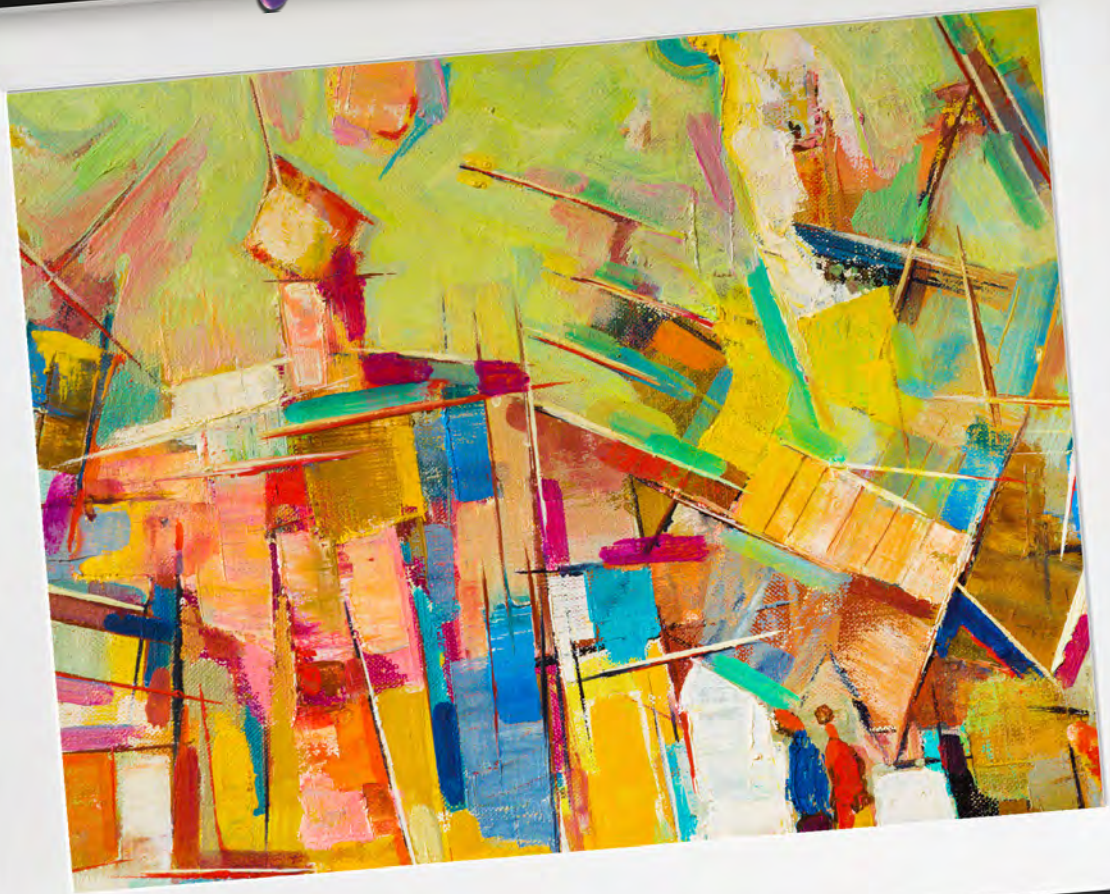
Art and Culture

Abstract Art

Lines, Rays, and Angles



