

Name:

Class:

School:

Date:

MEET MONA LISA

Welcome young art connoisseurs! As you wander through each chapter of this exhibition, you'll discover the history, legends and profound impact of this iconic masterpiece.

Follow the instructions on the worksheet, locate the relevant exhibits in the designated galleries and answer the questions. You can complete the final page at your convenience.

💡 Read the exhibit labels carefully — the answers are right there!



START EXPLORING AND HAVE FUN!

PORTRAITS EVERYWHERE

Where else have you seen portraits in your daily life? Perhaps on stamps, T-shirts, brand logos, or even photos you took. Throughout history, in both East and West, portraiture has been an enduring and timeless subject in art, appearing simultaneously across various artistic traditions around the world.

◆ **Let's see:** What do you think these portraits were used for?

Observe the portraits in **Gallery 4**.

Choose your favourite one here, and sketch its **outline** and **expression**!



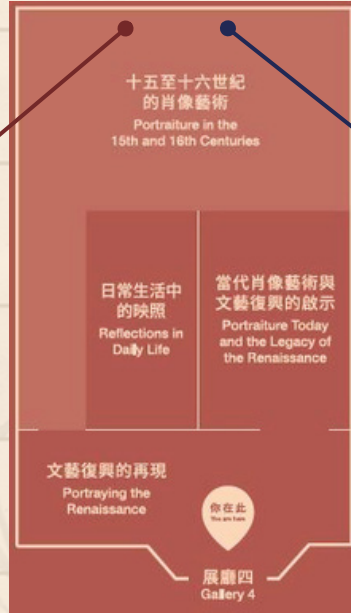
PORTRAITURE IN THE RENAISSANCE

Can you point out the similarities and differences between the *Mona Lisa* and the following two portraits?

💡 Compare the portraits in terms of their postures, expressions, costumes and angles.



Saint Mary Magdalene



Gallery 4 Floor Plan



Portrait of Beatrice d'Este

Similarities:

Similarities:

Differences:

Differences:

BEFORE THE RENAISSANCE: THE SYMBOLIC FACE

During the Middle Ages, portraits almost exclusively featured religious figures and nobles. The figures were usually presented in strict profile compositions with idealised faces to project an image of sacredness, authority and status. Women were usually depicted as religious figures, such as the Virgin Mary or female saints, with the aim of conveying doctrine and moral teachings.

RENAISSANCE: THE AUTHENTIC INDIVIDUAL

During the Renaissance, portraiture underwent a significant transformation. The range of subjects expanded to include merchants, scholars, artists and others. Compositions began to feature frontal and three-quarter views, capturing an accurate portrayal of the individual in a fleeting moment. For the first time, the characters' thoughts, emotions and personalities became the subject of artistic expression, presented through costume, posture and the objects surrounding them.

STEPPING INTO THE MONA LISA

In 1503 in Florence, Leonardo da Vinci began painting a portrait of Lisa, the wife of a silk merchant (which later became known as the *Mona Lisa*). He wanted to give his paintings a sense of life, so that viewers could almost feel her presence as a living being and perhaps even sense her thoughts. Although the painting remained unfinished at his death in 1519, it became a profound testament to Leonardo's artistic and scientific explorations. Why has this unfinished painting become one of the most legendary works in the history of Western art? Let's step into the world of the *Mona Lisa* together and examine how Leonardo infused this portrait with eternal vitality through his brushstrokes.

💡 Leonardo da Vinci was deeply influenced by Flemish painting from the 15th to 17th centuries, known for its realistic details and vibrant colours.



Look closely at the painting and note the fading contours.

What is the **special technique** Leonardo used to make the *Mona Lisa* look so lifelike?

💡 The name of this technique derives from Italian, meaning "to fade" or "to vanish like smoke". The painter uses subtle gradations from light to dark to eliminate lines and boundaries, creating a natural, fluid transition between colours and tones. This approach realistically reproduces the softness of skin and the sense of air movement, and adds a layer of mystery and subtlety to the painting.

