

The Wonderful Works of Vincent Van Gogh

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Vincent Van Gogh is one of the most famous artists in history, as well as one of the most influential. Because he painted with emotion and color and tried something new, his legacy lives on through his art. Although Vincent Van Gogh lived a life full of hardships including depression, his works of art have truly gained prestige and have changed art in a positive way.

Vincent Van Gogh was born on March 30, 1853, in Zundert, a town in the Netherlands. At sixteen years old, Vincent began working at the Hague Gallery of French Art Dealers. Then, after being fired for his bad attitude, he began the process to become a minister, however later changed to become a priest. He was dismissed from this occupation at the beginning of 1876 at age 23 because he did not suit the job.¹ Vincent Van Gogh actually started to paint four years later in 1880, and in 1886 ended up moving in with his brother Theo. Paul Gauguin, another young painter in that era, noticed Vincent's art in a display and respecting the style, he and Vincent soon became good friends. This new friendship, nevertheless, was a rather hard one to preserve, full of tragic conflicts. Following one particularly large argument, Vincent Van Gogh cut off a segment of his left ear lobe and gave it to Rachel, a woman whom Gauguin visited often. Rachel then alerted the police who took Vincent to a nearby hospital to recover from the severe loss of blood. In May 1889, Vincent Van Gogh was sent to an asylum in Saint-Remy, the townspeople not wanting to be near a proposed psychopath. During the time he spent in that mental hospital, Vincent painted one hundred and fifty paintings and produced hundreds of drawings, his art being his haven, an escape from his tragic

¹ Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History." *The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, 2000, www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gogh/hd_gogh.htm.

and lonely reality. Vincent Van Gogh was truly lonely all his life and made many attempts at romance, however, all resulted in rejection.² After this tragic life, on July 27, 1890, Vincent shot himself and died two days later, at the young age of only 37 years old.

Vincent Van Gogh's art is a triumph because it changed art in a positive way, all because he tried something new. "This sovereign contempt for life, doubtless a result of his impetuous love of art, is extraordinary [...] If Vincent were still alive, it would take years and years until the human art triumphed. His death, however, is, so to speak, the glorious result of the fight between two opposed principles: light and darkness, life and death."³ This quote is from a letter to Vincent's brother Theo from Vincent's caretaker Dr. Gachet. It was sent a few days after Vincent Van Gogh died. Dr. Gachet is saying that Vincent Van Gogh's artwork is astounding, and because of his hard work, and his captivating inspirational story to go with it, art has developed and changed. The change is what Dr. Gachet is referring to as triumph. Vincent's hard work is also evident in many other paintings, such as the Almond Blossom. When observing Vincent Van Gogh's Almond Blossom painting from 1890 [See Appendix A] you see that the shades are vibrant, and the image seems to rise off the page and come towards you. In this painting, Vincent Van Gogh painted a beautiful Almond Blossom tree. Not only this but in I am Vincent Van Gogh by Gabriel Martin Roig, a book written through Vincent's perspective states, "... the Impressionists. They were painters of light. Instead of using strong lines to make detailed paintings... the Impressionists used only pure color to

² Roig Gabriel Martín I, and García Fátima. *I Am Vincent Van Gogh*. Star Bright Books, 2017.

³ Roig Gabriel Martín i, and García Fátima. *I Am Vincent Van Gogh*. Star Bright Books, 2017.

paint images... I, however, did not want to be an impressionist painter. I adapted certain characteristics of the movement into my own work.”⁴ Vincent Van Gogh’s paintings were different from the other art in his era. In Paris, the popular style during his time was impressionism. This is when painters used color rather than lines to create detail. Vincent Van Gogh adopted some of the impressionism painting strategies, but also implemented his own ideas to the canvas, formulating his own unique style of art. Vincent is regarded as a Post-Impressionist painter. Post-Impressionism describes art from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, concerning personal styles and new importance of drawing. Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Cezanne were the leaders in this time, creating and leading with a different style and purpose. Another example of Vincent Van Gogh’s hard work is his painting Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin [See Appendix B]. Vincent’s painting is of one of his close friends who was staying in Arles during 1888 and 1889. The different shades of blue in the coat create depth, and whenA you look closely at the beard, you see all sorts of colors; green, yellow, and white to name a few. This painting is another excellent example of post-impressionism. While you see outlines of black in some areas, you see the pure color contrast in other places. Vincent Van Gogh took parts of two different styles, and merged them into one, producing a masterpiece, and a style that has been used by millions of other famous painters throughout our history up until today, including a more modern one, Bob Ross. Bob Ross was a much loved painter, and his style depicted much color and technique used in Van Gogh’s paintings.

Vincent Van Gogh’s art is a triumph because he painted with emotion and color.

