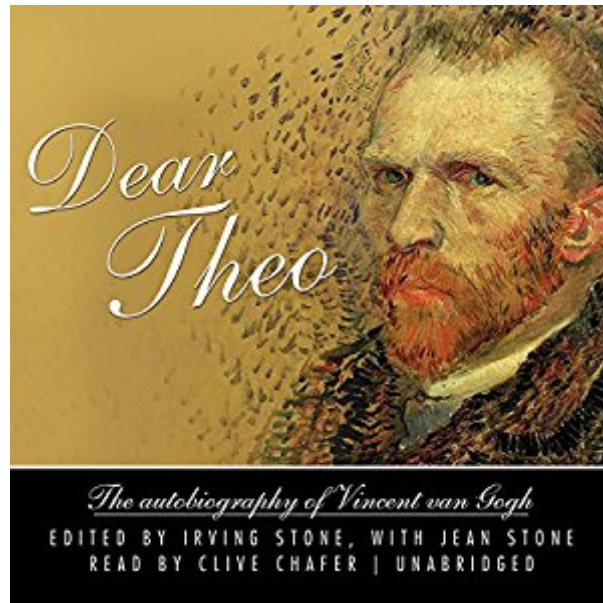


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# Dear Theo: The Autobiography Of Vincent Van Gogh



## Synopsis

Each night, when the hours of painting and drawing were over, Vincent van Gogh put pen to paper and poured out his heart through letters to his beloved brother, Theo, his confidant and companion. No thought was too small, no element of his craft too insignificant, no happening too trivial. It was all scrupulously recorded and shared. In these letters, Van Gogh reveals himself as artist and man. Even more than if he had purposely intended to tell his life story, Van Gogh's letters lay bare his deepest feelings, as well as his everyday concerns and his views of the world of art. Irving Stone has edited the letters of Vincent in such a way as to retain every line of beauty, significance, and importance. "It is my humble opinion that Vincent was as great a writer and philosopher," Stone says, "as he was a painter."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I, like the many reviewers of this book, was enthralled and inspired by this collection of letters when I first read it 25 years ago. I have recommended it to many friends. At the time I would have given it five stars or even more if they were available. Irving Stone writes in his preface "My aim has been to edit the 1670 pages of material down to a swiftly flowing, continuous normal-sized book..." He succeeded but even 25 years ago I was a little disturbed by the complete absence of indications where exactly Mr. Stone had done his cutting, or his editing. Today, in the age of internet we can now do some easy checking. The unabridged letters are on the net and reveal that basically what this Dear Theo is, is another novel written by Irving Stone. There is almost no resemblance to the original letters. The novelist has used his talents and the raw material to create a beautiful saga.

Worth reading, but let the reader beware.

"Dear Theo" should be mandatory reading for all students of fine art today, as no modern artist injected a level of passion into their work equal to that of Van Gogh in 1880 through 1890. This volume is a sort of highlight reel of Vincent's comments on his life and art to his beloved brother Theo. I recommend "The Complete Van Gogh" published by Taschen to accompany "Dear Theo", as there are no visual examples of Vincent's art aside from the cover included in this book. No one who appreciates fine art will be sorry to invest in either publication.

The book provides an excellent cross-section of letters painting a vivid picture of Van Gogh's life. It is not an all-in-one biography, though, in that Van Gogh makes references to work that only curators and art historians can picture. It would have been nice to have a black and white thumbnail of the finished paintings as Van Gogh wrote of them.

Irving Stone introduced much of the world to Vincent Van Gogh through his superb bio/novel 'Lust For Life' but here it's the artist himself that tells the moving, dramatic story that no fictive account can touch. While Stone's editorial gifts are considerable the true star of this important compilation is of course the 'Author'. We discover within these pages a mind, a heart, and a soul that shine with an intensity rivaled only by the master's own glowing canvases. An artist who 'paints' with words as effectively as with a brush is a rarity. When Vincent describes an observed scene we feel as though we are there. When he begs, cajoles and pleads with brother Theo for more funds for 'the work' we sense that it is the artist's life itself that is at stake. While it's true that a modern day tragedy is revealed here even more so we can witness a courageous triumph of the spirit over adversity in the extreme. There are few human documents that speak so directly to one as this.

It is not as easy a read as Stone's van Gogh biography 'Lust For Life', but for fans, it's a deep book. Vincent tells of how he went into the fields to paint, and then a rain storm came. He sought meager shelter behind a big tree while it lasted, and then resumed. And because he had started with a low vantage point, he now had to stand on his knees in the mud! He seems to merely mention this to point out why he considers common workman's clothes to be the artist's best friend... He also tells how he went out to paint the sea, in a storm so strong he could barely stay on his feet. One painting got so full of sand from the beach that he went to a nearby inn and retouched it... and then went back out into the storm to finish it with fresh impressions! Today, most of us: "Go

out with the camera today? Nah, it's a bit nippy, and I just got the Sopranos on DVD..."Irving Stone edited Dear Theo, and while he may have done a good job generally, I think it was a disservice to the material to not indicate where he cut it. It is just one long text, no dates and no indication where each quote starts or ends.

One star for the contents - which really deserves 4 stars - and one star for the condition (only because I can't leave no stars). The seller put it's ISBN sticker over Van Gogh's face - When I tried to remove it it left a tear across his face. As for the contents - a great book whether you like Van Gogh or not. Vincent's letters to Theo are extensive - and practically record his every thought and feeling (especially about his painting). The only downside is tht they have been heavily edited by Stone.

I read Van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo shortly after I saw the Van Gogh exhibit in Washington, DC. The effect was overwhelming. So much pain. So much loneliness. So much genius! We all are the richer for his pain and his poverty!

A triumph of a book, a definitive and soulful look into the life and times of one of the greatest painters since the inception of cave painting. I could feel the Artiste's loneliness, his eccentricity, his passion for colours, his love for humanity and the innate tragedy of his unhappy life. A book which can occupy you for days after you have finished reading it. A prize buy.

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