



Art History

English Lessons



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The Mona Lisa



“How the Mona Lisa became so overrated”

Watch the video and answer the questions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2wy7Fp2fqw>

- 1. What did the director of the Louvre say?**
- 2. What was the title of Walter Pater’s book and when did it come out? Why is it important?**
- 3. Why did the critics like the Mona Lisa?**
- 4. What happened in 1910?**
- 5. What did Vincenzo Peruggia do? When did this happen? What was his former job?**
- 6. How long was the painting missing and how did people react?**
- 7. Which former US President is shown paying tribute to the painting?**
- 8. “Mona Lisa isn’t a portrait but a blank face, a place for critics to paint meaning and people to find mystery. That’s why she was so famous. Not because of how she is painted but what we see in her. If that’s not art, then what is?” Do you agree with this opinion? Justify your answer.**

How the Mona Lisa became so overrated (video by Vox) Teacher's B2

1. What did the director of the Louvre say?

80% of the visitors are only there to see this painting

2. What was the title of Walter Pater's book and when did it come out? Why is it important?

The Renaissance in 1873. It came out more than 350 years after the painting but it defined the painting for Victorians. Pater was so insanely in love with Mona that he made it a masterpiece. People liked the book, Oscar Wilde praised it, many used his words to talk about the painting.

3. Why did the critics like the Mona Lisa?

Because it was a popular secular painting that they could analyze unlike The Last Supper, because they could supply all the meaning

4. What happened in 1910?

Amidst rumours of theft, papers called the Mona Lisa the second most famous painting in the Louvre

5. What did Vincenzo Peruggia do? When did this happen? What was his former job?

On August 21st 1911 Peruggia, a former Louvre worker, lifted the painting off the wall and took it home

6. How long was the painting missing and how did people react?

2 years. The press often quoted Pater calling it the greatest portrait there ever was. They constantly daydreamed about the paintings' whereabouts. Thousands went to the Louvre just to see empty hooks hanging on the wall

7. Which former US President is shown paying tribute to the painting?

JFKennedy

8. "Mona Lisa isn't a portrait but a blank face, a place for critics to paint meaning and people to find mystery. That's why she was so famous. Not because of how she is painted but what we see in her. If that's not art, then what is?" Do you agree with this opinion? Justify your answer.





For more ideas on how to use masterpieces of Art to teach critical thinking, you can read my blog post here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/how-to-use-works-of-arts-to-teach-critical-thinking/>

And about the use of images in the language classroom, another of my blog posts here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/the-use-of-images-in-language-learning/>

I have made a pdf with a set of questions that I use a lot with my students when we study all types of images, you can download it here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Questions-about-images-in-class.pdf>





Painter

[Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci](#) (15 April 1452 – 2 May 1519) was an Italian [polymath](#) of the [High Renaissance](#) who was active as a painter, draughtsman, engineer, scientist, theorist, sculptor, and architect. While his fame initially rested on his achievements as a painter, he has also become known for [his notebooks](#), in which he made drawings and notes on a variety of subjects, including anatomy, astronomy, botany, cartography, painting, and [palaeontology](#). Leonardo is widely regarded to have been a genius who epitomised the [Renaissance humanist](#) ideal, and his [collective works](#) comprise a contribution to later generations of artists matched only by that of his younger contemporary [Michelangelo](#). (information from [Wikipedia](#) and [Wikiart](#)).

Painting

The [Mona Lisa](#) is a half-length [portrait painting](#) by Italian artist [Leonardo da Vinci](#). Considered an archetypal [masterpiece](#) of the [Italian Renaissance](#), it has been described as "the best known, the most visited, the most written about, the most sung about, [and] the most parodied work of art in the world".^[6] The painting's novel qualities include the subject's enigmatic expression, monumentality of the composition, the subtle modelling of forms, and the atmospheric illusionism.

This painting is at the museum of Louvre

The video was made by Vox which is a general interest news site owned by *Vox Media*

You can check out their Youtube channel here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@Vox>

or their website here:

<https://www.vox.com/>



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For any questions you may have you can message me at info@ruthlessteacher.com

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