⁴ Ibid

"Vincent expressed his life via his works. As he famously said, 'real painters do not paint things as they are... they paint them as they themselves feel them to be.'"⁵ Vincent Van Gogh not only merged styles of several artists to create his own, but he also painted things as he felt them to be. Vincent Van Gogh did not just apply the paint to the canvas. His unique method of Impasto, a technique of applying thick and visible strokes of paint, and his use of symbolic subjects, allow the observer to get a glimpse into Vincent's life. Vincent's works of art tell us just how tragic his life was. In a letter to his brother Theo, Vincent wrote, "'As you can see, I am immersing myself in color—I've held back from that until now; and I don't regret it.'"—Vincent van Gogh, The Hague, September 3, 1882, to Theo van Gogh."⁶ An article from the Denver Art Museum says, "Perhaps, but then of course there is always van Gogh's color—the joyous application of pigment onto canvas, the glorious use of impasto, thick and swift; that fabulous hatching technique, in places evoking the textures it depicts."⁷ Vincent Van Gogh was not modest when it came to painting. If he was creating something, he went all out with color. Vincent suffered from depression, and often his facial expression in his self-portraits is dejected. Nevertheless, Vincent used vibrant colors and delicate brush strokes. He did not let his depression deter him from his passion. In another letter to Theo, Vincent wrote, "Ah well, really we can only make our paintings speak."⁸ In this quote, Vincent Van Gogh is saying that while communication with others is hard to do, you can make your art speak for you. Art can contain emotions, whether it be through color, strokes, or symbolism. An

⁵ Zurakhinsky, Michael. "Vincent Van Gogh Paintings, Bio, Ideas." *The Art Story*, www.theartstory.org/artist-van-gogh-vincent.htm.

⁶ Baer-Gutierrez, Fairlight. "20 Quotes from Vincent Van Gogh." *Denver Art Museum*, <https://denverartmuseum.org/article/staff-blogs/20-quotes-vincent-van-gogh>

⁷ Baer-Gutierrez, Fairlight. "20 Quotes from Vincent Van Gogh." *Denver Art Museum*, <https://denverartmuseum.org/article/staff-blogs/20-quotes-vincent-van-gogh>

⁸ "RM25." *The Letters - Vincent Van Gogh Letters*, 2009, vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/RM25/letter.html.

example of symbolism is in Vincent's painting *The Bedroom At Arles* [See Appendix C].

An empty chair is depicted, portraying his loneliness. Vincent Van Gogh used all of these strategies to portray his emotions, and change the world for the better. The following is a description of Vincent Van Gogh's painting, *The Starry Night* [See in Appendix D], "with intensely swirling patterns that seem to roll across its surface like waves. It is packed with bright orbs—including the crescent moon to the far right, and Venus, the morning star, to the left of center—surrounded by concentric circles of radiant white and yellow light."⁹ Vincent Van Gogh said, "This morning I saw the countryside from my window a long time before sunrise, with nothing but the morning star, which looked very big."¹⁰ Vincent Van Gogh's painting of the *Starry Night* is unlike some of his other paintings. While Vincent uses the same strategy of *Impasto* all around the canvas, he surrounds the stars with a wight and yellow paint, creating a glowing effect. While Vincent Van Gogh could have painted the small stars, he said that the morning star was glowing bright and that it was very big. Therefore, Vincent emphasized the stars even more with their halos.

Vincent Van Gogh's legacy lives on and has inspired many artists today, as well as in the years closer to his death. "By the outbreak of World War I, with the discovery of his genius by the Fauves and German Expressionists, Vincent van Gogh had already come to be regarded as a vanguard figure in the history of modern art."¹¹ The word vanguard means a group of people leading with new ideas. Vincent Van Gogh's

⁹ "MoMA Learning." *Lee Bontecou. Untitled. 1959* | MoMA, www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/vincent-van-gogh-the-starry-night-1889/.

¹⁰ "MoMA Learning." *Lee Bontecou. Untitled. 1959* | MoMA, www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/vincent-van-gogh-the-starry-night-1889/.

¹¹ "Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History." *The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, 2000, www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gogh/hd_gogh.htm.

strategies were very different at the time and not only this but later on, they were used by the Fauves and German Expressionists, and many after them. Vincent Van Gogh, without knowing it, started a huge chain of change in the art industry. With his bold applications of color to the canvas, Vincent sparked something big. "In popular culture, his life has inspired music and numerous films, including Vincente Minelli's *Lust for Life* (1956), which explores Van Gogh and Gauguin's volatile relationship."¹² Vincent Van Gogh not only gifted us with his astounding works of art but his legacy, his story, that has inspired many. "Lust For Life" is a movie, starring Vincent Van Gogh and his friend Gauguin. Not only this, but Vincent Van Gogh's art was featured in other films such as "Midnight in Paris." Vincent Van Gogh is an inspirational person in our history, his story known by millions and millions. Vincent Van Gogh has passed down his art along with his style to everyone in the generations after him. He has gifted us with masterpieces that come with a very interesting story. Vincent Van Gogh is not only the subject of movies but a very powerful man who sparked change in the way art is created.

