The little girl is painted in a way that makes her seem very innocent and gentle. This is shown through the colors used to depict her. Contrastingly however, the tiger mask



to the girl's right has a very different atmosphere in comparison to her. The mask seems very scary and **dark** in comparison to the rest of the painting as well. Everything else seems to have a very light color palette, so this darker colors instantly creates our focus to go directly to the mask since it looks so different. Despite the mask looking dark, it actually an important mask in Mexican culture

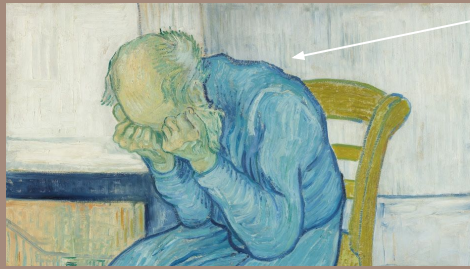


meant to ward off evil spirits after death. Overall, Frida Kahlo used color and space in this piece in order to showcase her theme of death. She did this by using light colors associated with innocence, and large open spaces to represent isolation and seclusion.



# Evaluation of the Formal Qualities Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh / "At Eternity's Gate" / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>



The main figure in this painting is an old man showing the grief that he is experiencing. He is pictured hunched over with his head in his hands. This figural pose **emphasizes** the pain of grief and death. He is also covering his face with his hands, hiding himself away from the rest of the world.



In the background of the piece there is a fire. Interestingly though, this fire seems to be burning out. There isn't a lot of visible flame and color within the flames. These fading flames are viewed as symbolism for the end of life.



The formal qualities within Vincent van Gogh's piece are very similar to the formal qualities of other Post-Impressionist artists of that time period. He used a lot of very **light** colors throughout this piece, which made the painting seem very light and almost basked in light. By using a lighter color palette, Van Gogh makes an interesting **contrast** to his theme. Despite making this piece about grief and the process of dealing with death, he uses a very light and soft color palette. He only uses darker colors in the outlines of certain parts of the old man's clothes. Van Gogh chose to outline the man's lighter blue clothes with a darker blue.

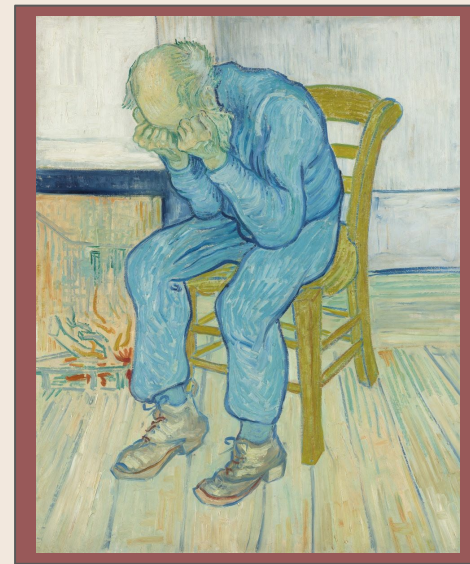
It's also important to note that the **main focal point** of this piece is the old man sitting in the middle of the room. There is nothing else surrounding him besides the fire in the bottom left corner of the piece. There is a lack of other objects in the room, creating a feeling of **isolation** within the piece. The emptiness around the old man emphasizes the loneliness he feels with his grief. The hopeless and tragic mood created in this piece is emphasized by the empty space.



The colors used throughout this piece are very light. Van Gogh chose to use many different shades of blues and yellows throughout this piece. He specifically used blue for the shirt and the pants, using darker and lighter shades to make contours and blending. He used yellow and tan for the chair, using the same Post-Impressionist style as the rest of his piece. This style is featured throughout the entire piece. Within every aspect of this piece you can see streaks of lighter yellow and blue. This makes the piece seem very cohesive and visually appealing. Vincent van Gogh specifically chose to use light shades in order to follow other Post-Impressionist artists during this time period.

