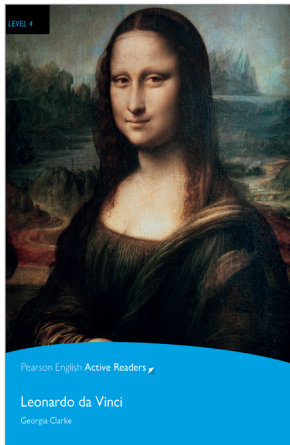


Leonardo da Vinci

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Summary

Chapter 1: Leonardo da Vinci was admired as an artist, thinker and inventor in his own time, 500 years ago, and he is still of great importance today. He was born in 1452 in Vinci, Italy, but moved to Florence as a young boy and began learning how to be an artist under the guidance of a painter and sculptor called Verrocchio. When he began to work for himself, he took on a number of young boys as pupils or assistants. The two most important were known as Salai and Francesco. Leonardo was reported to be a handsome, polite man and he was unusual for his time. He was left-handed and curiously most of his writing ran from right to left or backwards. Although Leonardo considered himself to be a Florentine, he moved around a great deal. He worked in Milan for a very powerful man called Ludovico Sforza, where he not only painted but also staged theatrical events, surveyed land and gave advice on engineering problems. Next he went to Mantua to paint for Isabella d'Este and then on to Venice before returning to Florence. At this time his mind was filled with geometry and some time later he started work as a military engineer and architect. He later spent another long period in Milan and finally a time in France, where he died in 1519.

Chapter 2: In Leonardo's time, art and science were closely related and Leonardo was particularly interested in understanding the rules of nature. He studied the effect of light on the way we see things and this is reflected in his paintings and drawings. He also wrote about the sun, the moon and the stars and had a great interest in animals. He sometimes talked of the world as a living body and made notes and did drawings of different aspects of the landscape. He was fascinated by all kinds of water and he

studied it in order to be able to paint it, but also to learn how to control it. People were also the subject of many of Leonardo's paintings and he observed them carefully so that he could paint them as they really were. He also contributed to the growing field of anatomy by studying how a body moves or cutting up bodies to see what happens under the skin. For Leonardo, nature was both beautiful and clever and a source of inspiration for his art.

Chapter 3: Leonardo painted both independently and for other people throughout his life, but he often failed to finish his paintings. He was innovative in his techniques, and painted both on wooden boards and on walls, creating what is known as a *fresco*. Portraits were very popular at this time and Leonardo was famous for painting very life-like images of people. One of Leonardo's earliest portraits is of Ginevra de' Benci, the daughter of a very rich Florentine, who was much admired for her beauty and intelligence. Another portrait, *The Lady with an Ermine*, shows Cecilia Gallerani, who was the lover of Sforza, the most powerful man in Milan. Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* is probably the most famous painting in the world today and it is surrounded by mystery. We are not sure who the woman is or whether she was real. Many people have wondered about the enigmatic smile she has on her face. Leonardo also began a number of religious paintings. One of these, *The Virgin of the Rocks*, he painted twice and today one version can be seen in Paris and the other in London. Another, *The Last Supper* shows Christ eating with his pupils the night before his death. It was repaired between 1977 and 1999 at a cost of \$9 million.

Chapter 4: Many rich and powerful people supported Leonardo's studies and work. In Milan, Leonardo worked on several theatrical events such as those held to celebrate the marriage between the daughter of the king of Naples and the governor of Milan and between Sforza and Beatrice d'Este. He was also asked to make a huge bronze sculpture of Sforza's father with his horse. He did many drawings and spent years making the model from clay but unfortunately, it was destroyed by the French when they took control of Milan in 1499. Leonardo went on to work for Isabella d'Este at the court in Mantua. Although Leonardo made two portrait drawings of Isabella, she never managed to get the finished portrait or any other painting from him despite insisting. Leonardo then began work for the French in Milan and became known as Louis XII's 'painter and official engineer.' Next

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Leonardo moved to Rome to work for the Pope's brother, Giuliano de' Medici and finally he moved to France to the court of King François I, where he was given lots of money and work to do, and a house at Clos Lucé.

Chapter 5: Leonardo wrote to Sforza in 1483 listing his talents and putting his skills as architect and engineer of military equipment above those of artist. This was not unusual at the time and Leonardo took on many projects in these areas. He worked on two churches, one in Milan and one in Pavia, and he was interested in making cities safer and more beautiful places for people to live in. He was involved in the design of comfortable, beautiful stables for horses and great houses and gardens for rich men. He studied the movement of water in order to control it and make rivers and canals more useful for farming, transport and military defence. In 1502, he also surveyed disputed land for Borgia, leader of the Pope's army, which was at the time at war with Florence and later went on to advise the Florentines in their fight against the Pisans.

Chapter 6: Leonardo also liked making games and machines for people's pleasure. Taking inspiration from his study of birds, he thought of different designs that would allow a person to fly. It wasn't until hundreds of years after his death that anybody matched those ideas. He was also well before his time in his design of boats to move through water and equipment that would allow a person to stay under the water. He loved word, picture and number games too and invented machines to amuse people at court. He was always jumping from one subject to another and it was maybe because of this that he often failed to finish a project. Despite this, Leonardo was often paid great sums of money or given expensive gifts by the people he worked for, a reflection of the admiration they felt for him. Leonardo is often referred to today as a 'Renaissance man', a person who brought together diverse ideas in a clever, useful and beautiful way.

