# EARLY LIFE



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One year to the day after her first child was stillborn, <u>Anna Cornelia van Gogh</u> (1819-1907) had another baby boy. She named her second son—born, <u>at home</u>, on March 30, 1853—after the first: <u>Vincent Willem van Gogh</u>. (Scroll down a bit on the linked name, then look to the right-side to hear the correct pronunciation of van Gogh.)

The family—three boys and three girls survived—lived in Groot Zundert, a town in the south of Holland.

Not much is known about <u>Vincent's early life</u>. His father, <u>Theodorus van Gogh</u> (1822-85), was the pastor of a <u>small church</u> (Dutch Reformed) which still stands <u>in Zundert</u> (pictured here as Vincent would have known his town). Like so many places in The Netherlands, Zundert has a <u>windmill</u>.

Vincent left school when he was fifteen. The next year, following in the footsteps of his uncles Cornelis and <u>Vincent</u>, he became <u>an apprentice</u> at an art dealership called <u>Goupil & Cie</u>, which was headquartered in Paris.

Relatively successful during his seven years at <u>Goupil & Cie's gallery</u> in <u>The Hague</u> (in this 24 March 1873 <u>letter</u> van Gogh asks his brother to check on a painting by Schotel since he may have a buyer for it), Vincent transferred to the company's London office in 1873.

Two years of living in Britain was good for Vincent. He especially liked visiting the country's museums and art galleries. British engravers, who produced illustrations for magazines like <u>The Graphic</u>, also made a good impression on the young van Gogh.

By 1875, Vincent was working in Goupil's Paris office. No longer interested in the paintings he was selling, he left the company and returned to Britain in the early spring of 1876. Van Gogh was twenty-three years old when he took a teaching position at a school in <u>Ramsgate</u>.

Although <u>his letters</u> indicate that he enjoyed teaching, during the summer of 1876 he thought about becoming a pastor. He convinced his <u>latest employer</u>—Rev. Thomas Slade-Jones <u>in lsleworth</u>—to help him learn the role of a clergyman. Vincent's sermons were uninspiring, however, and he returned to The Netherlands.

Initially, Vincent worked at a bookstore in Dordrecht, where his Uncle Cent had secured a position for him. While there, he frequently visited a museum and read religious books. Then he went to Amsterdam, to begin his theological studies.

After fifteen months of studying for the ministry, in <u>Amsterdam</u>, Vincent left his formal training. Among other things, he wasn't proficient in Greek, Latin and math. He later described this period as "the worst time of my life."

He wasn't giving up on his goal of helping others, however. Obtaining permission from his church, Vincent moved to the <u>coal-mining district</u> of <u>The Borinage</u> in Belgium. His plan was to be a lay preacher to some of the poorest people in western Europe.



See Learning Tasks for this story online at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/EARLY-LIFE-Vincent-Van-Gogh

# **Questions 2 Ponder**

# How Do We Find Our Calling?

Vincent van Gogh bounced-around, from job to job, as he tried to find his calling (or purpose) in life. Nothing seemed to work until he realized that he was meant to be an artist.

What does it mean to have "a calling" in life? Is there a difference between "a calling" and "a job?" What is the difference? Could "a calling" and "a job" be the same? Why, or why not?

Vincent seemed to find his purpose, or calling in life, when he discovered his passion for creating art. His ability to draw and paint allowed him to create stellar art over the years, but van Gogh was unable to sell his art work. If, like Vincent, we are drawn to a particular field of work—but those endeavors don't result in payment for a long period of time—have we misunderstood our calling?

What if, like Vincent, our calling to a particular field is genuine, but it takes years of effort to generate income? Is it better to stick with what we love to do—and are really good at doing it—or to find a different job that at least helps us to earn a living?

# Media Stream



<u>Vincent's Mother - Anna Cornelia van Gogh</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Vincent-s-Mother-Anna-Cornelia-van-Gogh</u>



<u>Birthplace - Vincent van Gogh</u> Image online, courtesy Kunstbeeld Nederland (a Dutch-language website). PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Birthplace-Vincent-van-Gogh</u>



<u>Birth Town of Vincent van Gogh - Zundert</u> Map image online, courtesy Orandanet Nederland (a Dutch-language website). PD View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Birth-Town-of-Vincent-van-Gogh-Zundert





## Map of the Netherlands

Image online, courtesy Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin. PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-of-the-Netherlands

# Boyhood - Vincent van Gogh, Age 13 Photo, courtesy van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. PD View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Boyhood-Vincent-van-Gogh-Age-13



<u>Vincent's Father - Theodorus van Gogh</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Vincent-s-Father-Theodorus-van-Gogh</u>



<u>Church in Zundert - Pastored by van Gogh's Father</u> Image online, courtesy Kunstbeeld Nederland (a Dutch-language website). PD

#### View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Church-in-Zundert-Pastored-by-van-Gogh-s-Father

<u>Hometown View - Zundert in the Late 1800s</u> Image online, courtesy Kunstbeeld Nederland (a Dutch-language website). PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Hometown-View-Zundert-in-the-Late-1800s



<u>Windmill in Zundert</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD

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<u>Childhood Namesake - Uncle Vincent van Gogh</u> Image online, courtesy Kunstbeeld Nederland (a Dutch-language website). PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Childhood-Namesake-Uncle-Vincent-van-Gogh

#### Early Career - Vincent van Gogh, Age 19 Photo, courtesy van Gogh Museum. PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Early-Career-Vincent-van-Gogh-Age-19



# Location of The Hague, Netherlands

Map image online, courtesy <u>University of Seville</u> (a Spanish-language website). PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Location-of-The-Hague-Netherlands





L'Établissement photographique de MM. Goupil et Cie, à Asnières











#### Nineteenth-Century Scene - Amsterdam

Image online, courtesy University of Seville (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh.

PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nineteenth-Century-Scene-Amsterdam

#### Goupil & Cie

This engraving, depicting Goupil & Co in 1873, was published in the review *L' Illustration*, No 1572, on April 12, 1873. Image, courtesy <u>Ministry of Culture</u>, France. (See Documents and Archives section.) PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Goupil-Cie

#### Isleworth, England - Place of Study for van Gogh

Image online, courtesy <u>University of Seville</u> (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh. PD View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Isleworth-England-Place-of-Study-for-van-Gogh

#### Ramsgate - Royal Victoria Pavilion and Pier

Image, vintage postcard. PD View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Ramsgate-Royal-Victoria-Pavilion-and-Pier

#### Ramsgate, England - Location

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Ramsgate-England-Location

#### van Gogh - Vincent Studies with a Cleric

Image online, courtesy <u>University of Seville</u> (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh. PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/van-Gogh-Vincent-Studies-with-a-Cleric

#### van Gogh's Workplace - Gallery in The Hague

Image online, courtesy <u>University of Seville</u> (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh.

PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/van-Gogh-s-Workplace-Gallery-in-The-Hague







# Mining in the Borinage

*Misère au Borinage*, by Joris Ivens, is a 34-minute silent film in black and white. Image online, courtesy <u>University of Seville</u> (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh. PD

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# Mining District - Borinage, Belgium

Image online, courtesy <u>University of Seville</u> (a Spanish-language website) and its illustrated biography of Vincent van Gogh.

PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mining-District-Borinage-Belgium

### Map of The Borinage

Image online, courtesy <u>Vincent van Gogh Gallery</u>. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-of-The-Borinage</u>