Today we are going to learn about Michelangelo Buonarroti (mahy kuhl AN juh oh bwaw nahr RAW tee), one of the most famous artists of the Italian Renaissance.

• Born on March 6, 1475 in Caprese, Italy, Michelangelo lived most of his life in Florence, Italy. Today he is so famous that he is known just by his first name. (If a world map is available, have students find Italy.)
• Michelangelo was a famous sculptor, painter, and poet.
• Michelangelo liked to design buildings, so he was also an architect and engineer. Maybe some of you who enjoy working with LEGO®s will grow up to be architects or engineers too.
• Even though Michelangelo was good at many things, creating sculptures was his favorite thing to do.
• To make a sculpture, Michelangelo would chip away at huge blocks of stone with a mallet and chisel to form beautiful pieces of art.

Fun Fact #1:
Michelangelo was very strong, and people said he could split a block of marble with a single strike of his mallet even as an elderly man.

Renaissance—a period of European history between the close of the Middle Ages and the rise of the modern world—from the 14th century through the middle of the 17th century; it was a time of cultural rebirth, a revival of classical art, architecture, literature, and learning that originated in Italy and later spread throughout Europe.

sculptor—an artist who shapes material, such as wood, bronze, marble, clay, etc., into three-dimensional objects or figures by chiseling, molding, modeling, or casting in metal.

mallet—a tool, similar to a hammer, with a large head which is used by sculptors to hit a chisel in order to form a material.
Introduction (continued):

- When Michelangelo was 10 years old, he moved to Florence to go to school, but he preferred to draw. By the time he was 13, he was an apprentice to a well-known artist named Domenico Ghirlandaio (Doh min ee coh GEAR Land I oh) who taught him the art of mural painting.

Fun Fact #2:

Have you ever dreamed of living in a palace? Well, if Michelangelo ever dreamed of this, his dream came true. One year after becoming an apprentice, the very wealthy De Medici (duh MED i chee) family invited him to come live at their palace to study and work at their sculpture school.

- Michelangelo learned a lot at this school as he became a very talented artist.

Fun Fact #3:

Michelangelo also became famous at the age of 24 when he created a sculpture called Pieta (pee ey TAH)—of the Madonna and her son, Jesus. People could not believe someone so young could have made something so beautiful.

[Show image of Pieta in Venezia book, page 19, calling attention to the folds of fabric and other details. Remind students that he chipped away at a block of stone to create this sculpture.]

- Michelangelo was also infamous for being a grouchy guy, so he did not have many friends and fought with just about everybody, including his arch-rival, Leonardo Da Vinci (duh VIN chee). It is rumored that he even got so mad that he threw paint at the Pope, the most important person in the Catholic Church.

- Years later, Michelangelo chipped away at another huge block of marble which Leonardo Da Vinci had refused to work with because it had so many cracks. Michelangelo accepted the challenge and in three years, he had completed one of the most famous sculptures in the world today.

[Show image of David in Venezia book, page 21.]

This sculpture is of David, a hero from The Bible, who bravely fought a giant named Goliath. No one believed that David could defeat this giant. However, David triumphed over Goliath in the story. The people of Florence, therefore, thought that Michelangelo’s sculpture of David was a symbol of Florence’s strength and courage.

- Michelangelo created a lot of detail in his sculpture of David. He had studied anatomy for years, and not only understood how muscles and bones worked together, but also the right proportions of the human body. His sculptures look very realistic, and this is why David is shown without clothes.

Fun Fact #4:

Michelangelo loved to ride horses and rode in the country every day, even when it rained.

- Michelangelo worked right up until his death at the age of 88, which was very old for someone at that time! He died in Rome on February 18, 1564.
Work of Art: (10-15 minutes)

We have talked about some of Michelangelo’s famous sculptures, but he is also famous for his paintings. Now we are going to look at an image of one of Michelangelo’s most famous works of art: The Sistine (SISteen) Chapel ceiling, 1508-1512, paint on moist plaster, 130’ 6” x 43’ 5”, located in the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican, Vatican City, Rome, Italy.

