

# Enrichment: Biography of Leonardo da Vinci

**Directions** Read the biography below. Answer the questions that follow and complete the activity.

Leonardo da Vinci was one of the most brilliant thinkers of the Renaissance. He painted and drew, studied science, designed buildings, worked as an engineer, and proposed inventions. He was born in 1452 near the town of Vinci in the republic of Florence. His mother was a peasant, and his father was a landlord. As a child, Leonardo received only a basic education in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Later, he studied Latin and advanced mathematics. At the age of 15, he was apprenticed to an artist in Florence, where he learned to paint and sculpt.

When he was 30, Leonardo moved to Milan to work as a painter and engineer for a duke. While there, he finished one of his most famous paintings, a wall mural called *The Last Supper*. It shows Jesus eating with his 12 disciples shortly before his death.

In 1499, a French army invaded Milan, so Leonardo left. He eventually returned to Florence. For the rest of his life, Leonardo worked as an artist, engineer, and architect for powerful men of the Renaissance. He spent his last years in France at the court of King Francis I.

In addition to *The Last Supper*, Leonardo painted the *Mona Lisa*, possibly the most famous painting in the world. He left many sketches of ideas for inventions, including one that looks like a helicopter.



1. Why do you think rulers wanted Leonardo to work for them?

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2. The phrase *Renaissance man* means an educated, well-rounded person who does well in many areas. Do you consider Leonardo such a person? Explain.

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3. **Activity** Imagine that you are a Renaissance ruler. Write a letter to Leonardo to persuade him to come work at your court.