



## Time Travellers Club

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August-17

[www.hilltopcloud.co.uk](http://www.hilltopcloud.co.uk)

Dear Club Member,

One of the most famous paintings in the world was only possible due to the discovery of a certain element. The Sunflowers by Vincent van Gogh is an amazing riot of yellow. However, until the early 1800's that intense yellow simply wasn't available as a pigment. Look at many early paintings and they feature stunningly strong blues, or punchy reds, but the yellows are often a dowdy neighbour by comparison.

The yellow comes from chrome, it was discovered in a deep Siberian gold mine in 1762. The mineral itself is called crocoite, from *krokos*, the Greek for saffron (it's amazing how often months tie together like this, I only discovered this fact after deciding on this month's colour). The mine didn't provide a reliable enough source of the mineral, but the French chemist Nicolas Louis Vauquelin began researching the crocoite and discovered a new element. He named it Chrome or Chromium. With that discovery came alternative supplies, lowering the cost. As with so many elements this name also comes from Greek, this time from the word *chroma*, meaning colour. So how does a metal end up being called "colour", it's because the salts formed from it (a salt is any metal bonded to a non-metal) come in such a variety of shades. In various forms you get every colour from pale yellow through to deep red.

van Gogh loved chrome yellow, and particularly loved using it in contrast to other shades, which is exactly why it's a very useful colour to have in your yarn palette. It will tie in with all the reds and oranges, and provide a lovely pop to the blues and purples. Yellow tends to be one of those shades that catches the eye, which is why Chrome Yellow is the colour of choice for school buses in the USA, and for the famous New York taxi cab.

Alas for us, chrome yellow is not a very stable pigment. The Sunflowers we see today are a murky brown version of the bright visual delight they were 100 years ago. Modern science has allowed us to look beyond the fading, analyse the pigments and digitally re-create what the painter originally planned. I'll put some links to some websites so you can see the effect of time on chrome yellow in the Ravelry group along with the usual spinning hints, and combining tips.

Happy Spinning,

Katie