1. What do you notice about this painting? (colors, arches, triangles, lots of people, etc.)

2. Where do you usually see paintings? (hanging in frames on walls, sometimes large murals directly on a wall)

3. This painting is unusual. In fact, you have to do something tricky to see this painting. Any guesses? (You have to look up! It is painted on the ceiling of a church in the Vatican, in Rome, Italy.)

4. How big do you think this painting is? (It is really big. 130’ 6” x 43’ 5”. You could measure your classroom to compare the size of this ceiling, but let’s say your classroom is about a 20’ cube. The Sistine Chapel ceiling would be about six of your classrooms long and about two classrooms wide. It also has a very high ceiling, about three classrooms high.)

5. Take a look at the people in this painting. What do you notice about their size? (Some are big, and some are small. Michelangelo had to exaggerate their sizes because the ceiling was so high, and visitors to the chapel would have a difficult time seeing them if he had painted them life size. Some of these people are about ten feet tall! That’s about the size of two or three first graders standing on each other’s shoulders.) Pope Julius II hired Michelangelo to create this tremendous work of art over 500 years ago. Back then many people still did not know how to read and would learn about history through the stories they were told or by looking at art. The Sistine Chapel ceiling tells us many stories from the Bible.

6. There are a lot of different people in this painting. Can any of you guess how many people Michelangelo included in this painting? (over 300!)

7. Think about some of the paintings you have seen in your life, maybe one in a museum, or a mural on a wall, or one even hanging in your school. Are paintings usually painted on something flat or something that is curved? (flat) Look at this print of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. It is hard to tell, but do you think this ceiling is flat or curved? (curved!)

8. So, the Sistine Chapel ceiling is huge, curved, and way above visitors’ heads. The ceiling is about three classrooms high. How do you think Michelangelo painted this ceiling? (He built special scaffolding with brackets that attached to the walls and placed boards across the brackets. Michelangelo would climb a very tall ladder, and then he would squeeze onto the scaffolding, which was close to the ceiling, lie on his back and paint above his head! This was very hard work.) Another challenge Michelangelo faced was that electricity had not been discovered 500 years ago, so the lighting in the Sistine Chapel was dim.
9. **Without lights, how do you think Michelangelo could see while he was painting?**
   (He worked with a candle strapped to his head, sort-of like a headlamp today. The candle was made of goat grease because that dripped less than candle wax.)
   Michelangelo also had to use very bright paint for visitors to see his painting from the floor 60 feet below. It was a special kind of paint called fresco paint. Fresco means fresh in Italian. This style of painting uses bright paint, which is like watercolor paint thickened with eggs, and is painted on fresh wet plaster. Michelangelo had to work on one section of this ceiling at a time because the paint dried quickly.

10. **How long do you think it took Michelangelo to finish painting all of the sections of this ceiling?** (four years)

11. **How do you think Michelangelo felt when his painting was finally finished?**

12. **Do you think that you could lie on your back for four years painting a picture?**

13. **Do you think that it would be comfortable lying on your back to paint?**

14. **Do you have any further questions about Michelangelo or his works of art?**

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**EXTRA!**

- Michelangelo may have learned to love working with stones because he was raised by a family of stonecutters after his mother became sick and unable to care for her son.
- Michelangelo was the second of five brothers, his mother died when he was young, and his father worked as an official for the city of Florence.
- Most of Michelangelo’s work was commissioned by important patrons like the Catholic Church or the Medici family.
- Michelangelo was extremely interested in the study of the human body and was even granted permission by the Catholic Church (because at the time it was forbidden by the Church) to go to hospitals to study people’s bodies after they had died. In exchange, Michelangelo agreed to create a wooden crucifix for the church.
- Michelangelo brilliantly recreated human forms in both painting and sculpture. He preferred sculpture and was annoyed when his sculpting was interrupted by the Pope’s request for Michelangelo to build a papal tomb. He commanded Michelangelo to begin painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.
- Michelangelo once expressed that he believed a figure already existed in the block of stone and it was his job as a sculptor to release it. He was known as the Divine Michelangelo.
- Occasionally he would not polish his sculptures, leaving evidence of the chisel marks.
- The Sistine Chapel ceiling covered over 5,400 square feet. Michelangelo typically drew his idea first on paper, then punched tiny holes along the outlines and applied the paper to the ceiling. Next, he either beat the drawing with a bag of fine coal creating a charcoal version of connect the dots, or he used a sharp stick to trace the lines of the drawing onto the plaster before he began to apply the fresco paint.
- Michelangelo had an irascible nature, and because of this, he tended to work alone.
First, each of you needs to put on a smock.