Background and themes

Art and science: Nowadays there is a tendency to separate the two areas, with people specialising in one or the other. In Leonardo's time, the two were intrinsically interlinked.

Genius: Leonardo is often considered to be a genius due to his wide range of talents, the beauty of his work and his ability to design and invent things that others didn't achieve until many years later.

Renaissance: Leonardo's ideas and work clearly reflect this cultural movement, which meant an intellectual rebirth emphasising learning based on classical sources and a kind of revolution in education, art and science.

Discussion activities

Before reading

- Research and discuss:** Ask the students to look for information using the Internet about the Renaissance. Tell them to write five sentences about it, four which are true and one which is false. In class, put students in small groups and get them to read out their sentences. The other students listen and guess which sentences are false. Now get them to discuss if they would like to have lived in that period of history and why. Get feedback from the whole class.
- Pair work:** Ask students to talk about what they know of Italy in the past or now. Put the following categories on the board to guide them: *history, famous places, climate, customs, food, government, people, films, music*. Get feedback from the whole class.

Chapter 1

While reading (p. 1, after the paragraph about Bill Gates.)

- Discuss:** Put students in small groups to discuss the following questions: *What things do people pay a lot of money for? Are they good value? What is the most expensive thing you have ever bought? Was it good value? What would you buy if you had a lot of money?*

After reading

- Write and guess:** Refer students back to the timeline on page 4. Ask them to write a similar timeline for their own lives. They can include any events that seemed to be important for them. Collect the timelines and read out some of the events from some of the papers. The rest of the students listen and guess which student wrote it.
- Pair work:** Remind students that Leonardo travelled a lot through his life. Ask them to write down three places they have travelled to. Each student then looks at a partner's paper and asks questions about each place. Prompt them with the following questions: *When did you go there? Who did you go with? How long did you stay? What was it like? Did you have a good time? etc.*

Chapter 2

Before reading

- Discuss:** Write NATURE on the board and explain that it was very important for Leonardo. Put students in groups to discuss the following questions: *How important is nature for you? How are people changing nature? What can we do to stop the bad things that are happening in the natural world? Do you do things to look after nature?*

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After reading

- 7 Write, ask and answer:** Write *What is affected by the brightness of light and the darkness of shadows?* on the board and elicit the answer (Colour). Now tell students to write similar questions about Chapter 2. Students then talk to each other, asking and answering each other's questions.

Chapter 3

Before reading

- 8 Research and guess:** Ask students to look for information using the Internet about another painter. Ask them to write a short biography about that painter's life and work. Then put them in groups and get the students to read out their biographies to each other without saying the name. Students must guess who the painter is.

While reading (p. 31, after the poem)

- 9 Discuss:** Put students in groups to discuss the following questions: *What famous people in history were thought to be very beautiful? Which famous people do you think are beautiful now? Has the idea of beauty always been the same? Is it important to be beautiful? How do people try to make themselves more beautiful? Do you agree with this?*

After reading

- 10 Write and guess:** Write *It was traditional in Italy to make paints with milk.* on the board. Elicit which word is wrong from the students (eggs not milk). Now students choose a sentence from Chapter 3 and rewrite it changing one word. Students walk around the class, reading out their sentences and the other students have to identify and correct the mistake.
- 11 Discuss:** Remind the students that Leonardo and Michelangelo may have been in competition with each other and then ask them to discuss the following questions in small groups: *Are you competitive? What competitions have you entered? Have you won any? Do you think competition is always a good thing?*

Chapter 4

While reading (p. 41, after 'The riders were dressed in beautiful clothes and the horses were covered in expensive cloths.')

- 12 Discuss:** Put students in small groups to discuss the following questions: *Have you ever been to the theatre? Do you like going to the theatre? Do you prefer theatre or cinema? Why?*

- 13 Discuss and write:** (p. 45, after 'Isabella did not give up.')
- Ask students to talk in pairs about what Isabella might say in her letter to persuade Leonardo to do a portrait of her. Get feedback and then ask students to write the letter individually.

After reading

- 14 Role play:** Put students in pairs to write questions that an interviewer could ask Leonardo about the people and events that occur in this chapter. Give them the following example to get them started: *Who did you plan plays for?* Monitor their work as they do this. Now have pairs exchange their questions and act out an interview with one student asking the questions and the other pretending to be Leonardo.

Chapter 5

While reading (p. 54, after the last paragraph)

- 15 Discuss:** Put students in groups to discuss the following questions: *Which buildings in your city and in other cities you know do you like and dislike? How is modern architecture different from architecture in Leonardo's time? What kind of buildings do you think architects will design in the future? How well is your town organised? How could you improve it?*
- 16 Pair work:** (at the end of page 60) Tell students to draw a map of their local neighbourhood or another area they know well. Now put them in pairs and tell them to take it in turns to describe their maps to their partner, who has to draw it without seeing it. Students compare the two maps to see how accurate they are.

Chapter 6

After reading

- 17 Pair work:** Remind students that Leonardo had many different skills and ask them to individually write a list of things they are good at. They then compare their lists with their partner explaining why they think they are good at these things and how they learned to do them.
- 18 Game (20 questions):** Ask the students to think of another famous person from the past or present and from any profession and write the name on a piece of paper. Students now play the game in small groups. They take it in turns to ask a maximum of 20 questions with 'yes'/'no'/'maybe' answers to guess the name. You can prompt them with some questions (see Discussion activities key).