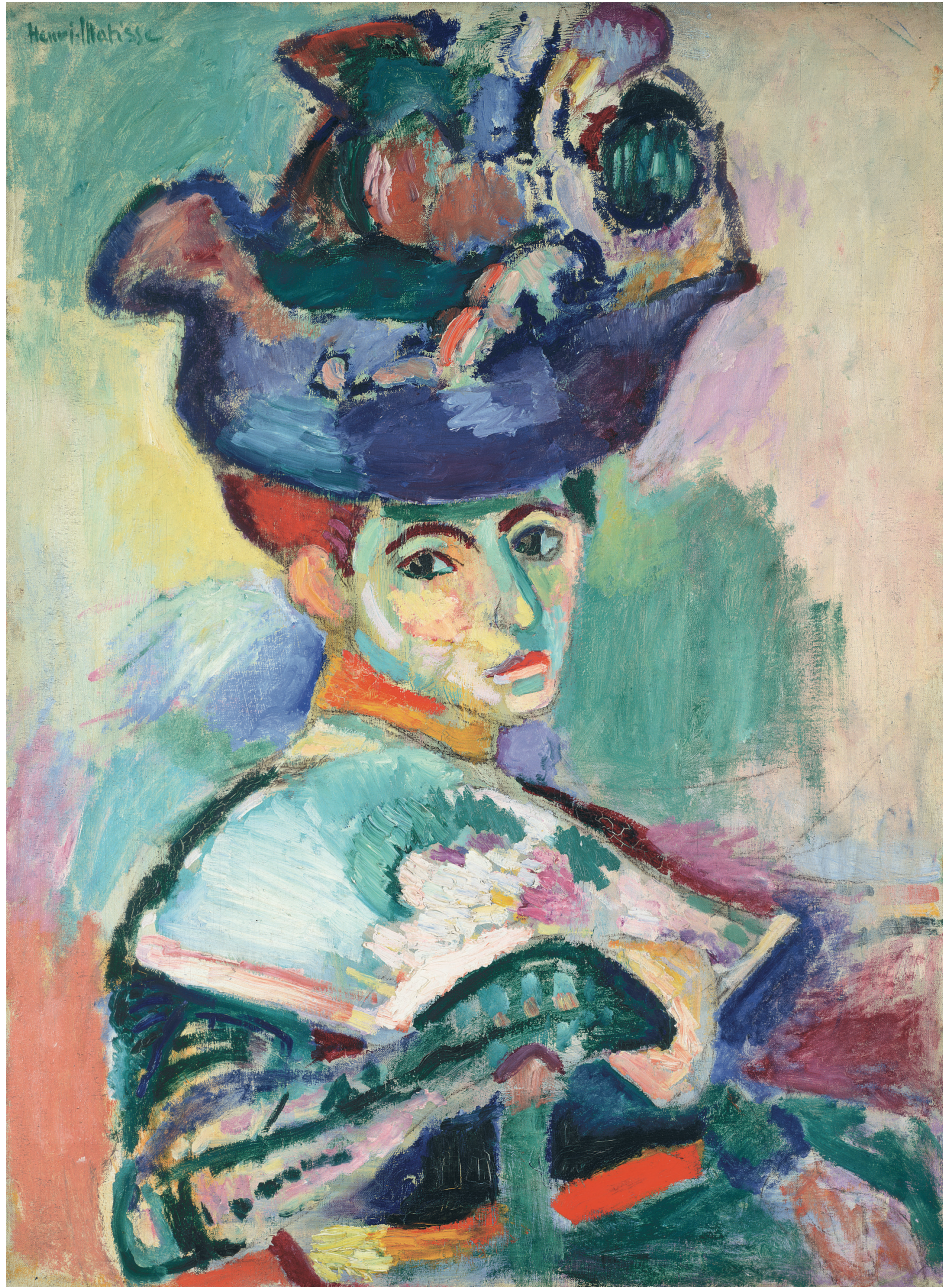


Henri Matisse

Born 1869, Le Cateau-Cambresis, France; died Nice, France, 1954



Henri Matisse was born in 1869 in northern France. While he was working in a law office as a young clerk, he got sick with appendicitis. As he was recovering, his mother gave him a paint set to keep him occupied in the hospital. It was around this time that he decided to become an artist. He went to art school in Paris, and became famous after an exhibition in 1905. As an adult, he traveled the world and made many paintings. Even when he fell seriously ill again in his 80s, he continued to make art, and worked until the end of his life.



