

Van Gogh's Letters

The artist speaks



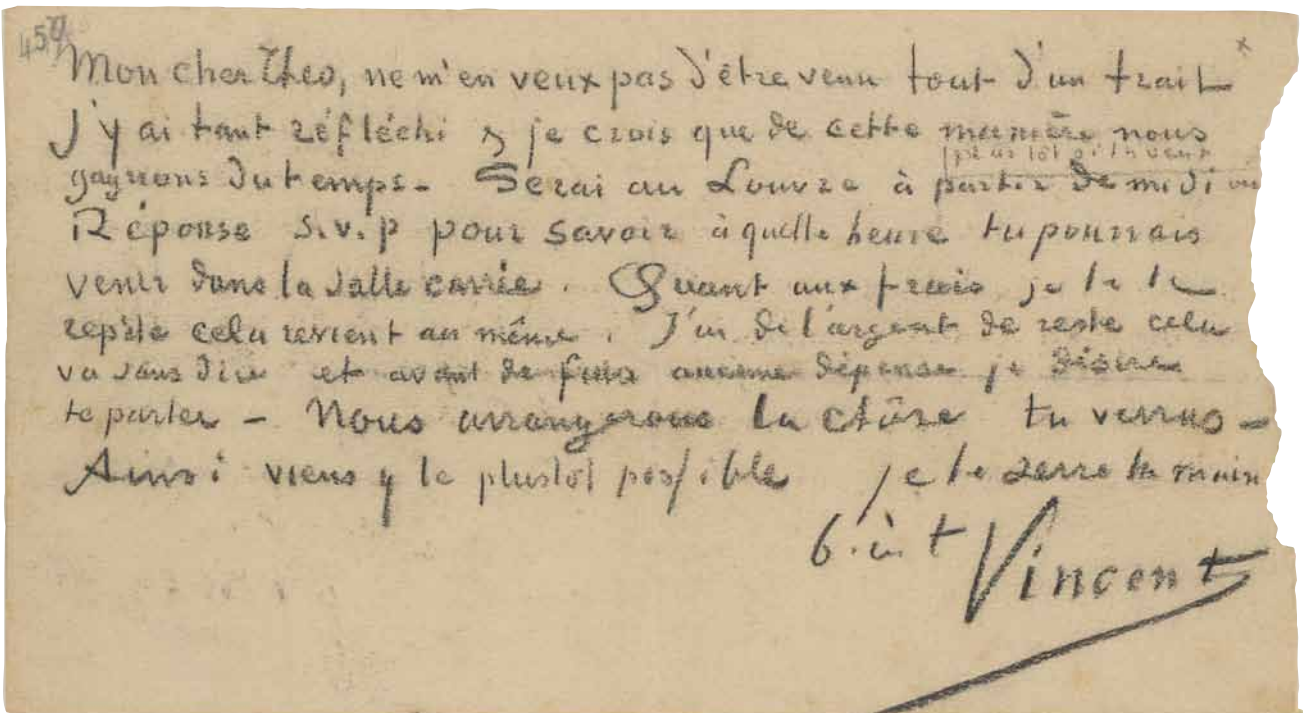
Programme description
Secondary education

Van
Gogh
Museum
Amsterdam



Content

Programme description	3
Background information	4
Assignments	9
Museum visit	15



Above:
Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, c. 28 February 1886
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Frontispiece:
Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 9 April 1885
Postcard from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 2 May 1882
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Programme description

'There are so many people, especially among our pals, who imagine that words are nothing. On the contrary, don't you think, it's as interesting and as difficult to say a thing well as to paint a thing.'

Vincent van Gogh to Emile Bernard, 19 April 1888

Vincent van Gogh was a passionate letter writer. In a time when means of communication such as the telephone and the Internet did not exist, writing was the way to keep in touch with family and friends who did not live nearby. More than 800 of the countless letters Van Gogh wrote to his friends and family and approximately 80 letters that he received have been preserved. The correspondence allows us to follow not only the fascinating story of Van Gogh's tumultuous life, but also his development as an artist. Many of the letters include sketches of paintings he was working on at that time, or which he had recently completed.

