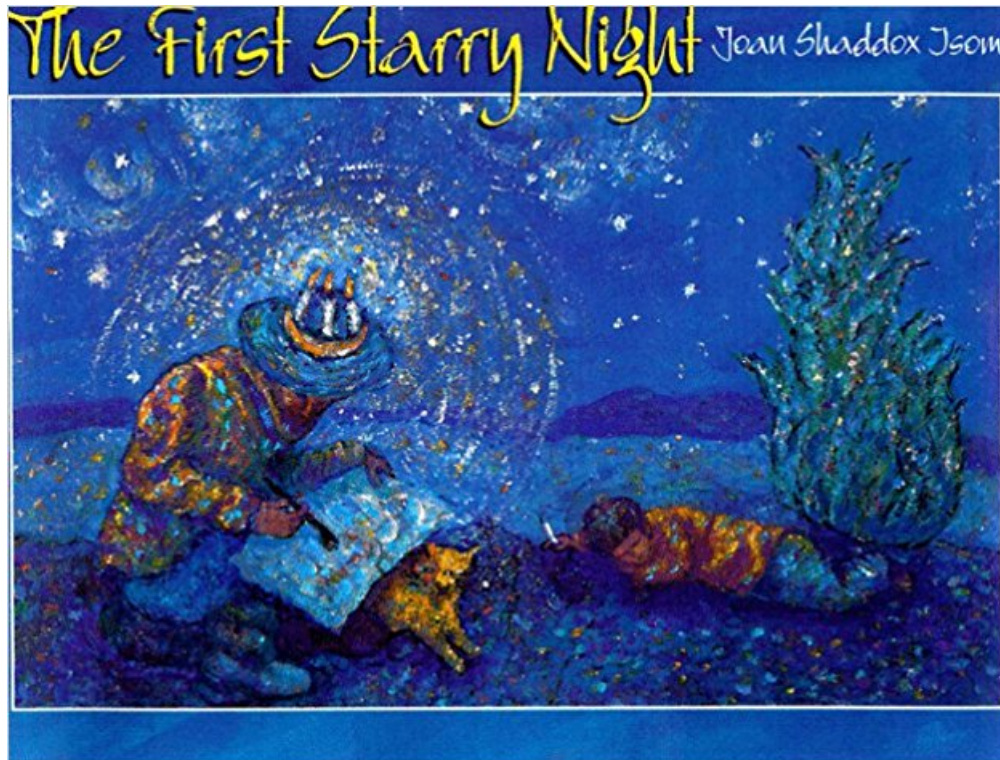




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The First Starry Night



Synopsis

Set during van Gogh's time in Arles, France, this story tells of van Gogh's friendship with a young boy, Jacques, who lives in the same house. As van Gogh teaches Jacques a new way to look at the world around him, the two become fast friends, even brothers. When van Gogh finally leaves Arles, he leaves behind some paintings; but more than paintings, he leaves memories which will last the young boy a lifetime. Illustrated with paintings done in the impressionist style, *THE FIRST STARRY NIGHT* is a beautiful introduction to van Gogh's work as well as a moving story about the true meaning of friendship and brotherhood.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

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Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: 1 - 3

Customer Reviews

The siren call of Vincent Van Gogh's vivid style and romantic outsider status makes the artist an appealing but tricky subject for those who would attract children to fine art. In her first book for children, Isom tells of Jacques, an orphan who befriends the beleaguered painter in Arles, emphasizing Van Gogh's kindness to children and animals. The two friends walk, talk and eat within full-page, swirling settings reminiscent of the artist's paintings. The ever-practical Jacques is sweetly protective of Vincent's physical and financial health, and the infinitely patient artist in turn counsels the child not to worry about money. Unfortunately, Isom's PG-rated Van Gogh lacks spark and her illustrations look fuzzy and sentimental next to the lone reproduction of *The Starry Night* which fairly

leaps off the page. Neophytes who do find this avuncular Vincent compelling will find no bibliography, picture locator or biographical sketch to help them explore further. Ages 6-12. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

K-Gr 3--Jacques, an orphaned potwasher in Arles, makes friends with the artist-lodger Vincent. The painter's odd ways have made him feared by the villagers, but his kindness toward a cat endears him to Jacques. Their friendship grows, and Vincent begins to explain what and how he sees. To the lonely boy he becomes a "brother of the heart." Jacques hopes for Vincent's success, but only one painting sells. The man departs, but he has left paintings in lieu of payment and arranged for Jacques to go to school. The boy's favorite painting--The Starry Night--patches the ceiling above his bed and, looking at it, he realizes that his lost friend "is not lost at all." This simple story is illustrated by page after page of Van Gogh-like paintings. Although none is actually a copy of any particular work, recognizable elements of the artist's style--impasto, haloes, discrete brushstrokes--distinguish them all. The subject matter is also familiar: cornfield, snow, sunflower, narrow red bed, flowering trees, rustic chair, etc. The intense palette of reds, oranges, blues, and purples also echoes the master. Purists may argue that near-Van Gogh is no substitute for the real thing, but this appealing book could introduce the techniques and themes of the impressionists in a pleasantly accessible way. Patricia Lothrop-Green, St. George's School, Newport, RI Copyright 1998 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

