

**Level:** Intermediate (B1)

**Age:** Teenagers

**Time:** This lesson can be divided up in various ways to suit the time you have with your students. Below are three time options that you can choose from depending on the length of your class. However, these are just suggestions and there are plenty of other ways you could divide the lesson up.

90 minutes – Complete all activities in Art survey, Leonardo da Vinci, and The Mona Lisa.

60 minutes – Complete all activities in Art survey and Leonardo da Vinci. Complete The Mona Lisa but have students write the short story as homework.

45 minutes – Complete all activities in Leonardo da Vinci. Complete The Mona Lisa but have students write the short story as homework.

**Summary:** This lesson is divided into three sections: Art survey, Leonardo da Vinci, and The Mona Lisa. Students will (depending on the length of the lesson):

- 1 do an art survey;
- 2 read about Leonardo da Vinci and the *Mona Lisa*;
- 3 complete texts about the artist and the painting;
- 4 take an in-depth look at the *Mona Lisa*;
- 5 write a short story based on a painting.

**Key skills:** Speaking, writing

**Subskills:** Talking about facts, describing paintings, writing a story

**Materials:** One copy of the Art survey, Leonardo da Vinci, and The Mona Lisa worksheets per student.

## ART SURVEY

1 Using Google Images, bring up images of a variety of paintings to show your students on screen. Suggested paintings:

- a landscape (e.g., *The Hay Wain* by John Constable)
- a portrait (e.g., *Self-Portrait with Necklace, 1933* by Frida Kahlo)
- a still life (e.g., *A Pair of Shoes* by Vincent van Gogh)
- surrealism (e.g., *The Son of Man* by René Magritte)
- pop art (e.g., one of Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe prints)
- impressionism (e.g., *Impression, Sunrise* by Claude Monet)
- cubism (e.g., *Brick Factory at Tortosa* by Pablo Picasso)

2 As you are showing them the paintings, ask students to discuss which ones they like and which ones they dislike in pairs, giving reasons.

3 Which is the most popular painting in the class? Take a class vote.

4 Hand out the Art survey worksheet. Ask students to work in pairs and discuss their answers to the questions. When they've finished the survey, confirm the answers to question 7. Have students visited any of the galleries? Then ask which student in each pair is the most serious art lover and why.

**Key (Question 7):** 1 c; 2 a; 3 b; 4 e; 5 d

## LEONARDO DA VINCI

1 What are the names of some famous paintings? Make a list of the paintings the students know on the board. What do they think is the most famous painting in the world?

**Note:** If students have already completed the Art survey and you have discussed the answer to question 8 (in the survey), leave out the last question above.

2 Tell students that you are going to ask them to discuss the following questions:

*What do you know about the Mona Lisa?*

*What do you know about Leonardo da Vinci?*

Tell them that, before they start, you are going to give them some useful language for expressing uncertainty when talking about facts. Hand out Leonardo da Vinci worksheet 1. Go over the language in the Phrasebook with them.

3 Divide the class into groups to discuss their answers to the questions, using the language from the Phrasebook. They should make brief notes on the facts they know.

4 Have students read the article. They should find any information they already knew, as well as three new, interesting facts about the painting and about the artist.

5 Ask students to turn over Leonardo da Vinci worksheet 1 so the text is hidden and hand out Leonardo da Vinci worksheet 2. Have students complete the summaries about the *Mona Lisa* and Leonardo da Vinci, without referring back to the text. Then ask students to compare their answers with a partner before checking their answers against the text.

**Key (The Mona Lisa):** 1 500; 2 La Gioconda; 3 last name; 4 1503; 5 1506; 6 François I; 7 Louvre; 8 Paris; 9 glass case; 10 three; 11 Italy / its country of origin; 12 the USA; 13 Japan

**Key (Leonardo da Vinci):** 1 1452; 2 Vinci; 3 67; 4 1519 / France; 5 Andrea del Verrocchio; 6 scientist / engineer / inventor / philosopher; 7 geology; 8 anatomy; 9 astronomy; 10 meat

## THE MONA LISA

1 Hand out The Mona Lisa worksheet 1. Ask students to look at the picture of the *Mona Lisa*. They must imagine they're describing it to someone who has never seen it before. Ask them to call out what they would say about the painting and what they can see in it.

