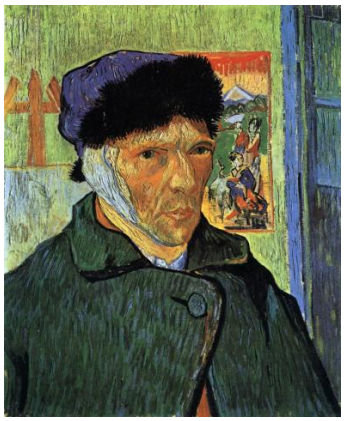
AWESOME stories

THE BANDAGED EAR



0. THE BANDAGED EAR - Story Preface

1. EARLY LIFE

2. AN ARTIST IS BORN

3. STUDYING ART, FEELING PAIN

4. THE FIRST MASTERPIECE

5. THE PARIS YEARS

6. INFLUENCE of JAPANESE ART

7. EARLY LIFE in ARLES

8. THE BANDAGED EAR

9. VINCENT at SAINT-REMY

10. THE ATTACKS CONTINUE

11. PAINTING in AUVERS-sur-OISE

12. WORRIES and TURMOIL

13. VINCENT COMMITS SUICIDE

14. THE SADNESS WILL LAST FOREVER

About eleven months after he moved to Arles, in the south of France, Vincent endured one of his traumatic moments in life. The episode caused him to harm his ear. This image, one of his self-portraits, depicts the aftermath of that episode. The oil-on-canvas, which measures 60 x 49 cm, is entitled “Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear.” Vincent created it during January of 1889, and it is currently maintained at London’s Courtauld Gallery. Click on the image for a better view.

Notwithstanding his own lack of commercial success, Vincent still wanted Gauguin to join him in Arles.

After Theo received an inheritance from his uncle, he paid for Gauguin's trip. His motives weren't entirely altruistic. Beyond desiring a stable environment for Vincent, Theo believed that Gauguin's paintings - which were starting to get noticed - would generate income. Subsidizing Gauguin would thus be a good investment for Theo.

Gauguin arrived in Arles on the 23rd of October, 1888. At first, the two artists got along well, and they painted together. But when the weather turned cold, forcing them to stay inside, Vincent got irritable - as he often did during dreary days - and the artists quarreled.

It helped somewhat when van Gogh painted several portraits of each member of the Joseph Roulin family, but by late December the Gauguin-van Gogh relationship had changed dramatically.

Vincent's mental health was deteriorating as fast as his eroding rapport with Gauguin. Becoming irrational on the 23rd of December, Vincent turned a razor on himself, severing the lower part of his left ear.

Greatly weakened due to loss of blood, he collapsed after he returned to the yellow house. The local police brought him to the Hôtel-Dieu hospital (todaycalled L'Espace) in Arles where he was cared for by Dr. Felix Rey.

Gauguin telegraphed Theo with the distressing news, then left for Paris. He never saw Vincent again, although they periodically corresponded.

Sure his brother was dying, Theo briefly stayed with Vincent (depicted here with a bandaged ear) who actually made a very quick physical recovery. But the early part of 1889 was difficult for van Gogh. His good friend, Joseph Roulin, accepted a higher-paying position in Marseilles.

If Monsieur Roulin left, with his family, Vincent would lose the companionship of someone he liked and trusted.

Back to being creative, van Gogh produced some of his most well-known (and beloved) paintings during January and early February of 1889. On the 7th of February, however, he imagined that he was being poisoned and was readmitted, for observation, to *Hôtel-Dieu*.

Returning to the yellow house, Vincent was hopeful he was well enough to continue working. But his neighbors in Arles were concerned about his bizarre behavior. They sent a petition to the local officials who ordered Vincent back to the hospital. He stayed there for six weeks, leaving the premises on supervised outings so he could paint.

Some of Van Gogh's paintings, during this time of anguish, were remarkable. But even Vincent was worried

about himself.

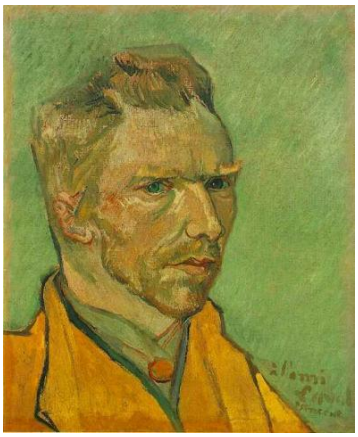
He agreed with Theo that he should seek treatment and voluntarily checked into the *Saint-Paul de Mausole* asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (just northeast of Arles).

Van Gogh left Arles on the 8th of May, 1889. He would remain at the asylum for about a year.

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Media Stream



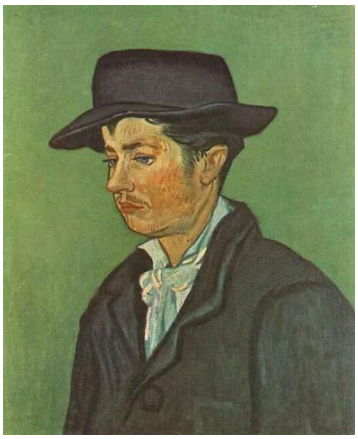
Self-Portrait - van Gogh, December 1888
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Portrait of Marcelle Roulin, 1888
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Armand Roulin - Portrait by van Gogh
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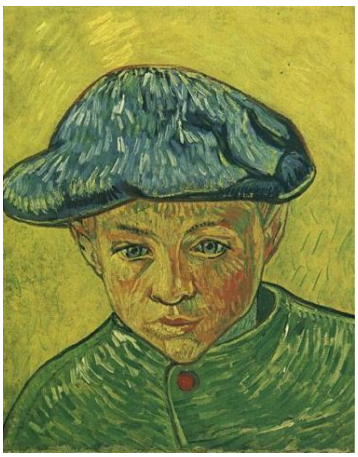
Armand Roulin - Son of the Postmaster Joseph