Van Gogh on the web: www.vangoghletters.org

Together with the Huygens Institute in The Hague, the Van Gogh Museum worked for fifteen years on a new, scholarly edition of Vincent van Gogh's correspondence. All of the preserved letters were studied anew, translated and annotated. The new edition is available in both digital and book form. Along with the complete correspondence it contains illustrations of all of the works Van Gogh referred to in his letters. These are not only his own paintings and drawings but also the works of other artists about which he wrote. On the website www.vangoghletters.org these letters can be read in the language in which they were originally written: Dutch, French and a few in English. All of the Dutch and French letters are provided with an English translation.

Lesson suggestions

This teaching manual contains background information and several suggestions for lessons about Vincent van Gogh's letters. The suggestions can be easily adapted or expanded to suit your needs and each one begins with a short introduction. Preceding the suggestions for lessons, you can find an introduction aimed at the students on the website www.vangoghletters.org. This site contains a wealth of information about Vincent van Gogh.

General aims of the educational material

- To acquaint students with Vincent van Gogh, not only as an artist but also as a writer of unique ego documents.
- To give students background information on various paintings by Vincent van Gogh: their subject, genesis and (symbolic) meaning.
- To give students information on art, culture, society and communication in the 19th century so that they can compare this with their own experiences now.
- To teach students how to place Van Gogh within the context of his own time.

Background information

Vincent van Gogh was born in Zundert, in the province of North Brabant on 30 March 1853. After he had attended the village school, his parents sent him to boarding schools in Zevenbergen and Tilburg. The young Van Gogh excelled in languages, becoming proficient in French, English and German. He suddenly left school in March of 1868, in the middle of the academic year, and returned to Zundert. He would never resume his official education.

In 1869, when he was 16 years old, Van Gogh became the youngest assistant at Goupil & Cie in The Hague. Headquartered in Paris, Goupil & Cie was an international art dealer. Van Gogh's language skills stood him in good stead: he worked not only in The Hague, but was also transferred to the branches in London and Paris. In 1872 Van Gogh's younger brother Theo also went to work at Goupil's, in the Brussels branch. They had written each other previously, but from that moment on the exchange of letters between the two brothers intensified:

'My dear Theo, That was good news that I just read in Pa's letter. My hearty congratulations. I don't doubt that it will give you pleasure, it's such a fine firm. It will be a big change for you. I'm so glad that both of us are now in the same line of business, and in the same firm; we must correspond often.'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 13 December 1872

Although Vincent van Gogh's career got off to a promising start, the art trade lost its appeal to him after a few years. He became increasingly fervent about religion and believed it was 'wicked' to sell paintings he thought were no good. He was fired in 1876.

'When I saw Mr Boussod again I asked if His Hon. indeed thought it a good thing for me to go on working in the firm this year, since His Hon. had never had any very serious complaints against me. The latter was indeed the case, though, and His Hon. took the words out of my mouth, so to speak, saying that I would leave on 1 April...'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 10 January 1876

Van Gogh's life is easy to follow in the extant letters. After working in England as a supply teacher and a minister's assistant Vincent returned to the Netherlands in 1877. In Amsterdam he prepared for university, studying for the theology entrance exam. However, he abandoned his study and never took the exam. At the end of 1878, his religious zeal led him to the poor coal-mining district of Borinage in southern Belgium, where he worked among the miners as a lay preacher.



Vincent van Gogh at age 19
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Background information

'It's a sombre place, and at first sight everything around it has something dismal and deathly about it. The workers there are usually people, emaciated and pale owing to fever, who look exhausted and haggard, weather-beaten and prematurely old, the women generally sallow and withered.'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, between 1 and 16 April 1879

Because he wanted to lead the life of the mineworkers, Van Gogh slept on the floor and gave away all of his possessions. His involvement with the local people went too far for his employer and Van Gogh was dismissed. The turnaround in Van Gogh's life was precipitated by his younger brother Theo. The letters Vincent sent him were often provided with illustrations. Theo advised his older brother to become an artist. In 1880 Van Gogh moved to Brussels, intending to enrol at the art academy. Ultimately, however, he decided to study on his own. As he had no means of earning a living, he received money from Theo, who by then was working for the Paris branch of Goupil & Cie. Theo would continue to provide financial support throughout Vincent's entire life.

