

Secret Lives of Great Artists

Elizabeth Lunday

Reviewed by: Daniel Gliksberg, 16

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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Secret Lives of Great Artists by Elizabeth Lunday tells the stories of many now famous artists from the 13th century to the 20th. Each story is short, no more than five or six pages, and each chapter has an accompanying color illustration. Elizabeth Lunday does not tell the expected stories for each artist, instead she reveals a little-known aspect or event in their lives, from Michelangelo's distaste for bathing to Van Gogh's love for eating paint. Each chapter is broken up into cleverly titled sections, and contains a summary page with biographical info (Date of birth/death, nationality, etc.), artistic style, and where most of their art is on display.

The format of the book is incredible: chapters are laid out chronologically, and each chapter is divided based on key moments in the artist's life. Occasionally an 'Art of the times' section is placed in between chapters, usually on an individual piece of art related to what was discussed in the previous chapter. The tone of the book, however, can be a bit uneven at times. The book switches from casual discussion to more formal speech somewhat quickly and without good reason, and sometimes the tone of a passage does not match its content: it can be either formal for a passage about a happy moment in an artist's life, or casual when discussing a sad one.

The content of this book, while usually presented in a light-hearted way, is not suitable for very young readers. The book mentions murders and other serious crimes, but this should not be held against it; these are the lives of the artists in question, and are not up for interpretation from the author. I would recommend this book for readers 14 years or older. It would be a nice book to get from a library.

Recommended Titles:

Secret Lives of Great Composers, Elizabeth Lunday

Interesting Stories for Curious People, Bill O'Neill

The Lives of the Artists, Giorgio Vasari