Saskia Lacey

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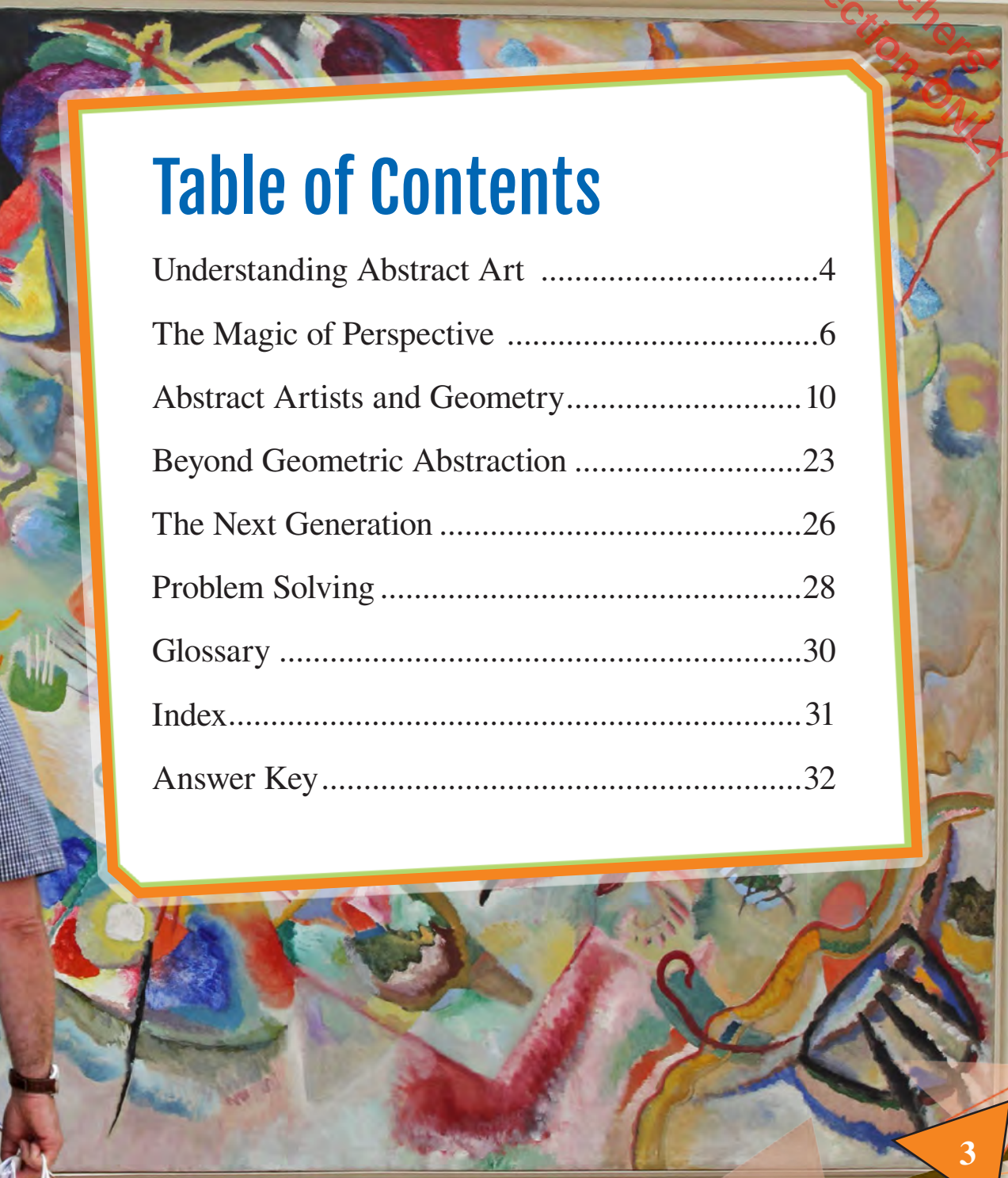


