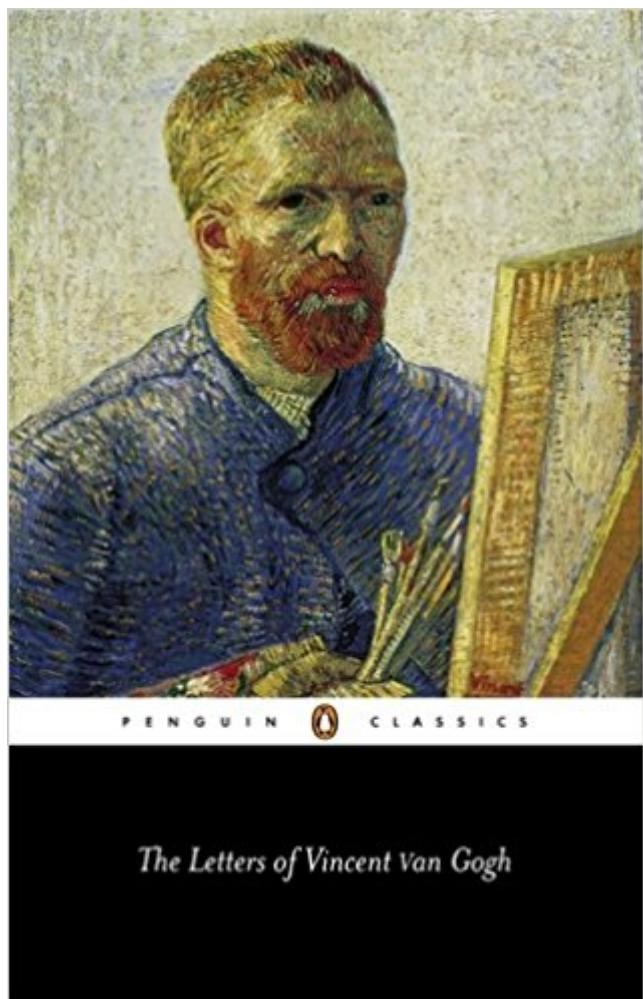


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The Letters Of Vincent Van Gogh (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

"If ever there was any doubt that Van Gogh's letters belong beside those great classics of artistic self-revelation, Cellini's autobiography and Delacroix's journal, this excellent edition dispels it." — The Times (London)

"Be clearly aware of the stars and infinity on high. Then life seems almost enchanted after all." Few artists' letters are as self-revelatory as Vincent Van Gogh's, and the selection included here, spanning the whole of his artistic career, sheds light on every facet of the life and work of this complex and tortured man. Engaging candidly and movingly with his religious struggles, his ill-fated search for love, his intense relationship with his brother Theo and his attacks of mental illness, the letters contradict the popular image of Van Gogh as an anti-social madman and a martyr to art, showing instead that he was capable of great emotional and spiritual depths. Above all, they stand as an intense personal narrative of artistic development and a unique account of the process of creation.

The letters are linked by explanatory biographical passages, revealing Van Gogh's inner journey as well as the outer facts of his life. This edition includes the drawings that originally illustrated the letters.

