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- Abstract:** Chapter 3 of the book "Everyday Life: Renaissance" is presented. It discusses the life and works of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti, two of the famous artists the Renaissance produced. Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452 in Italy. He created two of the world's greatest paintings, the Last Supper and Mona Lisa. Michelangelo Buonarroti was said to be just as versatile as da Vinci. Known simply as Michelangelo, he was a gifted painter, sculptor, architect, and amateur poet.
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CHAPTER 3: Two Great Artists

The Renaissance produced many great artists. You may have heard of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rembrandt, and Holbein, to name a few. There were many others. Because the focus of this book is on everyday life during the time and not on the works of individual artists, only two, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti, will be discussed in some detail. These two are among the more famous.

Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452 in the village of Vinci, in what is now Italy. What little is known of his early life is taken from the diary of his grandfather, Ser Antonio, with whom he lived until he was five years old. Ser Antonio revealed that Leonardo's father was a notary and his mother a peasant girl. His father married several times while Leonardo was a young boy.

From an early age, Leonardo showed an interest in everything around him. He collected flowers, leaves, unusual pieces of wood, and even small animals. He drew pictures of everything he saw on his walks through the countryside. Unlike others his age, he seemed to have an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. This thirst would in time make him one of the most remarkable men of the Renaissance.

At the age of 15, Leonardo was apprenticed to a painter and sculptor in Florence named Andrea Verrocchio. He remained and worked with Verrocchio until 1477, although he had progressed so quickly that he was admitted to the painters' guild as a master in 1472 at the age of 20. Leonardo studied not only painting and sculpture under Verrocchio but engineering as well. By the time he was 25 he had surpassed his tutor in skill and was ready to move on to other endeavors.

After leaving Verrocchio, Leonardo went to work for Lorenzo de Medici, the richest and most powerful man in Florence. Lorenzo paid Leonardo to paint and sculpt. Later,

Leonardo worked for the ruler of Milan. Then he moved on to other patrons, the last being King Francis I of France. Francis I gave Leonardo a chateau, a beautiful country house. He worked in France until his death in 1519.

Leonardo was a "jack-of-all-trades." Above all, he was a magnificent painter and sculptor. He created two of the world's greatest paintings: Last Supper and Mona Lisa, the latter a portrait of a lady thought to be Lisa del Gioconda. But he was also an architect, scientist, mathematician, engineer, and philosopher. More than 7,000 pages of his notebooks survive, and they reveal a person interested in every aspect of life. Even the notebooks themselves are fascinating. Besides containing notes and sketches of people, plants, animals, and machines, they are composed in "mirror" writing. Leonardo was ambidextrous and could write with either hand. Therefore, to protect his notes from prying eyes, he wrote them backward with his left hand and read them later in a mirror.

The drawings included in Leonardo's notebooks point to his curiosity about everything around him. There are many sketches of the human body that accurately depict muscles and tendons. These he obtained by dissecting the bodies of executed criminals. There are even more drawings of flying machines, submarines, and machine guns. In time, Leonardo's imaginings gave way to reality.

Some people found Leonardo a strange man. He bought caged birds in the marketplace and immediately set them free. Yet he would imprison flies to study the flapping of their wings. He recorded the varied sounds made when he clipped the wings of some and coated the flapping wings of others with honey. He would also spend hours on the banks of a river with his ear pressed against a submerged tube, listening to the sounds made by the moving water.

No person better exemplified the spirit of the Renaissance than Leonardo da Vinci. Nothing escaped his critical eye, as he sought answers to every problem of the day. Yet at the same time, and in true Renaissance fashion, he enjoyed everyday life. He loved a good joke and acquired a reputation as a prankster. Once at a party in Rome he inflated the entrails of a ram with bellows, causing them to rise like balloons and scare the guests in an adjacent room within an inch of their lives. Even in fun, Leonardo upheld the spirit of the age!

Michelangelo Buonarroti may have never been the life of a Renaissance party, but he was in many ways just as versatile as Leonardo da Vinci. Known simply as Michelangelo, he was a gifted painter, sculptor, architect, and amateur poet. Although some scholars consider his greatest work to be the religious scenes he painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Pope's palace in Rome, Michelangelo thought himself above all a sculptor. His works certainly support his claim. His statues of David and Moses are among the world's greatest sculptures. And few are not moved when they gaze upon the Pietá, Michelangelo's sculpture of the dead Jesus in his grieving mother's lap.

That Michelangelo achieved so much in his lifetime is remarkable considering his beginnings. Born in 1475 in a small village and raised in Florence, he was a small and sickly child. His father was a former public official who beat him regularly because of his interest in painting. His uncles ridiculed him, maintaining that art was work suited only for peasants. Surely the son of a public official could find something better to do with his life.

When at last Michelangelo's father realized that his son was determined to become an artist, he apprenticed him to a painter named Domenico Ghirlandaio. Michelangelo was 13 at the time. A year later, he began to study sculpture under Bertoldo de Giovanni, who

just happened to be in charge of the personal gardens of Lorenzo de Medici. Lorenzo de Medici, you will remember, was once the patron of Leonardo da Vinci. In a similar manner, this powerful man took Michelangelo under his wing and treated him as his own son.

