

ALYSON RICHMAN

THE LAST VAN GOGH - DISCUSSION GUIDE

Discuss Doctor Gachet as a doctor. Do you think he was qualified to treat Vincent? What do you think his motives were for treating him? How do you think he behaved by taking the paintings after Vincent's death?

Discuss the paintings in the novel and how Vincent might have been conveying certain information through them. For example, in "The Portrait of Doctor Gachet," he paints him in palette of puce and sickly greens. A water glass with a stalk of digitalis. He has an expression of melancholy and appears to suffer from a sort of malaise. Is this a clue that Vincent is saying about the doctor and his homeopathy?

Discuss the transformation on Vincent's feelings for the doctor. In the beginning he is excited to be with someone who encourages him to paint and produce as much as possible. But in his last letters to his brother, Theo, he writes: "I don't think we can count on dr.gachet at all. When one blind man leads another, what happens? They both end up in the ditch." What does this say about the doctor/patient relationship?

How does Marguerite's relationship with Louise-Josephine evolve over the years. How does Louise-Josephine influence Marguerite's relationship with Vincent and the risks she takes to see him. Do you think Marguerite would have ever taken the risk of a relationship if Louise-Josephine never existed?

Discuss the burden of "artistic responsibility" Vincent speaks of when he breaks off his relationship with Marguerite. Do you think an artist can have both a family and a career without someone or something being sacrificed?

How do you think Marguerite's brother saw her and her relationship with Vincent? Do you think it was revenge or jealousy that motivated him to sell her painting?

In one of his last letters to his sister, Vincent Van Gogh writes that he hopes to paint Marguerite again as the image of Saint Cecelia at the organ. Why does he pick this saint?

There is a new book published last year that claims Vincent did not commit suicide, but rather was killed by some youths who had a gun. Do you think, from the historic facts written into this book, that this is possible? Or does a suicide seem more likely.