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Portrait of Augustine Roulin, La Berceuse

Quoted passage from the van Gogh Museum's description of the painting.
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Portrait of Camille Roulin

Quoted passage, letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh dated 4 December 1888. Translated by Mrs. Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, edited by Robert Harrison, published in *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, Publisher: Bulfinch, 1991, number 560. PD
Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art. PD
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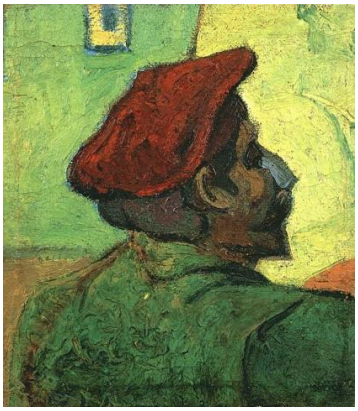
van Gogh - Schoolboy (Camille Roulin), The

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Gauguin's Chair, 1888

Quoted passage from the van Gogh Museum's web page on *Gauguin's Chair*.
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Paul Gauguin (Man in a Red Beret)

Quoted passage, letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh dated 4 December 1888. Translated by Mrs. Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, edited by Robert Harrison, published in *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, Publisher: Bulfinch, 1991, number 565. PD
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Arles - Map Depicting its Location

Image online, courtesy University of Seville (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh.
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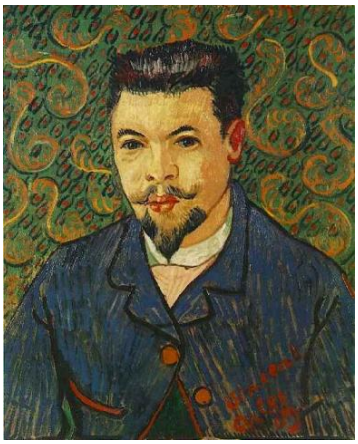
Dr. Felix Ray - Vincent's Physician

Image online, courtesy University of Seville (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh.
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Orchard Blossom with View of Arles

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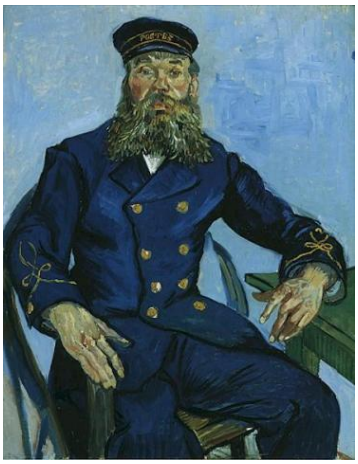
Portrait by van Gogh - Dr. Felix Ray

Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art.

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Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin

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Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin - April, 1889

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Postmaster Joseph Roulin - Photograph

Public-domain photograph of M. Roulin. Online, courtesy van Gogh Museum.

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Reinhart - Courtyard of Hospital at Arles

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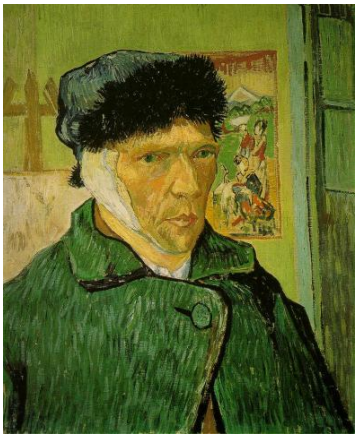
Reinhart - Ward in Hospital at Arles

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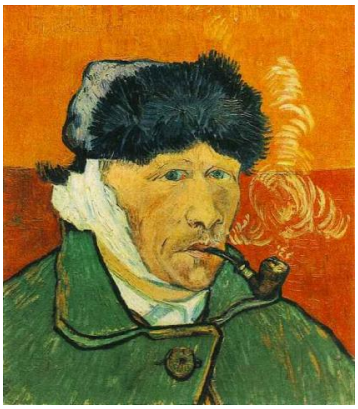
Saint-Remy Asylum

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Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear

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van Gogh - Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear and Pipe

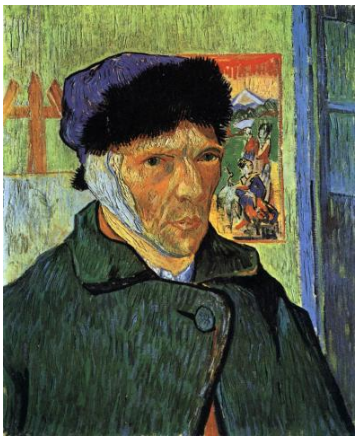
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Vase with Twelve Sunflowers - January, 1889
Image online, courtesy Web Gallery of Art.
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Vincent's Hospital in Arles
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THE BANDAGED EAR
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Vincent van Gogh - Gauguin Pays a Visit
Clip from: *Lust for Life*
Studio: MGM (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)

Director: Vincente Minnelli

Based on: *Lust for Life*, a novel by Irving Stone

Screenplay by: Norman Corwin

Kirk Douglas as Vincent Van Gogh

Anthony Quinn as Paul Gauguin

Release Date: 17 September 1956 (New York City)

Merson placed the clip online at his RetroArcaicoRex channel at YouTube.
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