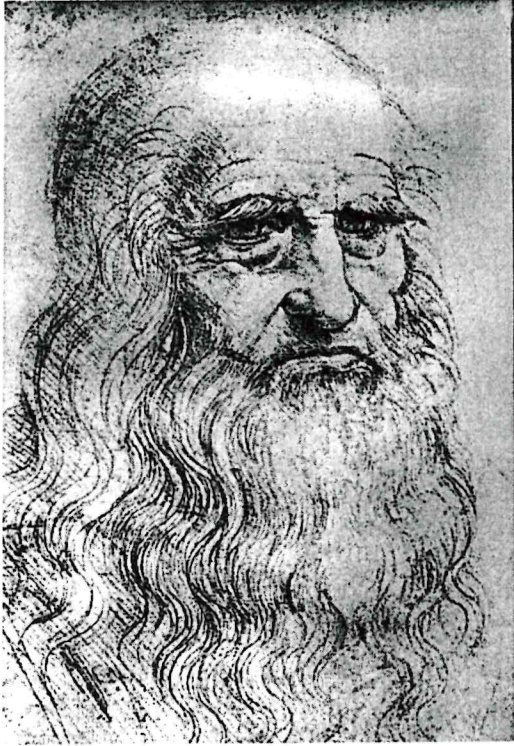


LEONARDO DA VINCI – THE ULTIMATE RENAISSANCE MAN



Perhaps history's greatest genius, Leonardo da Vinci was born to humble beginnings on April 15, 1452 in Vinci, Italy. While his father was a respected notary, his mother was a peasant woman and the two never married. His father recognized Leonardo's skill as an artist at a young age and he arranged for Leonardo to be educated in the studio of the renowned painter Verrocchio in Florence for six years.

When Leonardo turned 20, he opened his own workshop in which he would draw, paint, and sculpt for various patrons who commissioned him for altarpieces and other works. After he created a silver lyre in the shape of a horse's head for the Duke of Milan, Leonardo wrote the Duke a letter describing the many marvelous and varied things he was capable of in engineering and art.

Leonardo's letter worked, and from 1482 to 1499, he worked on many projects in Milan, including "The Last Supper". The Duke also had him designing elaborate court festivals, weapons, buildings and machinery. His notebooks from this period contain studies on nature, anatomy, flying machines, advanced weapons, mechanics, submarines, and architecture.

Leonardo's mind was so varied that he was often caught up in a new idea before he had finished a current project, which left many of his projects unfinished. This is one reason why only 15 of his paintings have survived until today. Nevertheless, these few works, together with his notebooks, form an artistic contribution rivalled only by that of his contemporary, Michelangelo.

A war disrupted his work with the Duke of Milan and over the next few years, Leonardo worked in Florence, Bologna, and Venice. Around this time, he was commissioned to paint the "Mona Lisa". However, the painting was never delivered to its commissioner-da Vinci kept it with him until the end of his life. Today, it remains one of the most famous works in history.

From 1513 to 1516, he worked in Rome, maintaining a workshop and undertaking a variety of projects for the Pope. In 1516, he was offered the title of "Premier Painter and Engineer and Architect of the King" by Francis I in France. Francis I provided Leonardo with a fine manor house near the royal chateau in France. Although suffering from a paralysis of the right hand, Leonardo was still able to draw and teach. Leonardo died on May 2, 1519 in Cloux, France. Legend has it that King Francis was at his side, cradling Leonardo's head in his arms.

Leonardo has often been described as the ultimate Renaissance Man. He is also revered for his technological ingenuity. He conceptualized flying machines, an armored vehicle, concentrated solar power, and an adding machine. Relatively few of his designs were constructed or were even feasible during his lifetime, but some of his smaller inventions, such as an automated bobbin winder and a machine for testing the tensile strength of wire, entered the world of manufacturing. He made substantial discoveries in anatomy, civil engineering, and optics, but never even published his findings.



Name _____

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Directions: After reading about Leonardo da Vinci, answer the following questions.

1. What is the best definition of “renowned” as it is used in the first paragraph?

- a. Clever
- b. Famous
- c. Handsome
- d. Believable

2. Read this sentence from paragraph 4:

Leonardo's mind was so varied that he was often caught up in a new idea before he had finished a current project, which left many of his projects unfinished.

This sentence implies that Leonardo da Vinci was –

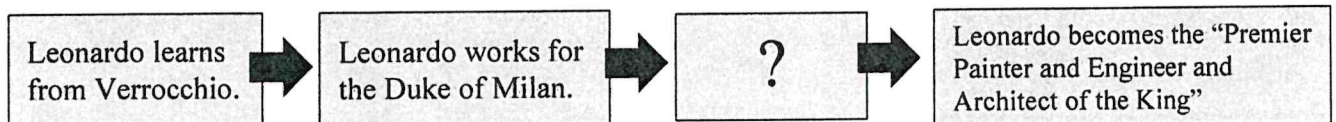
- a. Meticulous
- b. Familiar
- c. Grounded
- d. Distracted

3. How might Leonardo’s legacy be different today if he had been more focused on finishing each work he started?

4. Which of these is an opinion expressed in the article?

- a. “Perhaps history’s greatest genius...”
- b. “His notebooks from this period contain studies on nature...”
- c. “...war disrupted his work with the Duke of Milan...”
- d. “...suffering from a paralysis of the right hand Leonardo was still able to draw...”

5. What belongs in the missing box from this flow chart about the article?



- a. Leonardo paints “The Last Supper”
- b. Leonardo opens his own workshop.
- c. Leonardo teaches in France.
- d. Leonardo works on projects for the Pope in Rome.

6. In what way was Leonardo da Vinci a “Renaissance Man”? Do you agree or disagree that he was the “ultimate Renaissance Man”? Explain your answer with details you learned about him.