2 Students match the 10 parts of the painting to the correct words. Ask students to compare their answers in pairs.

**Key:** a 2 eyes; b 4 jaw; c 8 mountains; d 5 hands; e 6 chair; f 7 sky; g 10 the smile; h 3 lips; i 9 river; j 1 bridge

3 Hand out The Mona Lisa worksheet 2. Ask students to read the text and, together with their partner, rank the facts according to how interesting they find them. When they have finished, offer feedback, then take a class vote on the most interesting fact.

4 Hand out The Mona Lisa worksheet 3. Ask students to work with a partner to complete the sentences on the worksheet. Then, compare their answers to the suggested answers below.

- 1 She looks *mysterious / serene*.
- 2 She's wearing a *dark dress and a thin veil*.
- 3 In the background, you can just see *some mountains and a river*.
- 4 She seems to be looking *to the right of the painter*.
- 5 Maybe she's thinking about *something amusing or funny*.
- 6 The scene behind could represent *the force of nature*.

5 Students are now going to choose a painting and then write a short story based on it. Refer them to the webquest activity on the worksheet. They must choose a painting that includes at least one person.

6 Refer students to the Phrasebook on the worksheet, which shows them the basic structure for their story and tells them what each section should contain. Make sure students understand that they are to combine elements from the painting with invented details in their story.

7 Students write the story and then tell it to other students in the class. The stories and printed-out pictures can be displayed in the classroom.

## HOMework TASK

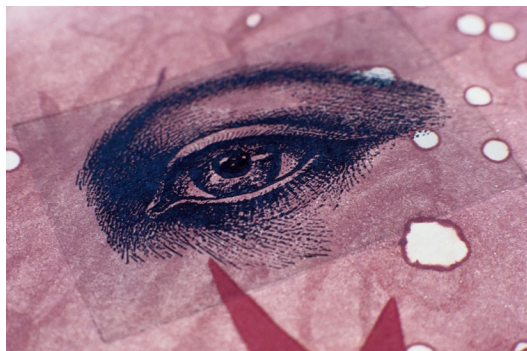
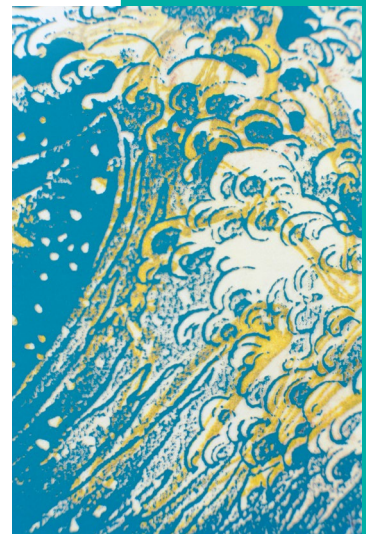
Ask students to interview a friend, family member, or teacher asking them what their favorite work of art is and why. They should then write down their response. In the following lesson, they share the responses with the class, along with a picture of the artwork, if they can.



## ART SURVEY

Write answers to the questions below.

- 1 What do you enjoy taking photos of? What photos do you have on your phone?
- 2 In your opinion, is dancing a form of art? Is music? Why or why not?
- 3 What pictures, paintings, or posters do you have on your walls at home?
- 4 Are you good at drawing? What do you like to draw?
- 5 What do you think is the most beautiful work of art in the world?
- 6 Do you like contemporary art?
- 7 Can you match the art galleries and museums to the city they are in?  
1 the Tate  
2 the Metropolitan Museum of Art  
3 the Pompidou Center  
4 the Uffizi Gallery  
5 the Prado  
a New York  
b Paris  
c London  
d Madrid  
e Florence
- 8 What do you think is the most famous painting in the world?



