

Achievements of Leonardo da Vinci

[MUSIC PLAYING] His name was Leonardo da Vinci. He was a painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, and scientist. And he had one of the finest minds of his century. Leonardo was born in 1452 in the town of Vinci in Northern Italy.

By the age of 15, he had moved with his father to Florence, a city of great culture, where the Renaissance was in full bloom. The Renaissance was a revival of art and learning in Europe not seen since the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It was characterized by a thirst for knowledge of all kinds and a desire to explore the possibilities of human achievement.

True to these ideals, Leonardo studied astronomy, anatomy, botany, and geology. Today, we know him best as the painter of the Mona Lisa, but he was also an inventor. His notebooks contained plans for hundreds of machines that were far ahead of their time, ships, planes, and weapons of war dreamed of hundreds of years before science would create the materials necessary to build them.

Leonardo opened a studio in Florence in his late 20s. His drawings from this time period include inventions of farm tools, pumps, and weaving machines. He drew amazingly accurate sketches of human body parts and their functions. A left-hander, Leonardo, sometimes wrote backwards. This can be read with a mirror.

In 1482, Leonardo left Florence for a job with the Duke of Milan. He worked for the Duke for 17 years as an artist and engineer, designing war machines, weapons, and military defenses. He even had an idea for an armored car. Eight men would have fired its cannons and turned cranks to power its wheels.

It wasn't until more than 400 years later that the tank became a reality. First appearing in 1916, during World War I, Leonardo was also an architect and an urban planner. When the Duke hired him as an engineer to design buildings, machinery canals, and forts, Leonardo came up with plans for an ideal city. It would be built on two levels crisscrossed by canals that would provide transportation.

Leonardo's greatest dream was for humans to fly. His notebooks are filled with notes and sketches about birds. He drew several designs of man-powered flying machines. A few years ago, scientists brought one of these designs to life.

Using lightweight materials that didn't exist in Leonardo's time, they built this glider with wings like those Leonardo envisioned. Another flying machine Leonardo drew looked like this. We know it is the helicopter.

Leonardo was aware of the perils of flight so he also designed a parachute, a cloth covered tent, which would enable a person to fall safely from a great height. Leonardo spent his last three years in France working as chief, painter, and engineer to King Francis I. He died there in 1519 at the age of 67.

At the time of his death, he was famous mostly as an artist. He actually created very few paintings, but nearly all of them are considered masterpieces. Today, we understand the full scope of

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Leonardo's genius, his pursuit of knowledge, and an understanding of nature made him the ultimate Renaissance man, a person who excels in many things.