'I heard from Pa that you've already been sending me money without my knowing it, and in doing so are effectively helping me to get along. For this accept my heartfelt thanks.'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 2 April 1881

In 1881 Van Gogh went to live with his parents in Etten, in the province of Noord-Brabant. At the end of the year he spent several weeks in The Hague, taking painting lessons from Anton Mauve, a leading member of the Hague School. He learned how to work in watercolour and oil paint. Once back in Etten, Van Gogh became embroiled in a conflict with his father:

'Pa cannot empathize or sympathize with me, and I cannot settle in to Pa and Ma's routine, it's too constricting for me - it would suffocate me.'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or around 23 December 1881

He left his parents' house, rented a studio, and in 1882 he again took lessons from Mauve in The Hague. During the summer of that same year he made his first independent watercolour and oil paint studies.



Theo van Gogh (1857-1891)
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh
The vicarage at Nuenen, 1885
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Background information



Vincent van Gogh
The potato eaters, 1885
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

In September 1883 Van Gogh travelled to the province of Drenthe to draw and paint the landscape and the farmers. His stay there was brief: not even three months later he moved back in with his parents, who by then were living in Nuenen in Noord-Brabant. In the footsteps of the French painter Millet, Van Gogh decided to become a genuine painter of peasant life. He painted his first grandly conceived canvas, *The potato eaters*, in 1885. In preparation Van Gogh spent a lot of time in the often dark and dim Nuenen peasant dwellings and drew and painted various studies and heads of the local labourers:

'Although I'll have painted the actual painting in a relatively short time, and largely from memory, it's taken a whole winter of painting studies of heads and hands.'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 30 April 1885

When it was completed, Van Gogh sent *The potato eaters* to Theo in Paris. Theo pointed out that it was very dark, and very different from the bright *Impressionist* palette that was all the rage in Paris at the time. Van Gogh's artist friend, *Anthon van Rappard*, also expressed his criticism in a letter of 24 May 1885:

'You'll agree with me that such work isn't intended seriously. You can do better than this - fortunately; but why, then, observe and treat everything so superficially?'

Van Gogh's attempts to work with local models in Nuenen were foiled by local clergymen. This was one of the reasons why he left the Netherlands in 1885 and settled in Antwerp, never to return to his native country. In Antwerp Van Gogh found fresh inspiration: he could work with nude models, readily obtain materials and study the extensive art collections in the museums and galleries. Moreover, many exotic products found their way to Antwerp, a major port, including Japanese prints, which Van Gogh ardently collected. There was also an active interest in photography, an extremely modern technique at the time. Van Gogh had strong views on the subject:

'I've noticed the many photographers here, who are much the same as everywhere and apparently have plenty to do. But always the same conventional eyes, noses, mouths, waxy and smooth and cold. It still always remains dead. And painted portraits have a life of their own that comes from deep in the soul of the painter and where the machine can't go. The more photographs one looks at, it seems to me, the more one feels this.'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 14 December 1885

Background information

Van Gogh enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts in Antwerp in January 1886. However, he soon became frustrated by the traditional teaching methods. He left the school and went to Paris, much sooner than he had agreed upon with his brother:

'My dear Theo, Don't be cross with me that I've come all of a sudden. I've thought about it so much and I think we'll save time this way. Will be at the Louvre from midday, or earlier if you like. A reply, please, to let me know when you could come to the Salle Carrée.'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or around 28 February 1886

