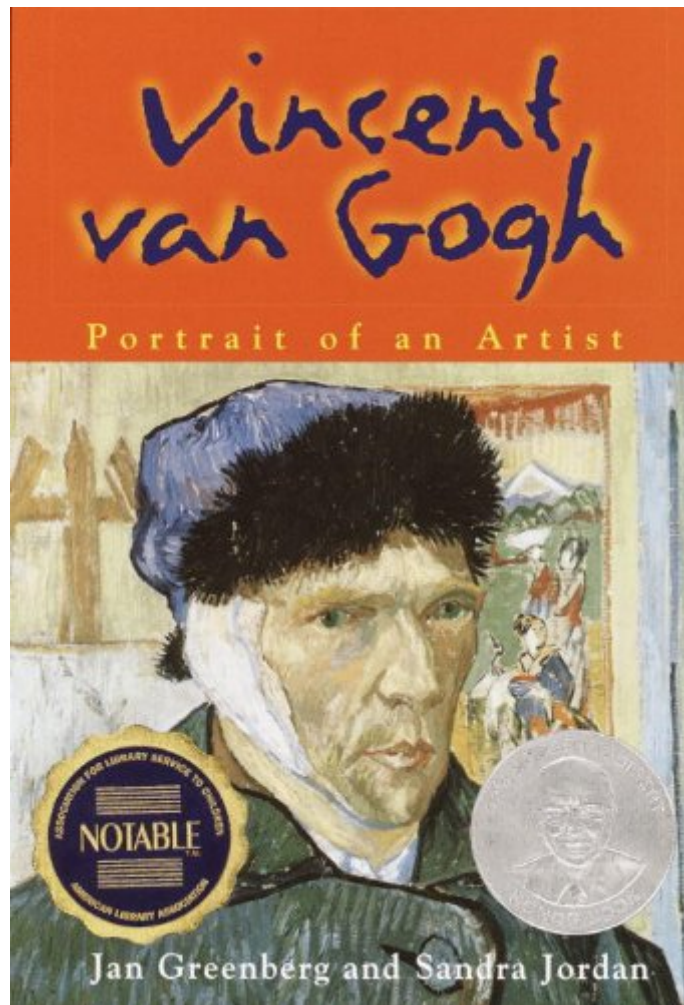


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# Vincent Van Gogh: Portrait Of An Artist



## Synopsis

Vincent Van Gogh: Portrait of an Artist was named a Robert F. Sibert Honor book by the ALA. This is the enthralling biography of the nineteenth-century Dutch painter known for pioneering new techniques and styles in masterpieces such as Starry Night and Vase with Sunflowers. The book cites detailed primary sources and includes a glossary of artists and terms, a biographical time line, notes, a bibliography, and locations of museums that display Van Gogh's work. It also features a sixteen-page insert with family photographs and full-color reproductions of many of Van Gogh's paintings. Vincent Van Gogh was named an ALA Notable Book and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and has been selected as a Common Core State Standards Text Exemplar (Grades 6-8, Historical/Social Studies) in Appendix B. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Vincent Van Gogh only painted for ten years of his life but his paintings are still compelling to modern audiences. This biography of the painter is directed to ages 10 and older and provides a discussion of not only his works, but why he went mad and why he cut off his ear. Letters from Vincent to his brother and patron explore his behaviors and thinking.

This biography of Van Gogh is beautifully written. It tells his story cradle to grave, from his being christened as the namesake of a brother who had died to his taking his own life in loneliness and despair. In between we learn of his having tried out various professions, including the priesthood and having come to his vocation by himself. His fierce dedication, his unending love affair with his own work led to the creation of some of the great masterpieces of 'Western Art'. The writers skillfully interweave passages from Van Gogh's correspondence with younger brother and financial supporter Theo in telling the story. Van Gogh's passionate and profound, his painfully beautiful letters are in themselves a great masterpiece. The writers tell us the story of someone who so much needed and wanted to love, and who was rejected more than once. He was forced to content himself with his Art and with Nature. They are wonderful in describing the landscapes of Van Gogh's life from Brabant in childhood to Arles and Saint- Remy at the end. Although this work is written for a 'young audience' I believe that anyone who wishes a relatively brief but truly outstanding biography of Van Gogh will enjoy this work. The volume also contains in a most tasteful way pictures of the artist, his family and reproductions of some of his greatest work.

This book is a window into the soul of the brilliant, driven VanGogh. If you've ever wondered what it's like to have a passion for something so that it becomes an all consuming fire inside oneself you will be able to see it in VanGogh's struggles as he fights to become accepted as an artist and a human being. A very good book indeed.

Among the non fiction recommendations for the Common Core for Middle School, this book chronological follows the life of Vincent Van Gogh. Though aimed at young readers, the story is retold with truth and frankness. The author presents the life of Van Gogh from early childhood, emphasizing his emergence of an artist. Theo, Vincent's brother, demonstrates that through family, genius can survive. As an artist Van Gogh was prolific and instrumental in an artistic movement. The book is filled with information for the art student and for those who want to learn more about the artist.

This book is written for young readers. I wanted a quick introduction to Van Gogh without having to read his 600 letters to his brother or a 1,000 page biography. Going to a Van Gogh exhibition this weekend, I got what I wanted as pre-reading. More than what is on Wikipedia, but not a two week reading project. But be warned, it is a short, young reader book.

My son used this book to help, with a 4th grade project/ report/performance. The book is nicely written, appears to be fairly comprehensive & isn't too complex. My son loved the fact that there was a timeline included, it helped him tremendously to simplify the information even further.

I appreciated that this was a simple, quick read as I was visiting a special exhibit the next day. I enjoyed getting an insight into the person before seeing his art for myself. Could easily be read or enjoyed by an older child or teenager.

The last words of a dying Vincent van Gogh, having shot himself in the stomach ten years into his career as an artist, (p 103) "I wished I could pass away like this." A tragic ending to a troubled life, van Gogh was only thirty-seven years old. Although his family worried about his extremist behavior, mental state, relationships with women, and inability to make a decent wage (for much of his life, his brother Theo supported him), the Dutchman's self-confidence in the salability of his work is obvious from letters he wrote to his supportive younger brother (over 600 in all). And although he had male friendships, female relationships, and a brief engagement, his affliction with a medical condition, (p 86) "an unusual form of epilepsy, possibly complicated by the effects of absinthe or digitalis poisoning," resulted in occasional bizarre behavior and a reputation as a bit of a mental case: Vincent (p 79) "slashed off his earlobe with a razor" after an altercation with his roommate and friend Paul Gauguin. The book covers from his birth, to a pastor father and an amateur artist mother; through his various careers, primarily as a missionary and then a painter; to his early death and includes information on his relationships and paintings (including photographs), and geographical locations. Although written at about a fourth grade reading level, Vincent van Gogh, an excellent, chronologically-written biography of a misunderstood man, might better be saved for sixth grade and up due to the sensitive issue of suicide. Also good: *The Second Mrs. Giaconda* by E.L. Konigsburg (for adults) and *Art Songs: Ten Songs about Artists* by Agnes and Aubrey (kids music CD).

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