



## Leonardo da Vinci

Artist Study and Portraiture Lesson for Grades One to Three  
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### **Art Concepts, Skills and Objectives**

Students will:

- ✓ Learn about the artist Leonardo da Vinci.
- ✓ Learn about the most famous portrait in the history of art.
- ✓ Learn that portraiture is an art genre.
- ✓ Learn that portraits were painted from live models.
- ✓ Learn about da Vinci's sketchbooks.
- ✓ Learn how a portrait can be created.

### **Resources**

- ✓ Da Vinci print *Mona Lisa* which can be found online and in books.
- ✓ storybook Leonardo & the Flying Boy by Laurence Anholt.
- ✓ photocopies of included student activities.

Introduce *Mona Lisa*. When displaying the print, remind students that this is a reproduction and that the real painting can be found in the Louvre Museum in Paris, France. Explain that portraiture is an art genre like still life and landscapes. Kings and nobility liked to have their portraits painted.

- ✓ Who or what is she smiling at?
- ✓ What do you notice about her that is unusual? (no eyebrows, style of the time)
- ✓ Do you think it is an old painting or a new painting and why?
- ✓ What is she wearing?
- ✓ What is in the background?

### **Leonardo and the Renaissance**

Read the information *Who Was Leonardo da Vinci?* Talk about Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance in Italy. The website <http://www.costumes.org/classes/fashiondress/latemedieval.htm> has costumes of this time period. Downloading is permitted for educational use.

Compare the clothing in the Renaissance to the clothing now. Look up Renaissance architecture on the Internet and in books.

Photocopy or print the handout *Leonardo da Vinci Word Puzzle* for students to complete.

### **Draw a Portrait**

Talk about the pyramid shape that Leonardo used for his composition. Find the pyramid shape around the main figure in *Mona Lisa*. Photocopy or print the handout

*Draw a Portrait* for students to complete.

Faces can look in different directions by changing the horizontal line on the oval. Photocopy or print the handout *Faces, Faces, Faces* for students to complete.

### **Storytelling**

Read the story Leonardo and the Flying Boy by Laurence Anholt.

Talk about Leonardo's sketchbooks. Emphasize becoming an artist it is like learning Math, the more you draw the better you get. Leonardo drew all the time. This would be a great opportunity to introduce sketchbook drawings to students. Dollar stores have nice little sketchbooks for \$1.25 each. I emphasize that sketchbooks are personal and for exploring and discovering art. They can be shared or kept personal, however I found my students most willing to share. Give them drawing assignments. For example, draw three things in your house that are made of circles, draw a plant in your house, draw a family pet, draw 5 vegetables, and so on.

### **Backwards Writing**

Give students small mirrors, scrap paper, and a pencil. Students write something on the paper and look at it in the mirror. What happens? Now have students write what they see in the mirror. Students go on to write backwards without the use of the mirror.

Photocopy or print the handout *Leonardo's Sketchbooks* for students to complete.

### **Comparing Mona Lisa**

Show works of other artist's portraits. Suggestions are Frida Kahlo, *The Frame*, cubism portraits by Pablo Picasso.

### **Contour Drawing and Modeling**

Tell students that Leonardo painted *Mona Lisa* from a live model. Most students enjoy posing. Dress up a student in a hat, scarf, etc for students to practice contour drawings. Ask students to pay particular attention to the face.

### **Stand-up Portraits**

My students had fun with this art activity and the results were amazing.

