

Reading Explorer 5 Unit 9 Lesson A

DIRECTIONS: Choose the best answer for each question.

Decoding Leonardo

[A] According to legend, in the year 1505 near the Tuscan town of Fiesole, a great bird rose from Monte Ceceri (Swan Mountain) and took to the air. No witness testimony remains of the event, but if anyone was present on that hillside, the most likely candidate is Leonardo da Vinci, a man whose ambition for many years had been to fly like a bird. Some 50 years later, an acquaintance, Gerolamo Cardano, wrote, "Leonardo da Vinci ... attempted to fly, but failed. He was an excellent painter."

[B] To call Leonardo an excellent painter is like labeling Shakespeare a clever wordsmith.¹ He was a true genius, recognized in his own time and idolized in ours. His paintings are as secret and seductive as himself, done with the hand of an angel, the intellect of a scientist, and the soul of a romantic. His drawings are among the most beautiful ever made; his most treasured painting, the *Mona Lisa*, is undoubtedly the most famous in the world.

[C] His love of painting notwithstanding, it was knowledge itself that was Leonardo's great love - knowledge, and the experience from which it may be drawn. To acquire it, Leonardo turned to a diverse array of fields: mathematics, geometry, optics, astronomy, geology, botany, zoology, hydraulics, mechanics, and anatomy, as well as painting and drawing. As an engineer, he could think in four dimensions, visualizing not only the shapes of mechanical parts but also their interrelated motions.

[D] Among his designs for flight, Leonardo imagined parachutes, landing equipment, even an aerial screw that acted like the blades of a helicopter. But, like so much else in his life, Leonardo's attempts to actually create a workable flying machine are a mystery. There remains only one enigmatic² reference, in a notebook characteristically filled with phrases and sketches, in which he proclaims that his great bird "will bring eternal glory to the nest where it was born ..."

Birth of a Genius

[E] Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452, the illegitimate child of a peasant girl named Caterina and respected notary³ Piero da Vinci. Leonardo lived at first with his mother in a three-room stone house on a hill just outside the village of Vinci, some 20 kilometers west of Florence. In that idyllic Tuscan countryside began the youngster's lifelong love of nature - a love that would remain implicit in all his later works.

[F] Around 1469, Leonardo's father took him to Florence, where the statesman Lorenzo de Medici had established a society that actively encouraged all forms of artistic expression. For years, art had been an instrument of religious expression, and the parameters of what was ideologically acceptable had been decided by the Church. But in the more tolerant atmosphere of Florence, painters represented things as they saw them, rather than as the Church said they must be. It was a society well suited to the ever-questioning country boy.

[G] Leonardo commenced an apprenticeship at the academy of Andrea del Verrocchio, with whom he studied for at least six years. The boy mastered every medium and continued his studies of nature, discovering so much so fast that it seemed to him that everything must eventually be revealed to his searching. In painting, he not only outshone his more mature colleagues but also his teacher. Assigned to paint the figure of an angel, he gave it a whole new dimension that drew the viewer directly into the painting, in a way that Verrocchio's inhibited style could never do. Some say that Verrocchio never painted again.

Early Masterworks

[H] Leonardo left Florence in 1482 at the age of 30, and he stayed away for 18 years. The young Florentine hoped to find the glory he sought in the court of Ludovico Sforza, ruler of Milan. A practical city, Milan cared more for knowledge than for the arts. Leonardo came as a musician but presented himself as an engineer, describing in a long boastful letter his inventiveness in the field of weapons. He assured Sforza that, " ...also I can do in painting whatever may be done, as well as any other, whoever he may be."

[I] It was as an artist that Leonardo was accepted. He established an art factory much like Verrocchio's shop in Florence and at once accepted assignments. These included a portrait of Sforza's beautiful and learned mistress, Cecilia Gallerani, a portrait of a musician that some scholars believe is really a self-portrait, and a brilliant early version of *Virgin of the Rocks*, begun in 1483 and now in the Louvre.

[J] Around 1485 he began his notebooks. These are detailed, cryptic⁴ compilations of material on a seemingly arbitrary range of topics, from geology and geometry to anatomy and astronomy, all interwoven and superimposed as one burning interest gave way to the next. His notes are written left-handed from right to left, and there are sketches everywhere that complement his text. His discussions were addressed to himself, leaving us an extraordinary record of the movements of his mind.

Bronze Horse and Last Supper

[K] Two great works mark Leonardo's years with Sforza. One was to be a bronze statue of the duke's late father as a conquering hero riding a horse. The other, ordered by Sforza for his favorite church, was a "Last Supper." The themes were not unlike other commissions of the time, but if the subjects lacked originality, their treatment did not.

