

Leonardo da Vinci and Renaissance Painting Student Worksheet

Introduction:

Painters during the Renaissance began using new techniques that made their works appear quite different from those of medieval painters. In this lesson, you're going to compare a painting by the medieval Italian painter Giotto (1267–1337) with two of Leonardo da Vinci's most famous paintings: *The Last Supper* and *Mona Lisa*.

Directions:

The Miracle of the Thirsty Man: Giotto

<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/francis/SSF-thirsty-1.jpg>

This painting depicts a scene from the life of St. Francis of Assisi. Take a couple of minutes to look over the painting, then answer the following questions:

1. Take a look at the three people in the painting. Briefly describe the expressions on their faces. Does the painting give you any hint as to what these people are thinking or feeling? Explain.
2. Consider the relative size of all the different components depicted in the painting: the people, the trees, the mountains. Can you tell how big each component is in relation to the others? Can you tell how close each component is to one another? Why or why not? If components of a painting are not shown in correct proportion to one another, do you think that makes the painting less effective in conveying the artist's message? Why or why not?
3. Look now at the scenery. In your opinion, does the landscape appear at all realistic? Why or why not? If the landscape in a painting doesn't seem realistic, do you think that makes the painting less effective in conveying the artist's message? Why or why not?

The *Mona Lisa*: Da Vinci

<http://www.louvre.fr/img/photos/collec/peint/grande/inv0779.jpg>

Go to the URL listed above and take a couple of minutes to look at Leonardo's most famous painting, the *Mona Lisa*. Answer the following questions:

4. Briefly describe the expression on Mona Lisa's face. Does the painting give you any hint as to what she is thinking or feeling? Explain.

***The Life of Leonardo da Vinci*: Giorgio Vasari, 1550**

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/vasari1.html>

Scroll down about two-thirds of the way through the document to the paragraph that begins "Leonardo undertook to execute..."

5. Vasari says that "in this painting, whoever wished to see how closely art could imitate nature, was able to comprehend it with ease." Restate this quote in your own words. What do you think Vasari meant by this?
6. One of the main things people usually notice about Mona Lisa is her hint of a smile: Vasari describes it as "a smile so pleasing, that it was a thing more divine than human to behold." Many people have speculated about what Mona Lisa was smiling about. What reason does Vasari give for her smile? Why do you think Leonardo thought it important to have her smiling while he painted her?
7. In your opinion, is this painting at all realistic? Why or why not?

The Last Supper

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/L/leonardo/lastsupp.jpg.html>

Take a couple of minutes to look over this painting, then answer the following questions:

8. Take a look at the people in the painting. Briefly describe some of the expressions on their faces. Does the painting give you any hint as to what these people are thinking or feeling? Explain.

9. Consider the relative size of all the different components depicted in the painting: the people, the furniture, the items on the table, the windows. Can you tell how big each component is in relation to the others? Can you tell how close each component is to one another? Why or why not?

10. Go back now to the Vasari excerpt and read the paragraph that begins "He also painted in Milan, for the Friars of S. Dominic..." What does Vasari particularly admire about *The Last Supper*?

11. In your opinion, is this painting at all realistic? Why or why not?

12. Finally, using the paintings you've viewed in this lesson as examples, write a paragraph in which you describe the major differences between medieval art and Renaissance art.