

# Vincent van gogh: the man behind the canvas

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When you think about Vincent Van Gogh what comes to mind? You might think of his most popular painting, *Starry Night*, or his unique art style, or even his mental illness which sadly lead him to take his own life. But many do not know who Vincent Van Gogh really was.

Vincent was born to his parents, Theodorus Van Gogh and Anna Van Gogh, on March 30, 1853. His father was a protestant priest and his mother was a kind woman who's love of art and nature later influenced her oldest son.

Vincent would have been the second oldest but sadly exactly one year before he was born his mother delivered a still born named Vincent Willem Van Gogh. Still heart broken his parents named him after his deceased brother. Vincent became the big brother to two brothers, Theo and Cor, and three sisters, Wil, Elisabeth, and Anna.

Vincent was a quiet, melancholy child who spent little attention to art until his later years. He started working at age 16 as a trainee in art dealership but would work many jobs before pursuing art. After being fired from art dealership in 1876 he became a schoolteacher then moved on to working at a bookstore after that he became a miner and then at age 25 he was hoping to become a pastor like his father. He had given his life to God and was very passionate about his faith but the elders of the church did not agree with his lifestyle and dismissed him. Finally Vincent picked up a paintbrush despite having no experience or training in the area and got to work.

He knew he wasn't very good but his brother Theo constantly encouraged him and supported him financially. Vincent moved back in with his parents and began to teach himself how to draw. " I am constantly doing what I

cannot do yet, in order to learn how to do it.” – Vincent Van Gogh. He drew and painted for months experimenting with different styles and materials.

For practice, he often painted pieces from some of his favorite artists. He loved to paint still life such as trees, flowers and fields, and was fascinated with the simple life of peasants. He admired their hard work and loving nature. Shortly after his father died in 1885, he painted *The Potato Eaters*. A dark toned painting that displayed a family of peasants sitting down to eat a dinner of steamed potatoes after a long day of hard work.

He was so proud of this painting that he wanted to make this image into business cards. “ There is nothing more truly artistic then to love people.” – Vincent Van Gogh Not many know that Vincent had always wanted to become a husband and father. He was quite the romantic but his love life was not one you would call romantic. He believed that love would make him a better artist and had fallen in love many times but always with the wrong girl or was rejected.

“ Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place.” – Vincent Van Gogh He never succeeded in finding a wife and his mental state probably had something to do with that. He suffered from episodes of depression, paralyzing anxiety, and according to some accounts, bipolar disorder. But he never stopped painting. He would paint outside in the fresh air surrounded by nature.

“ To paint nature you must be in it a long time.” – Vincent Van Gogh His love for nature is obvious in his paintings. His paintings were like therapy for him

but sadly they could not save him. Vincent Van Gogh committed suicide at the age of 37. In a letter to his brother Theo he wrote, " I feel.

.. a failure. That's it as far as I'm concerned...

I feel that this is the destiny that I accept, that will never change." On July 29, 1890, Vincent went into a field, shot himself in the stomach and passed out. He later regained consciousness and tried to find the revolver to complete the act but ended up heading back to the inn he was staying at. His brother was with him when he died and said, " He himself wanted to die. When I sat at his bedside and said that we would try to get him better and that we hoped that he would be spared this kind of despair, he said, " The sadness will last forever.

" Those were Vincent's last words before he died at 1: 30 in the morning. After that it was his brother's goal to make his art known to people across the globe. But unfortunately just a year later he was diagnosed with progressive paralysis and dementia caused by heredity, chronic disease, overwork, and sadness. He died on the 25 of January 1891, and his wife Johanna and their son they named Vincent successfully finished his work. Now that you know more about Vincent Van Gogh and his life I hope when you hear his name you now think of him as the amazing, loving, creative, lost man that he was.

" To believe in God for me is to feel that there is a God, not a dead one, or a stuffed one, who with irresistible force urges us towards more loving." -

Vincent Van Gogh