[L] The horse was to be colossal, in a pose full of motion and life. The concept was so bold, so ambitious, that it finally brought the artist the praise he sought. His contemporaries thought it could not be created, but Leonardo devised workable plans. Sadly, he was denied the chance to complete his project; war broke out, and the bronze was used for cannons instead.

[M] *The Last Supper*, too, was presented as never before. Leonardo arranged the 13 figures in a brilliant composition reflecting the terrible moment following Christ's words, "One of you shall betray me." He gave the figures deep emotions, varying according to their natures, perfectly illustrating the intention of each subject's soul.

[N] Unfortunately, Leonardo's brilliance was not matched by his planning. He hated deadlines and fixed schedules; painting fresco (that is, on freshly prepared plaster) imposed both. So he worked with oil mixtures, which could be applied whenever the mood struck him. The technique suited the artist, but not the wall; the paint soon blistered and began to peel away from the damp surface. With his doomed masterworks behind him, Leonardo left Milan, and in the spring of 1500, he was back in Florence.

Battle of the Giants

[O] Leonardo came home a famous man. No one knew or cared much about his science and his inventions, but everyone had heard of his horse and his *Last Supper*.

[P] Many of his competitors had either died or gone to Rome. His most serious rival was Michelangelo Buonarroti, 23 years his junior, surly,⁵ ambitious, and a great painter. The two Florentines hated each other wholeheartedly.

[Q] Once again, two great works drew Leonardo's artistic effort. One was a huge mural for the Council Chamber depicting the Battle of Anghiari, an important political victory for Florence. The other was a life-size portrait of a middle-class woman. He worked on the paintings concurrently, the portrait offering him pleasant relief from the subject of the battle.

[R] Some say the subject of the portrait is Lisa, wife of Florentine merchant Francesco del Giocondo, while others suggest different identities. Known today as *Mona Lisa*, it hangs in the Louvre, glass shrouded and guarded. Its colors have suffered a strange change, as if bathed in undersea light, but the lady still glows with an inner radiance, both troubling and serene.

[S] The battle scene thrust Leonardo into an artistic rivalry with Michelangelo, who was to paint another wall of the same chamber. The rivals did their preliminary sketches in separate quarters. Both sketches were magnificent in their own way: The younger man's picture of male bathers interrupted by a call to arms was as dynamic as Leonardo's cavalry⁶ confrontation. Benvenuto Cellini, who saw them both while they were still intact, wrote that "they were the school of the world."

[T] Michelangelo never transferred his draft to the Council Chamber wall. Leonardo did, or at least, he began to. Forgetting the fate of *The Last Supper* (or perhaps not yet aware of it), he again used an oil paint for greater freedom and brighter colors. The paint, however, soon began to flake and run. The work was doomed, another masterpiece lost - at least until its traces were rediscovered in the 1970s.

A Life Unfinished

[U] Leonardo now turned from art to his old love: flight. By this time, his knowledge went far beyond the limits of his age and was approaching the understanding that much later gave men wings. But his efforts, including his legendary attempt on Monte Ceceri, brought him no satisfaction, only the certainty that he himself would never fly or witness manned flight.

[V] In 1513, Leonardo journeyed south to Rome to work for the new pope, Leo X; three years later, he set out once again, this time for France, on the last journey of his life. France's young new king, Francis I, regarded Leonardo as the wisest of men and wanted him nearby, whether he painted or not. Thus, he lived the three remaining years of his life in a small chateau in the peaceful landscape near Amboise.

[W] In his heart, Leonardo felt defeat. His greatest works crumbling, his great knowledge undisclosed, Leonardo grieved for what might have been, for all the wondrous, unfinished projects that forever filled his extraordinary mind. He had no way to know that the few magnificent works he did complete would alone make his name immortal. And so the universal man - symbol of his time and anticipator⁷ of ours - passed into eternal fame.

¹ A **wordsmith** is someone who is good with words and language.

² A person, thing, or situation that is **enigmatic** is mysterious or puzzling.

³ A **notary** is a clerk licensed to prepare legal documents.

⁴ Something that is **cryptic** is mysterious in meaning, puzzling, or ambiguous.

⁵ Someone who is **surly** is usually bad-tempered and rude.

⁶ The **cavalry** is the part of an army that is mounted on horseback.

⁷ An **anticipator** is someone who foresees future events.

