

Vincent's Bedroom

A Reading A-Z Level Q Leveled Reader

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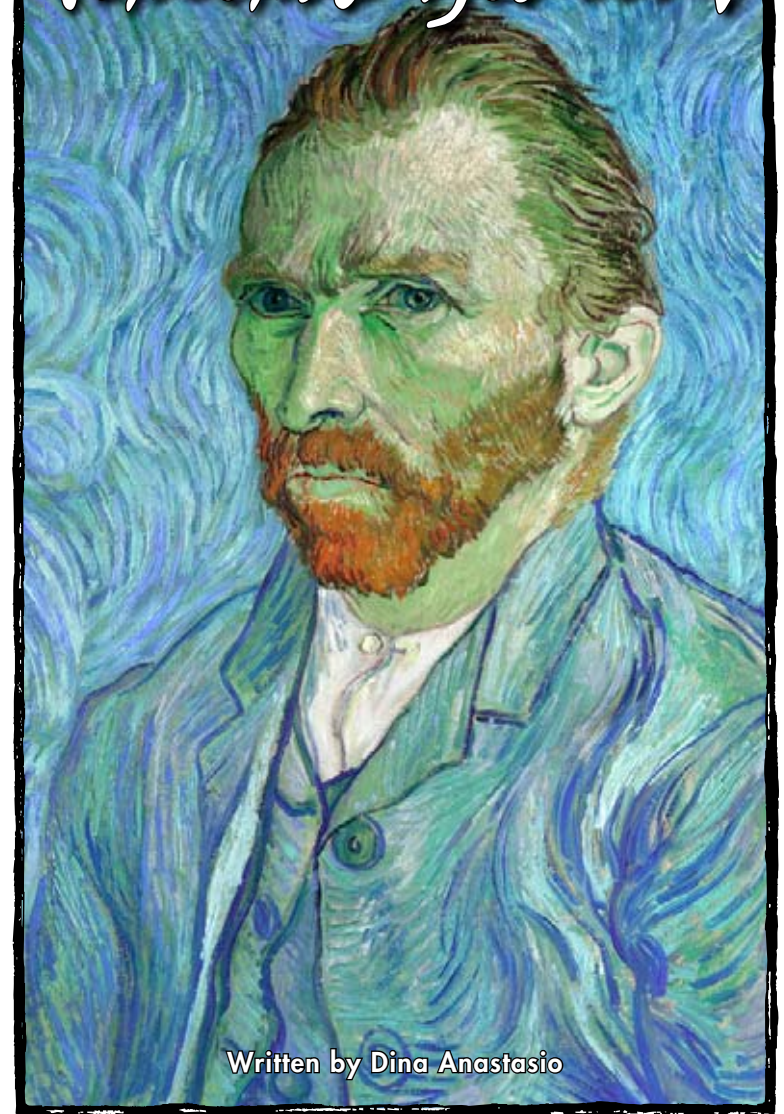


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Editor's note: Vincent Van Gogh's handwriting style was the model used to create the typeface for the cover page title, the chapter headings, and the personal letter in this book.

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Correlation

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Introduction

In 1888, an artist named Vincent Van Gogh moved from the Netherlands to Arles, France. Vincent was drawn to the beauty and calm of Arles. He liked the way the light from the night stars glittered across the Rhone River and the way the sunlight **glistened** over the yellow wheat that grew on the rolling hills.

Vincent spent most of his days outside, painting pictures of the fields, sky, and sunflowers. This was a new way to paint in the mid-1800s, as most artists up to that point had always painted inside a **studio**.



Van Gogh painted sunflower fields near Arles, France.



Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear
Oil on canvas,
60.0 x 49.0 cm.
Arles: January, 1889

Painting Emotions

Vincent was a man of many strong feelings. At times he felt sadder, angrier, or happier than other people. As his mind and his body **churned** with **despair** and delight, the emotions he felt led him to create some of his greatest paintings. He used color and his own **style** of putting color on the canvas with a brush to show his feelings.



Starry Night (above) and
a close-up to show brush
strokes (below)

Starry Night
Oil on canvas, 73.0 x 92.0 cm.
Saint-Rémy: June, 1889

One of his most famous paintings is called *Starry Night*. In Vincent's mind, the night sky above Arles swirled with emotion. The sky felt alive to him, and he was able to capture its energy in his painting. He painted the moon and bright yellow stars twirling in a navy blue sky.



Because Vincent's **moods** changed often, he understood that he needed a calm and cheerful place in which to live and work. So he rented a bright yellow house and created a bedroom that would help him feel safe and calm.