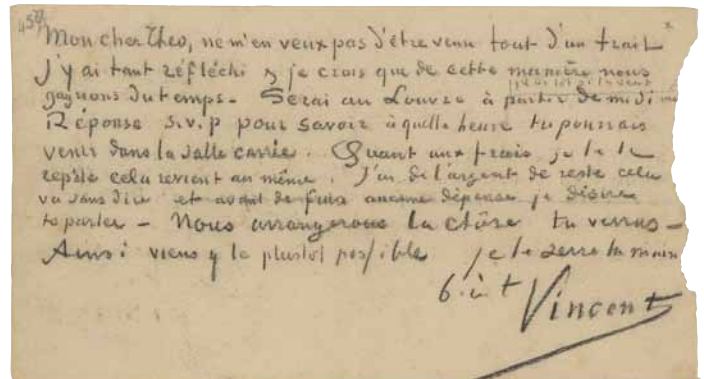
In Paris Van Gogh lived with his brother, Theo, in Montmartre. His move to the French capital had a great impact on his painting style. Theo managed a branch of the Boussod, Valadon & Cie art gallery, and introduced Vincent to the work of Claude Monet and other Impressionists. Until then Van Gogh had been familiar primarily with Dutch art and French realists. In Paris he could see first-hand how the Impressionists handled light and colour. He wrote the following to Horace Mann Livens, a fellow student in Antwerp, in September or October 1886:

'In Antwerp I did not even know what the impressionists were, now I have seen them and though not being one of the club yet I have much admired certain impressionist pictures...'

Van Gogh studied for four months in the atelier of the painter Fernand Cormon. He met contemporary artists there, including Paul Gauguin, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Emile Bernard, Camille Pissarro and John Russell. In developing his own style, he studied the Impressionists' working method: his palette became lighter and his brushwork looser. He also followed the Impressionists in his choice of subject matter, such as Paris cafés and boulevards and the countryside along the Seine. Van Gogh travelled to Provence on 19 February 1888. In Arles, he rented the 'yellow house', where he intended to establish an artists' colony. Paul Gauguin came to live with him in October 1888. The two artists painted together, took part in the local nightlife and had heated debates about art:

'Gauguin and I talk a lot about Delacroix, Rembrandt &c. The discussion is excessively electric. We sometimes emerge from it with tired minds, like an electric battery after it's run down.'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 17 or 18 December 1888



Letter from Vincent to Theo van Gogh, on or about Sunday, 28 February 1886
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh
View from Theo's apartment, 1886
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh
Self-portrait as painter, 1887-88
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Background information



Vincent van Gogh
The yellow house, 1888
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

After some time, however, tensions mounted. Van Gogh fell ill, prey to psychotic episodes that left him confused and sometimes even caused him to lose consciousness. Van Gogh's illness peaked in December, when he cut off a piece of his left ear. Gauguin rushed off to Paris, and Van Gogh was admitted to the hospital of Arles.

'I'll stay here at the hospital for another few days - then I dare plan to return home very calmly. Now I ask just one thing of you, not to worry, for that would cause me one worry too many. Now let's talk about our friend Gauguin, did I terrify him? In short, why doesn't he give me a sign of life?'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 2 January 1889

After being discharged from the hospital, Van Gogh was unable to lead a normal independent life and continued to be plagued by psychotic episodes. Consequently, Van Gogh committed himself to the asylum in Saint-Rémy, where he would spend an entire year. While there he produced around 150 paintings.

'As for me, my health is good, and as for the head it will, let's hope, be a matter of time and patience.'

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, between 31 May and 6 June 1889

Van Gogh left the asylum in Saint-Rémy in May 1890 and headed north to Auvers-sur-Oise, where other artists were working at that time. In the productive period that followed he produced nearly one painting a day. Rural Auvers afforded Van Gogh the peace and quiet he needed, yet was close enough to Paris to allow him to visit his brother Theo. Dissatisfied with his employer, Theo was considering quitting his job at Boussod.



Vincent van Gogh
The garden of Saint Paul's Hospital, 1889
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Van Gogh was deeply troubled by his brother's worries and the related financial concerns. After visiting his brother and sister-in-law in Paris, he wrote the following on 10 July 1890:

'Once back here I too still felt very saddened, and had continued to feel the storm that threatens you also weighing upon me. What can be done - you see I usually try to be quite goodhumoured, but my life, too, is attacked at the very root, my step also is faltering.'

