

Study of Life



Mini Quote:

“The grandest of all books, I mean the Universe, stands open before our eyes.”

— Leonardo da Vinci

When you think of Leonardo da Vinci, you probably focus on his famous paintings — the “Mona Lisa,” which hangs in The Louvre Museum in Paris, France, or “The Last Supper,” a mural in Milan, Italy.

But Leonardo was much more than a painter. On the 500th anniversary of his death, The Mini Page learns more about him.

The Renaissance

Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452, just as the **Renaissance** (REN-ah-sahns) was changing life in Europe. This period of history marked a big leap in learning and in the arts compared to the Middle Ages, or roughly the 5th to the 15th centuries. Florence, Italy, was where the Renaissance began.

Leonardo's early life

Leonardo was born in a village near Florence called Vinci. (His name means “Leonardo, from Vinci.”) For a time, he lived with his grandparents, and he became close to his uncle, Francesco, a farmer.

Leonardo loved learning about plants and animals, and he carried paper and pencil with him everywhere so he could sketch what he saw.

When he was 12 or 13 years old, Leonardo's father, Piero, arranged an apprenticeship, or training job, for him with

Andrea del Verrocchio, a painter and sculptor in Florence. Leonardo's jobs included learning to mix paint and perfecting ways to prepare wood panels for painting. He built musical instruments and furniture. Verrocchio also encouraged his apprentices to study the human form by looking at live models or making casts of their own body parts.

Artist or scientist?

Leonardo was a gifted artist, but he was distracted by other things that caught his interest. In fact, he made only about 15 paintings in his whole lifetime.

His imagination was wild for his time: He thought about machines that could fly and studied birds to figure out how that would work. He designed waterwheels and drew submarines, and he sketched weapons of war, such as tanks and cannons.

Always learning

Leonardo did not want to just accept other people's explanations for why things happened. He studied what others said, then used their knowledge to figure out the answers to his many questions.

Keeping a record

We know about Leonardo's search for knowledge because of the thousands of pages of notes he left behind. When he was writing only for himself, he wrote backward, from right to left, so that his text could be read only when held up to a mirror.



This portrait of Leonardo was made by Francesco Melzi, one of his students, in about 1515.

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Famous works

By 1495, Leonardo had moved to Milan, Italy, and had become an engineer and architect for that city's leader, Duke Ludovico Sforza. The duke asked Leonardo to paint a mural on one of the walls of a nearby **monastery*** (MAHN-uh-stare-ee).

He wanted to paint a scene from the Bible, the last meal Jesus shared with his followers before he was crucified. Leonardo tried to show the many emotions of the people at the table.

“The Last Supper,” shown at the left, is 14 feet high and almost 30 feet wide. It took him about three years to paint, and it has been restored many times over the last five centuries.

When Leonardo was 51 years old, he returned to Florence. Historians believe he was hired by a rich businessman there to paint a portrait of his wife. “Mona Lisa,” which Leonardo worked on for a number of years, is just 30 inches high by 21 inches wide.

Around 6 million people visit The Louvre each year to see the famous painting.



“Mona Lisa”

* A **monastery** is a place where a community of monks live and work.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPdaVinci
- bit.ly/MPdaVinciinventor

At the library:

- “Leonardo: Beautiful Dreamer” by Robert Byrd
- “Leonardo da Vinci” by Kathleen Krull

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of Leonardo da Vinci are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



APPRENTICE, BUILD, FLORENCE, INVENTOR, ITALY, LEARNING, LEONARDO, LOUVRE, MILAN, MONASTERY, NOTES, PAINTING, PARIS, PORTRAIT, RENAISSANCE, SCIENCE, SCULPTOR, SKETCH, VINCI.

S B T U L E A R N I N G J M K
C E C N E R O L F S I R A P Y
H C T E K S C B U I L D P A R
N A L I M T E R V U O L O I E
E C N A S S I A N E R I R N T
I N A P P R E N T I C E T T S
T O L I N V E N T O R W R I A
A T S C U L P T O R V C A N N
L E O N A R D O V I N C I G O
Y S I Z B E C N E I C S T O M

Cook's Corner

Asparagus With Bacon

You'll need:

- 1 pound small asparagus spears
- 6 slices precooked bacon
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

- 1 teaspoon garlic salt



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

What to do:

1. Break bottoms off asparagus spears and place spears in baking dish.
2. Follow directions to heat precooked bacon slices; crumble into small pieces. Sprinkle bacon bits over asparagus.
3. Drizzle olive oil over asparagus, then sprinkle with garlic salt.
4. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. Serves 4.

1. A person skilled in a fine art (6-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □

2. Decorative patterns of a creative sort (7-letter plural noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □

3. Unusual natural ability to create; special and creative inborn skill (6-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □

4. An original idea that produces something new (9-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

1. Thomas took classes to become a better _____.
2. Rafaella drew circular _____ in pretty colors on a pad.
3. Milo has a _____ as a magician to make things disappear.
4. Gayle hopes her _____, a mouse robot, will sell.

ROOTONYM®

by Jan & Carey Orr Cook



Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: Artist, Designs, Talent, Invention.

Mini Jokes



Leo: What's green and smells like blue paint?
Lena: Green paint!

Eco Note



Some forms of air pollution affect the whole environment, passing from the air to water and soil, and affecting plants, animals and people. Acid rain is an example of this. Fumes from cars, factories and power stations contain pollutants. These drift in the air and are absorbed by the tiny water drops that gather to form clouds. The rain that falls from these clouds is slightly acidic, making it harmful to living things.

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For later:

Look in your newspaper for news items that might have interested Leonardo da Vinci. Why do you think he would have wanted to know more about them?

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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