# Comparing and Contrasting the Formal Qualities of Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh / "At Eternity's Gate" / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>



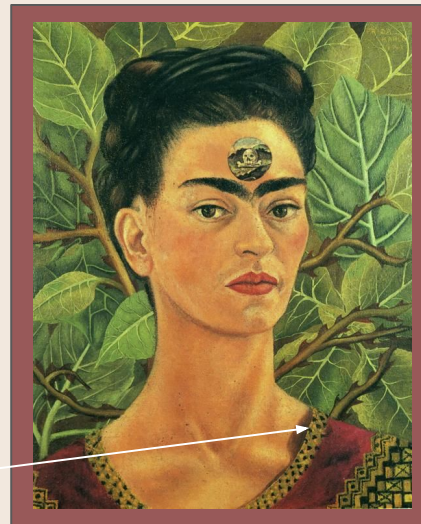
There are a lot of similarities and differences in the formal qualities within Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh's work. Between all of these chosen pieces, the most obvious similarity is that each painting consists of one person as the main focal point of the piece. In "At Eternity's Gate" this figure is an older man, in "Thinking About Death" this figure is a woman (Frida Kahlo), and in "Girl with Death Mask" the main figure is a little girl. In all of these chosen pieces, there also doesn't seem to be a lot going on in the **background**. In "Girl with Death Mask" and "At Eternity's Gate" the background is almost completely empty, both **emphasizing** the isolation of grief and death. In "Thinking About Death" the background consists of a variety of leaves, however there isn't anything else featured in the background.

A similarity between "Girl with Death Mask" and "At Eternity's Gate" is that they use very **similar color palettes**. Both artists chose to use a lighter pastel color palette to convey their messages. Both pieces feature colors like light blue and yellow.



Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask" / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>

**Contrastingly**, "Thinking About Death" uses a darker color palette. Frida Kahlo doesn't use the same pastel color in this piece as she did in "Girl with Death Mask". Instead she chose to use darker, yet still natural, colors throughout the piece.

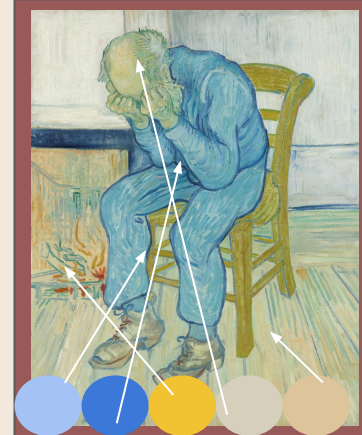


Frida Kahlo / "Thinking About Death" / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>

In addition, both of the chosen Frida Kahlo pieces feature **imagery** that specifically points to the thematic topic of death, whereas Vincent van Gogh's piece does not. In "Girl with Death Mask" there is specific cultural imagery that points to the idea of death shown throughout the piece such as the skull, tiger mask, and a marigold. In her other piece, Frida Kahlo features a skull in the middle of her forehead, alluding to the fact that death is something that is always on her mind. However, in Vincent van Gogh's piece, "At Eternity's Gate", there is no specific imagery that directly points to and mentions the idea of death. The theme is implied rather than directly shown.

# Comparing and Contrasting the Formal Qualities of my Work with Van Gogh and Kahlo's Work

Vincent van Gogh / "At Eternity's Gate" / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>



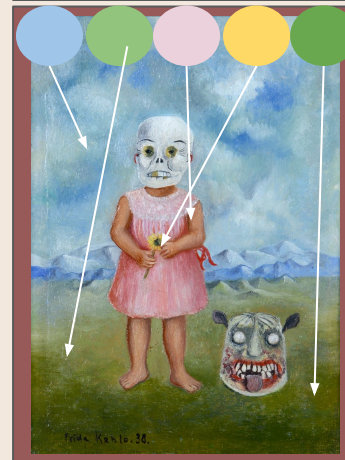
There are a lot of **similar formal qualities** between my work and the chosen works by Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh. For starters, both me and Van Gogh used a similar technique because I took inspiration from the Post-Impressionist art period when creating my piece "Summer's in her Blood". Subsequently, both of our pieces have a **streaky** look to them due to the way that we used the paint in our piece. When painting the skin of both of our pieces we used the same technique as well, causing our skin to have similar styles.

We also both used very similar blues in our pieces, Van Gogh using his to paint the clothing of the man while I used mine to add streaks of color to the background of my painting. However, since Van Gogh used oil paint and I used acrylic paint, the **blending** of our pieces looks different with his being more smooth streaks of color whereas the streaks in my piece are much more visible.

