



New York State Testing Program

English

Language Arts

Listening Selection

Grade

8

Sample Test 2005

This listening selection is to be used in administering Book 2 of the English Language Arts Test. The entire selection is to be read aloud twice to the students. For complete directions, please follow the instructions in the *Teacher's Directions*.

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Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa

by Joel Stein

Besides being a scientist and inventor, Leonardo da Vinci was a gifted artist. His *Mona Lisa* became one of the most recognized paintings in the world. People everywhere still admire the famous portrait almost 500 years after he painted it. They want to know who Mona Lisa was and why she has that strange smile.

What we do know about the *Mona Lisa* is that da Vinci began the painting in 1503 and worked on it for more than three years. It was done with oil paint on a piece of pine wood, 20 by 30 inches in size. When it was finished, he decided to keep it for himself. He liked it so much that he took it with him wherever he went. Before he died, da Vinci sold the *Mona Lisa* to King François I of France for \$105,000.

There are many theories about who the “real” Mona Lisa was. One theory is that Mona Lisa was a young woman from Florence, Italy. She was married to a wealthy man by the name of Francesco del Giocondo. The theory goes on to say that Francesco asked Leonardo da Vinci to paint a portrait of his young wife. The painting was later called *La Gioconda*. Another theory is that Mona Lisa was actually Leonardo da Vinci himself. Dr. Lillian Schwartz of Bell Labs matched the *Mona Lisa* with a self-portrait of Leonardo da Vinci using a computer. She said that the portraits matched perfectly. Still another theory says that the *Mona Lisa* is a portrait of da Vinci’s mother.

When you look at the picture, the woman actually appears to be smiling. Her mouth looks as if it is moving! How was da Vinci able to do that? Leonardo da Vinci was not only a great artist, but also a brilliant scientist. He studied light, shadow, and the way color changes when it moves away from you. He also studied how our eyes work. When he painted the portrait, he used the mind of a scientist and the technique of an artist to create the amazing Mona Lisa smile.

On August 21, 1911, Vincenzo Peruggia, a workman at the Louvre, slipped the *Mona Lisa* under his house painter’s smock and hid the famous painting. This was called “the biggest art theft in history.” Peruggia believed that Napoleon had stolen the *Mona Lisa* in the first place and he wanted to take the beautiful painting back to Italy. He kept it in the bottom of a trunk for two years. Peruggia was finally caught two years later when he tried to sell the painting to an Italian art dealer.

Go On

Now the *Mona Lisa* is in her original home in the Louvre. She stays in an air-conditioned room protected by a strong railing and bullet-proof glass. But you do not have to look far to see copies of her. You might see her face on a barn. Or you may see her on a TV commercial or a screensaver on a computer. Mona Lisa is one of the most recognized faces in the world.

STOP



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