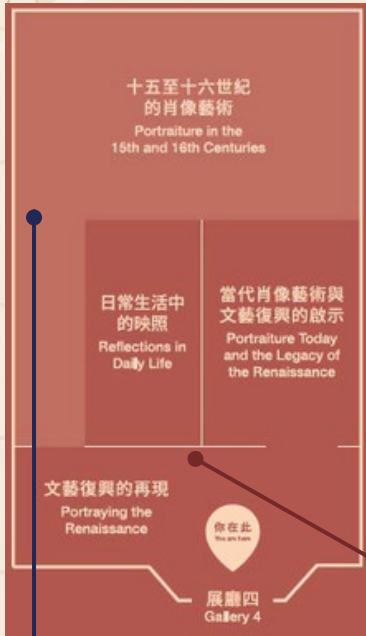
◆ **As you look around this gallery, can you find any other works by Leonardo da Vinci that used this technique?**

LEONARDO DA VINCI WAS NOT JUST A PAINTER — HE WAS ALSO A SCIENTIST, ANATOMIST AND ENGINEER!

Carefully observe the posture, gesture and expression of the subject of the *Mona Lisa*. Does she appear calm, mysterious or thoughtful? How did Leonardo da Vinci depict human anatomy, facial proportions and even subtle movements? Behind these details lies his profound understanding of the human body and emotions.

Observe the copy of *The Last Supper*:

When Jesus declares, "One of you shall betray me", examine the disciples' reactions in the copy. How do their gestures and expressions convey surprise, anger and confusion?



Gallery 4 Floor Plan



Sheet from the Codex Atlanticus, Page 180
Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)
 c.1510
 Black and red pencil, pen and various inks on paper
 Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, fols. 118v
 © Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana/Mondadori Portfolio



Sheet from the Codex Atlanticus, Page 575
Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)
 c.1508
 Black pencil, pen and brown ink on paper
 Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, fols. 575r
 © Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana/Mondadori Portfolio

Can you identify Judas, who betrayed Jesus, and the other apostle, Thomas, based on their postures and expressions?

- 💡 Judas, holding a bag of silver in his hand, looks nervous and terrified after hearing Jesus' announcement.
- 💡 Thomas raises one finger to Jesus, pointing upwards in a gesture of doubt, expressing scepticism about the prophecy of Jesus' resurrection.

◆ The delicate depiction of the figures in the copy of *The Last Supper* gives the composition a powerful narrative. The sketches in *Sheets from the Codex Atlanticus* further confirm Leonardo da Vinci's research on the human body and face, inspiring his vivid portraiture. Take a closer look at his manuscripts displayed in the gallery.

THE BACKGROUND



In traditional portraits, the background was merely a simple sky or basic indoor decoration. The *Mona Lisa* not only revolutionised portraiture; the intricate, dreamlike landscape behind her also marks a key shift in the Renaissance. The landscape gradually began to share equal standing with the figure, conveying emotion and meaning together. Step by step, the landscape became an independent artistic theme, laying the groundwork for pure landscape painting in the 16th century.

Pay attention to the following two works. In what details do they resemble the style of Renaissance landscape painting?



Leonardo da Vinci Dwelling in Huang Gongwang's Mountains
Xu Lei (1963–)

2021
Ink and colour on paper
Courtesy of the artist and Ying Centre for Contemporary Space
Photo courtesy of the artist and Ying Centre for Contemporary Space

Describe it.

(How does this landscape painting depict distance and depth? Pay attention to the variations in ink density and lines.)

Analyse.

(Is there a clear focal point in this landscape painting and the background of the *Mona Lisa*? What kind of atmosphere do the two landscapes create?)



Firenze Breakfast with Omega 3 Egg
Holly Lee (1953–2024)

2000
Photograph
Donated by Ms Holly Lee
Collection of Hong Kong Heritage Museum,
HM2004.38.6

Describe it.

(How does this "composite photograph" mimic the effect of an oil painting?)