## LEONARDO DA VINCI

Everything you should know about Leonardo da Vinci and the *Mona Lisa*

It's the most famous work of art on the planet.

The *Mona Lisa* is also known as *La Gioconda*.

Leonardo da Vinci painted it between 1503 and 1506. We know that the painting was special to Leonardo because he spent so long working on it. In one of his notebooks, he wrote, "Tell me, tell me, has one ever finished anything?"

Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci (his full name) was born in 1452, the son of a lawyer in the Tuscan town of Vinci.

He didn't have a classical education but became an apprentice in the studio of painter and sculptor Andrea del Verrocchio.

He spent 13 years there, learning and working with other important painters such as Sandro Botticelli.

He was a vegetarian.

Apart from being an artist, Leonardo was an engineer, inventor, and philosopher. He also loved geology, anatomy, and astronomy. As a scientist, he was ahead of his time.

He died in France in 1519, age 67.

We don't have any final proof of the identity of the woman in the painting. Most people agree that it is a portrait of Mona Lisa, who married Francesco di Bartolomeo di Zanoli del Giocondo in 1495. The title *La Gioconda* comes from his last name.

There have been theories that the portrait is of Leonardo's vision of an ideal woman or of an adolescent boy dressed as a woman or even a self-portrait.

It was painted on a thin backing of wood, which is now extremely fragile. This is why it is preserved behind a glass case.

The painting was acquired by François I of France. He knew Leonardo when the painter lived in France.

The painting remained in French royal collections from the beginning of the 16th century to the creation of the Central Arts Museum at the Louvre in 1793.

The *Mona Lisa* was stolen from the Louvre on August 21, 1911. An Italian painter, Vincenzo Peruggia, stole it to return it to its country of origin. It was found almost two years later.

Since then, the painting has left France on two occasions: in 1963 to the USA and in 1974 to Japan. The painting was welcomed in both countries like a visiting movie star.

President John F. Kennedy opened the *Mona Lisa* exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, saying, "This painting is the second lady that the people of France have sent to the United States and, though she will not stay with us as long as the Statue of Liberty, our appreciation is equally great."

The *Mona Lisa* is housed at the Louvre in Paris.



## PHRASEBOOK

**Expressing uncertainty when talking about facts**

**If you want to check a fact with someone**

Didn't he ... ?  
Wasn't he ... ?

**If you don't trust your memory**

I think he was ...

If I remember correctly, he ...  
I'm not sure, but ...

**If you aren't sure about the source of your information**

I read somewhere that ...  
I heard that ...  
Someone told me that ...



## WHAT CAN YOU REMEMBER?

Complete the summaries.

