

Michelangelo

Michelangelo (1475–1564) was one of the leading artists of the Renaissance. He was born in a small village near Florence and grew up to be one of the greatest painters and sculptors in history. He was also a talented poet and architect. Of all these arts, he preferred sculpture because it seemed to bring his subjects to life.

Background and Personality Historians say that Michelangelo had a difficult childhood. His mother died when he was six years old. His father was stern and demanding. Perhaps this troubled early life contributed to Michelangelo’s famously bad temper. Although he was very religious, he was known to use fierce words when he was angry. He was also intensely ambitious.

When Michelangelo was 13, he became an apprentice to a painter in Florence, Italy. At 15, he began studying with a sculptor who worked for the powerful Medici family. Michelangelo lived for a time in the Medici household. There he met many leading thinkers, artists, and writers.

Talents and Achievements Michelangelo was gifted in both sculpture and painting. His art combines Renaissance ideals of beauty with emotional expressiveness.

Michelangelo’s sculptures show his amazing talent for carving lifelike figures from single blocks of marble. When he was just 24, he carved his famous *Pietà*. A *pietà* is a depiction of Mary, the mother of Jesus, mourning over her dead son.

Michelangelo’s *Pietà* shows Mary tenderly holding the body of Jesus across her lap. He carved the two figures from one block of marble. The sculpture is in the shape of a

pyramid, with Mary’s head forming the apex, or tip.

Two other magnificent sculptures by Michelangelo are his *David* and *Moses*. Michelangelo’s *David* is about 17 feet tall. The statue combines great beauty with the intense look of a youth who is about to go into battle. Michelangelo’s *Moses* is a strong, powerful figure. The statue shows Moses holding the Ten Commandments, which the Bible tells he received from God.

Michelangelo is perhaps best known for painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the pope’s chapel in Rome. Michelangelo labored for almost four years on a high platform to complete this work. He covered the curved ceiling with brilliantly colored scenes from the Bible. The scenes contain over three hundred figures and continue to awe visitors to Rome today.

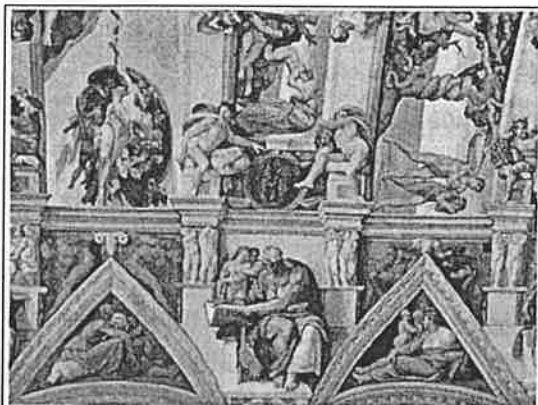
Quotations from Michelangelo

“My soul can find no staircase to Heaven unless it be through Earth’s loveliness.”

“If people knew how hard I worked to get my mastery, it wouldn’t seem so wonderful at all.”

“The best artist has that thought alone
Which is contained within the marble shell;
The sculptor’s hand can only break the spell
To free the figures slumbering in the stone.”

Michelangelo



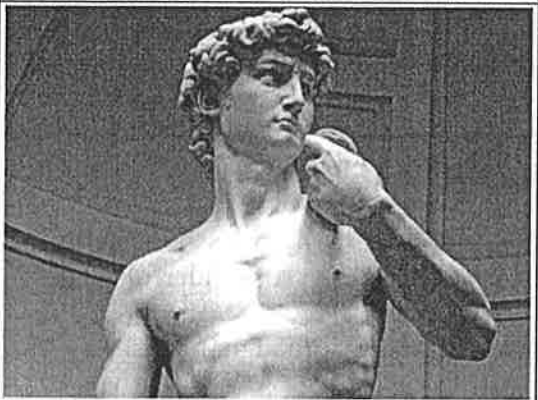
This is only a small part of the ceiling Michelangelo painted in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. It is covered with brilliantly colored scenes from the Bible.

Discuss: What challenges did Michelangelo face when painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel?



Located in St. Peter's Basilica, the Pietà is a life-like depiction of Mary tenderly holding the body of Jesus across her lap.

