



Da Vinci

Recommended year group: Year 8

Subject focus: Art, Mathematics, RE, Science

Driving Question

How have the ideas of da Vinci shaped our thinking about the world?

Introduction

This theme explores the remarkable legacy of Leonardo da Vinci—artist, inventor, and scientist. We'll examine how his ideas have shaped modern thinking, from anatomical studies to mechanical designs, and reflect on his unique fusion of creativity and inquiry.

Through practical and creative tasks, we'll produce our own da Vinci-inspired portraits, sketches, and commentaries. In science, we'll test his theories on human proportions, evaluating their accuracy and refining our investigative methods.

We'll also explore the story of Holy Week, considering Christian doctrines such as Holy Communion, and analyse *The Last Supper* as both a religious and artistic masterpiece.

The theme concludes with a return to our driving question: **How have da Vinci's ideas shaped the way we understand the world?** Participants will create a final piece that captures their own theory—through the lens of da Vinci's enduring influence.



Learning Checks

05 Decoding The Last Supper

Explain why Christians know the story of the last supper. How do they commemorate it through art and Holy Communion

07 Big Write

“Leonardo da Vinci is the most important person in history.”

10 Big Write - The burden of proof

Show both sides of the argument about the existence of God using the evidence you've learned.

Key vocabulary

AFOREST, Anatomical, Anatomy, Annotate, Apostle, Argument, Art, Ascension, Audience, Author's voice, Belief, Bible, Bone, Burden of Proof, Claim, Conviction, Cornell note taking, Cross hatching, Crucifixion, Disciple, Dissection, Easter, Engineering, Evidence, Existence, Faith, Function, Gospel, Hatching, Holy Communion, Hypothesis, Invention, Jesus, Judas, Last Supper, Line of Best Fit, Mark making, Mathematics, Maundy Thursday, Measurement, Muscle, Persuasive, Physiotherapy, Printing press, Ratio, Reasoning, Renaissance, Research, Resurrection, Sacrifice, Scatter Graph, Science, Symbolism, Technology, Vitruvian Man.



Linked Reading

Creativity, Invention & Renaissance Thinking

***The Medici Seal* by Theresa Breslin**

Historical mystery set in Renaissance Italy, featuring a young apprentice who crosses paths with Leonardo da Vinci.

***Chasing Vermeer* by Blue Balliett**

A mystery involving art, codes, and puzzles, with references to famous artists and critical thinking.

***The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick**

A beautifully illustrated novel about a boy, a mysterious automaton, and the magic of invention.

***Leonardo's Shadow* by Christopher Grey**

Told from the perspective of da Vinci's servant, this novel explores the creation of The Last Supper and life in Renaissance Milan.

***The Shakespeare Stealer* by Gary Blackwood**

Set in Elizabethan England, this story blends theatre, espionage, and historical intrigue.

Science, Anatomy & Human Curiosity

***Wonderstruck* by Brian Selznick**

Two parallel stories—one told in words, the other in pictures—explore discovery, museums, and the human experience.

***The Many Worlds of Albie Bright* by Christopher Edge**

A science-based adventure exploring quantum physics and alternate realities.

***The London Eye Mystery* by Siobhan Dowd**

A gripping mystery solved through logic and observation.

Faith, Philosophy & Big Questions

***The Boy in the Tower* by Polly Ho-Yen**

A story of survival, belief, and resilience in a crumbling world.

***Skellig* by David Almond**

A mysterious creature, themes of healing, and questions about angels and science.

‘Visit’ the works of Da Vinci

National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)

View high-resolution images of Da Vinci’s works like *Ginevra de’ Benci* and various sketches.

Museo Leonardiano di Vinci (Italy)

Explore manuscripts, treatises, and digital archives of Da Vinci’s work from his hometown.

Virtual Tours & Interactive Experiences

Leonardo da Vinci Galleries – Milan Science Museum

A virtual tour of the world’s largest permanent Da Vinci exhibition.

V21 Artspace – “A Life in Drawing”

3D virtual exhibition of Da Vinci’s drawings from the Royal Collection.

Mostra di Leonardo Online

A 360° virtual exhibition with 3D holograms and video mapping of Da Vinci’s inventions

NextStop Italy – Virtual Art Experience

A guided virtual tour through Da Vinci’s life and works, hosted by an art historian

YouTube: Louvre 3D Tour in 8K VR

Explore the Louvre and see the *Mona Lisa* in immersive 3D.

Global Art Platforms Featuring Da Vinci

MoMAA – 30 Best Museum Virtual Tours

Lists top museums like the Louvre, Uffizi, and British Museum that feature Da Vinci’s works in their virtual collections.

Extended learning opportunities

Students could use these ideas to explore different features of the theme.

Careers

These ideas can be used alongside the careers lesson from the theme in order to discover career pathways associated with key elements of learning from this theme.

[STEAM Careers for the 21st Century - The Institute for Arts Integration and STEAM](#)

[CAREERS IN ART | Accredited Schools Online: Find Top-Rated Accredited Programs Online](#)

Cultural capital suggestions

Read Leonardo da Vinci: Bridging the Gap Between Art and Science

This article explores how da Vinci’s curiosity and creativity helped shape both modern science and art. It highlights his iconic works like *The Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper*, and explains how his scientific methods were centuries ahead of his time.

