

Michelangelo Reading Comprehension Name _____

Michelangelo was a famous Renaissance artist, sculptor, poet, and architect. He is regarded as one of the finest painters of the Renaissance period. He was born in Abrezzo in the Tuscany region of Italy in 1475. He was raised in Florence. Although his father disapproved of his interest in art, Michelangelo became an apprentice of Italian painter Domenico Ghirlandaio. Ghirlandaio was so impressed with the work of his apprentice, that he recommended him to the ruler of Florence, Lorenzo de' Medici. Michelangelo studied in de' Medici's workshop for three years. During these years, Michelangelo gained new perspectives on art and met many prominent figures in art and literature. He also painted his first important works, Madonna of the Steps (1490–1492) and Battle of the Centaurs (1491–1492).

In 1494, the Medici family was driven away from Florence. As a result, Michelangelo left the city for Venice, Bologna, and then Rome. In 1497, he sculpted Bacchus, the Roman God of Wine. Bacchus would prove one of Michelangelo's only works involving a pagan, rather than Christian subject. He was next commissioned by the French cardinal Jean de Billheres to sculpt a marble depiction of Jesus resting in Mary's arms after the Crucifixion. It was called Pieta and was made for the Cardinal's funeral monument. Pieta can be viewed today in St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. That same year, Michelangelo moved back to Florence. He was then commissioned to complete a marble statue of David started by Agostino di Duccio. The statue was to be a symbol of the Florentine Republic. Michelangelo finished the colossal statue in 1504. It stood over 14 feet tall. The statue was immediately recognized as a masterpiece, and is considered one of Michelangelo's two greatest sculptures. In 1508, commissioned by Pope Julius II, Michelangelo began the work from which he became most famous for, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The elaborate ceiling took four years to complete. Working on scaffolding high above the chapel floor, Michelangelo painted over 400 life-sized figures on the ceiling by 1512. The ceiling features nine scenes from the Book of Genesis, seven Old Testament prophets, and five sibyls (characters from Greek mythology). Of the Old Testament scenes, the Creation of Adam is the most renowned.

In the 1520's and 1530's, Michelangelo worked on several major projects including the grand Medici Chapels in the Basilica of San Lorenzo, fortifications of the city of Florence, the Laurentian Library in Florence, and the fresco of The Last Judgment on the alter wall of the Sistine Chapel. The Last Judgment took seven years to complete and was the largest fresco (painting) of the Renaissance period. As he worked on the massive fresco, Michelangelo met Vittoria Colonna, a female poet who became a close friend and inspired his own poetry.

In 1546, at the age of 71, Michelangelo was commissioned as architect of St. Peter's Basilica and designed its dome. Michelangelo never married and remained in a relative state of solitude for most of his life. As he grew older, he cherished this solitude more and more. In 1564, Michelangelo died of a "slow fever". He was buried in front of a large crowd in Santa Croce (a church) in Florence.

1. Michelangelo's father...

- A. supported his son's interest in painting.
- B. did not support his son's interest in painting.
- C. was a famous painter.
- D. helped his son get work as an apprentice.

2. How did Michelangelo grow as an artist as an apprentice for Lorenzo de' Medici? Select all that apply.

- A. He was hired to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel
- B. He met many important people in the art world
- C. He painted Madonna on the Steps
- D. He sculpted Bacchus

3. What made Michelangelo's sculpture of Bacchus different from his other works?

- A. It was a sculpture
- B. It was made after the Medici's were driven from Florence
- C. It did not involve a Christian subject
- D. It was not built in Florence

4. Which of the following best describes the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel?

- A. It includes seven scenes from the Book of Genesis, nine Old Testament prophets, and five sibyls
- B. It includes over 400 life-sized figures, scenes from the Book of Genesis, prophets from the Old Testament, and characters from Greek Mythology
- C. It includes 400 life-sized figures and other characters from the Bible and mythology
- D. It took Michelangelo over four years to complete and features elaborate figure drawings of a variety of things.

5. What does the word "renowned" mean in the following sentence?

Of the Old Testament scenes, the Creation of Adam is the most renowned.

- A. Questioned
- B. Studied
- C. Famous
- D. Beautiful

6. In which paragraph does the reader learn about the work of art that took Michelangelo the longest to complete?

- A. Introductory
- B. First body
- C. Second body
- D. Concluding

7. Michelangelo did not...

- A. paint frescos.
- B. write poetry.
- C. work on the fortifications of Florence.
- D. enjoy being with lots of people.