

Extract from a letter from Wilhelmina van Gogh to Line Kruysse, a Dutch girlfriend.  
Nuenen, 26 August 1886

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My second brother, Theo, from Paris, left yesterday; he really is a dear boy. He told us so many good things about Vincent, the eldest, who is living with him. His paintings are getting so much better and he is beginning to exchange them for those of other painters, so everything's sure to come right in time. According to Theo, he is definitely making a name for himself. But we are under no illusions, and are only too grateful that he is having some slight success. You don't know what a hard life he has had, and who can say what is still in store for him. His disappointments have often made him feel bitter and have turned him into an unusual person. That was difficult for my parents, who could not always follow him and often misunderstood him. My father was strict, and attached to all sorts of conventions of which my brother never took any particular notice; needless to say, that often led to clashes and to words spoken in anger, which neither party was quick to forget. So during the past eight years Vincent has been a bone of contention with many, and all too often one tended to forget all the good there was in him, the appearances to the contrary. During the past few years he has been working at home with us; after my father's death, Anna thought it would be more peaceful for Mother if he stopped living at home, and saw to it that he left us. He took that so badly that from then on he has not been in touch with us, and it is only through Theo that we have news of him.

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