When comparing my piece "Summer's in her Blood" to Frida Kahlo's piece "Girl with Death Mask" you can mainly compare the colors that we chose to use in our pieces. We both chose to use lighter colors in our pieces, both of us choosing to use a variety of light blue and greens. The way we used these colors is different though, Frida Kahlo chose to blend her colors together and use a technique such as scumbling to create texture throughout the piece whereas I simply placed streaks of colors onto the canvas in ways that made these colors blend together without actually having to use blending techniques. These different techniques make it so that our pieces look very different. "Girl with Death Mask" visibly looks more smooth and blended, which is also assisted by her use of oil paint so that blending was made easier. "Summer's in her Blood" doesn't have this same smooth look, in part because we didn't use the same techniques or find inspiration in the same art movements, but also because we used a different medium.



Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask" / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>



Frida Kahlo / "Thinking About Death" / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>



# Comparing and Contrasting the Formal Qualities of my Work with Van Gogh and Kahlo's Work

Vincent van Gogh / "At Eternity's Gate" / 1890 / Oil Paint on Canvas 78.74 x x x 60.96 / <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>



My piece "Summer's in her Blood" has a lot of contrasting formal qualities to Frida Kahlo's piece "Thinking About Death". For starters, we both used very **contrasting** color palettes in our pieces. I used cooler tones in my piece such as blues, greens, and purples, whereas Frida used yellows, oranges, and dark reds. However we did both use various shades of green to create natural aspects in our pieces. Frida Kahlo used her green to create a background of leaves in her piece, and I used green to create a background of grass in my piece. Another similar aspect of our pieces is that both of us created self portraits and feature ourselves in the center of the piece

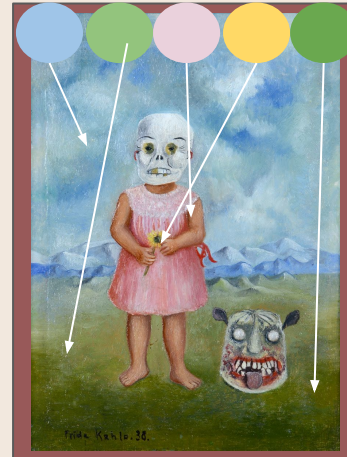
surrounded by elements of nature. This causes our pieces to have a similar visual appearance, both feature a woman in the center of the painting surrounded by greenery in the background. This is similar for all of the other chosen pieces as well. "At

Eternity's Gate features one man in the middle of the painting surrounded by an open background, and "Girl with Death Mask" features one young girl in the center surrounded by a large open landscape. Due to the choice that Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo, and I made to only include one figure in each of our pieces, it causes them to have a similar visual make-up. However, the person we all chose to include in our pieces are all from different **demographics**. My piece features a young woman, Kahlo's pieces feature a young girl and an adult woman, and van Gogh's displays a man.

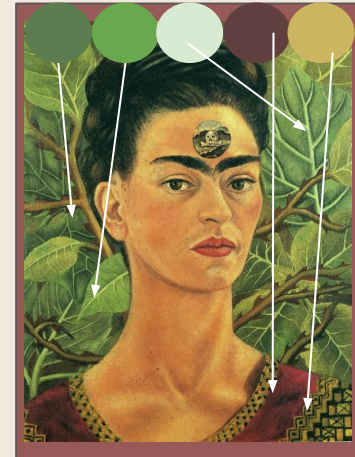
Another similar elements of the visual makeup of our pieces is that we all chose to have fairly simple backgrounds for our paintings. Each painting has the main figure in the center, and then an almost completely empty background. This choice helps to assist each of our themes of experiencing some sort of isolation because you can visibly see an isolation in the piece alongside the theme.



Frida Kahlo / "Girl with Death Mask" / 1938 / Oil Paint on Canvas 15.24 x 10.16 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/girl-with-death-mask/>



Frida Kahlo / "Thinking About Death" / 1943 / Oil Paint on Canvas 45.72 x 38.1 centimeters / <https://www.kahlo.org/thinking-about-death/>



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