### **Materials**

- ✓ 1/2 sheet of 2 ply white bristle board for each student
- ✓ markers, crayons, scraps of coloured and patterned paper for collage additions
- ✓ glue
- ✓ scissors



Josiah

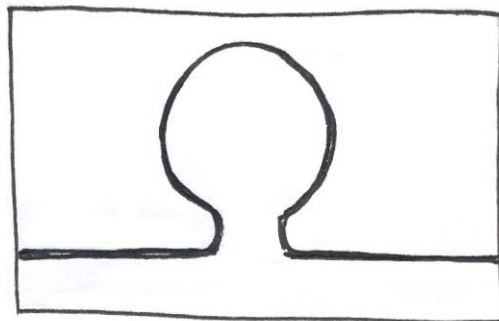


Eliana

### Procedure

Draw a template as shown for students to trace and cut out. (Precut templates are also available through Spectrum Art Supplies.) Students apply the knowledge learned from drawing a face proportionately, using markers and collage materials to create a face, neck and shoulders. When complete, fold the portrait in half to make it stand.

Portrait template.



If you have trouble making an oval, make a template, draw half the face or oval, flip it and trace the other side.

Take a class picture of everyone holding their portraits of front of their faces!

## **Who was Leonardo da Vinci?**



Leonardo was born in Vinci, Italy in 1452. His name "da Vinci" means of Vinci. Leonardo lived during the Renaissance in Italy. It was a time in great architecture and art. Leonardo is the greatest artist who ever lived. He drew thousands of sketches in his sketchbooks and painted the most famous portrait ever, *Mona Lisa*. Leonardo was an inventor and drew pictures of his inventions. Leonardo believed that to understand art, one had to understand nature. Leonardo used his knowledge of science and nature to paint realistic paintings.

## **Mona Lisa**

*Mona Lisa* is the most famous portrait in the world. Today it can be found at the Louvre Museum in Paris. It was painted on poplar wood with oil paints. Many are surprised at the actual size of the painting and expect it to be much larger than 77cm x 53 cm. It is one of the four female portraits that the artist Leonardo da Vinci completed. Her real name is believed to be Lisa del Gherardini. *Mona Lisa* has many mysteries behind her and opinions differ on who is really is.

Looking at the real painting of *Mona Lisa* is like looking at a 3-D picture without the glasses. Leonardo da Vinci used a special painting technique to create this effect. The landscape appears to be in a fine mist which makes *Mona Lisa* stand out in the foreground. It was one of the first paintings to have an imaginary landscape behind the portrait.

*Mona Lisa* is painted in a pyramid design.

In 1911 *Mona Lisa* was stolen from the Louvre. One of the people brought in for questioning by the police was Pablo Picasso, another very famous artist in history. He was friends with a French poet who was also under suspicion. The painting was found and it turned out an employee had stolen it. He wanted *Mona Lisa* to be returned to Italy where he and many others felt it belonged. Now *Mona Lisa* is under heavy security behind bullet proof glass.

## **Leonardo da Vinci's Sketchbooks**

Leonardo wanted to understand nature and science because he felt it would make him a better artist. He studied plant life, animals, and the human body. He went to the morgues and dissected bodies. His sketchbooks are full of drawings and notes. Many of his sketchbooks have backwards writing. This could be because he felt his thoughts were secret or because he was left-handed. Some of his writing is so messy it seems his hand could not keep up to his ideas. Her Majesty the Queen owns a collection of Leonardo's sketches.

A collection of da Vinci sketches can be found at <http://www.drawingsofleonardo.org> and are available for downloading.



## Leonardo da Vinci Word Puzzle

Leonardo da Vinci lived during the time of the Renaissance in Italy during the 1500's. Can you find the words listed below and circle them in the word puzzle? You will learn more about the most famous artist in history.

renaissance leonardo italy painting nature

mona lisa inventions portrait oil master

louvre beard painter art vinci

b y p o r t r a i t i  
e p a i n t e r m x n  
a l i t o y z j o x v  
r e n a i s s a n c e  
d o t l l p n c a v n  
g n i y d n a z l i t  
x a n y a r t w i n i  
e r g f a b u x s c o  
m d l o u v r e a i n  
d o m a s t e r k j s

