

The Brilliant History of Color in Art Discussion Questions

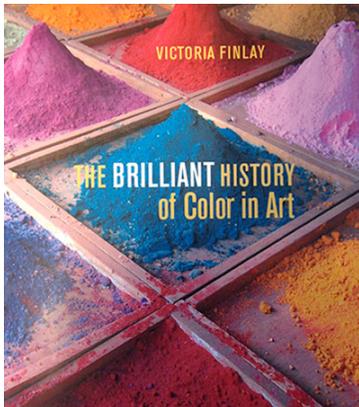
1. There are several meanings for the word “brilliant”. Why do you think it was used for the title of the book? What other words might have been used?
2. It is believed that certain techniques such as spray painting caves with blowpipes occurred throughout the ancient world at roughly the same time. How do you think this was possible and why might it have occurred?
3. The author discusses complimentary colors, or colors that contrast and reinforce each other. What color combinations do you like the most and least? Why?
4. The expression “red letter day” comes from the medieval practice of writing special holy days in red ink. How many other expressions using color can you think of? What might be the meanings behind these phrases?
5. From ancient times, many prized colors were shipped over great distances, probably at great cost. Has the ease of access to color today made them less valuable? How do you think access to color has changed the way artists work?
6. Historian Pliny the Elder recorded many specific details about the art of his time. How would you describe art being made today? What details would you include?
7. Colors in art do not stay the same. The author suggests that when you look at a painting, in a tiny way you are changing it. What does she mean? Should certain art be hidden away to preserve it? Why or why not?
8. In ancient China, artists such as Wu Daozi only used black ink to create monochrome paintings. Is this more or less striking than works with color? Why? Does the same hold true for black and white versus color photography?
9. Describe the introductory image for part two “Rocks, Twigs, Minerals, and Bugs.” What objects do you see? What is happening in this scene?
10. What if, like Henry the Navigator, you had access to great sums of money that you could use for invention? What would you invent and why? Like Henry, would you improve upon something that already exists?
11. The author states “colors are just effects, created in the world inside our heads.” What do you think she means by this?
12. Sometimes forgeries are so well done that only scientific testing can distinguish them from the originals. How does viewing the original differ from seeing a forgery or reproduction? How does it affect the viewer’s experience?



13. Monet was one of the first artists to concentrate on painting shadows, which were previously thought to be only black. What colors do you see in his works on pages 94 and 95? Compare and contrast his work to that of other impressionist artists.
14. If you could, what “extinct” or retired color from the past would you choose to use and why?
15. The color mauve, which was developed by accident, became a huge fashion fad in the mid 1800s. Can you think of other color fads or colors associated with certain time periods?
16. Some artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Edvard Munch depicted sounds as color in their art. Do you think sounds have color? Think of some everyday sounds (footsteps, birds singing, babies crying, music). What colors would they be?
17. Like Wassily Kandinsky, have you ever seen a painting or work of art that made you see the world a different way? Why do you think it made you feel that way? Did you do anything differently as a result?
18. What makes a work of art? Is it the picture, objects, lines, or color? Can any of these alone be considered art?
19. Artist Andy Warhol said “good business is the best art”. What do you think he meant by that?
20. What do you think color in art will look like in 20 years? 100 years? 1000 years?

Questions submitted by Madeline J. Bryant, Senior Librarian, Children’s Literature Department, Los Angeles Public Library.

About this Book



The Brilliant History of Color in Art provides a comprehensive understanding of Art History by examining the use of color in art through the ages. Teachers can use these questions in their classroom to spark discussions about the history of Art. Other resources are available at www.getty.edu/education/brilliantcolor.



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