**Paul Gauguin**

Paul Gauguin was born in Paris. In 1849, the family left Paris for Peru, motivated by the political climate of the period. At the age of seven, Gauguin and his family returned to France. After attending a couple of local schools he was sent to a Catholic boarding school, which he hated. He spent three years at the school. At seventeen, Gauguin signed on as a pilot's assistant in the [merchant marine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merchant_marine) to fulfill his required [military service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_service). Three years later, he joined the French navy where he stayed for two years.

In 1871, Gauguin returned to Paris where he secured a job as a [stockbroker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stockbroker); Gauguin was twenty-three. He became a successful Parisian businessman and remained one for eleven years. In 1873, around the same time as he became a stockbroker, he started becoming an artist too. Gauguin began painting in his free time. In 1873, he married a [Danish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denmark) woman, Mette-Sophie Gad. Over the next ten years, they had five children, Emile, Aline, Clovis, [Jean René](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Ren%C3%A9_Gauguin), and Paul Rollon.

By 1884 Gauguin had moved with his family to [Copenhagen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copenhagen), Denmark, where he pursued a business career as a [**tarpaulin**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarpaulin) salesman. It was not a success; He could not speak Danish, and the Danish did not want French tarpaulins. Mette became the chief **breadwinner**, giving French lessons to trainee **diplomats**. His middle-class family and marriage fell apart after 11 years when Gauguin was driven to paint full-time. He returned to Paris in 1885, after his wife and her family asked him to leave because he **renounced** the values they shared. Paul Gauguin's last physical contact with his family was in 1891.

In 1891, Gauguin sailed to [French **Polynesia**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Polynesia) to escape European civilization and "everything that is artificial and conventional". Gauguin left France again on 3 July 1895, never to return. He lived particularly in [Tahiti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tahiti) and [Hiva Oa Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiva_Oa). He was known to have had **trysts** with several prepubescent native girls, some of whom appear as subjects of his paintings. Gauguin had several children by his mistresses: Germaine with Juliette Huais, Emile Marae a Tai with Pau'ura, and a daughter with Mari-Rose.

In French Polynesia, toward the end of his life, sick and suffering from an unhealed injury, he got in legal trouble for taking the natives' side against French colonialists. He sided with the native peoples, **clashing** often with the colonial authorities and with the Catholic Church. On 27 March 1903, he was **charged** with **libel** against the governor. He was fined 500 francs and sentenced to three months in prison. On 2 April, he appealed for a new trial in Papeete. At the second trial, Gauguin was fined 500 francs and sentenced to one month in prison. Suffering from [syphilis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syphilis), he died at 11 a.m. on [8 May](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/8_May) [1903](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1903) of an **overdose** of morphine and possibly heart attack before he could start the prison sentence. His body had been weakened by alcohol and a **dissipated** life. He was 54 years old.