Look “Mona Lisa After Da Vinci” by Oscar Nin

A modern reinterpretation of the *Mona Lisa*, this artwork invites us to consider how da Vinci’s influence continues to inspire contemporary artists. It’s a great conversation starter about how art evolves while still honouring the past.

Listen Leonardo da Vinci Song – Music with Mr. I

A fun and educational song introducing da Vinci’s many talents—as a light-hearted recap. It’s catchy, informative, and great for reinforcing key facts.

Lessons

Lesson title	Subject	Essential knowledge/concepts	Competencies	National curriculum coverage
Lesson 1: Introduction to da Vinci	English	Identify key facts about Leonardo da Vinci's life, work, and the Renaissance period. Apply research skills to gather and organise information about Leonardo da Vinci's achievements and influence.	PL.RL.04: Create, evaluate and develop purposeful notes individually and collaboratively.	English - Summarising and organising material and supporting ideas and arguments with any necessary factual detail.
Lesson 2: Decoding Vitruvian Man	Science	Identify and describe Leonardo da Vinci's ideas about body measurements and ratio. Test one of Leonardo's ideas by collecting data and measuring it against his theory.	SC.PE.05: Evaluating Ideas.	Science - Make and record observations and measurements using a range of methods for different investigations. Present reasoned explanations, including explaining data in relation to predictions and hypotheses.
Lesson 3: Anatomy with da Vinci	Science	Identify the names of bones in the body. Explain the function of the skeleton. Explain the link between Leonardo da Vinci and anatomy.	SC.CS.01 Using Scientific Ideas	Science - The structure and functions of the human skeleton, to include support, protection, movement and making blood cells Biomechanics – the interaction between skeleton and muscles, including the measurement of force exerted by different muscles The function of muscles and examples of antagonistic muscles.
Lesson 4: Da Vinci and Art	Art	Investigate different pieces of art created by Leonardo da Vinci. Apply artistic techniques such as hatching to your own work. Investigate the accuracy of Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical drawings. Produce a modern twist on one of Leonardo da Vinci's most famous anatomical drawings.	C.RD.01: Refining the processes and techniques through initial practice. Selecting and testing ideas. Developing an in-depth understanding of skill.	Art Know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms.

Lesson 5: Decoding the Last Supper	RE	Interpret meaning in religious art. Explain the origins of a religious ritual. Analyse the meaning behind a religious ritual.	SE.RE.01 Make sense of religious beliefs.	NATRE guidelines Students should extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews recognising their local, national and global context. Building on their prior learning, they learn to appreciate religions and worldviews in systematic ways. They should draw on a wide range of subject specific language confidently and flexibly, learning to use the concepts of religious study to describe the nature of religion. They should understand how beliefs influence the values and lives of individuals and groups, and how religions and worldviews have an impact on wider current affairs. They should be able to appraise the practices and beliefs they study with increasing discernment based on analysis, interpretation and evaluation, developing their capacity to articulate well-reasoned positions.
Lesson 6: Careers	Careers	Investigate different STEAM careers. Identify how different jobs may have skills that are applicable to each other. Describe how these skills can be used in more than one profession.	PD.CA.02: Experiencing the world of work	Gatsby benchmark 4 Linking curriculum learning to careers. All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. STEAM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEAM subjects for a wide range of future career paths.
Lesson 7 – Big Write:		Understand the key features of persuasive writing. Recap and develop the use of AFOREST. Consider how to effectively use persuasive techniques in response to a given statement.	CL.WP.02: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organisation, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (Voice)	“Leonardo da Vinci is the most important person in history.” English - Write accurately, fluently, effectively and at length for pleasure and information through: writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences, including essays. Draw on knowledge of literary and rhetorical devices from their reading and listening to enhance the impact of their writing.

Lesson 8: Crucifixion	RE	Explore Christian beliefs about the festival of Easter. Examine how the death and resurrection of Jesus influence Christian beliefs today. Compare how the Old and New Testaments present tests of faith through sacrifice.	SE.RE.03: Make connections between religious beliefs and practices	NATRE Guidelines Students should extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews recognising their local, national and global context. Building on their prior learning, they learn to appreciate religions and worldviews in systematic ways. They should draw on a wide range of subject specific language confidently and flexibly, learning to use the concepts of religious study to describe the nature of religion. They should understand how beliefs influence the values and lives of individuals and groups, and how religions and worldviews have an impact on wider current affairs. They should be able to appraise the practices and beliefs they study with increasing discernment based on analysis, interpretation and evaluation, developing their capacity to articulate well-reasoned positions.
Lesson 9: The Resurrection	RE	Explore Christian beliefs surrounding the festival of Easter. Understand how Christian beliefs today are influenced by the death and resurrection of Jesus.	SE.RE.03: Make connections between religious beliefs and practices	
Lesson 10: Burden of Proof	RE	Apply the principles of the burden of proof to a court case example. Examine arguments for and against the existence of God.	SE.RE.01: Religious Beliefs	