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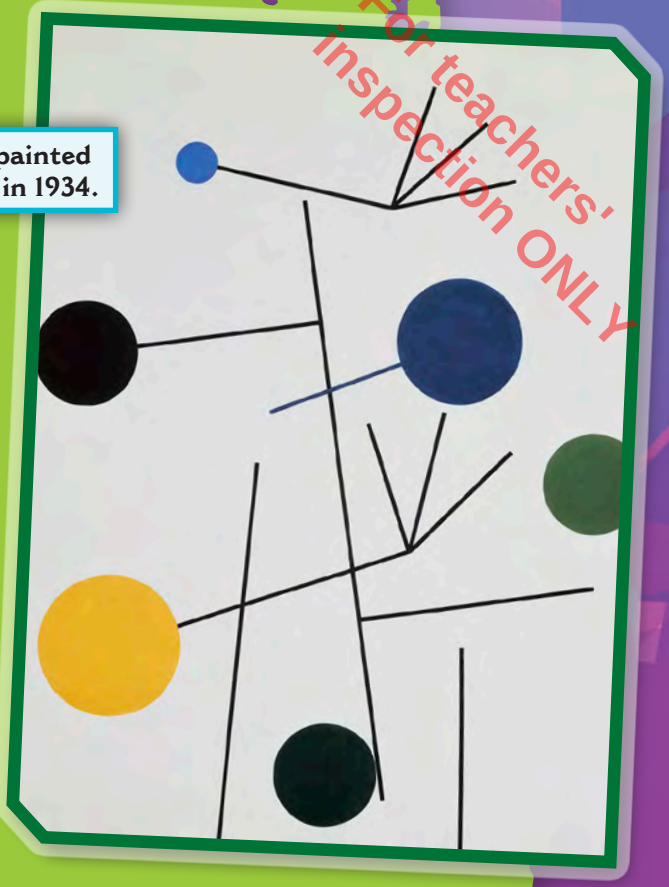
Understanding Abstract Art

Many artists try to recreate what they see in the real world. They sketch landscapes or draw portraits of friends. They paint familiar objects. But, there are other artists who do not try to reflect the outside world. Their drawings, paintings, and sculptures serve a different purpose. These creators are known as abstract artists.



Wassily Kandinsky painted *Improvisation: Dreamy* in 1913.

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Sophie Taeuber-Arp painted *Rising, Falling, Flying* in 1934.

Many people are confused by **abstract art**. They are not sure of its purpose. They puzzle over what it is trying to "say." To understand what abstract art is, we need to know what it is not. Abstract art does not include mountains, trees, or animals. It doesn't include people or things created by people. It doesn't include objects that we can see or touch. So, what's left?

Abstract art features shapes, lines, and colors that do not resemble the real world. Instead, these works of art seek to create a feeling, mood, or idea. Artists like Wassily Kandinsky, Josef Albers, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp (TOY-ber-arp) were pioneers of abstract art. Their work changed the art world forever.



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The Magic of Perspective

To truly grasp abstract art, we must explore how art has **evolved**. Before the era of the abstract, painters wanted to create realistic art. They tried to make their works as true to life as they could.

If you've ever tried painting, you might think this is a challenge. You start painting with high hopes. But then, you become frustrated. It doesn't look the way you thought it would. Many artists use the rules of **perspective** to help them overcome this challenge. Perspective helps artists create works that appear three-dimensional.

Before artists learned the rules of perspective, their paintings looked two-dimensional, or flat. A work like *Court of King's Bench* is an example of a painting that does not use perspective. There is no element of depth. So, the people in the drawing look the same size.



Court of King's Bench does not use perspective.