Moreover, he feared he would suffer a relapse. In the evening of 27 July 1890, Vincent walked into a wheat field and shot himself in the chest. He died from his wounds two days later, with Theo at his side.

In the ten years that he was active as an artist (1880-1890) Vincent van Gogh produced a large body of work: more than 850 paintings and close to 1300 works on paper. The majority of what has been preserved is in the Van Gogh Museum; the rest is dispersed throughout various museums and private collections around the world, from the Netherlands to Japan and the United States.

Assignments

Van Gogh's letters: the artist speaks

In the course of his life, Vincent van Gogh wrote hundreds of letters. In a time when the telephone and the Internet did not exist, writing was *the* means of communicating with family and friends who did not live nearby.

The *Van Gogh Museum* and the *Huygens Institute* conducted research for more than fifteen years on the extant correspondence of one of the Netherlands' most famous artists. This resulted in a book (six volumes) and a web edition: all of the preserved letters by and to Vincent van Gogh can be read online at www.vangoghletters.org. Along with a wealth of information, the website also includes illustrations of all of the works of art Van Gogh mentioned in his letters. These are not only his own drawings and paintings, but also works by other artists.

On the website you can read Van Gogh's letters in their original language: Dutch, French and a few in English - including the grammatical and spelling errors that he made. All of the letters have been translated into modern English, which can be called up next to the original text on the screen. The letters are organised chronologically; you can also search by subject using key words in the original language or in English.



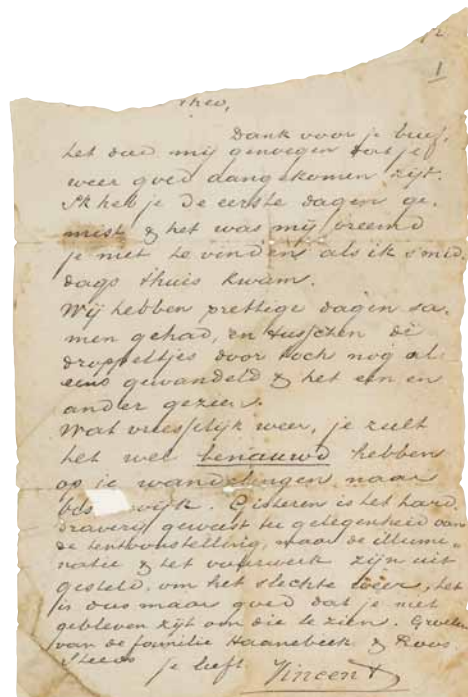
Van Gogh as a letter writer

Vincent van Gogh's merits as a letter writer were already recognised by his contemporaries. In 1893, three years before Van Gogh's death, the artist Emile Bernard began publishing fragments of the letters Vincent sent to him in the course of their friendship. The many subsequent publications only added to the fame of Van Gogh and his work long after his death.

Van Gogh's correspondence is not only about personal matters, but also about art, human behaviour and social developments. Due to his powerful verbal and writing skills the letters are still easy to read even now. Van Gogh wrote chiefly in Dutch until 1886, after which he generally communicated in French.

Assignments

- Consult www.vangoghmuseum.com or www.vangoghletters.org for information about Vincent van Gogh's letters. How many of them have been preserved? In what period were they written? To whom did Vincent write, and about what? Why are these letters so important? Pick one letter and describe to whom it was addressed, what it was about and why you chose it. All of Vincent van Gogh's letters can be found on the Internet.
- Log on to www.vangoghletters.org and select a few letters from different periods. Compare them. Note the differences; for example, the *style of writing* and the *opening and closing salutation*, but also *subject matter, personal concerns* and even *handwriting*.
- Go to www.vangoghletters.org and use the search engine to look for all of the letters in which Van Gogh mentions working on his painting *The potato eaters*. Bear in mind that in many instances the titles of Van Gogh's paintings were thought up later. Use several key words in your search; for example, the words you would use to describe the painting. Can you follow the genesis of *The potato eaters*? To whom did Van Gogh write about this painting and what did he say about it? Write up your findings.
- Pick a painting by Vincent van Gogh that you would like to know more about. What did the artist himself have to say about it? To find out more, look through Van Gogh's letters at www.vangoghletters.org. Bear in mind that in many instances the titles of Van Gogh's paintings were thought up later. Use several key words in your search; for example, the words you would use to describe the painting. Write up your findings.