When Michelangelo was 33, he was commissioned by Pope Julius II to paint scenes from the Bible on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo was reluctant at first, telling the pope he was a sculptor, not a painter. But Julius II was insistent, and Michelangelo gave in. He signed a contract for the project in 1508 and set about making his plans.

The Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome is no small place. It measures 132 feet by 45 feet and the ceiling covers some 3,000 square feet. The ceiling is about 70 feet above the floor, which gives you some idea of the difficulty Michelangelo faced when he began his task. All work would have to be done on a high scaffold with Michelangelo flat on his back.

Michelangelo's assignment might have been easier had Pope Julius II been a more understanding man. But he was not. He was headstrong and impatient and constantly badgered Michelangelo to hurry the project. He wanted the paintings completed during his lifetime. Even though he was an old man, the pope often climbed a ladder to the top of the scaffold and berated his frustrated artist. Once, having grown tired of Michelangelo answering his question "How much longer?" with his usual "As soon as I can," Julius gave him a smart whack with his staff. He even threatened to have Michelangelo thrown off the scaffold if he didn't hurry!

In spite of the pope's prodding, it took Michelangelo more than four years to complete the chapel ceiling. He often worked around the clock, skipping meals and napping in his clothes. The scenes he painted were frescoes, which are paintings done on wet plaster. Paint constantly dripped in his face, and his eyesight suffered from the strain of focusing on his work. Even his ability to freely move his neck was affected. After four years of lying on his back, he could only read a letter by holding the page above his head and looking upward.

Michelangelo finished the Sistine ceiling amidst great fanfare in 1512. Twenty-two years later, he began the Last Judgment on the end wall of the chapel. It was a project that took him eight years to complete. Although not part of the original ceiling paintings, many critics consider Last Judgment Michelangelo's greatest work of art. Michelangelo also designed the great dome of the Church of St. Peter's in Rome. He was active until the time of his death in 1564.

Michelangelo, like Leonardo da Vinci, was so obsessed with portraying the human form accurately that he too dissected and studied countless bodies to make his paintings and sculptures as realistic as possible. His quest for perfection was characteristic of the artists of the Renaissance.

Name _____

Date _____

[Solve Some Sistine Chapel Math](#)

Below are three word problems dealing with the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Work each in the space provided and write its answer on the given line. Use the equivalency data below in solving the problems.

- 10.76 square feet = 1 square meter

- 1. a. The Sistine Chapel measures 132 feet by 45 feet. Therefore, the chapel contains ____ square feet.

b. Convert the number of square feet above into square meters. In doing so, you will find that the chapel contains ____ square meters. (Round your answer.)

- 2. The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel painted by Michelangelo covers about 3,000 square feet. How many square meters does the ceiling cover? ____ square meters. (Round your answer.)
- 3. Michelangelo's Last Judgment is a fresco that covers about 200 square feet on the end wall of the Sistine Chapel. How many square meters does the painting cover? ____ square meters

Name ____

Date ____

Use Context Clues to Complete Sentences

Fill in the blanks in the sentences using the words from the word box.

accomplished
agree
attest
construction
contributions
drew
excelled
greater
models
modern
primarily
produced
second
statues
study
unsurpassed

The Renaissance ____ many great artists, but none were ____ than Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti. Both were multi-talented individuals who ____ in a number of areas. Although Leonardo was ____ a painter and Michelangelo considered himself above all a sculptor, each made ____ in other fields as well.

Leonardo da Vinci is mostly remembered for two paintings. They are the Last Supper and the Mona Lisa. But he also was an ____ sculptor and engineer. He ____ designs for bridges and highways, as well as for a diving bell and tank. ____ engineers have used drawings from his notebooks and made working ____ of machines he proposed centuries ago. Not the least of his achievements was the knowledge of anatomy he acquired from his ____ of the human body.

Some people think Michelangelo was even more gifted than Leonardo. His ____ of David and Moses and his Pietá are ____ in detail and beauty. As a painter, the scenes he painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome ____ to his talent with the brush. And as an architect, his skills were ____ to none. In his later years, he designed plans for the ____ of St. Peter's Church in Rome.

Don't you _____ that Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarotti were two very talented individuals?

Name _____

Date _____

[Write a Lead Paragraph for The Rome Review](#)

Suppose that newspapers existed in 1512 and you are a reporter for The Rome Review. Your assignment is to write a story covering Michelangelo's completion of the paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

On the lines provided, write the lead paragraph to that story that would go along with the headline given. Be sure to include answers to the five "W" questions (Who? What? When? Where? Why?) that are characteristic of a good lead paragraph.

The Rome Review November 1, 1512

Michelangelo Completes Paintings at Sistine Chapel Four Years of Hard Work Over

Name _____

Date _____

[Make a Sketch](#)

In the space provided, make a sketch of a drawing from Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks. You can find samples by looking in any encyclopedia or biography of Leonardo.

On the lines at the bottom of the page, tell about the drawing you have chosen to copy.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Leonardo da Vinci's "flying machine," which he envisioned as being operated by a man seated in the middle.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Michelangelo's Pietá, a magnificent sculpture of the dead Christ on his mother's knees. Carved from a single slab of marble, the Pietá stands in Saint Peter's Church in Rome.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): The Last Judgment, one of nine scenes from the biblical book of Genesis painted by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

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