Vincent Van Gogh had an extremely woeful life, but the product of this tragedy is truly a triumph. The artworks that Vincent has created were his creative escape from his awful reality. In many of his paintings, he used symbolism, and the art style impasto, leaving people today to see what Vincent Van Gogh saw in the world. Although Vincent Van Gogh lived a life of tragedy, full of arguments and much emotional pain, his works of art are a triumph, his strategy of painting with emotion and color astounding, and his legacy lives on, reminding us of his pure talent. Vincent Van Gogh instigated change in the art community, causing art to look like it does today. Art now has more of a meaning

¹² Zurakhinsky, Michael. "Vincent Van Gogh Biography, Life & Quotes." *The Art Story*, www.theartstory.org/artist-van-gogh-vincent-life-and-legacy.htm#legacy_header.

to it, and everyone can paint their emotions, not just a Bible story. Vincent's life teaches many lessons, the most important, keep going even when times get tough, things will always get better. As well as the famous saying, "Don't judge a book by its cover."

Appendix A:



Almond Blossom painted 1890

Barnard, Marcel. "The Parable of Almond Blossom." *ArtWay.eu*, 11 Apr. 2010, www.artway.eu/content.php?id=554&lang=en&action=show.

Appendix B:



Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin painted in 1888

"Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin - by Vincent Van Gogh." *Chronology of Vincent Van Gogh's Life and Works*,
2009, www.vincentvangogh.org/portrait-of-the-postman-joseph-roulin.jsp.

Appendix C:



Bedroom at Arles painted 1888

"The Bedroom At Arles, 1888 by Van Gogh." *Chronology of Vincent Van Gogh's Life and Works*, www.vincentvangogh.org/the-bedroom-at-arles.jsp.

Appendix D:



The Starry Night painted 1889

The Starry Night, 1889 by Vincent Van Gogh." *Chronology of Vincent Van Gogh's Life and Works*, www.vincentvangogh.org/starry-night.jsp.

Primary Sources

Barnard, Marcel. "The Parable of Almond Blossom." *ArtWay.eu*, 11 Apr. 2010, <http://www.artway.eu/content.php?id=554&lang=en&action=show>.

This source provides a description of Vincent Van Gogh's painting the Almond Blossom. It also provides information about specific artists. I used this source to prove that Vincent Van Gogh changed art.

Baer-Gutierrez, Fairlight. "20 Quotes from Vincent Van Gogh." *Denver Art Museum*, <https://denverartmuseum.org/article/staff-blogs/20-quotes-vincent-van-gogh>

This webpage has 20 quotes from Vincent Van Gogh. Most of which are from letters to his brother Theo. The quotes describe his and the process that he used to create it. I used this source to help me prove Vincent Van Gogh painted with emotion and color.

Bodinson, Sara. "MoMA Learning." *Lee Bontecou. Untitled. 1959 | MoMA*, www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/vincent-van-gogh-the-starry-night-1889/.

In this article, the author, Sara talks about Vincent Van Gogh's past and goes on talking about his painting the Starry Night. Vincent Van Gogh painted this masterpiece in 1889. He wrote about this painting and his process to his brother Theo in one of his many letters. The article describes Vincent's painting in vivid detail, allowing a picture to be formed in the mind. This particular article was used in my evidence to prove that Vincent Van Gogh painted with emotion and color.

Malyon, John. *Artcyclopedia*, 2007,

www.artcyclopedia.com/feature-2001-11.html.

This article provides much information as to what Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh quarreled about. It also provides pictures of Van Gogh's paintings. I used this source to learn more about Vincent Van Gogh and his issues.

"MoMA Learning." *Lee Bontecou. Untitled. 1959 | MoMA*,

http://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/vincent-van-gogh-the-starry-night-1889/.

This source describes Vincent's Starry Night. It also talks about his style. I used this source to help me prove that Vincent Van Gogh painted with color.

"Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin - by Vincent Van Gogh." *Chronology of Vincent Van Gogh's Life and Works*, 2009,

<http://www.vincentvangogh.org/portrait-of-the-postman-joseph-roulin.jsp>.

This source has a list of paintings and a description of each. This site also talks about the reasons behind the paintings. I used this source to help me prove that Vincent Van Gogh's art is a triumph because he changed art in a positive way.

