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Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni simply known as Michelangelo is arguably one of the greatest artists ever. He was a painter and a sculptor by profession. Born in the 1470s in Caprese, Michelangelo followed his passion to become one of the greatest artists of his time. His influence was not only felt in the religious world but he also influenced both the western culture and political being at his time. During his lifetime, he made some of the world's most famous sculptors and paintings. He also wrote poems and sonnets that have been inspirational to many even today. His contributions to the development of the western culture were enormous. He not only contributed for the development of Christianity but also influenced the west politically, culturally and economically.

Michelangelo was born on 6th march 1475 in Caprese. His father Ludovico Buonarotto, was a middleclass man and a lower dignitary often doing a few government jobs. Young Michelangelo had great passion for art and had shown great talent. At age thirteen he became Domenico Ghirlandaio's apprentice where he learnt his first painting and art skills. After showing his great talent he was taken by the then ruler Lorenzo de' Medici to further promote his talent. At Medici's place great intellectuals, poets and some of the most talented people in various fields surrounded him at the time. One of the people Michelangelo met at Medici's place was Bertoldo di Giovanni who was a teacher of sculpture. Michelangelo learnt how to sculpture. Unlike his teacher who mainly built bronze sculptures, Michelangelo built marble sculptures. In 1494 after Medici was thrown out of power, Michelangelo fled to Venice then to Bologna. In bologna he made some carvings and dedicated them to one of the churches in there. He later returned to Medici's

employment where he carved a sculpture of John the Baptist and Cupid. This sculpture was sold to a cardinal in Rome and therefore earned Michelangelo an invitation to Rome. (Stanley, Diane 2000)

His entry into Rome marked the beginning of his rise to fame. He got to Rome at the age of twenty-one years and worked for a cardinal called Raffaele Riario. His first assignment was to carve a statue of a Roman wine god named Bacchus. The cardinal rejected his carving and his career in Rome began poorly. However, in the following year the then French Ambassador ordered the carving of one of the greatest carvings ever made called the 'pieta'. The pieta was a carving of Mary holding the dead body of Jesus in her hands. The completion of the pieta marked the beginning of his great career in Rome. (Stanley, Diane 2000)

Some of his most famous works include the statue of David and the Sistine chapel ceiling. Michelangelo later returned to Florence after the fall of the great anti-renaissance leader Girolamo Savonarola. He then embarked on a mission to finish one of his greatest works the statue of David. The statue of David was a sign of the freedom of Florentine. This statue was made out of marble and became one of the world's most famous statues at the time. Michelangelo returned to Rome in 1505 after he was summoned by Pope Julius II to build the pope's tomb. During his stay in Rome he painted the ceiling of the Sistine chapel which arguably the greatest paintings to be done on earth. The painting, which took Michelangelo four years to complete, was an outstanding painting of various people of the bible both of the old and new testament mixed with great imagination and an aspect of the tradition roman religion. The painting that originally was to have the twelve disciples

ended up with three hundred characters drawn from various parts of the bible. The most spectacular thing about the paintings is how Michelangelo could visualize the various characters and bring out their real images.

Michelangelo made other works of art like the drawing of the judgment, and the sculpture of Moses among many others.

Michelangelo live at the beginning of the renaissance period in Europe.

Historians argue that the renaissance began in Italy in the early 15th century. The renaissance period was a period of various dramatic events both in the religious and political scenes. The people were in such of knowledge and wisdom. Careers like literature poetry and politics were some of the most valued things one could do. In the religious scenes, it marked the uprising of the Protestants. The renaissance in Europe marked the beginning of the formation of the western culture. At the time, the Roman Catholic pope was the most powerful in the roman kingdom. The pope therefore contributed greatly to the activities during the renaissance period. The intellectuals expressed their wisdom to the world in various ways. One of the major ways was through works of art. Various leaders at the time valued good work of art, which was part of their show of might. Various cities had specific symbols that were placed in various places and became the identities of specific cities. Some of the paintings and carvings done at the time were an expression power and various aspects valued in different cities. For example, the statue of David built by Michelangelo was an expression of the strength of the city of Florence. The political setting of the time was also complex. The battle for power was a common thing the reign of different rulers at different times forced Michelangelo to move from city to city during

rising of these political upheavals. The church however remained the main source of power in Rome at the time and therefore once Michelangelo settled in Rome he concentrated in his work and did most of his paintings there. Michelangelo lived at a time when the Jews had been expelled from most countries in Europe. With the dominance of Christianity in most parts of Europe, the Jews were discriminated against and expelled from most of the countries in Europe for example Spain and Portugal. The Jews in these countries were executed and the rest fled from Europe back to their motherland. Michelangelo tried to fight for fairness among the Jews by painting pictures of the biblical Jews of the Old Testament in the Sistine chapel. In a society where the Jews were viewed as evil because they were the tormentors of Jesus, Michelangelo painted a different picture of them and reminded the people that they were also Jesus' ancestors. (Brand, Peter, Lino P 2004) The Christians on the other hand were divided by their love for power, differences in doctrines and propaganda. His works of art captured on the things these groups of people had in common thus uniting them. He was among the few people who tried to unite the various religions in Europe and therefore unite the people of Europe through art. He encouraged the spirit of universal brotherhood.(Stone, Irvin, 2004)

Apart from his sculptures and paintings, Michelangelo also wrote many poems and wise sayings. Most of today's motivational speakers use his sayings in their speeches. In his last few years, Michelangelo was involved in architecture and the construction of Rome. He planned the building of several buildings in Rome after the successive popes asked for them. He might have planned some of the greatest building in Vatican today. among

some of his alleged constructions is the dome which is one of the greatest tourist attraction in Italy today. He died in 1564 having made many accomplishments in his life. Having friends in very influential positions in the time he influenced change in Europe to the formation of today's European/western culture.

Michelangelo has greatly contributed to today's setting of Europe. His pieces of art inspired the artwork even after his death. Many artists have done their works of art inspired by the works of Michelangelo. His contributions in promoting a humanistic approach in Europe bore fruits during the renaissance. The humanist activists fought for a more humanistic approach to religion, which brought to end the persecution and killing of the Jewish people in Europe. This has greatly influenced the stand of modern Europe. His drawings have become of great economic benefit to Rome today. approximately forty million tourists visit the Sistine chapel today to view the works of Michelangelo. His works have also promoted the growth of the Christian religion as his pictures, sculptures and paintings are some of the most valued items in Christian faith.

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