Discuss: What are some words that describe Michelangelo's *Pietà*?



Michelangelo's *David* is one of the world's best known sculptures. The expression shows the concentration and tension of a real youth headed to battle.

Discuss: What are some other famous sculptures of Michelangelo's?



Santa Croce Church in Florence, Italy, is the burial place of some of the most illustrious Italians, such as Michelangelo.

Discuss: How did Michelangelo's ideas transform Europe at the time? How do his ideas affect us today?

Elizabeth I

Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603) was one of England’s most popular and successful monarchs. Born in London, she was the daughter of King Henry VIII and his queen at the time, Anne Boleyn.

Background and Personality When Elizabeth was two years old, King Henry lost interest in Anne Boleyn. Claiming that Anne had been unfaithful to him, he ordered her beheading.

Elizabeth was raised in a separate household, largely away from the royal court. An English scholar became her teacher and educated her as a possible future monarch. Elizabeth was a gifted student. She became highly educated and learned to speak Greek, Latin, French, and Italian.

Elizabeth was a strong-minded ruler, but she was not stubborn. As monarch, she was willing to listen to good advice and always kept in mind what was best for the people of England.

Talents and Achievements Elizabeth became queen at age 25 and reigned for 45 years, until her death in 1603. She never married, because she feared that a husband would take her power. She said she was married to the people of England.

Elizabeth was a hard-working and able ruler. She was independent, but she was also flexible. She was willing to change unpopular policies. She showed political skill in balancing the interests of different people in her court. She inspired great love and loyalty from her subjects, who called her “Good Queen Bess.”

Elizabeth’s long reign is often called England’s Golden Age. Culture thrived under her rule. She supported theater, fashion, literature, dance, and education. Poets and

playwrights during her rule composed some of the greatest works in the English language.

Elizabeth worked to strengthen England’s economy, and she encouraged trade and commerce. She authorized English trading companies in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Her funding of sea exploration helped England gain territory in North America. In 1588, the English navy defeated the Spanish Armada, a mighty fleet that tried to attack England. This victory sparked a national celebration and further strengthened England’s sea power. By the time Elizabeth died, England was one of the strongest and richest countries in the world.

Quotations from Elizabeth I

“I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too.”

“There is nothing about which I am more anxious than my country, and for its sake I am willing to die ten deaths, if that be possible.”

“There is one thing higher than Royalty: and that is religion, which causes us to leave the world, and seek God.”

Elizabeth I



Elizabeth inspired great loyalty and love from her subjects. Here she is being carried to a wedding in 1600, near the end of her life and reign.

Discuss: Describe Elizabeth's personality and style of ruling.



We may never know Elizabeth's personal religious beliefs, but we do know she tried to increase religious tolerance and allowed greater freedom of worship.

Discuss: Why might Elizabeth have promoted religious tolerance?



Elizabeth supported poets and playwrights, such as Shakespeare shown here.

Discuss: Why is Elizabeth's reign often called England's Golden Age?



Queen Elizabeth rallies her troops at Tilbury before England's 1588 defeat of the mighty Spanish Armada, positioning England as one of the world's strongest and richest nations.

Discuss: How did Elizabeth transform Europe at the time? How do her actions and ideas affect us today?

Leonardo da Vinci

One of the most creative Renaissance thinkers was Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519). Leonardo was an artist, a scientist, an engineer, and an inventor. He was born in a village near Florence in Italy. His wide range of interests and accomplishments made him a true Renaissance man.

Background and Personality Leonardo trained in Florence under a master sculptor and painter. Leonardo was endlessly curious about all aspects of the world around him. He did not accept anything as true until he had proved it himself. In his notebooks, he made sketches and wrote about an amazing variety of topics. He studied many subjects, including painting, sculpture, music, geometry, anatomy, botany, architecture, and engineering.

Leonardo spent much of his life in Florence and Milan. He worked as an artist, engineer, and architect for kings, popes, and wealthy commoners. He had a special love for animals. Sometimes he bought caged animals at the market and set them free. He also was a vegetarian, which was quite unusual at the time.

Talents and Achievements Leonardo was gifted in many fields. He was an accomplished painter, sculptor, architect, and engineer.