Analyse.

(What are the similarities and differences between the main subject of this painting and the *Mona Lisa*? Do you think this work can be called a portrait?)

THE FEMALE CELEBRITY: MONA LISA

To this day, the face of the *Mona Lisa* continues to inspire countless artists, with her image frequently appearing in installation art and street art. She is also a timeless classic icon in the world of advertising and has been reproduced on thousands of objects.

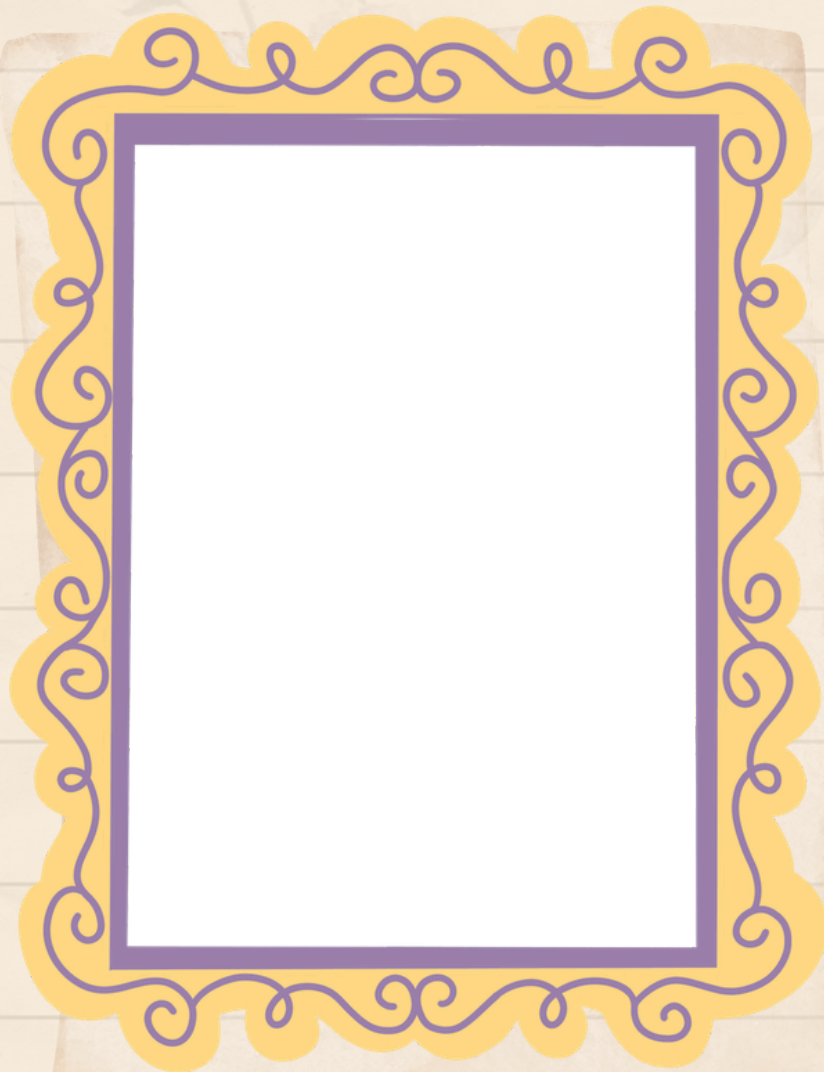
Head to **Gallery 5** to experience this "Mona Lisa Mania", which is popular all over the world.

CREATE YOUR OWN MASTERPIECE:

Unleash your creativity and conceive your own portrait of "Mona Lisa"

(After exploring all these topics, you too can create portraits like a painter. First, consider the pose and mood of the subject. What background will you choose? What message or emotion do you want your painting to express? Let's get started creating your own artwork step by step!)

Share your artwork by uploading it to social media and tag @heritagemuseum.hk!



As you leave the galleries and return to your daily life, continue to explore. Perhaps on a street corner you'll unexpectedly encounter Mona Lisa!