

Henri Matisse Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Henri Matisse, considered the most important French painter of the 20th century, was born on December 31, 1869, in France. Surprisingly, Matisse did not discover his passion for art until age 20; before that, he was pursuing a career in the legal profession and trying to become a lawyer. However, once he watched an early-morning drawing class at the École Quentin-Latour, Matisse's curiosity sparked, and he began painting by copying colored reproductions in a box of oils. He then decorated his grandparents' home.

In 1891, Matisse decided to drop his pursuit of the legal profession and follow his muse. He started taking classes at the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs, and studied there until 1899. Matisse then presented four of his paintings at a French Salon, a key event for social gatherings and sharing of ideas. They were a hit at the meeting, and Matisse was elected an associate member of the Salon Society. One of the paintings he shared, *Woman Reading*, was even bought by the government.

In 1905, Matisse was particularly inspired by a trip to southern France; moved by the patterns of sunlight there, he began creating various pieces with luminous, clashing colors. His style was associated with the epithet "fauves," meaning "wild beasts"—inspiring the art style of Fauvism. Matisse frequently used expressive, bold colors, and emphasized exaggeration in his works; he attempted to unify the concepts of color and line, and worked with a variety of mediums, including paintings, sculptures, and prints. However, while Matisse's style of painting was vivid and embellished, he often used friends or family members as subjects. He would also paint landscapes, or even the studio in which he was painting.

Matisse moved to Nice, located on the French Riviera, in 1921, following his travel to various European countries. He continued his artwork with more saturated colors inspired by his travels. In 1941, he went through a surgery, but continued to draw in bed – Matisse even used a pencil attached to a long pole so that he could reach his canvas from his mattress. Matisse died in November 1954 in Nice, having left his distinct mark on the European art scene.

- 1. Fauvism is derived from the epithet "fauves," meaning "wild beasts." Why is this art form compared to the behavior of untamed animals?**
 - a. Because it is reckless and without purpose.
 - b. Because it is wild and imaginative.
 - c. Because it is dull and muted.
 - d. Because only animals are painted in Fauvism.
- 2. Which of the following is most likely to have been created by Matisse?**
 - a. A clay sculpture of the king of France.
 - b. A painting of the Palace of Versailles with the colors inverted and exaggerated.
 - c. A portrait of his mother with bright colors and an extravagant background.
 - d. A landscape painting with faded colors, almost to black and white.

- 3. Which event happened first in Matisse's life?**
 - a. Matisse moving to Nice
 - b. Matisse being inspired by patterns of sunlight in France
 - c. Matisse being elected to the Salon Society
 - d. Matisse decorating his grandparents' house

- 4. Which of the following best describes Matisse's attitude towards his surgery?**
 - a. His health needed to come before everything else.
 - b. He refused to go through with the surgery until he finished his latest project.
 - c. He used the surgery as inspiration for his later paintings.
 - d. Health complications would not stop him from pursuing his art.

- 5. Which best describes Matisse's art style?**
 - a. Embellished, but overdone
 - b. Expressive, but grounded
 - c. Muted, but meaningful
 - d. Thoughtful, but cliché

- 6. Which of the following is not true about Matisse?**
 - a. Matisse discovered his love for art at an early age.
 - b. One of Matisse's paintings was acquired by the government.
 - c. Matisse's travels inspired his artwork.
 - d. Artistry was not the first career he pursued.

- 7. Which of the following was the effect of Matisse sharing his paintings at the Salon?**
 - a. He gained favor and status in a key social environment.
 - b. He became France's most in-demand artist.
 - c. He acquired an elected position that he remained in for much of his life.
 - d. He realized that he needed to try elsewhere to sell his art.