

# Sinbad the Sailor by Paul Klee

## Print Facts

- Medium: Watercolor on paper, mounted on cardboard
- Date: 1923
- Size: 34.5 x 50 cm
- Location: Kunstmuseum (art museum in Basel, Switzerland)
- Period: Bauhaus
- Style: Expressionism, Cubism
- Sinbad the Sailor is a character from 1001 Arabian Nights. This painting depicts an adventurous journey Sinbad took fighting sea monsters.

## Artist Facts

- Paul Klee (Pronounced: Paul Clay)
- Born in Switzerland in 1879. (About the same time as the invention of the automobile.)
- Died in Switzerland in 1940 (age 60)
- more than 9,000 paintings, drawings, and etchings
- training at Academy of Fine Arts, Munich
- German/Swiss Nationality
- Periods: Expressionism, Bauhaus and Surrealism
- Styles: Expressionism, Cubism, Abstract Art, Surrealism
- Quote: A line is a dot that goes for a walk. - Paul Klee
- Paul Klee's was a Swiss born painter, with a unique style that was influenced by expressionism, cubism, surrealism, and orientalism.
- Although Klee is now considered a master of color theory, he spent a long time in his search for his sense of color. At first, Klee drew in black and white, saying he would never be a painter. But as an adult, after a visit to Tunisia, in which he was impressed by the quality of light, he had found his sense of color and began experimenting with his newfound decision to be a painter.
- His parents were musicians. As a boy, he played the violin. He also loved art and his grandmother taught him how to draw and paint.
- When he grew a little older, he had to choose between becoming a musician or an artist. In the end he chose to be an artist.
- He married a concert pianist and while his wife worked out of the house, Paul became a "stay at home dad" and worked on his art.
- Klee's art is very colorful and fun. He really liked art that was done by children and sometimes he tried to make his art look like it was done by a child. Klee was considered a Modern artist, that means he went against tradition-he wasn't afraid to paint blue cows or purple trees.
- Paul liked to paint a lot and sometimes more than one painting at a time. He could have up to 12 paintings in his studio, all halfway done.
- At the height of his career, Paul became a respected artist and taught art in German Universities.
- Klee spent much of his adult life teaching at universities and art schools, including the German Bauhaus School of Art and Düsseldorf Academy. During his tenure at Düsseldorf, he was singled out as a Jew by the Nazi party. The Gestapo searched his home and he was fired from his job.

- In 1933, the German government said his art was “below standards” and locked most of it away in museum cellars. Luckily, many of them were found so we can enjoy them today.
- The Klee family emigrated to Switzerland in late 1933.
- Paul Klee's father was a German citizen; his mother was Swiss. Swiss law determined citizenship along paternal lines, and thus Paul inherited his father's German citizenship. He served in the German army during World War I. However, Klee grew up in Berne, Switzerland, and returned there often, even before his final emigration from Germany in 1933. He died six days before his application for Swiss citizenship was processed.
- Paul Klee's artwork is seemingly quite simple. Klee intentionally mimicked children's artwork and used forms and shapes that are ambiguous; he once compared his art to a tree's root system that "collects what comes from the depth and passes it on."
- You can also see that his paintings are inspired by the paintings of children.

### Key Element of Design to Teach

- **Shape** is a two-dimensional line with no form or thickness. Shapes are flat and can be described as being geometric or organic. Geometric shapes have hard, defined lines and angles. Often man-made things have these kinds of forms, which usually must be measured to come out correctly. Circles, squares and rectangles are geometric shapes. Organic shapes have no set form, and no geometric lines or angles. Things found in nature are often organic shapes such as clouds.

### Possible Questions to Teach Shape

- What shapes did the artist use to create Sinbad? The monsters? The boat?
- Are any of the shapes repeated?
- How would this painting be different if the artist used organic or realistic shapes instead of abstract shapes?
- What shape do you see the most?

### Keywords

- Abstract, two-dimensional, shape, pattern, repetition, cool colors

### Other Possible Questions

- What do you see in this picture? Are there people? Animals?
- What do you think the animals are in this painting?
- Discuss the animals. Do they look real or imaginary? Scary or friendly?
- Paul Klee's artwork is sometimes described as childlike? What about this painting makes it seem childlike? Do you think you could have created this painting?
- What colors do you see in this painting? Are they mostly warm or cool?
- Why do you think some of this painting is dark and some is light?
- What kind of mood is the artist portraying? How does the artwork make you feel?
- Do you see the pattern on the fish repeated anywhere? (The boat, the clothes)
- What is the first thing that you see? (The center between the animals and Sinbad where the light meets dark for emphasis.) This is the focal point. The focal point is what first draws your eye, something that stands out.
- What does the light area surrounded by dark edges remind you of? (maybe an island, something dark and scary out there, etc.)