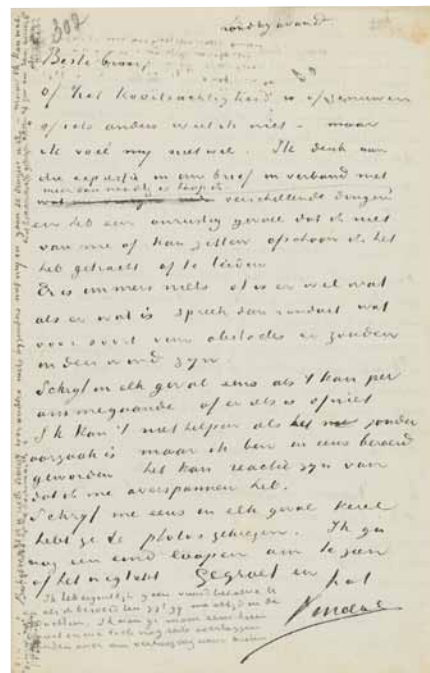
Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 29 September 1872, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Vincent and Theo

The majority of Vincent van Gogh's preserved letters were written to his younger brother Theo. The brothers had a strong emotional bond: 'I don't really have any friends except for you, and when I'm ill *you're always in my thoughts,*' Vincent wrote Theo on 22 July 1883. Because the brothers lived far away from one another for most of their lives, writing letters was the only alternative to having actual conversations: *'My dear Theo, Before going to Scheveningen I wanted to have a brief word with you.'* Theo stimulated Van Gogh to become an artist and supported him throughout his entire life. *'If I didn't have Theo it wouldn't be possible for me to do justice to my work...,'* Vincent wrote his sister Willemien at the end of October 1887.

Assignments

- Go to www.vangoghletters.org and look for information about and references to the role Theo van Gogh played in the life and career of his older brother Vincent. Think about how you want to present your findings. For instance, as a report? Or perhaps as a story, a script for a scene in a play, a painting, or a video.
- The tone of Van Gogh's letters to his younger brother Theo changed in the course of the years. Using www.vangoghletters.org look for letters from various periods and compare them. Describe the difference in tone, style of writing and subject matter. If you are having difficulty making a choice, look at the letters of 29 September 1872, 13 December 1872, 30 March 1874, 15 April 1877, 11-14 August 1879, 2 April 1881, 22 July 1883 (2 copies) and 18 February 1886.
- Vincent and Theo van Gogh were very close; however this did not mean that they always agreed. Their differences also surface in their correspondence; for example in the long letter Van Gogh wrote around 2 March 1884. After a brief introduction concerning their mother – who was at home, ill, following a fall – he soundly criticised his younger brother. Look up the text of the letter at www.vangoghletters.org and find the images of the original. List some of the grudges Van Gogh held against Theo. How is this manifested in Van Gogh's handwriting?



Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 22 July 1883, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

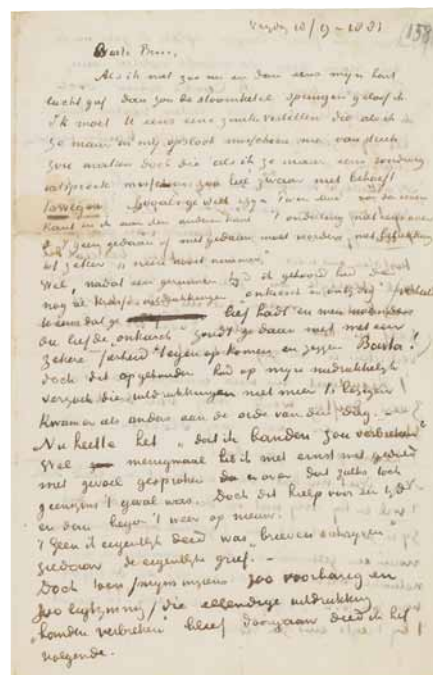
Vincent van Gogh: private life

In August 1879 Vincent van Gogh wrote his brother Theo: *'Like everyone else, I have need of relationships of friendship or affection or trusting companionship, and am not like a street pump or lamppost, whether of stone or iron...'*