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Customer Reviews

This thorough collection of van Gogh's letters has been assembled with an artful eye and sensitivity to the artist's thinking. The result is an atypical take on Vincent van Gogh that avoids putting too much stress on his troubled mental state and too much straining by the editor to shape a narrative out of van Gogh's epistolary clues. Instead, we see the thoughtful and contemplative side of this creative genius, as well as his concern for the impact his art and life had on those people closest to him. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Van Gogh was 37 and on the edge of fame when, in 1890, he shot and killed himself. Unable to sell his brilliant canvases, he was utterly dependent upon his younger brother, Theo, to whom most of the letters collected here are written. Anguished by loss of faith after planning to be a priest, disappointed in several once-promising love affairs, he was also so tormented by poverty that one of his artistic breakthroughs occurred when, without proper colors, he brushed in "a garden, green by nature, but painted without actual green, nothing but Prussian blue and chrome yellow." Whether van Gogh's suicide was the inevitable culmination of depression, or due to epilepsy or to professional frustration (he is remembered, beyond his pictures, for razoring off part of his ear), his letters reveal that the end was long contemplated. In 1878, he had written to Theo, "It must be good to die in the knowledge that one has done some truthful work." By the time he put a hole in his chest, he knew he had done that. The letters, edited by de Leeuw, the director of the van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, echo the artist's passionate voice, and the connective narrative excerpts other letters that readers may regret not having in full. Integral to the letters are 49 pen-and-ink sketches that evidence van Gogh's development into a creative force. Although each letter possesses an inherent pathos because one knows what lies ahead, van Gogh's epistolary appeal goes beyond melodrama. Often inspired by books despite being a limner of peasant life and the land, he once wrote, "How beautiful Shakespeare is, who else is as mysterious as he is; his language and method are like a brush trembling with excitement and ecstasy." Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Wow...just wow. I have always enjoyed Van Gogh's works but I had no idea how complex he was. His letters to his brother paint a beautifully painful picture of the man who with the red beard. This is a must read for anyone. His writing is really lovely and you can feel his struggle to come into his

own. His story is so heartbreakingly inspiring. He literally taught himself how to draw and paint people! He used a single book to teach himself. How amazing is that!

Nothing quite like these beautifully human and passionate letters of a young artistic sensibility to his beloved brother. Van Gogh felt the spirit - whatever one takes that to mean - and tried to become a preacher like his father. He was too Christ-like to learn Greek and Latin; he wanted to preach and reach people. He put aside "the Book" and in a 10 year span he created some of the most iconic images of the century and, more importantly, spoke and preached about beauty and seeing things, through his self-taught paintings that have spoken to millions.

I have been devouring this book. It's very well organized by the dates and time periods of his life. Each letter is also categorized by who the letter was written to. It provides a very thorough and thoughtful view into Vincent's life and personality. It doesn't provide every letter ever written by him (is that possible?) but very, very many of them and not excepts either but complete letters. This way, the reader is able to really see what he is saying and everything is in context. There is so much misinformation and stigmatization about him. This book allows one to really understand him and lets him speak for himself. He was a complicated person, but so very passionate and rich in all he did. There are many of sketches that he sent with the letters to illustrate what and how he was working on different projects. They are included in the book along with the letters. This is an invaluable resource for artists wishing to study and understand a master artist and how he worked. I myself, am an artist and view him as a mentor. This book is wonderful.

A must read if you want to learn more about Vincent Van Gogh in his own words. I learned a lot of things I didn't know about him as a person. Educational, inspiring, sad, all at the same time. He was an excellent letter writer. I loved this best when he wrote about painting and color. His passion and joy is so evident.

We just returned from France, where we visited many Van Gogh sites. I wish I had thought to read the letters in advance.

This book is an absolute treasure trove, and an inspiration. I have started keeping a journal of quotes from the book that I want to remember. Van Gogh was an incredible artist and writer, and this book gives an insight into his life, his mind, and his experience.

Coming from an art historica background, this was a refreshingly pure and encompassing view of Van Gogh's life. The translation is fantastic, with many detailed notings regarding pigments, views, family and religious facets of his life. I did not know how deeply religious he was until reading this- it is a unique view of a famous man not often discussed in the introductory western art classes. A good read for the more serious Van Gogh inquiries.

I got interested in reading the letters of artist Vincent Van Gogh to his brother, Theo from watching Kirk Douglas' excellent film "Lust for Life" recently. I tried reading the letters without any significant editing or illuminating footnotes, and found them fascinating but frustrating, because of the lack of help in dating or reference to the people and places mentioned in them. This edition provides some of that. However, I wish there were more illustrations of the specific pieces, especially drawings that Van Gogh refers to as he is working on them.

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