

1. The following statements refer to either artist Paul Gauguin or artist Diego Velázquez. In pairs, read the biographies on Worksheet B to find out which statement refers to whom.

1. He used a lot of bright colours and bold lines in his paintings.
2. He tried to commit suicide.
3. He painted royal portraits.
4. His painting style inspired the French Impressionists.
5. He married at the age of 18.
6. He had five children.
7. Before becoming a full-time painter he worked as a stockbroker.
8. At the age of 50 he travelled to Italy and bought paintings by classical artists.
9. He spent much of his life travelling.
10. He abandoned his wife and children.
11. Picasso painted more than 40 variations of his work *Las Meninas*.
12. He helped to build the Panama Canal.
13. He was inspired by primitive cultures.
14. He had five brothers.
15. His portrait of the Pope was judged to be too honest.
16. His wife's name was Juana.

## Paul Gauguin

was born in 1848 in Paris. At the age of three he and his family went to live in Lima, Peru, where they stayed until 1855. As a young man Gauguin worked as a stockbroker in Paris but painted in his free time. In 1873 he married Danish Mette Sophie Gad who, over the next ten years, gave birth to his five children. He began working with artist Camille Pissarro in 1874, showing his work at every Impressionist exhibition between 1879 and 1886 and by 1884 Gauguin had moved with his family to Copenhagen, where he unsuccessfully pursued a business career. He returned to Paris in 1885 to paint full-time, leaving his family in Denmark.

In 1885 Gauguin met Edgar Degas and in the following year he met Charles Laval and Emile Bernard in Pont-Aven and Vincent van Gogh in Paris. Under the influence of Bernard, Gauguin turned away from impressionism and adopted a less naturalistic style, which he called synthetism. Features of his painting at this time were the use of bright colours and thick, flat shapes which lacked any sense of perspective. With Laval he travelled to Panama (where he helped to work on the Panama Canal) and Martinique in 1887 in search of more exotic subject matter. He turned to primitive cultures more and more for inspiration.

In 1891 Gauguin was forced to auction his paintings to raise money for a voyage to Tahiti, which he undertook that same year. Two years later illness forced him to return to Paris. He was able to return to Tahiti in 1895, but remained weak and ill. Suffering from depression, he unsuccessfully attempted suicide in January 1898, not long after completing his mural-sized painting *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* In 1901 he moved to the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia, where he died on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1903.



## Diego Velázquez

was born in 1599 in Seville, Spain, into a family of five brothers and one sister. In 1611 his father sent him to serve an apprenticeship with artist Francisco Pacheco, a patient teacher with good contacts in the royal court. In 1617, Velázquez married Juana, Pacheco's daughter and within three years they had two daughters.

In the spring of 1623, Velázquez was summoned to court and received his first commission for a portrait of Philip IV. The success of this picture brought the artist an appointment as court painter and the right to be the only artist permitted to paint the king. He remained court painter over the next 20 years until 1643 when the king promoted him to the post of Chamberlain of his private chambers. Later on he was given other administrative roles.

During his second visit to Rome, (he visited Rome first in 1629 and later in 1649) he painted the famous portrait of *Pope Innocent X*, which the Pope himself declared to be 'too truthful'. During this trip he bought many paintings by masters like Titian and Tintoretto for the king's collection.

In 1656 he painted the famous *Las Meninas*, a portrait of the royal family and court. The principal figure is the mischievous but charming little Infanta Margarita, who, along with her ladies-in-waiting, has burst in on a portrait sitting of the king and queen.

Described by Manet as 'the painter's painter', Velázquez was regarded as the inspiration for artists of the French Impressionist movement. He died on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1660.