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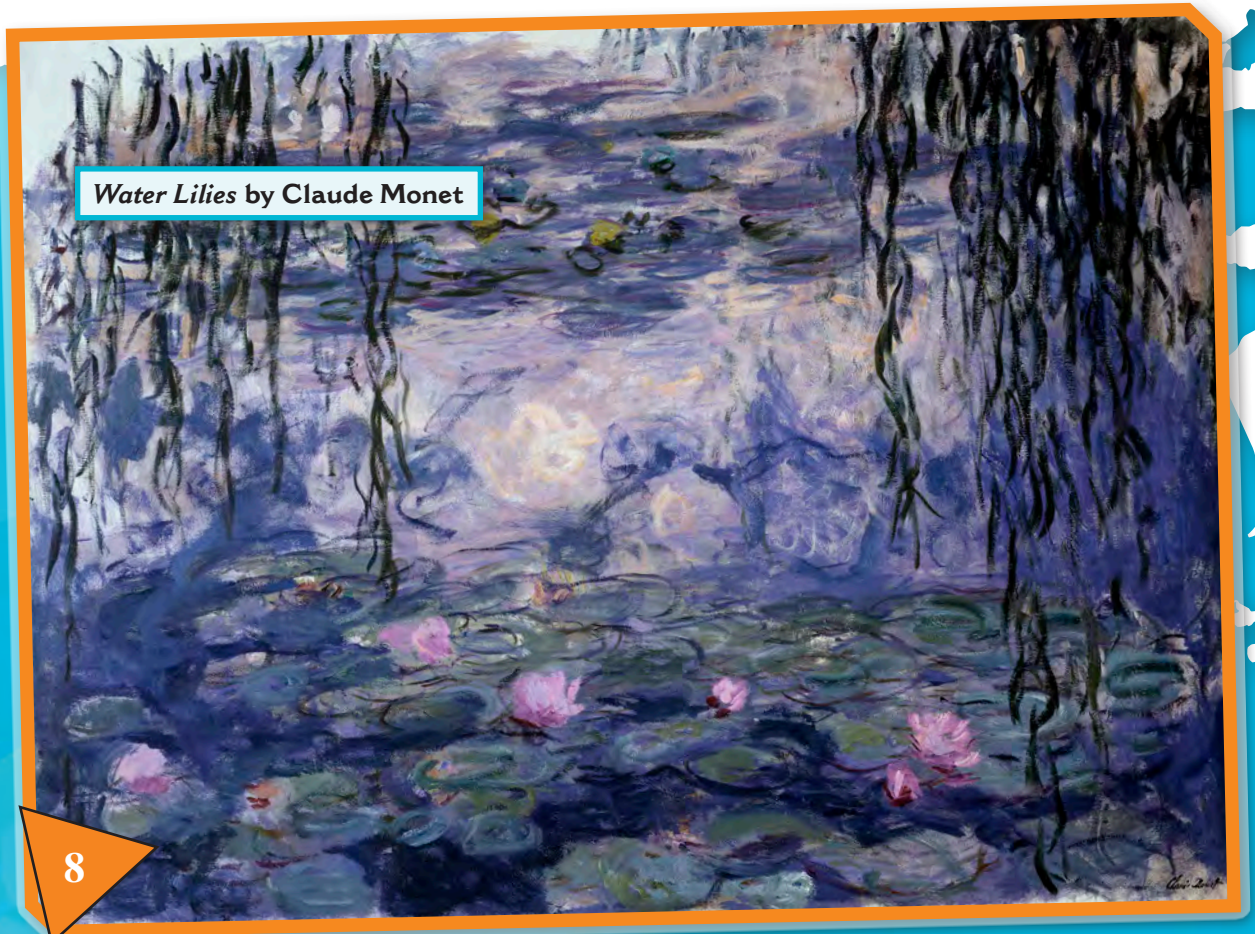
Visitors admire the perspective in this Raphael Sanzio painting.

As centuries passed, paintings became more and more lifelike. Some paintings almost seemed like photographs. These works took a *long* time to create. Artists put thought into every brushstroke. Raphael Sanzio used perspective in his paintings to make them look realistic. The people in the foreground look closer than the people in the background.

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Impressionism

There was a great shift in the nineteenth century. A new group of painters arrived. They had a unique vision. They were called impressionists. Unlike earlier artists, they were not concerned with art that looked *exactly* like the real world. They were more interested in capturing the light and color of the moment. They painted quickly and often outdoors. Take, for instance, Claude Monet's *Water Lilies*. The painting shows real objects—water lilies. But, it is not a perfect representation. The painting could never be mistaken for a photograph. It is too abstract. The impressionists took the first step toward abstract art.



***Water Lilies* by Claude Monet**

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Three Musicians by Pablo Picasso

Cubism

After the impressionists, artists such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque (jawrj brahk) arrived. Their works were even more abstract. They were known as cubists. Cubists use geometric shapes to create their masterpieces. A great example of cubism is Picasso's *Three Musicians*. At first, the shapes stand out. There are squares and triangles. There are lines and circles. But, take a longer look. The shapes form three distinct figures. Picasso, like other cubists, painted objects from the real world. *Three Musicians* may seem strange. But, it is not purely abstract.