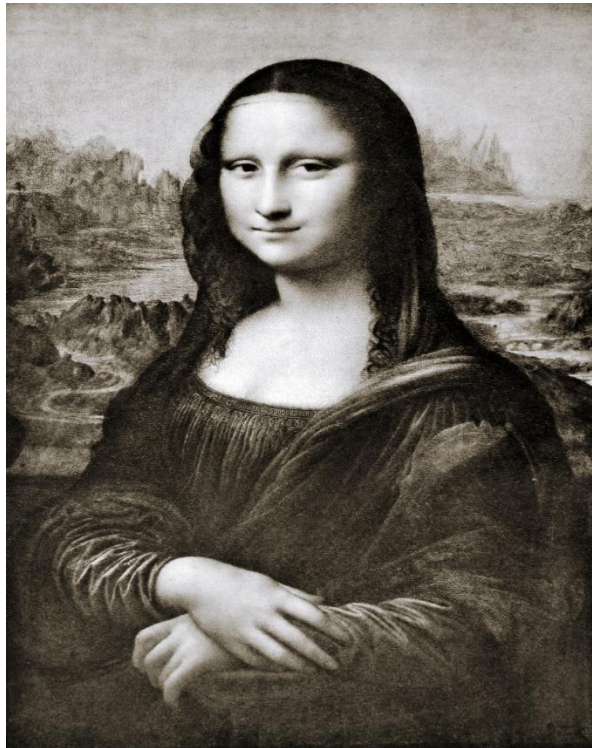


THE STORY OF THE MOST FAMOUS PAINTING IN THE WORLD



When it comes to famous works of art, probably the first painting that comes to mind is the Mona Lisa. What has made the Mona Lisa the most famous picture in the world? Five centuries after Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa, her mysterious smile has reached celebrity status.



But who exactly was Mona Lisa? Over the years, there have been many theories about the true identity of the woman in the picture but most art historians now believe that it was Lisa del Giocondo. That's why the Mona Lisa is also called La Gioconda. Leonardo da Vinci began painting the Mona Lisa about 1503 in Florence and he worked on it

over several years. French King Francis I, in whose court Leonardo spent the last years of his life, bought the painting after Leonardo's death and it is now the property of France. It is exhibited at the Louvre museum in Paris.

On 21st August 1911, the painting was stolen. That theft created a legend and made the Mona Lisa even more popular than ever before. Newspapers all over the world wrote about the missing masterpiece. Thousands of people went to the Louvre to stare in shock at the empty space on the wall, where the Mona Lisa once hung, and leave flowers, notes, and other remembrances. The police unsuccessfully followed many trails. During the investigation, the police arrested poet Guillaume Apollinaire but he was soon released. They even questioned Pablo Picasso.



Two years went by before the thief was discovered. The thief turned out to be Vincenzo Peruggia. He was a former employee of the Louvre who, convinced that the painting belonged to Italy and should not remain in France, decided to steal it. He took the painting, locked himself in a closet overnight and left the museum the next morning with the painting under his coat. He kept the painting in his apartment for two years before returning to Italy. He was arrested when he was trying to sell the painting to the director of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. During the trial, the thief was said to be 'mentally disabled' and was in prison for only seven months. However, he did briefly get his wish – the Mona Lisa toured Italy before returning to the Louvre in Paris, where it remains today, exhibited behind bulletproof glass.

A Answer the questions.

- 1 When did Leonardo da Vinci start painting the Mona Lisa?
- 2 What is the other name for the Mona Lisa?
- 3 Who bought the painting?
- 4 What made the painting even more famous?
- 5 What was the reaction of people after the theft?
- 6 How long did the Mona Lisa remain missing?
- 7 Who were some famous suspects?
- 8 When was the real thief arrested?
- 9 How long was he in prison?
- 10 How does the museum protect the Mona Lisa?

B What about you?

- 1 Do you enjoy art lessons at school? (Why/Why not?)
- 2 Do you like drawing?
- 3 Do you ever draw pictures at home just for fun?
- 4 When was the last time you went to an art gallery or exhibition?

C1 You've probably heard about the following artists. Match the artists with the countries they are from.

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Pablo Picasso | a) the Netherlands |
| 2 Michelangelo | b) France |
| 3 Auguste Rodin | c) Croatia |
| 4 Ivan Meštrović | d) Spain |
| 5 Vincent van Gogh | e) Italy |

C2 Go online and find some information on one of these artists and report to your classmates.