

30.3 Michelangelo, Italian Sculptor and Painter

You met Michelangelo (1475– 1564) in Chapter 29. Michelangelo was born in a small village near Florence. He grew up to become one of the greatest painters and sculptors in history.

Personality and Training

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. At 15, he began studying under 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 amazingly gifted in both sculpture and painting. His art combines ideal beauty with emotional expressiveness. To other artists, Michelangelo's talent seemed almost godlike.

Michelangelo's sculptures show his amazing talent for bringing life to figures carved from giant blocks of marble. When he was just 24, he carved his famous *Pieta*. A *pieta* is a depiction of Mary, the mother of Jesus, mourning over her crucified son. Michelangelo's *Pieta* shows Mary tenderly holding the body of Jesus on her lap.

Two other magnificent sculptures by Michelangelo are his *David* and *Moses*. As you learned in Chapter 29, *David* is 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 also a strong, powerful figure. In the Bible, Moses receives the Ten Commandments from God. Meanwhile his people, the Hebrews, are worshiping false gods. The expression of Michelangelo's *Moses* is a mixture of compassion and anger.

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 300 figures and continue to awe visitors to Rome today.

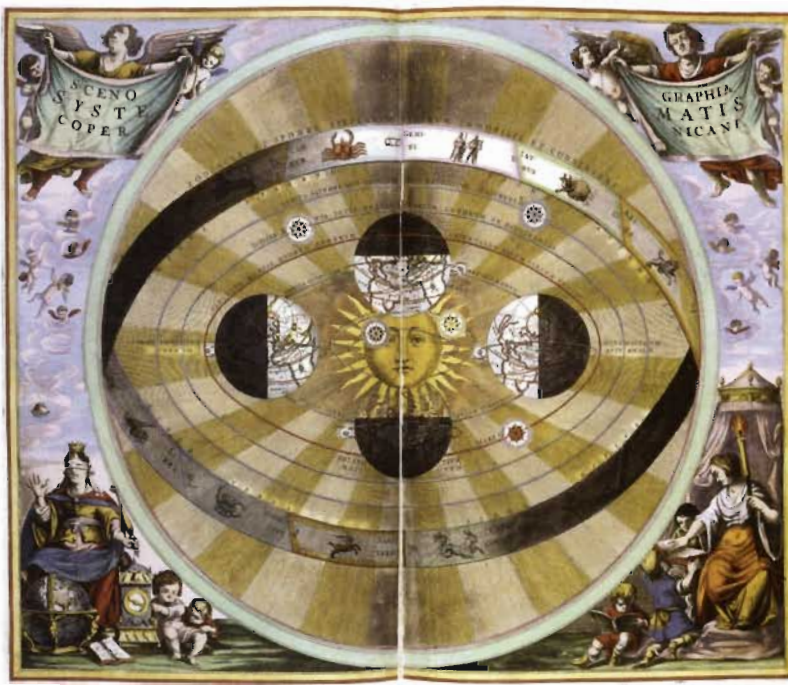


In this famous scene from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, God is reaching out to touch the finger of Adam, the first man in the Bible story of creation. Adam seems to be coming to life under God's touch.

chapel a room, sometimes inside a larger church, set aside for prayer and worship



Michelangelo



Since ancient times, most people believed that Earth was at the center of the universe. This engraving illustrates Copernicus's theory that Earth and the other planets travel around the sun.

axis an imaginary line drawn through a sphere, or ball, such as Earth



Nicolaus Copernicus

30.6 Nicolaus Copernicus, Polish Scientist

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) was born in Torun, Poland. He is often called the father of modern astronomy.

Personality and Training

When Copernicus was 10 years old, his father died. His uncle, a Catholic bishop, became his guardian. He made sure that Copernicus received a good education.

As a young man, Copernicus attended Poland's University of Krakow. Then he went to Italy to study medicine and church law. In Italy he rented rooms at an astronomy teacher's house.

Soon he became fascinated by astronomy.

Copernicus's scientific work would show that he was highly creative. He was also a free thinker, unafraid to question accepted beliefs.

Talents and Achievements Copernicus was skilled in mathematics and observation. He based his thinking on what he truly saw, rather than on what he thought he *should* see.

