

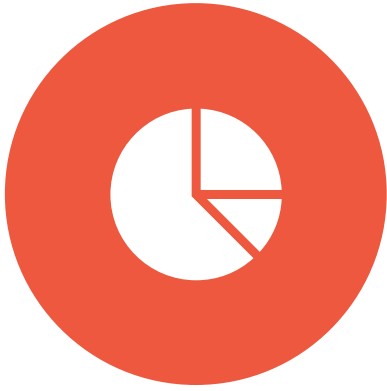


Leonardo da Vinci & "La Gioconda"

CLIL LESSON

Teacher: Fasolino Sara

WHAT?



SUBJECT: ART HISTORY



LANGUAGE: ENGLISH .



PERIOD: 1500

Part 1: The Artist

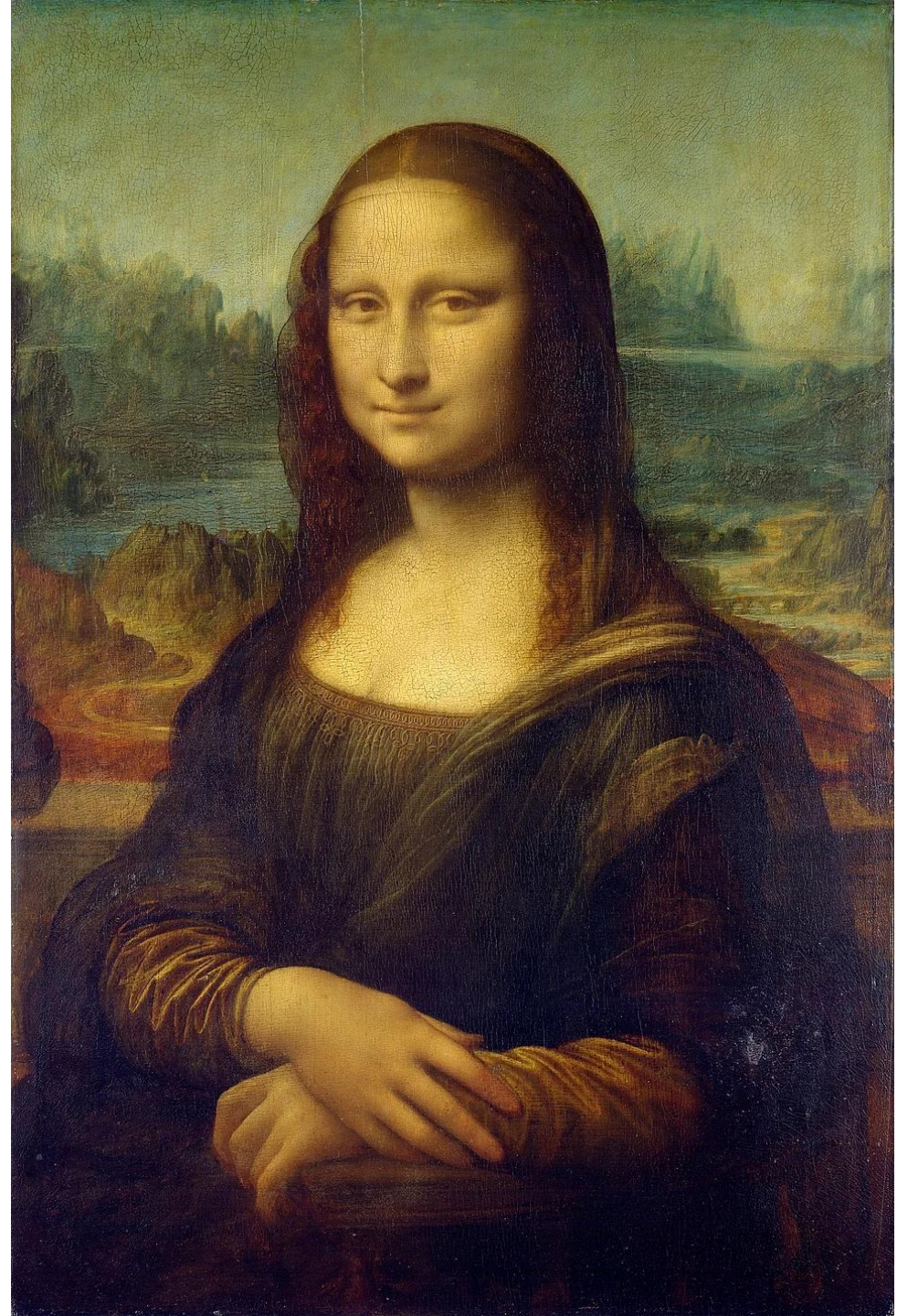
(EN) Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was an Italian polymath of the High Renaissance. He is widely considered one of the greatest painters of all time and perhaps the most diversely talented person ever to have lived. His genius is legendary.

