
**Keywords:** portrait, proportion, texture  
**Grade:** 5\textsuperscript{th} Grade  
**Month:** May  
**Activity:** Modern Day Mona Lisa

**Meet the Artist:**
- Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452 in the Tuscan hill town of Vinci in the territory of Florence, Italy to a lawyer father and a peasant mother.
- He was born during a time called the Italian High Renaissance when great advancements in learning were occurring in literature, philosophy, art, politics, science, engineering and religion.
- Little is known about Leonardo's early life. At the age of 14, his father sent him to apprentice with a well known artist in Florence known as Verrocchio who taught him both theoretical training and technical skills including drafting, chemistry, metallurgy, metal working, plaster casting, leather working, mechanics and carpentry as well as the artistic skills of drawing, perspective, painting, sculpting and modeling. \textit{Martindale, Andrew (1972). The Rise of the Artist.}
- Leonardo is often described as the ultimate "Renaissance Man" and perhaps the most diversely talented person that ever lived. His curiosity and vision for the natural and developed world (including the human body) gave him the ideas and methods to invent objects, tools and machinery centuries before they were feasible to make. He would sketch these plans in his notebooks, in which he wrote backwards, so that a person would have to look in a mirror understand what was written.
- He was an extremely popular and sought out artist. Royalty from France and Italy would commission his work. He frequently traveled between these countries choosing only to bring his notebooks, and always, the Mona Lisa.
- He is widely considered to be one of the greatest painters of all time. Two of his works, the "Mona Lisa" and the "Last Supper" are unquestionably the most recognized, most reproduced and most parodied portrait and religious paintings in history.
• At a time when most people did not bath often, or at all, he was meticulously clean. This caused many people to think he was eccentric. He knew that being clean kept a person healthy in an age of rampant disease and plague. Additionally, he was a strict vegetarian and was known to buy birds in a market just to set them free in order to observe their flight.

• He was strongly opposed to war although he was commissioned to design weapons and draw maps so Italy could defend their port cities such as Venice and Florence from attack. One of his large sculptures of a horse was used as target practice by the invading French.

• Da Vinci never married and never had any children of his own.

• After becoming partially paralyzed, he finally died while being employed by the King of France at the age of 67.

Possible Questions and Facts about the Mona Lisa:

○ Who do you think Mona Lisa could be? For many centuries, speculation by art scholars and hobbyists on who Mona Lisa was made this masterpiece a worldwide mystery. Some say she wasn’t a woman posing at all; rather it was a self-portrait of da Vinci as a woman. In 2005, Lisa Gherardini, Wife of Francesco Del Giocondo of Florence, Italy, was definitively identified as the model of the Mona Lisa. The painting is actually called "The Portrait of Lisa Gherardini, Wife of Francesco Del Giocondo". It’s called "Mona Lisa" for short because "Mona" means "Mrs." Or Mrs. Lisa.

○ What do you notice about her?

○ Why do you think she has a mysterious grin? Some people think the artist, Leonardo da Vinci, painted her special smile because her name, “Giocondo,” means “cheerful” in Italian. Others think she has a secret to hide.......or maybe it was da Vinci’s subtle way of keeping us all guessing through the centuries.

○ What do we call a painting of a person? (portrait)

○ Do you think da Vinci paid her to pose or did she pay him to paint her? Lisa’s husband, Francesco, commissioned da Vinci to paint his wife after the birth of their third child and the purchase of their own home.

○ What do you think her story is?

○ Why do you think da Vinci took this painting with him when he traveled? Leonardo had no income during the spring of 1503 -when he was commissioned by Francesco to begin the portrait of Lisa - but later that year, he had to delay this work when he received payment for starting a more valuable commission and one he was contracted to complete by February 1505. In 1506, Leonardo considered the portrait unfinished and he was not paid for the work and did not deliver it to Francesco and Lisa. Instead, it traveled with him throughout his life and he may have completed it many years later while living in France.
Note the texture of the sleeves of her dress. How do you think he made the appearance of folds? He did this by using contrasting colors. Before this time, artists used layers and layers of paint on top of each other to create texture.

What is the background of the portrait? (landscape - remember da Vinci was one of the first artists to paint maps and aerial views of Italian cities)

Is this painting realistic to you? During the Renaissance, Italian artists studied the model of nature more closely and to learned to create lifelike people and animals with the goal of realism. Da Vinci developed facial proportions using a mathematical calculation which is what he did with the Mona Lisa. Additionally, the artists became skilled at creating the illusion of depth and distance on flat walls and canvases by using a technique of linear perspective.

Activity: Modern Day Mona Lisa

Note to Art Guide: Make enough copies of the facial grid template for each student (see end of lesson for template).

Materials Needed: 9”x12” white drawing paper, facial grid template, student’s own pencils, erasers, oil pastels, 12”x18” black construction paper, scissors, glue sticks.

The explanation below should be drawn on the white board as you go through the steps.

Process:
1. Give each student a sheet of white drawing paper and a facial grid template. Have student provide their own pencil and an eraser.
2. Situate the facial grid template behind the white drawing paper in the upper, center portion. Tape together with small pieces of masking tape so it won’t slip. With pencil, lightly sketch the facial grid onto the drawing paper.

3. Working from left to right, lightly number each of the five columns “1-5” as shown.
   Ignore the dotted center line at this point.
4. In between the top two lines going across, you will draw basic ear shapes outside of your egg.

5. Now you are done laying the ground work for your facial features. You can be a little bit stronger now with your line work. The top horizontal line is going to go right through your eyes in the middle. Here is where the vertical lines breaking up your egg into 5 columns will be helpful. Using the horizontal line and column 2 and 4, draw your eyes in.

6. The nose falls in between the eyes in column 3 and stops at the middle horizontal line that holds the bottom of the ears. Use the dashed middle line to center your nose. Draw the nose using lighter lines for the bridge shape and only use darker lines at the bottom of the nose.
7. Next is the mouth. The lowest horizontal line at the bottom of your egg shape is going to go between the lips of the mouth. Draw your mouth delicately and stop the edges of the mouth in the middle of the eye pupils.

8. Draw in the ears and add details like eyebrows and color in the pupils.

9. To draw the bottom of the jaw and chin you don't have to follow the bottom of the egg shape exactly because everyone's face shape is different. Also draw in some hair going above the top of the egg shape because hair sits above the skull. Be careful about where you draw the hairline, too high and it will look like it's receding, and too low will look like hair is growing down the forehead.
10. Once you have completed drawing a proportional human face, you may erase all the fine grid lines used to help you lay out the facial features.

11. Now have students add a neck, chest, shoulders, arms, and hands. Have them give Mona a new hairdo and clothing. Maybe add a hat.
12. Put something in her hand that is modern, a lollipop, ice cream cone, a Barbie, whatever...let them be creative.
13. Color her in with the oil pastels. Here, they can combine the realism with modern art, so color choices are entirely up to them.
14. After they are finished modernizing Mona, have them design a background landscape.
15. Glue the new Mona Lisa onto a 12”x18” black construction paper; they can either leave it like it is, or they can get creative with their scissors and cut along the edge of the construction paper to make for a different shaped frame.
16. When done, make sure they sign their masterpiece in the corner (frame or picture).
Facial Grid Template