Femme au chapeau (Woman with a Hat), 1905

A **portrait** is a picture of a person. This painting is a portrait of the artist's wife Amelie, who was a **milliner** (hat maker).

Fun Fact!

When this portrait was first exhibited in 1905, many people thought it was shocking. One critic described Matisse and other artists who used vivid and unexpected colors as “wild beasts” (*fauves* in French).

Do you find this portrait shocking or surprising? Why or why not?

How many different colors can you find in this portrait?

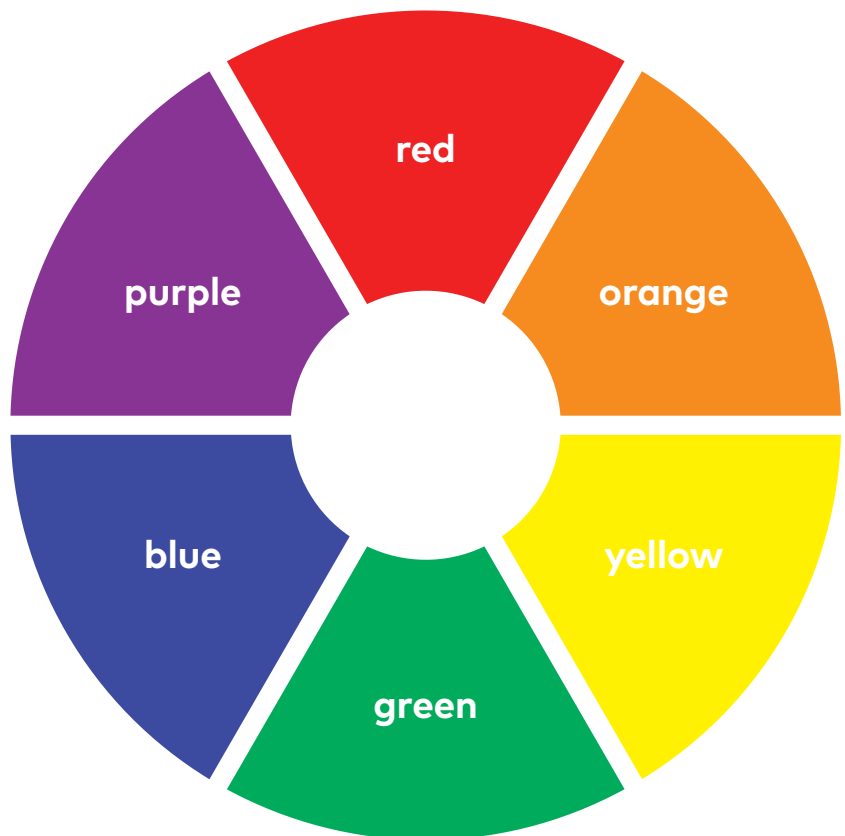
What words would you use to describe the use of colors in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?

Explore

Colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel are called **complementary colors**. When complementary colors are used next to or near each other, they “pop.”

Find places where Matisse used complementary colors next to each other. Can you find areas where red and green are next to each other? What about blue and orange? Purple and yellow?

Matisse’s use of complementary colors can also affect the way you look at this painting even when they aren’t placed next to each other. Look for the complementary colors throughout the painting and pay attention to how your eyes move from one color to its complement, even when that color is on the other side of the painting.



Create

Matisse once said, “The chief function of color should be to serve expression as well as possible.” In this portrait, he did not paint Amelie’s face as you might see it in real life; instead, he used colors to express emotion. He also didn’t paint her dress as it actually was; in real life she was, in fact, wearing black!

Create your own version of *Woman with a Hat* using colors that don’t imitate nature. Consider how and where you use complementary colors.



Front cover image: Henri Matisse, *Femme au chapeau* (Woman with a Hat), 1905 (detail); collection SFMOMA, bequest of Elise S. Haas; © 2020 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

For more information about this work, watch *The Country Dog Gentlemen Travel to Extraordinary Worlds* at sfmoma.org/countrydog.