The Yellow House
Oil on canvas,
72.0 x 91.5 cm.
Arles: September, 1889

The window on the left with the shutters closed was Van Gogh's bedroom.



A Comforting Bedroom

In a letter written in October 1888 to his brother Theo, Vincent described his bedroom.



Well, I have painted the walls pale violet. The ground with checked material. The wooden bed and the chairs, yellow like butter; the sheet and the pillow's lemon light green. The bedspread, scarlet coloured. The window green. The washbasin, orangey.



This painting of Vincent's made this Arles cafe famous.

The Cafe Terrace
Oil on canvas, 81.0 x 65.5 cm.
Arles: September, 1888

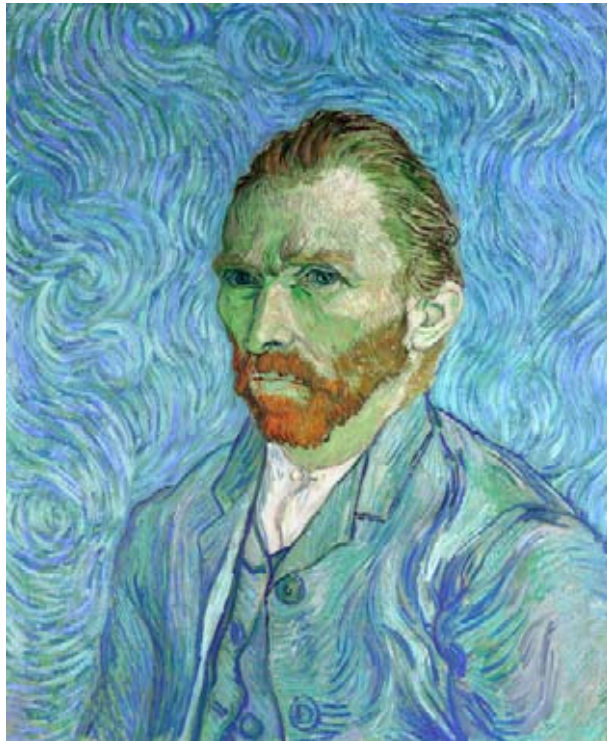
It was a good time for Vincent. In the mornings, he painted all kinds of paintings. In the evenings, he sat in outdoor cafes and chatted with the people of Arles. Later in the evening, he enjoyed coming home to his comforting bedroom.



Sunflowers
Oil on canvas,
92.0 x 72.5 cm.
Arles: January, 1889



Sunny Meadow
Oil on canvas,
60.5 x 73.5 cm.
Arles: July, 1888



Self-Portrait
Oil on canvas, 65.0 x 54.0 cm.
Arles: September, 1888

The Bedroom Series

During the years 1888 and 1889, Vincent created five works of art showing his bedroom in Arles. Three were brightly colored oil paintings, and two were **sketches**. The three oil paintings, sometimes called the “Bedroom” series, show us a bit of what Vincent’s life was like during the time when he painted the pictures.

Vincent was very close to his brother Theo. Theo supported Vincent’s life as a painter. Vincent wrote many letters to Theo explaining his paintings and telling him about his life in Arles. Theo saved the letters, and today 847 of them can be seen and read in an online **museum**. In one of these letters, Vincent wrote about his bedroom and included a sketch.

Vincent’s Bedroom in Arles
Pencil sketch
Arles: October, 1888



*My eyes are still tired by then
I had a new idea in my head and here
is the sketch of it.*



Vincent's Bedroom in Arles
Oil on canvas, 72.0 x 90.0 cm.
Arles: October, 1888

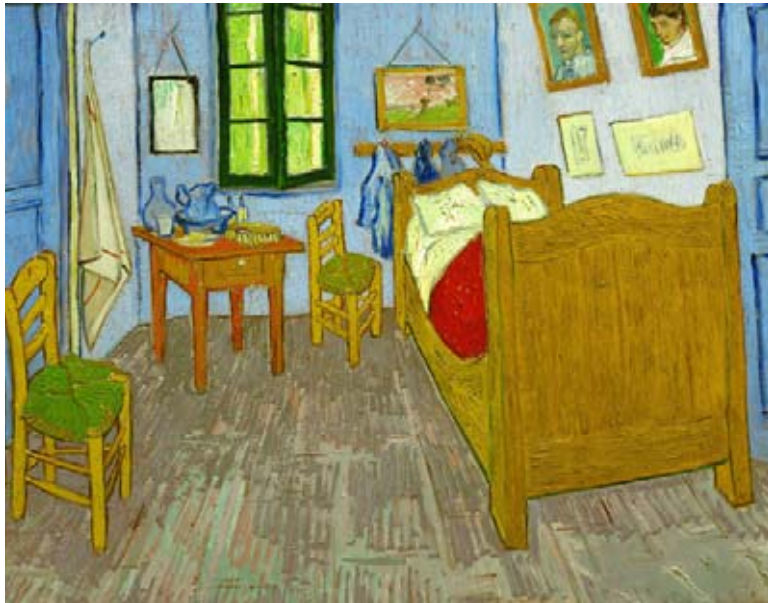
Vincent created a bedroom that was a simple, restful, cheery **haven**. His oil paintings show some of what life was like in 1888. Indoor plumbing didn't exist then, so if you look carefully at the paintings, you can see that Vincent kept water in his room for washing. He hung his clothes on hooks. Radios, televisions, and CD players had not been invented. Look at the painting. What do you think Vincent did for fun?

