STUDYING ART, FEELING PAIN



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Vincent painted “The Vicarage at Nuenen,” where his parents were living in 1885, between the months of September and October that year. The original is now owned by the van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. Nuenen is located in the south-central area of The Netherlands.

To study art, van Gogh moved to Brussels where he was financially supported by his father and younger brother Theo. But Vincent didn't really like formal training in an academic setting, and scholars dispute whether he was actually accepted by the *Ecole des Beaux-Art* in Brussels.

He made progress on his own, however, as he studied - and copied - works by his favorite artist, Jean-François Millet, such as The Sower and Angelus.

Before getting too far ahead of himself, Vincent also studied the basics. Charles Bargue, a Frenchman, had designed courses which Vincent ferociously practiced. He told Theo that *Exercises au fusain* (how to use your pencil) and *Cours de dessin* (the drawing course, republished in 2003) were especially helpful.

Only a few of his drawings from this time period survive.

Brussels, in 1881, was an expensive place to live. Vincent decided that he would spend the summer with his parents in the Dutch town of Etten. There was, after all, "a lot to draw there." He would concentrate, especially, on landscapes and villagers.

One area of concentration, however, was completely misplaced. While in Etten, van Gogh fell in love.

His cousin "Kee" (Cornelia Vos-Stricker) had lost her husband and was raising their son on her own. Vincent thought they'd make a great match. Kee disagreed. The more he tried to change her mind, the more upset Kee became. When he proposed marriage, Kee rebuffed Vincent with words he never forgot:

> *Never, no, never.*

At about the time of this unwelcome event, Vincent received an unexpected present from another cousin (by marriage). Anton Mauve, a successful artist, gave Vincent his first set of watercolors.

Working in The Hague, van Gogh experimented with this gift. By 1882, still depending on his brother Theo for financial support, he was also working with oil paints.

Returning to his parents' home - they had since moved to the Dutch town of Nuenen - Vincent continued to improve his skills during late 1883 and throughout the following year. He would soon create what most scholars consider his first significant painting.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/STUDYING-ART-FEELING-PAIN-Vincent-Van-Gogh

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

Questions 2 Ponder

How Can We Deal with Rejection?

Before he was unable to sell his many paintings—one significant form of rejection—Vincent van Gogh experienced another devastating life event. The woman he wanted to marry turned him down with these words:

> *Never, no, never.*

Vincent's letters, and the biographies written about him, confirm how this negative response impacted the artist.

Have you ever experienced a rejection which was extremely hard to take? How were you able to move forward from such an awful event?

Vincent never married. Do you think that his embarassing romantic rejection impacted him for the rest of his life?

Can you think of how a profound rejection could be resolved, transforming it from a negative situation to a positive one? What are some of the things we can do when faced with such life-shattering events?

Media Stream



Theo van Gogh
Photo by Ernest Ladrey. Image online, courtesy University of Seville (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh.
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Jean-Francois Millet
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Jean-Francois Millet - The Sower

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Jean-Francois Millet - Angelus

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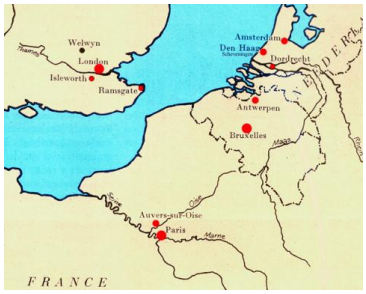

Map - Location of Brussels

Image online, courtesy University of Seville (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh.
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Grand Place - Brussels

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Nuenen - Home of Vincent's Parents

Image online, courtesy University of Seville (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh.
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Etten, The Netherlands

Aerial Photo, courtesy Cees Kuppens. Image online, courtesy Kaatman Nederland (a Dutch-language website).

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Pastoral Scene - Etten, The Netherlands

Image online, courtesy Dorpsbelangen Etten (a Dutch-language website).

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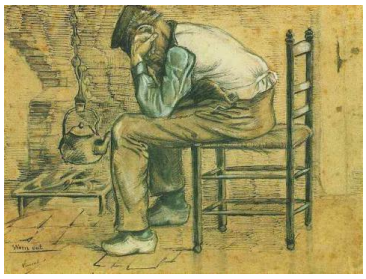

Peasant Sitting by the Fireplace - "Worn Out"

Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art.

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Marsh with Water Lilies - van Gogh Drawing

Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art.

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Farmer at Fireside Reading - van Gogh Watercolor

Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art.

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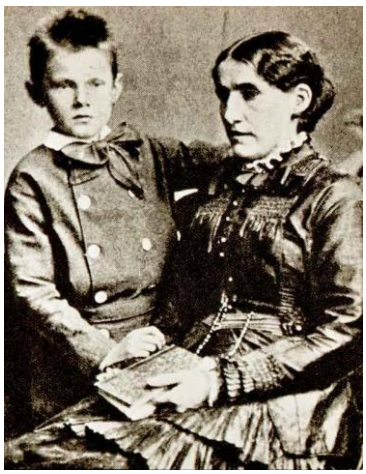

Cornelia Vos-Stricker - Vincent's Love

Photo, van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

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Houses on Schenkweg - Vincent's Street

Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art.

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Mauve, Anton - Helped van Gogh

Portrait, in the public domain.
Quoted reference, about Anton Mauve, from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
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Riders on the Beach at Scheveningen

Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art.
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Torn Up Street with Diggers

Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art.
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Water Mill at Gennep

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Water Mill at Kollen Near Nuenen

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Wood Gatherers in the Snow

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