120. The Starry Night. Vincent van Gogh. 1889 C.E. Oil on canvas.

Form:
POST-IMPRESSIONISM
Composite landscape
short, thick brushstrokes
parts of canvas can be seen through the brushwork, did not need to fill in every bit of the composition

Post-Impressionist Characteristics:
dynamic brushstrokes
non-naturalistic
vibrant color that exaggerates and accentuates, rather than representing reality
painterly in quality
inspired Fauvism (later movement)

Content:
Landscape view from artist’s hospital room in St.-Rémy
Mountains in the distance, actual steepness exaggerated in painting
Composite landscape: Dutch church, crescent moon, Mediterranean cypress tree
Wave-like movement flows left to right, broken only by verticality of cypress and church steeple
Cypress tree a traditional symbol of death and eternal life, reaches up to the sky, dominating foreground closest to artist

Function:
A landscape study, or a study of the nighttime
expression of the artist’s internal turmoil (suffered from mental illness)
Desire to experiment with stylized techniques

Context:
Van Gogh struggled with mental illness
  painted during his convalescence at mental hospital near St.-Rémy
following breakdown in which he mutilated his own ear