Leonardo's notebooks show him to be one of the greatest creative minds of all time. He closely studied anatomy, including the circulation of blood and the workings of the eye, and proportions. He made precise drawings of people, animals, and plants. He also sketched out ideas about geometry and mechanics, the science of motion and force. He learned about the effects of the moon on Earth's tides. He was the first person to draw maps from an aerial, or above-ground, view. He designed weapons, buildings, bridges and a

variety of machines. Many of the inventions he imagined, such as a helicopter, an underwater diving suit, and a submarine, were centuries ahead of their time.

Leonardo's paintings are among the world's greatest works of art. One of his masterpieces is the *Mona Lisa*, a painting of a woman with a mysterious smile. It is one of the most famous paintings in the world. Like his other works, it displays a remarkable use of perspective, balance, and detail. The rich effects of shade and color reveal Leonardo's close study of light. Students of his art also detect how principles of geometry helped him organize the space in his paintings.

Leonardo's work inspired other great artists, such as Michelangelo. With his many interests and talents, Leonardo is a perfect example of the spirit of the Renaissance.

Quotations from Leonardo da Vinci

"It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things."

"The truth of things is the chief nutriment of superior intellects."

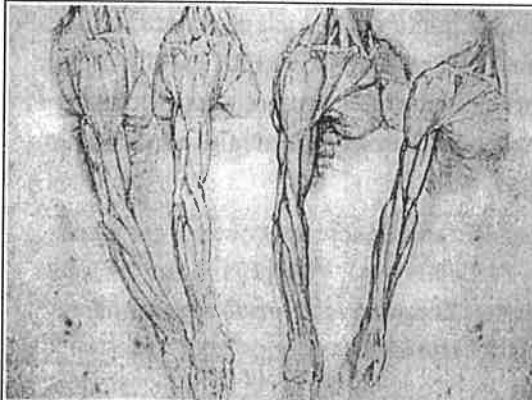
"Human subtlety will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple or more direct than does nature because in her inventions nothing is lacking, and nothing is superfluous."

Leonardo da Vinci



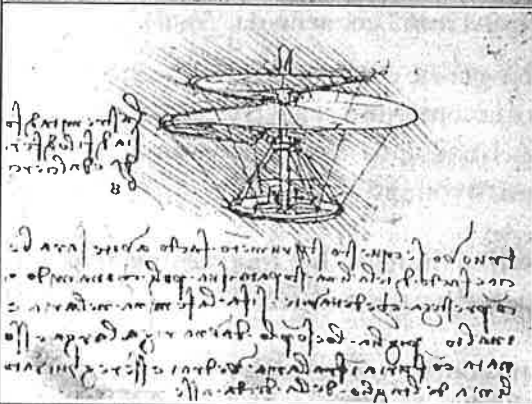
This montage contains some of Leonardo da Vinci's most famous works. In the top left, we see the *Mona Lisa*. Along the bottom, we see *The Last Supper*.

Discuss: What artistic techniques did Leonardo da Vinci use to such impressive effect?



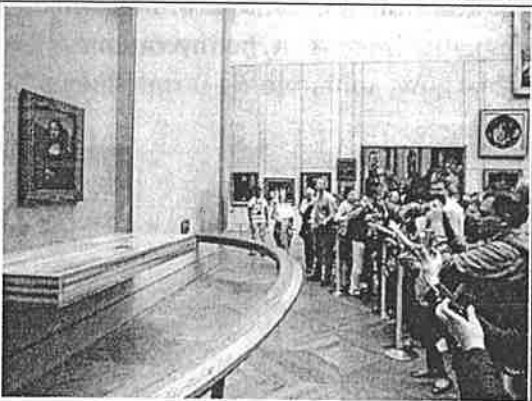
Leonardo da Vinci studied many topics, including human anatomy. These sketches of the muscles of the arm are from his notebooks.

Discuss: Why was Leonardo da Vinci interested in studying proportion in nature and human anatomy?



The sketches of Leonardo da Vinci contain many ideas that were unthinkable in his time. Here we see his 1480s drawing of a helicopter.

Discuss: What other things did Leonardo da Vinci design or imagine?



Millions of people visit the Louvre museum in Paris each year to view Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*.

