

Leonardo Da Vinci

Leonardo Da Vinci was a scientist, inventor and artist who lived in Italy in the fifteenth century. Leonardo was born in the small town of Vinci in what is now central Italy on April 15, 1452. He showed many talents as a young boy. He was well spoken and musically talented, and he had a great talent for art. In 1466, Leonardo became the apprentice of Andrea Del Verrocchio, one of the most popular painters and sculptors in Florence, Italy. He remained an apprentice for twelve years. In 1478, he became what was known as an *independent master* – an artist in his own right. As an independent master, he was hired to create paintings, with many being for churches in the area.

Leonardo Da Vinci was one of the greatest painters of his day, even though he only finished a small number of paintings. Among his most famous completed works are The Last Supper, The Vitruvian Man and The Mona Lisa. Leonardo started many other paintings that he never finished. His work was very realistic due to his keen ability to observe things in detail. He spent a great deal of time closely watching people, animals and objects. He compared how they looked close up to how they looked from far away. He also paid attention to the difference between how something looked in bright light and how it looked in dim light. On long walks in nature, he wrote notes about his observations. Because he kept such detailed notes on his observations, we can tell that Leonardo was among the first people to try to explain how things work scientifically. He made up a kind of shorthand for his notes, and he also wrote from right to left, so his notes looked like they were being seen through a mirror. People have longed been puzzled by why Leonardo made his notes so hard to read. It may have been because he wanted to hide his ideas for some reason.

Leonardo Da Vinci was also an inventor, scientist and mathematician. In 1482, he wrote a letter to the Duke of Milan in which he made a number of amazing claims. For example, he said that he could build portable bridges and make cannons. He also said he could make sculptors out of marble, bronze and clay. The Duke of Milan made Leonardo an engineer and architect, and one of his jobs was to help

Leonardo Da Vinci (cont'd)

design military weapons. He also did some work with a mathematician named Luca Pacioli.

Even though one of Leonardo's jobs was to design military weapons, he hated war. In fact, he was a vegetarian and animal lover with very gentle manners. Leonardo Da Vinci was a true Renaissance man, meaning he could do wide variety of things. His attention to detail and sharp mind led to important scientific discoveries, though his ideas were not published. He studied machines intensely and learned how they were designed. Some of the machines used during Leonardo's time included water wheels that were used to turn water and grind grain and Archimedes' screws, which provided water by lifting it from streams. Leonardo believed that if he could understand how machines like these worked, he could design improvements and even entirely new inventions. His skills as an illustrator helped him to draw designs for new inventions. His sketches were so detailed and clear that now, more than five hundred years after they were created, Leonardo Da Vinci's drawings can still be used to build the machines that he imagined.

Leonardo Da Vinci Questions

1. Leonardo Da Vinci was
 - a. a sculptor.
 - b. a painter.
 - c. a philosopher.
 - d. all of these

2. Leonardo Da Vinci became an independent master (painter) in
 - a. 1452.
 - b. 1466.
 - c. 1478.
 - d. 1490.

3. Name one of Leonardo Da Vinci's most famous paintings.

4. Leonardo Da Vinci's paintings were realistic, meaning that
 - a. he used his photographic memory to paint them.
 - b. he used models of people he knew or objects he owned.
 - c. they looked very much like the people or things they represented.
 - d. the colors matched perfectly.

5. Explain why Leonardo Da Vinci was so good at realistic painting.

Leonardo Da Vinci Questions (cont'd)

6. Leonardo's notes
 - a. were written in a code he made up.
 - b. were written from right to left.
 - c. looked like they were being seen through a mirror.
 - d. All of these

7. Why did Leonardo write notes the way he did?
 - a. He was sloppy.
 - b. He did not want people to see his ideas.
 - c. He had a fun sense of humor.
 - d. No one knows for sure.

8. How can we tell that Leonardo Da Vinci was one of the first people to try to explain how things work scientifically?

9. Which of the following is not true about Leonardo Da Vinci?
 - a. He fought in the Italian army.
 - b. He made weapons.
 - c. He loved animals.
 - d. He was a vegetarian.

10. Name one of the machines that were used during Leonardo's time and tell what it was used for.

Name _____

Date _____

Leonardo Da Vinci Answers

1. b
2. c
3. The Last Supper, The Vitruvian Man or The Mona Lisa
4. c
5. He carefully observed people and objects and took notes and drew sketches of what he observed.
6. d
7. d
8. He kept detailed notes on what he observed.
9. a
10. Water wheels were used to turn water and grind grain.
Archimedes' screws provided water by lifting it from streams.