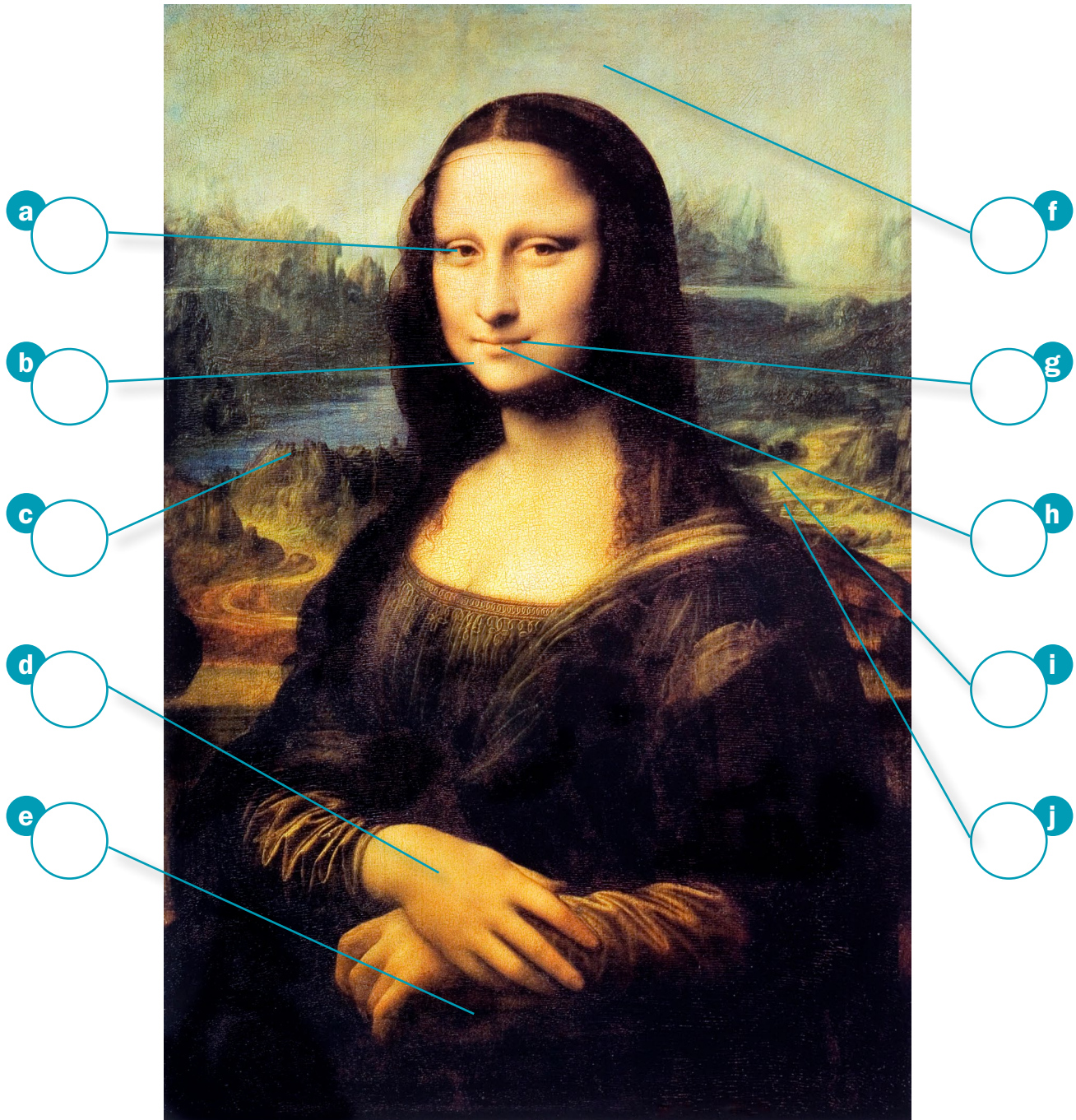
The Mona Lisa was painted around \_\_\_\_\_ (1) years ago. The other name for the Mona Lisa is \_\_\_\_\_ (2), which is based on her husband's \_\_\_\_\_ (3). It was painted sometime between \_\_\_\_\_ (4) and \_\_\_\_\_ (5). The French king \_\_\_\_\_ (6) acquired the painting when Leonardo da Vinci went to live in France at the end of his life, and it's now on display at the \_\_\_\_\_ (7) art gallery in \_\_\_\_\_ (8). It's kept behind a \_\_\_\_\_ (9) because it was painted on a thin layer of wood and so is very fragile. The Mona Lisa has left the gallery only \_\_\_\_\_ (10) times: once when it was stolen by a painter who wanted to return it to \_\_\_\_\_ (11) and twice on loan to other countries – the \_\_\_\_\_ (12) and \_\_\_\_\_ (13).