Discuss: How did Leonardo da Vinci's ideas transform Europe at the time? How do his ideas affect us today?

Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was born in the English town of Stratford-on-Avon. He was a major figure of the English Renaissance. He is widely considered to be the world's greatest playwright and one of its finest poets.

Background and Personality As a boy, Shakespeare studied Latin and classical literature in grammar school. He never went to a university. His plays, however, show a broad knowledge of many subjects, from history and politics to music and art.

In his early twenties, Shakespeare became an actor with a theater company in London. He learned about drama by performing and writing plays. Many of his plays were first presented at London's Globe Theatre. Queen Elizabeth, among many others, enjoyed his work.

Shakespeare had a reputation for being quiet and a bit mysterious. His writings show that he was curious and keenly observant. He thought deeply about life and its sufferings. Yet he also had a sense of humor and found much to laugh at in life.

Talents and Achievements Shakespeare was a skilled actor, but he was an even greater poet and playwright. He had an enormous talent for expressing thoughts and feelings in memorable words. His plays show that he had a deep understanding of human behavior and emotions. Above all, he had the skill to present his understanding through vivid characters and exciting drama.

Shakespeare's poetry is widely admired, especially the 14-line poems called sonnets. He is best known, however, for his 38 plays. He wrote both comedies and tragedies. Many of his plays are still performed around the world, and several have been made into television

series or movies. Among the most popular are *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *The Merchant of Venice*.

Shakespeare's plays cover a wide range of subjects. He wrote about history, romance, politics, prejudice, murder, and war. His plays remain popular in part because he wrote about timeless, universal themes such as love, jealousy, power, ambition, hatred, and fear.

Shakespeare has had a deep influence on later writers. He also left a lasting mark on the English language. Many common sayings come from Shakespeare, such as "Much ado about nothing." People often quote his witty, wise lines, sometimes without knowing that they owe their clever or graceful words to Shakespeare.

Quotations from Shakespeare

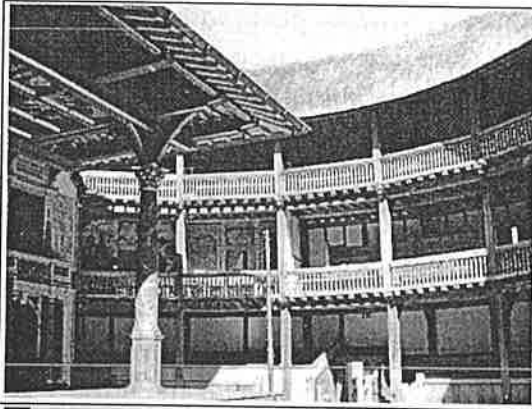
"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts."

"To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be."

"Parting is such sweet sorrow."

Shakespeare



In 1599, Shakespeare helped build the Globe Theatre in London, where his plays were performed.

Discuss: What made Shakespeare such a talented poet and playwright?



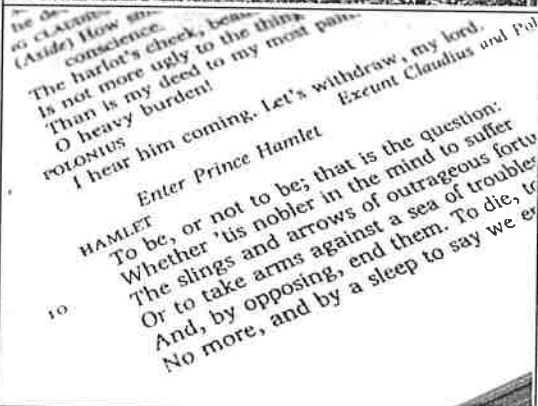
Shakespeare wrote many 14-line poems, called sonnets. This is Sonnet 18, one of his most famous.

Discuss: Besides love and romance, what are some of the subjects that Shakespeare covered in his plays?



This photo shows a close-up of one of the walls at Juliet Capulet's villa in Verona, Italy. Lovers from all over the world come here to write their names and personal notes on the "Wall of Love."

Discuss: Which Shakespeare play do you think inspired the "Wall of Love"? Why do you think this play is still read and enjoyed today?