He is the archetype of the **"Renaissance Man"** (Uomo Universale), a person with curiosity and expertise in many different fields. While he is famous for paintings like the "Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper," he was also a brilliant scientist, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, and writer. He left thousands of pages of notebooks filled with drawings, scientific diagrams, and notes (often written in mirror-inverted script).



La Gioconda

(EN) The "Mona Lisa" (known in Italian as "La Gioconda") is a half-length portrait painted by Leonardo da Vinci between 1503 and 1506. It is perhaps the most famous painting in the world, housed in the Louvre Museum in Paris. The subject is believed to be Lisa Gherardini, the wife of a Florentine merchant. Leonardo kept this painting with him his entire life. He took it from Italy to France when he went to work for King Francis I, which is why it remains in France today. Its fame grew significantly after it was stolen from the Louvre in 1911 by an Italian employee who believed it belonged to Italy. Its return two years later made it a global icon.



(EN) Before the "Mona Lisa," most portraits (especially of women) were stiff, formal, and shown in profile (from the side). Leonardo revolutionized the genre.

The Pose: He showed the subject in a 3/4 pose (three-quarter pose), turned towards the viewer. This was dynamic and created a sense of interaction.



The Gaze: Her gaze is famous because it appears to follow the viewer, no matter where they stand. This creates a psychological connection.