- _____ 1. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a field of study that Da Vinci was interested in?
- a. geology
 - b. astrology
 - c. mathematics
 - d. anatomy
- _____ 2. In paragraph C, what does the author mean when he describes Leonardo *thinking in four dimensions*?
- a. He drew on his background in geometry and optics.
 - b. He was able to envision how his designs would actually work.
 - c. He designed objects with height, width, and depth.
 - d. He used 3-D perspective to give dimension to paintings.
- _____ 3. In paragraph D, what was Leonardo referring to when he talked about his *great bird*?
- a. a huge bird he sketched
 - b. a parachute he designed
 - c. a blade of a helicopter
 - d. a flying machine
- _____ 4. In the second last sentence of paragraph G, what does *it* refer to?
- a. the painting of an angel
 - b. the academy of Andrea del Verrocchio
 - c. Leonardo's apprenticeship
 - d. Verrocchio's style of painting
- _____ 5. What was Leonardo's attitude in his application letter to Ludovico Sforza?
- a. He was modest about his inventions.
 - b. He was confident about his abilities.
 - c. He lacked self-confidence as an engineer.
 - d. He was shy about his artistic skill, but not music.
- _____ 6. What is the purpose of paragraph J?
- a. to establish that the notebooks were written for his employer
 - b. to emphasize the importance of Leonardo's notebooks
 - c. to identify Leonardo as left-handed
 - d. to mention that some drawings were anatomical
- _____ 7. Where in paragraph J would this sentence be best placed?

There's no clear order, even on a single page, and similar themes often appear on different sheets completed years apart.

- a. before the first sentence
- b. after the first sentence
- c. after the second sentence
- d. after the last sentence

- _____ 8. Which of these works of Leonardo was completed and can still be seen in a museum today?
- a. a bronze statue of a Duke on a horse
 - b. an early version of *Virgin of the Rocks*
 - c. *The Last Supper*
 - d. a mural of the Battle of Anghiari
- _____ 9. Which event in Leonardo's career occurred last?
- a. varied employment with Ludovico Sforza, ruler of Milan
 - b. assignment to paint a portrait of a Florentine merchant's wife
 - c. recruitment by the French King, Francis I
 - d. apprenticeship in Verrocchio's Florence studio
- _____ 10. What do paragraphs A, D, and U have in common?
- a. They discuss Leonardo's interest in flight despite his failures.
 - b. They all describe an experiment in 1505 on Monte Ceceri.
 - c. They list the designs found in Leonardo's notebooks.
 - d. They describe Leonardo's friendship with Cardano and their common interest in flying.

DIRECTIONS: Read each sentence. Decide if the use of the underlined word in each sentence makes the statement T (true) or F (false).

- _____ 11. If something is implicit, it is not stated directly.
- _____ 12. A parameter is a limit or guideline.
- _____ 13. Ambulances usually take the injured to the academy, where doctors and medical staff treat them.
- _____ 14. An ideology is a set of beliefs.
- _____ 15. The members of the Olympic ski team were chosen in an arbitrary way; they decided based on how many races they won last year.
- _____ 16. When the tourists were denied entrance to the museum, they were allowed in.
- _____ 17. The London Symphony commissioned the composer to write a special piece to celebrate their 100th anniversary, and even paid him in advance.
- _____ 18. It's hard to choose which festival event to attend when there are 20 concurrent concerts happening at the same time.
- _____ 19. The exhibit showed a preliminary model of the new library based on initial plans.
- _____ 20. At the end of the semester, the students in the writing course submitted their drafts, which were the final versions of their papers.

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Answer Section

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | ANS: B | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Negative Detail | | TOP: Creativity | |
| 2. | ANS: B | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Paraphrase | TOP: Creativity | | |
| 3. | ANS: D | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Figurative Language | | TOP: Creativity | |
| 4. | ANS: A | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Anaphoric Reference | | TOP: Creativity | |
| 5. | ANS: B | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Inference | TOP: Creativity | | |
| 6. | ANS: B | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Purpose | TOP: Creativity | | |
| 7. | ANS: C | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Cohesion | TOP: Creativity | | |
| 8. | ANS: B | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Supporting Detail | | TOP: Creativity | |
| 9. | ANS: C | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Sequence | TOP: Creativity | | |
| 10. | ANS: A | PTS: 1 | REF: Pages 181-185 | |
| | OBJ: Compare and Contrast | | TOP: Creativity | |
| 11. | ANS: T | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |
| 12. | ANS: T | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |
| 13. | ANS: F | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |
| 14. | ANS: T | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |
| 15. | ANS: F | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |
| 16. | ANS: F | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |
| 17. | ANS: T | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |
| 18. | ANS: T | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |
| 19. | ANS: T | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |
| 20. | ANS: F | PTS: 1 | REF: Page 189 | OBJ: Vocabulary |
| | TOP: Creativity | | | |