Like others of his day, Copernicus had been taught that Earth was at the center of the universe. According to this idea, the sun, stars, and planets traveled around Earth.

As Copernicus studied the motion of the planets, he became dissatisfied with this explanation. He proposed a revolutionary idea. People, he said, had it backward. In reality, Earth and the other planets revolve (travel) around the sun. Earth rotates, or turns, on its **axis**. This turning is what makes the sun and other objects in the heavens seem to move across the sky.

In 1514, Copernicus printed a booklet that outlined his theory. Then he began years of work on a full-length book. He called it *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*. (*Celestial* means "heavenly.") According to legend, he saw his book in print just a few hours before his death in 1543.

Copernicus dedicated his book to the pope. However, the idea of Earth traveling around the sun went against the church's belief that God had placed humans at the center of the universe. In 1616, the church forbade people to read Copernicus's book.

Despite the church's disapproval, Copernicus's theory had a major influence on a few key scientists. Eventually it was proved to be correct. Today the Copernican theory is part of the basis of modern astronomy.

30.10 William Shakespeare, English Poet and Playwright

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

Personality and Training Shakespeare's father was a glove maker. As a boy, William 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 20s, Shakespeare became an actor with a theater company in London. He learned about drama by performing and writing plays for the company. Many of his plays were first presented at the Globe Theatre.

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 ways. 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*. Many of his sonnets are beautiful love poems. He is best known, however, for his plays. He wrote both **comedies** and **tragedies**. Many of his 38 plays are still performed today around the world. Among the most popular are *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *The Merchant of Venice*.

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

Shakespeare has had a deep influence on writers. He also left a lasting mark on the English language. Many common sayings come from Shakespeare, such as "Love is blind" and "All's well that ends well." People often quote his witty, wise lines, sometimes without knowing that they owe their graceful words to Shakespeare.



Shakespeare wrote about life with both humor and drama. This tragic scene is from his play *Romeo and Juliet*.

comedy an amusing play with a happy ending

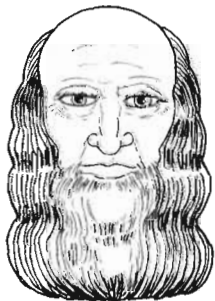
tragedy a serious play with a sad ending



William Shakespeare



Mona Lisa is one of Leonardo da Vinci's best-known paintings. This surprisingly small painting—only about 20 by 30 inches—has had a huge and lasting influence on artists to this day.



Leonardo da Vinci

30.12 Leonardo da Vinci, Italian Renaissance Person

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) was born in a village near Florence. His wide range of interests and accomplishments made him a true Renaissance person.

Personality and Training As a teenager, Leonardo trained in Florence under a master sculptor and painter. All his life he studied many subjects, including art, music, math, 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 patrons. A handsome, brilliant man, he had a special love of animals. Sometimes he bought caged animals at the market and set them free. He also was a vegetarian (he ate no meat), which was quite unusual at the time.

As you can see from all the topics he studied, Leonardo was endlessly curious. He was a careful observer and liked to figure things out for himself.

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

Leonardo's notebooks show him to be one of the greatest creative minds of all time. Like Albrecht Dürer, he closely studied 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 designed weapons, buildings, and a variety of machines. Many of the inventions he drew, such as a helicopter 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 paintings, it displays a remarkable use of perspective, balance, and detail. The rich effects of light, 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 art inspired other great artists, such as Michelangelo. With his many interests and talents, Leonardo is a nearly perfect example of the spirit of the Renaissance.

Name _____

Per _____



**30.10 William Shakespeare,
English Poet and Playwright**

Lived (years of birth and death):

From (the place):

Personality and Training:

Talents and Achievements:



**30.6 Nicolaus Copernicus,
Polish Scientist**

Lived (years of birth and death):

From (the place):

Personality and Training:

Talents and Achievements:

Name _____

Per _____



**30.3 Michelangelo,
Italian Sculptor and Painter**

Lived (years of birth and death):

From (the place):

Personality and Training:

Talents and Achievements:



**30.12 Leonardo da Vinci,
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Lived (years of birth and death):

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