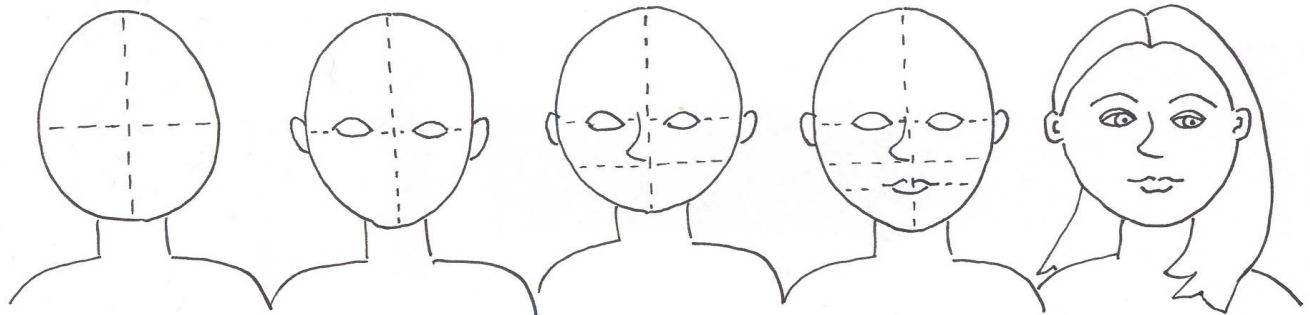
Can you find the words in the list that need capital letters? Write them the correct way here.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Draw a Portrait



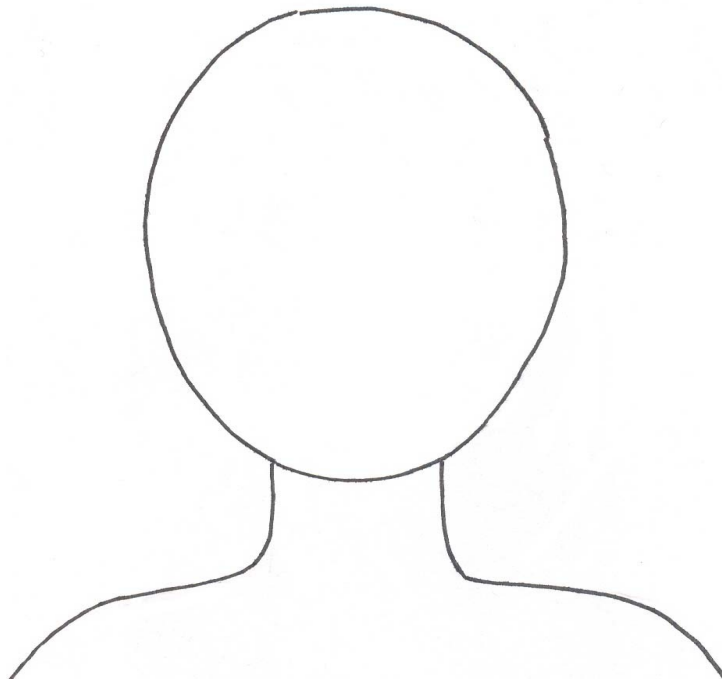
1. Divide the oval into four equal parts with very lightly drawn dotted lines.

