

Legendary portrait by
leonardo da vinci –
mona lisa essay
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Mona Lisa, widely known as Gioconda, is one of the most famous paintings in the whole world. The masterpiece was created by Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci in the sixteenth century. Nowadays, people can enjoy this work of art in the Louvre, Paris.

Leonardo da Vinci made this portrait for Francesco del Gioconda, who asked the painter to draw his wife –Lisa Gherardini. The girl was 24 years old when the painter was 54. Da Vinci was working on the painting for four years but did not finish it. Firstly, the masterpiece was kept by the artist at his place. Afterward, the painting became the possession of Francis I. Through centuries, a lot of people were willing to obtain this beautiful piece of art, and the picture was even stolen from the Louvre. Pablo Picasso was thought to be responsible for the theft, although he was not a real robber. Nowadays, the painting has its own room in the Louvre! Millions of dollars are spent on security system: the picture is protected by bulletproof glass, ultra-modern alarm system and special environment, which maintains good conditions for the canvas itself.

The picture represents sfumato technique, that was widely used in the Renaissance art. The aim of this technique is to achieve more believable image through a soft transition between colors and tones. Da Vinci told that the technique was about blending colors “ in the manner of smoke”. Mona Lisa is a perfect example of using sfumato, especially in the shading around her eyes.

The first fact that we can see while looking at the painting is a contrast between the background and the sitter. One can easily tell that the sitter

looks totally real, but the background landscape is surrealistic. Experts say that this background must have been created by Leonardo's imagination. On the one side, we can see a road which leads to unknown mountains, while on the other side, there is an unknown bridge. While the portrait shows us a real woman, the background landscape does not exist in real life. The realistic scale which Leonardo has deliberately decreased makes the painting more attractive for viewers.

One more interesting fact about Mona Lisa is the absence of eyebrows and eyelashes. The expertise proved that it was not a peculiarity of Gioconda and originally the woman was depicted with both eyelashes and eyebrows. Unfortunately, over the centuries the painting started eroding, and some features (including ones listed above) became invisible. It is fair to say, that this distinction only makes the painting even more original.

The mystery of the picture is in its every detail. The face of Gioconda is very attractive. One can hardly tell, that the girl depicted in the painting is 24 years old, as Lisa looks naïve and mature at the same time. One more mystery of the girl is her eyes. She has her eyes directed at the viewer all the time, no matter from which point you are looking at her.

The portrait includes the hands of the sitter. They are depicted being simply crossed. It adds some calmness, simplicity, and aristocracy to the atmosphere of the painting. The model seems to be close to the viewer, but at the same time, there is a small detail, that separates us from her. Lisa's hands are depicted on the armrest. It creates a barrier between the sitter and the viewer and makes the intimate dialogue impossible.

A lot has been said about the mysterious smile of the model. People are still struggling, whether Mona Lisa has a faint smile or looks sad and thoughtful. Research concerning this issue was conducted by neurobiologists from Freiburg University in 2017. Scientists tried to find out, what are the real emotions of Mona Lisa. They showed eight black and white reproductions of the painting with light changes in the position of Lisa's mouth. 97% of people from the focused group defined the emotion as happiness.

It is fair to say, that the painting is popular because of its author as well. All the features of the sitter look very realistic. This effect was achieved thanks to the talent of Leonardo da Vinci. Except being a good artist, he was also known as a scientist and a doctor. Leonardo was learning human anatomy. Probably, it did contribute to his ability to depict Mona Lisa realistically.

The Mona Lisa painting was recognized to be priceless, which means that no one can sell or buy it. It belongs to the public, and everyone has a chance to enjoy its beauty.

Some art critics tell that there are two more layers under the final painting. There are some outlines of the portrait of a woman on the first one, and a woman with a pearl hat on the second one.

However, not everyone is fascinated by the beauty of Mona Lisa. Over the years the painting has suffered enormous vandalism attacks. The first one took place in 1956 when a visitor of the Louvre decided to throw a bottle of acid at the picture. Some time later, another man threw a rock that damaged the paint on the elbow. Afterward, people decided to make better protection for the masterpiece, by setting a bulletproof shell.

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People can keep struggling about the value of the portrait, telling, that there is nothing special about it. But for more than 500 years the beauty of Mona Lisa has been charming people all over the world and, probably, the masterpiece will never lose its popularity.

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