

# GREGOR MENDEL

**Gregor Johann Mendel** (born 20th July 1822, Hynčice, Czech Republic – died 6th January 1884, Brno, Czech Republic) was a scientist and monk. He changed science forever, just by looking at peas! At the time, people didn't know why children looked like their parents. Could there be a special gene that made children 'inherit' the features of their mum and dad? Mendel solved the mystery by mixing over 28,000 green and yellow peas together in his garden. He discovered a pattern that showed how parent plants passed their own features to their offspring. This amazing pattern is also found in every family!



## → FAMOUS FOR

Discovering why we look like other members of our family. His work on genetics helps us understand the special make-up of our minds and bodies.

## → FUN FACT

Mendel dreamed of becoming a teacher. Unfortunately, he failed his exam! This upset him, but he carried on working hard and eventually became a famous scientist!

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# THEOPHRASTUS

**Theophrastus** (born c. 371 BC, Eresos, Greece – died c.287 BC, Athens, Greece) spent his life exploring animals and plants. He was curious about how different types of plants developed, so he studied their leaves, roots and the soil in which they grew. He collected enough information to fill dozens of books! Theophrastus designed a system of classification, helping us to understand the similarities and differences between plants.



## → FAMOUS FOR

Being one of the first ever 'botanists'. This is the scientific name given to people who study plants.

## → FUN FACT

Theophrastus lived in Ancient Greece. People back then had strange superstitions – some Greeks refused to eat beans because they were meant to hold the souls of the dead!

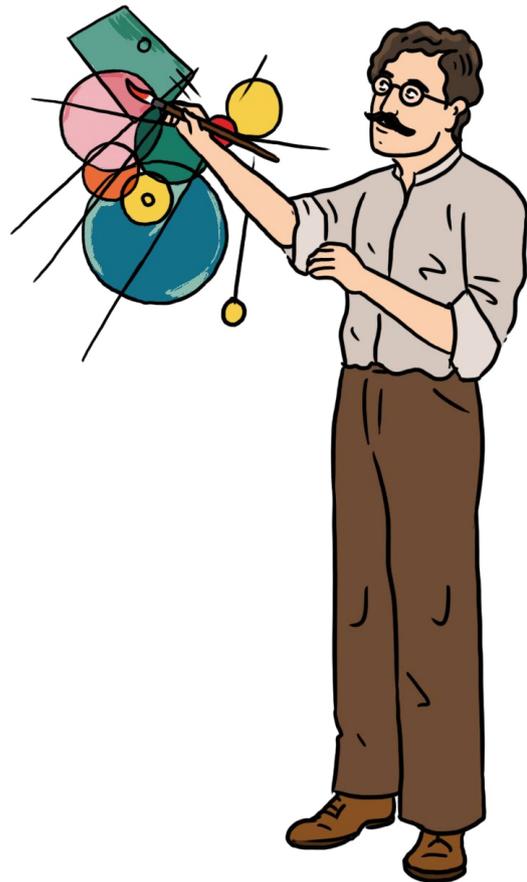
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# WASSILY KANDINSKY

**Wassily Kandinsky** (born 16th December 1866, Moscow, Russia – died 13th December 1944, Neuilly-sur-Seine, France) did not like playing by the rules. As an artist, he disagreed with the idea that all paintings should have a real-life subject. Why couldn't shapes and colours on their own be called art? He began to paint unusual patterns using different colours, lines and forms. This style became known as abstract art, and Kandinsky became highly respected in France for his fresh ideas. He called one of his most famous paintings 'Circles in a Circle'.



## → FAMOUS FOR

Being one of the first artists to paint in the abstract style. His use of bright colours and bold shapes changed the way people looked at art.

## → FUN FACT

Kandinsky had an unusual talent. He could 'see' colours when listening to music! Jazz music helped him use daring colours and shapes in his paintings.

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# MAURITS ESCHER

**Maurits Cornelis Escher** (born 17th June 1898, Leeuwarden, Netherlands – died 27th March 1972, Hilversum, Netherlands) is one of the world's most famous graphic artists. He had a difficult start in life – he was a sickly child who failed his school exams. Escher later found that he had a gift for creating prints and illustrations. He used complicated maths and geometric tile patterns to design 'impossible' prints that fooled the eye. People were puzzled and amazed by his clever optical illusions! Escher's special geometric trickery has inspired countless filmmakers, rock stars, scientists and video game designers.



## → FAMOUS FOR

Mixing art with science and maths to create mind-boggling drawings.

## → FUN FACT

The creator of *The Simpsons*, Matt Groening, was influenced by Escher's art. Versions of his famous drawings appear in the cartoon's many jokes and visual gags!

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# GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

**Georgia Totto O'Keeffe** (born 15th November 1887, Wisconsin, USA – died 6th March 1986, New Mexico, USA) was a big believer in flower power. She was an artist who was fascinated by the outdoors, painting nature in a way that reflected her own feelings. O'Keeffe experimented with colours, shapes and marks to paint larger-than-life flowers. Her giant creations were painted in such a striking, colourful way that they almost leapt off the page! O'Keeffe's feisty personality and unique style quickly got her noticed as an art superstar on the rise. She became the highest-paid female artist in America and played an important part in the growth of modern art.



## → FAMOUS FOR

Her large, vivid, close-up paintings of flowers. She is also known for painting landscapes, skyscrapers and bones.

## → FUN FACT

O'Keeffe and her husband, Alfred Stieglitz, wrote 25,000 pages of love letters to each other!

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# HENRY COWELL

**Henry Dixon Cowell** (born 11th March 1897, California, USA – died 10th December 1965, New York, USA) was a professional musician. An expert in all things musical, he composed over 900 songs in a range of styles and experimented with sound all over the world. Cowell's most important experiment was with rhythm – the patterns of long and short sounds in music. Together with Russian inventor, Leon Theremin, he created a new keyboard instrument called the rhythmicon in 1931. He didn't know it at the time, but Cowell's invention started the modern electronic music craze! His machine created automatic patterns of rhythm that were impossible for a human to perform.



## → FAMOUS FOR

Inventing the rhythmicon, the world's first drum machine.

## → FUN FACT

Cowell played the piano in an unusual way. Instead of striking the black and white keys, he lifted the piano's lid, reached inside and plucked the hidden strings to make sounds!

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Additional info on these Amazing People can be found in the *The Nature Timeline Wallbook* and *Explorer Plants!* published by What on Earth Books

