Vincent van Gogh and the Colors of the Wind

Written by Chiara Lossani
Illustrated by Octavia Monaco
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8 1/4" x 12 1/4"  34 pages  Ages 7 & up

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If you have any suggestions for using Vincent van Gogh and the Colors of the Wind with young readers, we would be happy to hear from you.

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"Who's that madman dressed like a scarecrow wandering in the fields with canvases under one arm and paintbrushes under the other?"

Thematic connections

- Art
- Impressionism
- Creativity
- Biography
- Brothers

This guide was written by Ed Sullivan, a librarian and writer who lives in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Praise for

“Large, imaginative illustrations match the lyrical quality of the text, while bold brushstrokes, vivid color, and images of sunflowers subtly evoke the artist’s style. Reproductions of van Gogh’s paintings are deftly integrated into many of the illustrations, providing readers with a look at his artistic evolution.”
— School Library Journal

“The lines are descriptive and informative and may inspire young people to connect with nature, listen to their hearts, and ask themselves about their passions.”
— Booklist

Chiara Lossani has written a number of books in Italian for young children. She has collaborated with Octavia Monaco before on a picture book about Demeter and Persephone. Chiara lives in Milan, Italy.

Octavia Monaco has created the art for many children’s books, including Klimt and His Cat (Eerdmans). Octavia lives in Modena, Italy. For more information, visit her website at www.artofoctaviamonaco.com.

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Discussion Guide
Things to think about before reading the book

1. If you’re not familiar with the concepts of metaphor, simile, and personification, have your teacher describe these literary figures of speech for you. How is the title of the book an example of metaphor?

2. What do you think the author means by the phrase “colors of the wind” in the book’s title? What qualities does wind have that could make it a creative inspiration?

3. Before reading the book, invite your art teacher to speak to your class or reading group about Impressionism. Look at examples of works by painters mentioned in the story: Pissarro, Toulouse-Lautrec, Seurat, and Gauguin. If possible, ask the art teacher to show the kinds of equipment and materials Van Gogh would have used to create his art.

Questions to reflect on after reading the book

1. Vincent and Theo are described as “so alike and yet so different.” What are some ways they are alike? In what ways are they different?
2. How would you describe the relationship between Theo and Vincent?
3. How does Theo help Vincent pursue his work as an artist?
4. What is it about Vincent’s personality that makes it so difficult for him to get along with other people, even his own brother?
5. What makes Vincent decide to become a preacher? Why is he ill-suited for that vocation?
6. What roles does the wind play in the story? How does the wind help Vincent discover his destiny?
7. When Vincent goes to Paris, how do his paintings change from those he created in Holland? What are some inspirations for this change?
8. In what ways is nature important to Van Gogh’s art?
9. What drove Vincent to take his own life?

Vocabulary

Use an online or print dictionary to look up the meanings of the following words: anguish, brawl, flabbergasted, inheritance, insufferable, murmur, reminisce, sensation, somber, technique.

Activities

1. Go back through the book page by page and identify examples of personification, simile, and metaphor in the text and illustrations.

Recommended reading