There are many prejudices when it comes to Van Gogh, but he could never be accused of being a completely unworldly, insensitive eccentric person. He regularly voiced his feelings in his letters, for instance when he felt unappreciated or was disappointed. Themes such as love, loneliness and financial troubles recur regularly. This is partly what makes Van Gogh's letters still so topical for readers today.

Assignments

- *'Myself – I feel I'm losing the desire for marriage and children, and at times I'm quite melancholy to be like that at 35 when I ought to feel quite differently,'* Vincent wrote in July 1887. However, 'the desire for marriage and children' had formerly played an important role in his life. Vincent's letters include the names of the women he had feelings for: *Kee Vos, Sien Hoornik, Margot Begemann* and *Agostina Segatori*. With the information and the letters at www.vangoghmuseum.com and www.vangoghletters.org try to uncover the path Vincent's love for these women took. To what extent was it affected by social conventions?
- In 1881 Vincent van Gogh lived with his parents in Etten, a town in the province of Noord-Brabant. He wrote a letter to his brother Theo from there on Friday evening, 18 November, in which it is clear that Vincent's relationship with his parents was not always smooth. Find the letter at www.vangoghletters.org. What do you think of Vincent's reasoning with respect to the conflict he describes? Can you relate to it? What do you think of the cause of the conflict?
- Contrary to what is generally thought Vincent van Gogh was not poor. From 1882 on, he received an amount of money monthly, and then weekly, from his brother Theo. This amount was more than what some families had to live on at that time. Nevertheless Van Gogh regularly lamented about his lack of money in his letters to Theo. Find out via www.vangoghmuseum.com or www.vangoghletters.org what Van Gogh spent his money on – and how he informed Theo about his financial situation.



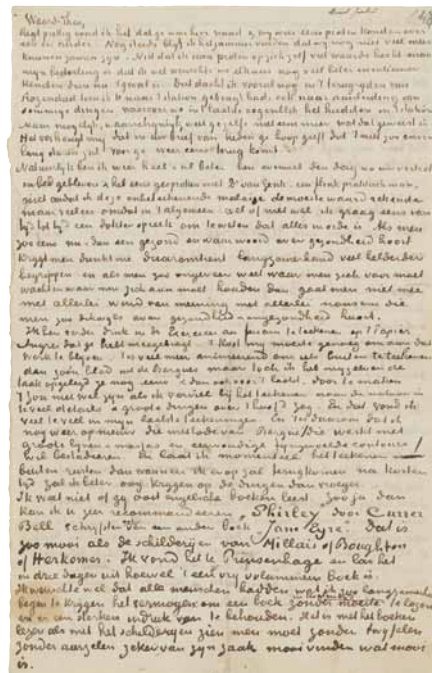
Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 18 November 1881, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Vincent van Gogh as a reader

In a time without media such as the Internet, radio and television, people spent their free time differently than we do. At the age of 20 Vincent van Gogh was working for an art dealer in London. On 2 July 1873 he wrote to friends in The Hague: *'I'm already finished with my work at 6 o'clock, so I still have a fair amount of time for myself, which I spend very pleasantly walking, reading and writing letters.'* Van Gogh was an avid reader and his letters are full of references to books he had read by more than 150 different writers. He often recommended his favourites to family and friends.