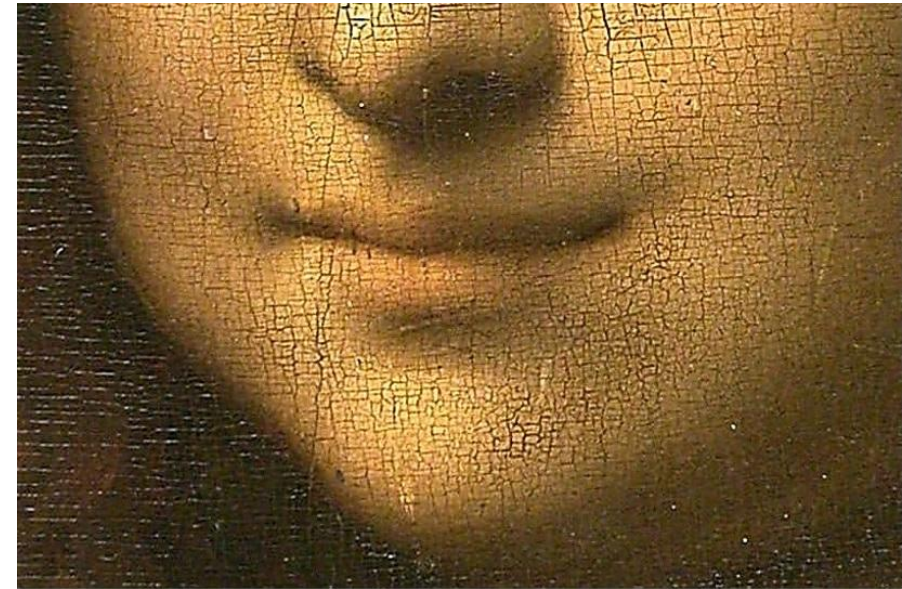
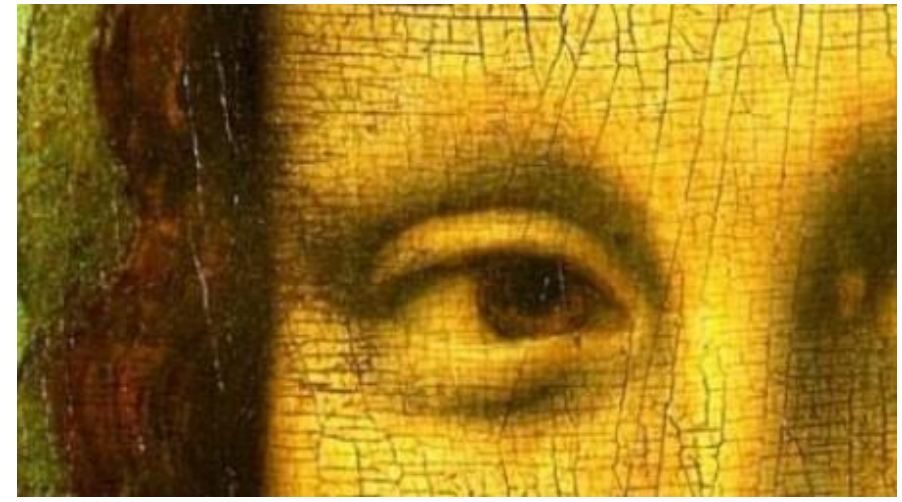
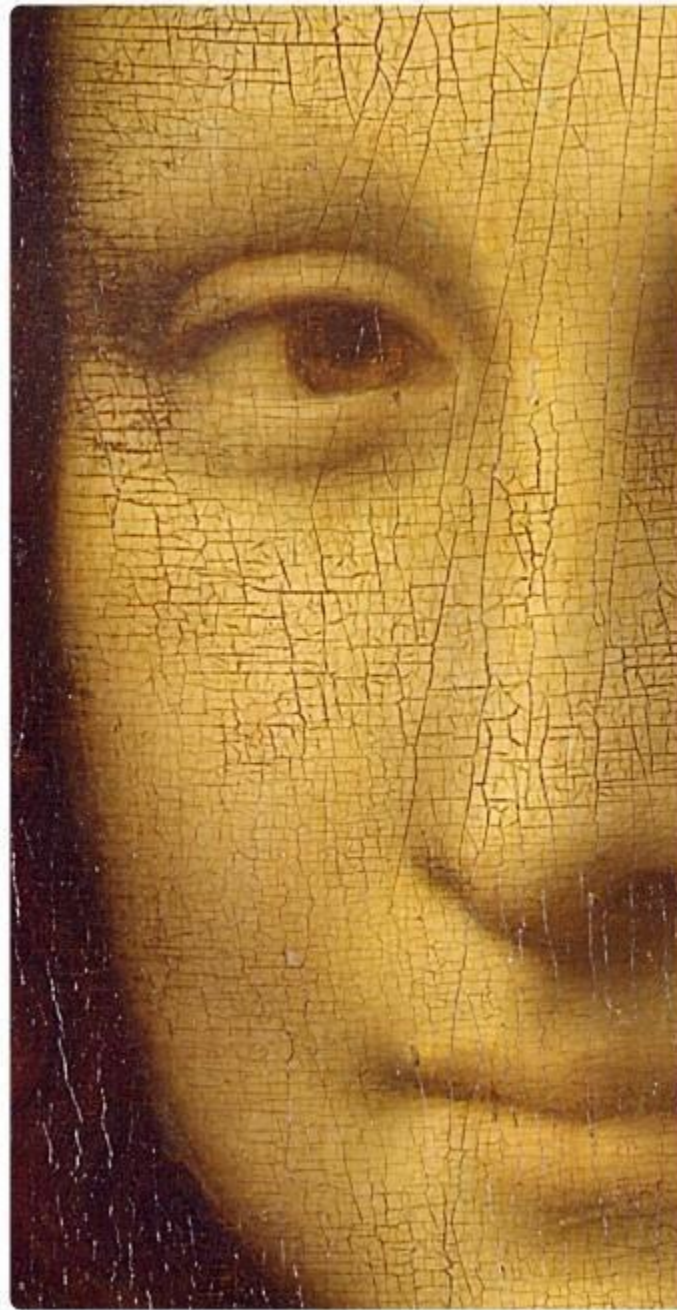


The Lack of Symbols: She is not painted with jewelry or symbols of wealth (like most portraits of the time). The focus is purely on her personality and inner life, not her social status.



