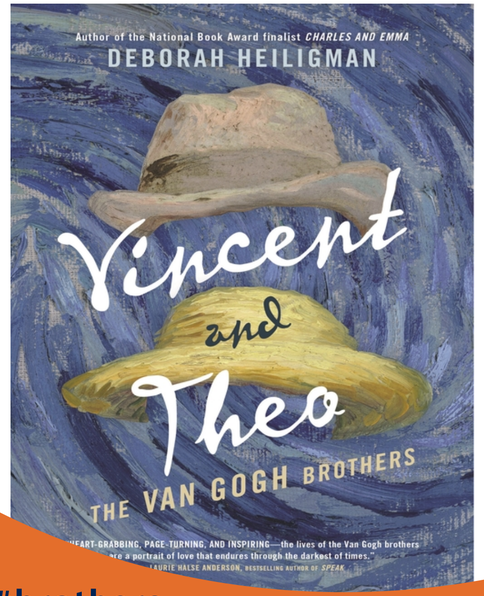
VINCENT AND THEO: THE VAN GOGH BROTHERS by DEBORAH HEILIGMAN



BOOK REVIEW



ABBY S.
BUCKHEAD

"...this book captures what it means to weather storms as a family, and explores the depth of fraternal love."

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Non-Fiction (Biography), Young Adult

The life of iconic artist Vincent Van Gogh is well-documented. But much less is known about his brother, Theo, and his role in Vincent's career and well-being. Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers by Deborah Heiligman is a thoughtful, detailed look at their brotherly relationship, and a satisfying read for teens and adults alike. Winner of the 2018 YALSA Nonfiction Award, and a Printz Award finalist, this book captures what it means to weather storms as a family, and explores the depth of fraternal love.

It's well-known that Vincent had his own physical, psychological, and emotional difficulties. This book doesn't avoid these parts of his life, but rather provides an insightful and tender portrayal of a wildly creative man and his supportive, loving family. That said, this nonfiction book—though it reads like a novel—also depicts the turbulence of Vincent's relationship with his family. At one point Heiligman writes, "Vincent knew and loved nature in all her moods…He would rush to a storm to see it up close, to be inside it. Vincent adored a good storm. His parents did not."

But soon it becomes clear that he and Theo have a different relationship; they understand each other in ways others cannot. Their unique dynamic is summarized best in the following scene, both of them teenagers, which Heiligman captures beautifully: "They promise to always be close, to keep the bond between them strong and intimate. They will always walk together. They will be more than brothers, more than friends. They will be companions in the search for meaning in life and meaning in art. Together they will achieve lives filled with a purpose. And they will, when needed, carry each other's parcels."

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