Assignments

- In a letter to his brother Theo (written in early August 1881) Vincent compared the beauty of a book he had read to that of paintings: *'I don't know if you ever read English books. If so, then I can highly recommend Shirley by Currer Bell, the author of another book, Jane Eyre. This is as beautiful as the paintings of Millais or Boughton or Herkomer. I found it at Princenhage and read it in three days, even though it's quite a thick book.'* 'Currer Bell' is the pseudonym of which English female writer? Why would Van Gogh compare her work to that of the painters *John Everett Millais*, *George Henry Boughton* and *Hubert van Herkomer*?
- On the Internet search through Vincent van Gogh's letters for his comments on the books by the writers *Emile Zola*, *Victor Hugo*, *Charles Dickens* and *Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Have you read any of these books? How does Van Gogh describe their work? Would he have been able to convey his enthusiasm about them to others?
- On 6 July 1882 Vincent van Gogh wrote his brother Theo: *'Do you know that drawing in words is also an art...'* He was referring to a way of writing that allowed the reader to visualise the story, as it were. Pick a story with special meaning for you or which has impressed you. Choose a scene or a place in this story and make a drawn or painted version of it.



Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 5 August 1881, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Communication

Vincent van Gogh lived in a time when the telephone and the Internet did not exist. In the 19th century writing was *the* way of communicating with family and friends who did not live nearby. The postal services expanded and mail was collected and delivered several times a day, also internationally. But, in the 19th century, as now, things sometimes went wrong: *'I received your letter today, for which many thanks. Bitterly sorry as I am that your letter of 9 Nov. and the enclosed banknote have been lost, I was nonetheless glad that it wasn't for another reason that your letter didn't come. For I can assure you that I was terribly worried. I immediately reported the loss of the letter at the post office, but they say they can give little hope and that steps for tracing it must come from Paris. In the meantime they would investigate. We hope it'll turn up but I dare not count on it, and I fear the 50 francs are down the drain, just when they're almost indispensable...'*

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 16 or 17 November 1882

Assignments

- On 9 November 1882, Theo van Gogh wrote a letter from Paris to Vincent van Gogh in The Hague. Because he financially supported his older brother, Theo included a 50 franc bill in the envelope. However, something went wrong between Paris and The Hague: the letter vanished, and Vincent was left without money. Go to www.vangoghletters.org and find Van Gogh's letters to Theo of 14, 22 and 24 November, and 1 December 1882. Also read Van Gogh's letters to his friend Anthon van Rappard of 17 or 18 November and of 24 November 1882. Try to reconstruct what happened after the letter was lost. What does Van Gogh himself have to say about this? How would his brother and friend have reacted?
- Vincent van Gogh used the only means at his disposal for long-distance communication. Far fewer letters are written nowadays than in the 19th century because there are so many more means of communication. Imagine that Vincent lived in the 21st century. How would he have communicated with his brother, his family and his friends? Think about the kinds of means he could have used, and what he would have communicated. Work out your answers in a 'message to Vincent'. For example, this could be in the form of a written text, a webpage, a message on Twitter, an SMS/text, or an audio or audiovisual recording.
- When was the last time you wrote a letter by hand? You probably communicate primarily by telephone and via the computer. When you want to point something out to somebody, you send them an image or a link to a website. Actually, Van Gogh did the same: in his letters he mentioned the titles of books he thought other people should read. And when he wanted to make clear what something looked like in his letters, he sketched it or included a drawing. At www.vangoghletters.org you can see what Van Gogh's letters looked like. Write your own letter, the old-fashioned way, using the same means as Vincent van Gogh to convey a written message, such as letter sketches and enclosed drawings.
- The postal services developed rapidly in the 19th century. In Vincent van Gogh's time letters from the Netherlands were often delivered in Paris the next day. This is not always the case now! How did it come about that in a century that began with the stagecoach the mail was ultimately delivered more quickly than it is now? What made this development possible? How does this work in our current postal system?

Museum visit

You can combine the assignments in this teaching manual with a school visit to the Van Gogh Museum.

Reservations

To visit the museum with your class, it is necessary to make a reservation. Please consult our website for more information:

www.vangoghmuseum.com/education

Visiting address

Van Gogh Museum
7 Paulus Potterstraat
1071 CX Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Questions

Mail your questions to educatie@vangoghmuseum.nl. You can also call the Van Gogh Museum's department of Education, open Monday through Thursday from 13.00 to 17.00, via the special education line: + 31 (0)20 570 52 46.