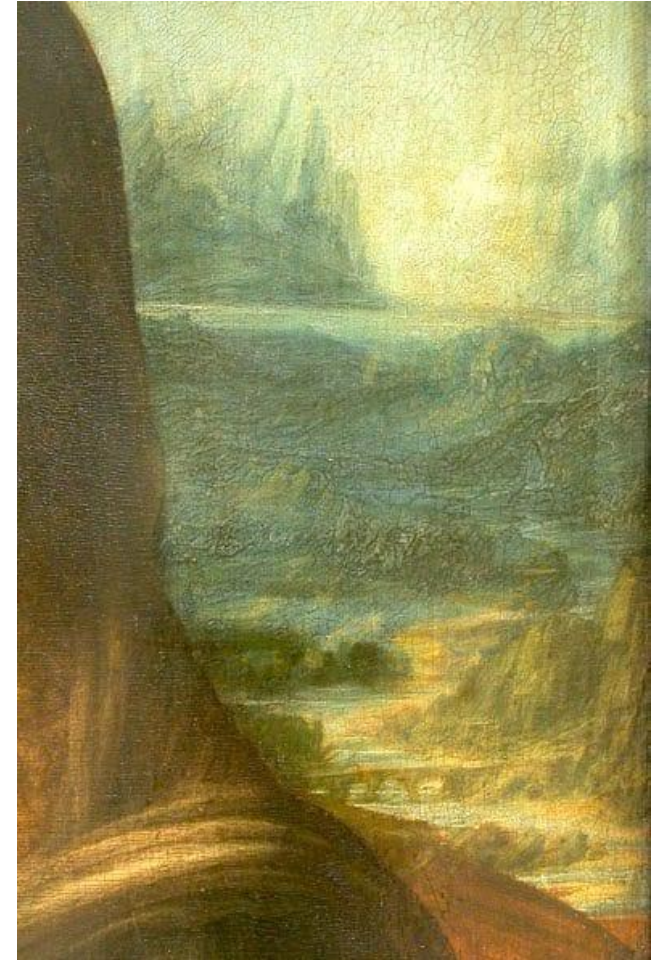
The Smile and "Sfumato" (EN) The "Mona Lisa" is famous for her enigmatic smile. It is subtle, ambiguous, and seems to appear and disappear. Leonardo achieved this effect using a technique he perfected called "sfumato".

Sfumato (from the Italian word *fumo*, meaning "smoke") is a painting technique that involves blending colors and tones so subtly that there are no sharp outlines (contorni). By blurring the corners of the mouth and eyes—the parts of the face that show emotion the most—Leonardo created an expression that is not fixed, but open to interpretation.



Landscape and Aerial Perspective

(EN) The background is a fantastical, dream-like landscape. It is not a real place. It seems almost alien, which makes the human figure in front seem even more present and real. Leonardo used **aerial perspective** (also called atmospheric perspective) to create a sense of deep space and depth. This technique mimics how the atmosphere affects our vision: objects in the distance appear hazier, bluer, and less detailed than objects in the foreground.



Part 3: Key Terminology / Termini Specifici (Glossary)

English Term	Termine Italiano	Meaning / Spiegazione
High Renaissance	Alto Rinascimento	The peak period of the Italian Renaissance (c. 1490s–1527), featuring Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael.
Polymath	Poliedrico / Polimatematico	A person with wide-ranging knowledge or learning in many different fields.
Renaissance Man	Uomo Universale	The ideal of the Renaissance: a person (like Leonardo) skilled in many areas.
Sfumato	Sfumato	(Lit. "smoky") A painting technique for softening transitions between colors, creating a smoky or hazy effect.
Aerial Perspective	Prospettiva Aerea	A technique to create depth by making distant objects hazier, bluer, and less detailed.
Enigmatic	Enigmatico	Mysterious, difficult to interpret or understand (used for the smile).
Gaze	Sguardo	A steady, intense look.
Outline / Contour	Contorno / Linea	The line that defines the edge of a shape. Sfumato avoids sharp outlines.
Depth	Profondità	The illusion of distance (front-to-back) in a painting.
Portrait	Ritratto	A painting, drawing, or photograph of a person, especially one focusing on the face.
Notebook / Codex	Taccuino / Codice	The bound books of notes and drawings Leonardo kept.
Profile	Profilo	A view of an object (like a face) from the side.
Icon	Icona	A person or thing regarded as a representative symbol of something.
To steal (stole)	Rubare (rubò)	To take something without permission (referring to the 1911 theft).

Part 4: Final Questions

What is the "Renaissance Man" (Uomo Universale)?

What is the name of the famous painting technique Leonardo used to create the "Mona Lisa's" smile?

How does aerial perspective create depth in the background?

(Language) Find a word in the text that means "mysterious" or "difficult to understand".

(Content) Why was Leonardo's 3/4 pose for a portrait considered innovative?