This is a special project. We have taped a piece of white paper for each of you under your desk and spread newspaper down on the floor.

Now lie down under your desk and close your eyes while we pass out paintbrushes and paints. [Place paints and water containers within their reach.]

Try to relax and imagine that you are Michelangelo for a minute. It is a hot day 500 years ago. Fans and air conditioning have not yet been invented. You have mixed your paint and climbed a very long way up to lie on some boards while you paint the ceiling. The candle on your head is lit so you can see better, but the light is still not very bright. The ceiling is curved so the paint runs and drips, but you keep working.

Now think of what you would like to paint today. Maybe you will paint a scene from one of your favorite stories or a place that is special to you. Maybe you will paint a picture of yourself, or your friends, or something that you enjoy doing such as playing at the playground. You may paint whatever you would like; it is your choice.

When you have an idea, you may begin painting on your ceiling under your desk.

Don’t be surprised if paint drips from your ceiling—that’s what happens when you paint lying on your back.

Try to use only a little bit of paint at a time. Otherwise, the paint will drip a lot, and you will look a bit silly wearing polka dots all over your face for the rest of the day. Don’t worry, the paint washes off.

When you are done adding details to your work of art, raise your hand, and we will help you remove your painting.

Have fun!
1 Language Arts: Reading, Writing, Poetry, & Heroism

- Read *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg aloud to your class.
- Read *Who Can Open Michelangelo's Seven Seals* by Thomas Brezina to your students and solve the riddles. Perhaps create your own book posing and solving riddles about your classroom, school, or neighborhood.
- Michelangelo wrote poems about his experience painting the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Write a poem(s) about your experience painting under your desk.
- The people of Florence viewed Michelangelo’s sculpture of the hero David as representative of their city’s strength and courage. Discuss some modern day heroes, and design a school, neighborhood, or family mascot that represents specific admirable qualities.

2 Math & Science: Drafting, Markets, Scientists/Inventors, & Gardening

- Block Building or Architectural drawing: Look at images of the Medici Palace where Michelangelo lived and studied sculpture: www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/medici_riccardi_palace.html. Draw your own palace on paper, or use blocks/boxes to build a three-dimensional version.
- Use grocery boxes or building-blocks to create a Renaissance town including apprentice shops and a Renaissance open air market. Tie this into a unit on money and number sense through dramatic play—dress-up like a patron or artist and negotiate commissions for artwork. Set up a marketplace where students can role play as merchants and consumers and fulfill transactions.
- Discuss famous scientists and inventors of the Renaissance and their contributions to modern science. See: Copernicus, Galileo, Da Vinci, Gutenberg, etc. For more information see: www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/projects/renaissance/main/scientists.html

3 Social Studies: Renaissance Culture

- Learn more about the Renaissance at: www.kidskonnect.com/content/view/278/27
- Discuss and create a list of the similarities and differences between life and culture during the time of the Italian Renaissance and life and culture today.

4 Art & Music: Painting, Sculpture, & Renaissance Music

- Read *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo aloud to your class or watch the film. Have each child create a painting of his/her favorite part or character and then display the class paintings on the ceiling of your classroom.
- Carve your own sculpture using balsa foam carving blocks or florists’ oasis and double wire end clay cutting tools.
- Listen to Renaissance music and learn about the various instruments that were popular at the time such as the lute and the hurdy-gurdy. For more information see: www.music.iastate.edu/antiqua/instrumt.html

- Formal herb gardening became popular during the Renaissance, and garden designs became more complex. Discuss the shapes and patterns of Renaissance herb gardens and the various uses for herbs (cooking, medicine, etc.). Then plan and grow your own class herb garden. Harvest the herbs and cook a special class treat. For more information, see: www.bbq.org/gar2/topics/design/handbooks/herbgarden/1.html www.kidsgardening.com/growingideas/projects/may04/pg1.html
Michelangelo Buonarroti
Italian 1475-1564

References:


Suggested Reading:


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