"RM25." *The Letters - Vincent Van Gogh Letters*, 2009,

<http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/RM25/letter.html>.

This source provides many letters that Vincent Van Gogh wrote, not just to his brother Theo, but to other people like his friend Joseph. I used this source to prove that Vincent painted with emotion and color.

Zurakhinsky, Michael. "Vincent Van Gogh Biography, Life & Quotes." *The Art Story*,

www.theartstory.org/artist-van-gogh-vincent-life-and-legacy.htm#legacy_header.

This website gave me more insight as to how Vincent Van Gogh's legacy is living on, as well as a timeline that helped me grasp when events happened in relation to one another. This website also provided quotes from Vincent. I used this site to prove that Vincent Van Gogh's legacy lives on.

Secondary Sources

Barton, Gina. "Results for 'Vincent+Van+Gogh.'" *Vox.com*, Vox Media, 15 July 2017, 9:40 a.m., <http://www.vox.com/videos/2017/7/15/15973568/vincent-van-gogh-travel>.

In this video, Gina Barton talks about Vincent Van Gogh's tragic past. While watching this video I learned the pathways Vincent Van Gogh took during his lifetime. He went many places because of his job at the Hauges Gallery, an art dealership, that transferred Vincent throughout France.

Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History." *The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, 2000, www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gogh/hd_gogh.htm.

This website provides more background information, as well as an explanation pertaining to what influenced Vincent Van Gogh's art. Not only does it talk about Vincent Van Gogh's life, but it talks about how people used his style of painting in the past, how his legacy lives on. I used this website to prove that Vincent Van Gogh inspired many artists today, as well as closer to his death.

Cruz, Sabrina, director. *The Story Behind Famous Paintings*. YouTube, YouTube, 28 Apr.

2017, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jND9DUcR6d4>.

This video by Sabrina not only provided information on Vincent Van Gogh's *Starry Night* as well as parts of his life, but it also referred to paintings that came after Vincent Van Gogh. *The Scream* by Edvard Munch is particularly similar to Van Gogh's style of painting, using swirls and different colors where only one would seem present. This video helped me gain perspective on the halos around the stars in Vincent Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. Sabrina talks about Vincent eating or trying to eat paint, and the effects of the lead inside the paint include swollen retinas, making halos appear around lights, similar to the effect in Vincent's painting.

Malyon, John. *Artcyclopedia*, 2007,

<http://www.artcyclopedia.com/feature-2001-11.html>.

This article provides much information as to what Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh quarreled about. It also provides pictures of Van Gogh's paintings. I used this source to learn more about Vincent Van Gogh and his issues.

Roig Gabriel Martín I, and García Fátima. *I Am Vincent Van Gogh*. Star Bright Books, 2017.

This book is written in the first person so that it is Vincent Van Gogh talking. It provides multiple sections, all about different parts of Vincent's life. I used this source to prove that Vincent Van Gogh's art is a triumph because he did something new.

Sal. "Realism, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism." *Khan Academy*, Khan Academy, www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france.

This source helped me gain a better understanding of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and how Vincent Van Gogh was a part of it. Vincent saw the work of the Impressionists and was inspired. He took the style of the Impressionists, using color to create detail, and added it to his own way of painting, becoming a Post-Impressionist. I used this source to dig deeper into the style of Vincent Van Gogh.

"Van Gogh." *Van Gogh*, by Victoria Charles et al., Parkstone Press, 1997.

This source has some of the paintings created by Vincent Van Gogh. It also gives more insight as to Vincent's life's experiences. This source provided another perspective to my research.

Vanguard | Definition of Vanguard in English by Oxford Dictionaries." *Oxford Dictionaries / English*, Oxford Dictionaries, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/vanguard.

Oxford Dictionaries provides definitions online. I used this source to help understand the word Vanguard. This word changed my perspective on how I saw Vincent Van Gogh. Vanguard means a group of people leading with new ideas as well as developments.

Zurakhinsky, Michael. "Vincent Van Gogh Biography, Life & Quotes." *The Art Story*,

www.theartstory.org/artist-van-gogh-vincent-life-and-legacy.htm#legacy_header.

This website gave me more insight as to how Vincent Van Gogh's legacy is living on, as well as a timeline that helped me grasp when events happened in relation to one another. This website also provided quotes from Vincent. I used this site to prove that Vincent Van Gogh's legacy lives on.

Zurakhinsky, Michael. "Vincent Van Gogh Paintings, Bio, Ideas." *The Art Story*,

www.theartstory.org/artist-van-gogh-vincent.htm.

This source has images of Vincent's paintings with a description of each as well as the year it was created. This website provides five quotes from Vincent Van Gogh. I used this source to prove that Vincent Van Gogh painted with emotion and color.