

Vincent van Gogh

1 Listening: Van Gogh biography

This introductory biography by the Goodbye-Art Academy focuses on the Dutch post-Impressionist painter Vincent Willem van Gogh.

- a) First note down on a sheet of paper what you know about Vincent van Gogh. What comes to your mind when you think of this artist?
- b) Now watch the video on Vincent van Gogh and take notes on the following aspects:

Van Gogh's life and interests	Van Gogh's work and vision of art	People's opinion about van Gogh	The way the video is made
wanted to preach the gospel			



[Vincent van Gogh: Introductory biography](#)

- c) With a partner, compare your notes and discuss the following questions:
 - Which ideas that you had collected before viewing the clip were then mentioned in the video?
 - What information was new to you?
 - How did you like the way the video is made?
 - What would you like to know about Vincent van Gogh after having seen the artist from a slightly different perspective?

2 Reading: Van Gogh's death unconvincing?

For many years, it was generally accepted that Vincent van Gogh committed suicide. Now a new theory about his death has emerged: that he did not commit suicide but was shot by a teenage boy.

- a) Skim through the newspaper articles below to get an idea of the new theory and the evidence behind it.



[BBC: Van Gogh death claim unconvincing](#)



[The Telegraph: New book claims van Gogh did not commit suicide](#)



[The Guardian: Did van Gogh kill himself? It shouldn't really matter](#)

- b) With a partner, discuss the following questions:
 - What kinds of texts are these articles? How do they differ from each other in content and style?
 - Which details are given in all three articles and which information is only mentioned in one of them?
 - What do you think: Do you believe the new theory? Does it matter to you?



3 Listening: Vincent

Vincent is a song by Don McLean written as a tribute to Vincent van Gogh. It is also known by its opening line, "Starry Starry Night", a reference to van Gogh's painting *The Starry Night*.

a) Listen to the following recording of *Vincent*, available on YouTube, and complete the lyrics with the missing words.



Don McLean – *Vincent*:

<http://www.youtube.com/>

Vincent

Starry, starry

Paint your palette blue and

Look out on a day

With eyes that know the in my soul

Shadows on the

Sketch the and the daffodils

Catch the and the winter chills

In on the snowy linen land

Chorus

Now I

What you to say to me

How you for your sanity

How you to set them free

They would not listen they did not know how

Perhaps they'll now

Starry, starry night

Flaming that brightly blaze

Swirling in violet haze

Reflecting Vincent's eyes of China

Colors changing hue

Morning of amber grain

Weathered faces lined in

Are soothed the artist's loving hands

Chorus

For they could not you

But still your love was

And when no was left in sight

On that starry, starry night

You took your life as often do

But I could have told you Vincent

This world was never

For one as beautiful as you

Starry, starry night

Portraits hung in halls

Frameless heads on walls

With eyes that watch the world and can't forget

Like the that you've met

The men in ragged clothes

A thorn on a bloody rose

Lie crushed and on the virgin snow

(Don McLean, 1971)

b) With a partner, discuss the following questions:

- How do you like this song? How does it make you feel?
- Which references to Vincent's life can you find?
- What are the titles of some of Vincent's pictures displayed in the slideshow?

c) Find out more about the song and its background on the following websites. Especially focus on:

- references to Vincent van Gogh
- Don McLean's motivation to write the song
- what the song has to do with the van Gogh museum in Amsterdam



[Don McLean's official homepage](#)



[Lyric interpretation from the van Gogh gallery](#)



[Lyric interpretation and background info from Songfacts](#)