2. Draw shapes for the eyes and ears.

3. Divide the bottom half of the oval in half. Draw a nose.

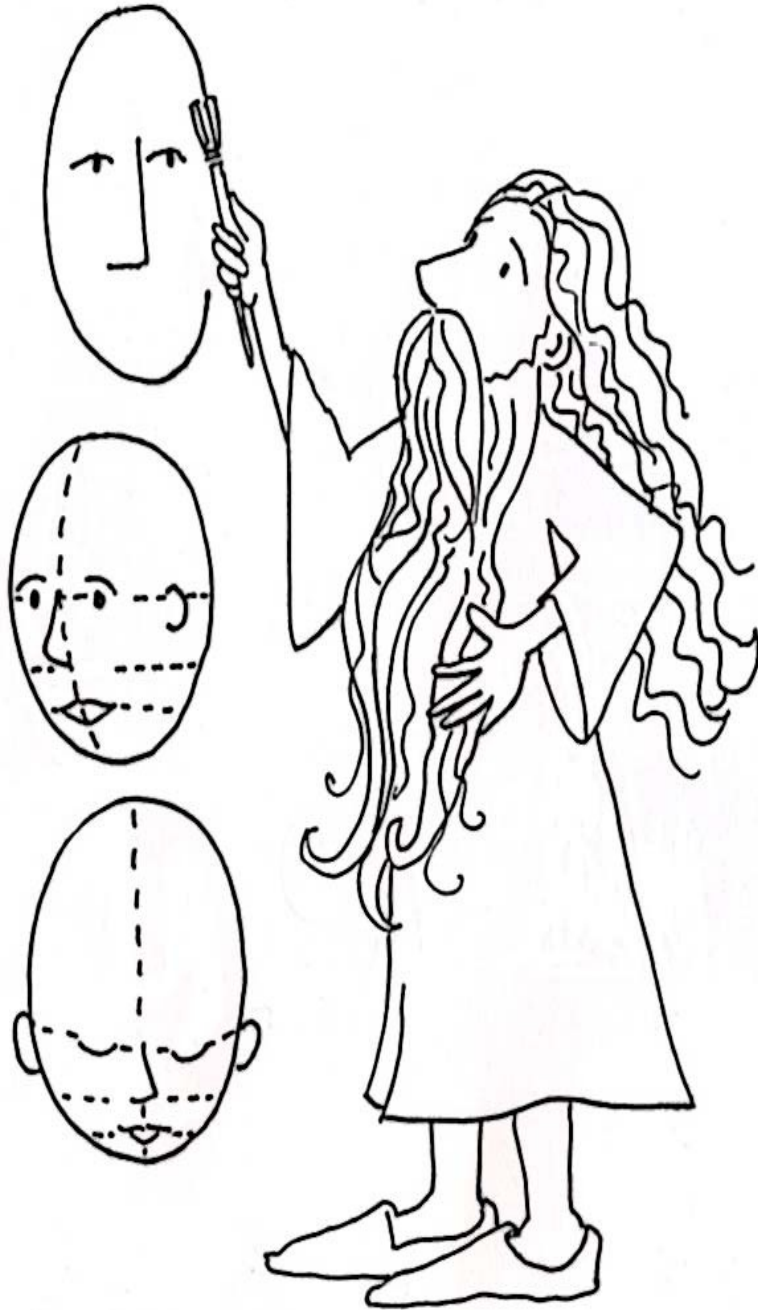
4. Divide the bottom part of the oval in half again.

5. Add details to the face and add hair.



**Faces, Faces, Faces**

To draw a face looking in certain direction, just change the position of the horizontal line. Can you draw 2 or more faces facing different directions?



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Leonardo's Sketchbooks



Leonardo drew pictures from nature and pictures of his inventions in his sketchbooks. Suppose this is a page from one of Leonardo's sketchbooks, what might he draw? Can you draw a picture of it?

Leonardo also wrote backwards in his sketchbooks. Write something to go with your picture and write it backwards. Ask someone to hold your page up to the mirror to see what it says.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Leonardo da Vinci Time Line

Can you number  
the sentences in  
the order that  
they happened in  
history?



\_\_\_\_\_ In 1913, the police found who had stolen *Mona Lisa*.

\_\_\_\_\_ Leonardo da Vinci painted *Mona Lisa* in 1503.

\_\_\_\_\_ Leonardo da Vinci was born in Italy in 1452.

\_\_\_\_\_ Today *Mona Lisa* is under bulletproof glass.

\_\_\_\_\_ In 1911, *Mona Lisa* was stolen from the Louvre Museum.

\_\_\_\_\_ Leonardo died in France in the year 1519.

Mona Lisa was painted in 1503. How many years ago was that?

How many years did it take to find the stolen *Mona Lisa*?

How old was Leonardo when he died?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_