Leonardo da Vinci's full name was Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci. He was born in \_\_\_\_\_ (1) in the town of \_\_\_\_\_ (2) in Tuscany and died at the age of \_\_\_\_\_ (3) in \_\_\_\_\_ (4). He studied painting and sculpture for 13 years under \_\_\_\_\_ (5) but, apart from being an artist, he was also an important \_\_\_\_\_ (6). He was also interested in \_\_\_\_\_ (7), \_\_\_\_\_ (8), and \_\_\_\_\_ (9). A curious fact about Leonardo da Vinci is that he didn't eat \_\_\_\_\_ (10).

## THE MONA LISA

### Look closer

Most of us think we know what the *Mona Lisa* looks like, but have you ever taken a really close look at the painting? Do you know what makes it special?



1 bridge

2 eyes

3 lips

4 jaw

5 hands

6 chair

7 sky

8 mountains

9 river

10 the smile

### Bridge

The bridge depicted by Leonardo behind Mona Lisa's left shoulder is the one at Buriano. It still exists. The bridge, which has seven irregular arches, is still open to road traffic, and the area is a popular picnic spot.

### Eyes

Leonardo believed the eyes were the "windows to the soul." Is she looking at us or at something behind us that we can't see?

### Lips

There are no hard outlines. Leonardo used a technique called *sfumato*, which gave objects a soft look.

### Jaw

The jawline is very masculine, which is one reason why some people thought the picture might be a self-portrait. Artists of the time thought beauty was a combination of male and female features.

### Hands

She isn't wearing any rings, which is unusual for a married woman. Her hands are slightly swollen, which some experts believe is evidence that the sitter, Lisa del Giocondo, was pregnant.

### Chair

She is sitting with her body facing one direction and her face looking toward us, giving the painting a sense of movement. This is a technique still used today by photographers.

### Sky

For many years, King François I hung the painting in his bathroom. The steam might have caused the cracking that can be seen in the sky.

### Mountains

Leonardo was fascinated by geology. His notebooks suggest this landscape is the Arno Valley, one of the areas that Leonardo surveyed for Cesare Borgia. Maps by Leonardo da Vinci, which have recently been assembled for the first time in his native Tuscany, have helped to identify the landscape in the *Mona Lisa*.

### River

As an engineer, Leonardo was fascinated by the power of water.

### The smile

The smile is higher on the right and lower on the left. This makes her expression unusual. Scientists have recently suggested that we are fascinated by her smile because of the way the human eye processes information. Professor Margaret Livingstone of Harvard University says that the eye uses two types of vision, direct and peripheral. When we focus on the smile, we use direct vision and the smile seems to disappear, but when we look at other parts of the painting, our peripheral vision notices shadows and picks up Mona Lisa's smile.



Complete the sentences about the painting.

- 1 She looks ...
- 2 She's wearing ...
- 3 In the background, you can just see ...
- 4 She seems to be looking ...
- 5 Maybe she's thinking about ...
- 6 The scene behind could represent ...

## WEBQUEST



You are going to write a story based on a painting. You should use the painting as a starting point and invent extra details to complete your story.

Search online for a painting that you like. The painting must include at least one person. You could use Google Images to search for paintings by, for example, Johannes Vermeer, Edward Hopper, or Lucian Freud. Or, you could choose a painting from a gallery website, such as [www.nationalgallery.org.uk/artists](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/artists).

## PHRASEBOOK



### Describing a painting with imaginary facts about the past and predictions about the future.

This should be the basic structure of your story:

#### Introduction

Say something about the picture you're describing (title, painter, genre, why you've chosen it) and give a very brief description of what it shows.

#### First paragraph

Who is the person in the painting? What was the person doing before the moment that is captured in the painting?

Example – *The woman in the picture was born into a poor family.*

#### Second paragraph

What is the person doing in the painting?

Example – *Now, she is wearing very expensive clothes.*

#### Third paragraph

What happens next?

Example – *She is going to find her poor parents so she can give them some of her money.*

#### Conclusion

There could be a surprising or funny end to the story.

Make sure you use the correct tenses when talking about past, present, and future.