Similar and Different

Vincent painted for fun. He created more than 2,000 works of art during his lifetime. In Arles, he painted many landscapes and portraits. Each time he painted a picture of his bedroom, he included newer paintings he hung on his walls. Look at the pictures hanging on the walls. How do the pictures on the bedroom walls change from painting to painting?

Vincent's Bedroom in Arles
Oil on canvas, 72.0 x 90.0 cm.
Arles: October, 1888





Vincent's Bedroom in Arles
Oil on canvas, 56.5 x 74.0 cm.
Saint-Rémy: September, 1889

Bedroom, The
Oil on canvas, 73.6 x 92.3 cm.
Saint-Rémy: September, 1889



Study the three paintings. In many ways they are similar, but some of the details are very different. Can you name three ways in which the paintings differ?

Vincent painted the first painting in October 1888. The painting was damaged when the Rhone River flooded the yellow house. His brother Theo really liked the painting and **encouraged** Vincent to create another painting to replace the damaged one. Vincent created the second painting in September 1889. Look at the two paintings. How do the paintings express what Vincent was feeling?



Vincent's Bedroom in Arles
Close-up detail
Arles: October, 1888



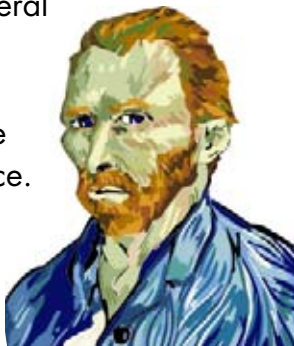
Vincent's Bedroom in Arles
Close-up detail
Saint-Rémy: September, 1889



Bedroom, The
Close-up detail
Saint-Rémy: September, 1889

Where Can You See Vincent's Paintings?

Many people who like art agree that the only way to truly see a painting is to stand in front of it. However, to see just the few paintings in this book you would need to travel to several cities in Europe and North America. However, the Internet created a way for people to see all of Vincent's work in one place. Visit www.vggallery.com to see how Vincent's painting style changed from his earliest works to his latest.



In the summer of 1889, Vincent decided to make smaller **versions** of his favorite paintings. The painting of his bedroom was one of his favorites, so he painted a third version of it. This version was smaller than the other two versions. It was different in other ways as well. Look at the painting on the walls. How is it different from the paintings on pages 16 and 17?

Vincent's Style

To paint like Vincent, you would need to use:

- large swirls of color
- thick, short brush strokes
- colors that express feelings

Colors That Nourish

Vincent Van Gogh loved color. He used color to express his feelings. He loved the colors of the sky, butter, wheat, and light from the sun. The colors he chose for his bedroom made him feel **content** and glad to be home.

Think about how colors affect you. Do bright colors make you feel happy? Can dark colors make you feel sad? If this were your bedroom, what colors would you use to decorate it? Color this drawing to create a bedroom that would make you feel content.



Glossary

churned (<i>v.</i>)	moved violently (p. 5)
content (<i>adj.</i>)	feeling pleased or satisfied (p. 19)
despair (<i>n.</i>)	a deep feeling of no hope (p. 5)
encouraged (<i>v.</i>)	urged someone in a helpful way to do something (p. 16)
glistened (<i>v.</i>)	shone brightly (p. 4)
haven (<i>n.</i>)	a place that offers comfort, rest, protection, or shelter (p. 13)
moods (<i>n.</i>)	states or frames of mind (p. 7)
museum (<i>n.</i>)	a building or place that displays objects of artistic, historical, educational, or scientific value (p. 12)
sketches (<i>n.</i>)	rough drawings (p. 11)
studio (<i>n.</i>)	a place where an artist works (p. 4)
style (<i>n.</i>)	a distinctive artistic form such as in music or art (p. 5)
versions (<i>n.</i>)	forms that are different from the original (p. 18)