Shakespeare's *Hamlet* contains many famous lines, such as "To be, or not to be; that is the question."

Discuss: How did Shakespeare's ideas transform Europe at the time? How do his ideas affect us today?

Martin Luther

In the early 1500s in Germany, then part of the Holy Roman Empire, a priest named Martin Luther (1483–1546) became involved in a serious dispute with the Catholic Church. Condemned by the Church, Luther began the first Protestant church, which started the Reformation. This movement led to the start of many new Christian churches that broke away from the Catholic Church. The word “Protestant” refers to protests against the Church.

Background and Personality Luther was born in Germany and was raised as a devout Catholic. Luther’s father wanted him to become a lawyer. As a young man, however, Luther was badly frightened when he was caught in a violent thunderstorm. As lightning flashed around him, he vowed that if he survived he would become a monk. Luther kept his promise and joined an order of monks. Later, he became a priest. He studied the Bible thoroughly and earned a reputation as a scholar and teacher.

Talents and Achievements Luther’s views brought him into conflict with the Church over indulgences. In 1517, Pope Leo X needed money to finish building St. Peter’s Basilica, the grand cathedral in Rome. He sent preachers around Europe to sell indulgences. Buyers were promised pardons of all of their sins and those of friends and family. An outraged Luther felt that the Church was selling false salvation to uneducated people. Salvation means being saved from sin.

Luther posted a list of arguments, called theses, against indulgences and other Church abuses on a church door in the town of Wittenberg, Germany. He also sent the list, called the Ninety-Five Theses, to Church leaders.

Luther’s theses caused considerable controversy. Many people approved of his ideas, while the Church condemned them. Gradually, Luther was drawn into more serious disagreements with Church authorities. In 1521, Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther. To be excommunicated means to no longer be allowed membership in a church.

After his views were condemned, Luther started a new Christian denomination known as Lutheranism. Luther and his followers disagreed with the Catholic Church about sin and salvation. Catholics believed that people earned salvation by following the teachings and practices of the Church, taking part in the sacraments, and performing good works.

Luther did not believe that people could do anything to earn their salvation. He believed salvation was God’s gift, which people received in faith. People would be saved if they sincerely believed in Jesus Christ, were sorry for their sins, and accepted the words of the Bible as truth.

Luther also preached that the Bible—not the pope or Church leaders—was the ultimate source of religious authority. The only true sacraments, he said, were baptism and Communion. The Church’s other five sacraments had no basis in the Bible. Moreover, Luther said that all Christians were priests, and, therefore, all should study the Bible for themselves.

Quotations from Martin Luther

“Faith must trample under foot all reason, sense, and understanding.”

“Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God.”

Martin Luther



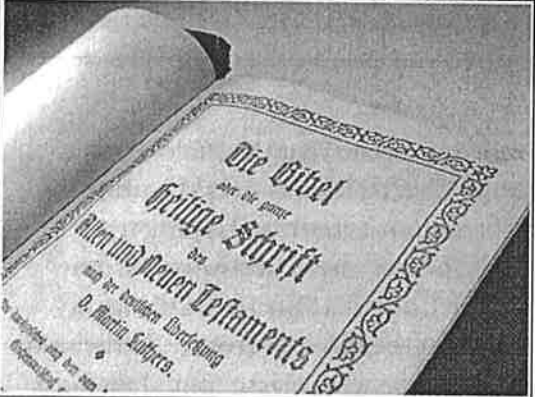
Luther nailed his list of 95 arguments, called the Ninety-Five Theses, to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. Catholic Church leaders condemned Luther's ideas.

Discuss: What complaints did Luther have about the Catholic Church?



Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther, but Luther still refused to take back his teachings. Luther is said to have burned the papal bull, or official papal document, announcing his banishment from the Catholic Church.

Discuss: Why was Luther excommunicated? What new Christian religion did he start?



Luther preached that the Bible—not the pope or Church leaders—was the ultimate source of religious authority.

Discuss: What were the major differences between Lutheranism and Catholicism?



This painting of a Lutheran church shows clergy administering the sacraments of baptism and Communion, the only two sacraments Luther believed were clearly named in the Bible.

Discuss: How did Luther's ideas transform Europe at the time? How do his ideas affect us today?