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The Color Blue

The color blue is featured prominently throughout the earth with a rich history. Blue has many shades and even occurs naturally in bodies of water, the sky, the elements, and semi-precious and precious stones. Although the color blue was always on the visible spectrum of light, it was hard to reproduce and quite expensive to obtain.

Appearing several thousands of years ago in ancient Egypt, the color was admired greatly by Egyptians and was used in the production of art and jewelry. Lapis is a vibrant semi-precious stone that was mined in the middle east. The Egyptians were able to evolve the color blue using pigments from other stones including calcium, limestone and others. The color blue was shared with neighboring kingdoms throughout the world evolving further. The blue pigment was quite rare, often expensive and only worn by royalty. As it became more accessible, it became adopted as a symbol of authority and used by military personnel and religious figures.

Symbolic in many ways the color blue is symbolic across many cultures as a color of wealth and power. For many, it is a symbol of trust and loyalty and used to signify military personnel. For others it can also be a symbol of sadness. In a state of depression, one could feel

“blue” or sad, for example when someone sings “the blues.” In Korea, shades of dark blue are known to be a color of mourning.

There are many different variations and values of the color blue. Cobalt blue is perhaps one of the most vibrant shades of blue, where the element is aptly named. This beautiful, vibrant shade was used in ceramics and jewelry making. In china, white and blue ceramic patterns used a relative of this blue. As artists used it more, less expensive versions were created and used by artists. Cobalt eventually evolved and led to the creative of its relative, cerulean. Known as a “sky colored blue,” cerulean was created by mixing various minerals and materials with cobalt. We were also aware of cerulean as a staple in pop culture as a Crayola crayon, and even referenced in the fashion movie, “The Devil Wears Prada,” when Miranda Priestly chastises Emily aka Andy during a styling meeting. Indigo is a rich and vibrant color with known as a natural dye and used in the production of denim, yarn, silks and more. It initially was extracted from plants from the genus *Indigofera*, but nowadays is mostly synthetic. Indigo was mostly found in India and surrounding areas. Prior to the synthetic variations, the natural extraction produced indigo by fermenting cut indigo flowers into vats and a laborious filtering process.

One of the most popular pieces of art that features blue is Vincent Van Gogh’s “Starry Night.” In this work, Van Gogh uses several different shades and tints of blue in swirled patterns and dabbed strokes. Starry Night was painted during his stay at the Saint Paul de Mausole

asylum. During this time, he had been recovering his mental health. Near the end of his life before committing suicide, he was using dark colors and blues to convey his emotional state of melancholy. Though most of Van Gogh's works were impressionist he broke away from that tradition, as *Starry Night* was created from his vivid imagination, in post-impressionist fashion. Van Gogh constructed this image based on different views of the village rather than a direct line of sight. He chose vivid blues and added a glowing effect using yellows in the stars and moon. This painting is currently on display at the Modern Museum of Art in New York City.

Spanish artist Pablo Picasso had an entire "Blue Period" where his compositions featured monochromatic works with many hues of blue between 1900 and 1904. During this period, Picasso had endured the difficulties of many artists including poverty and lack of success. This period took place during his travels through Spain and after his friend Carlos Casagemas committed suicide in a Paris café. Much of his subject matter featured that of poverty and lack of stability, the poor, the infirm and society's destitute while wayfaring through Spain and Paris. Picasso achieved mild success earlier 1901 in Paris but had begun to shy away from his usually vivid works. As a result, many did not wish to have such melancholy works displayed in their homes. Picasso was often inspired by religious figures while executing his works. *A Mother and Child by a Fountain*, 1901, features a lonely woman holding her baby by what appears to be a fountain. Many different values of a vivid blue are used, with scant browns and some pink shades. This work was inspired by a visit to a women's prison in Saint-Lozere. Picasso depicted the subject with an allusion to the *Madonna and Child* originally by Duccio.

Although it can symbolize sadness, it can also represent nature and serenity. IN modern society, it also represents the male child and featured during gender reveals, opposite of pink of girls. The color blue has many different shades, tints, and tones and has a rich history around the world.