THE FIRST STARRY NIGHT provides a perfect introduction for children to the life and works of the artist, Vincent Van Gogh. Jacques sees past the rough exterior that Van Gogh portrays to others and recognizes the loneliness and longing for friendship within his heart. We often forget that in their innocence children recognize the inner needs of another individual in ways that we as adults do not. A child is much more accepting of the uniqueness of the individual, not focusing on the oddities or eccentricities. Joan Isom portrays a kind and caring side of Van Gogh not often displayed in other books, but a side that every child should and needs to see. The comparison of the stars to a good painting or a good story in their everlasting qualities is one that should be instilled in every child. The emphasis on the fact that we all see things differently and an appreciation for those differences is a lesson that I try to incorporate daily in the classroom. I think that we all long for a "brother of the heart" and that those of us who are fortunate enough to have found such a person are truly blessed. This book provides the inspiration to each of us to reach out to others and to the stars just as Vincent Van Gogh did on that "starry night" long ago.

Great book about Vincent van Gogh. Perfect for my elementary art classroom. Students can read to themselves when they finish early and can learn much from reading this book.

This is a wonderful book about Vincent Van Gogh. It is beautifully illustrated and brings to life the story of "The Starry Night." The relationship between the boy in the story and Vincent is that of beloved friends. Vincent's insanity is never brought to the fore; however it is dealt with along with a subliminal message of compassion and tolerance. As an Art History teacher I have used this book on numerous occasions to introduce Van Gogh to children as young as Kindergarten and as old as 5th grade, with each level taking from it what they could. The illustrations in the book are exceptional. One can only be moved by Vincent painting in the darkness with a halo of starlight around his hat. Teaching Van Gogh to children is always a touchy subject. How do we separate the genius from the insanity? This book brings Vincent to a level of understanding that children can comprehend without ever mentioning his illnesses. It is a lovely, well-written story that introduces Van Gogh and one of his most famous paintings in a delightful manner.

"Why do you love the stars so much?" young Jacques, who washes pots and pans in Madame Rouel's kitchen, asked his friend Vincent. "Maybe because they are like a good painting or a good story. They stay." Joan Shaddox Isom's THE FIRST STARRY NIGHT, like the stars that Vincent loved so much, is a story that stays: in the heart's mind and memory. Enriched by Joan Isom's illustrations, this portrait of Vincent van Gogh--as seen through the eyes of Jacques, his "little brother of the heart"--is as full of star-spun magic as Vincent's own paintings. One reads the last words of this elegant and perceptive tribute to this lonely and mis-understood painter, with a sudden shock of recognition: for Vincent's never-ending stars still whirl like pinwheels across the night sky above us--and though we may have feared to lose him, we see that "he is not lost at all.

Impressive story depicting van Gogh's efforts when painting The Starry Night. The story unfolds a unique friendship between two lonely individuals. The illustrations are vivid and absolutely captivating. They leave the reader with a "feel" for the warmth of the friendship, the warmth of the shared experiences between the two individuals, and the warmth that each of us feels when discovering one has found a "friend of the heart." I will definitely utilize this book when teaching Children's Literature at the University level. Elementary teachers would be able to share this book with students, delve into van Gogh's work, and possibly discuss the value of being a friend

Isom's lovely book has all the elements of a wonderful children's book, from beautifully whimsical art (with a kitty to find in every picture) to a sweet story that teaches kids about friendship. The vibrance and timelessness of both the art and the story appeal equally to adults, with historically accurate details of Vincent Van Gogh's life included in the charming fictional story. This book has proven again and again to be the perfect gift for all.

Excellent telling of how van Gogh painted The Starry Night with a text that engages children. The colorful illustrations captivated my second graders, and they kept watching for Melon the cat on every page. The book is appropriate for either a read aloud or for independent readers. I highly recommend this book for anyone teaching a unit on van Gogh or wishing they had been with him on that First Starry Night. The book works well with the book Camille and the Sunflowers.

This is a beautifully written and illustrated piece of art. Our 4-year-old is developing what I hope will be a lifetime love affair with art, artists and books. Thank you so very, very much.

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