



News & Announcements

Exam Prep Workshop

Register before Dec. 15th for our next Exam Prep Workshop

Date: January 10, 2011

Time: 10:30-12:30

Location: Emily Carr Library

Cost: \$25 for non-STR students

Suitable for students in grades 9+

STR in the Community

STR runs workshops for middle and high school level students, parents and teachers.

Workshop Topics Include:

- ▶ Study Skills for Parents
- ▶ Study Skills for Students
- ▶ Exam Preparation
- ▶ Memory Techniques

If you are interested in hosting a talk by Smart Tutor Referrals, please contact us.

What Sets Us Apart

Several new tutoring agencies have moved into Victoria. Here is some of what sets us apart:

- ▶ We listen to each student's needs and preferences.
- ▶ A tutor is selected for each student, not just randomly paired.
- ▶ We are 100% Victoria owned - not a franchise or chain.
- ▶ We've been supporting Victoria families since 2002.
- ▶ STR has built a solid foundation in Victoria through working from its core values: honesty; professionalism; respect; positive vision; and positive support of students, families & teachers.

Best wishes for a happy holiday season & a peaceful new year!

The Smart Connection will be back with an issue in February, 2011.

Great Thinkers: da Vinci (1452-1519)

by Dahlia Miller

This is the second in a series of articles on great thinkers. In each article, we look at some interesting details about the life of a historical thinker who changed the way we look at the world. This month's article focuses on Leonardo da Vinci.

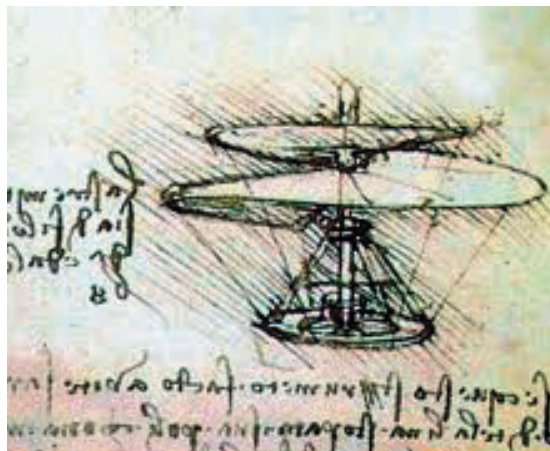
Pushing the Boundaries

Leonardo da Vinci is the ultimate model of a man who stretched and flexed his brain's capabilities for creativity and original ideas. He is best known for his paintings (the 'Mona Lisa' and 'The Last Supper'), but he was more than an artist. He was also an architect, musician, engineer, scientist and inventor.

Da Vinci had a relentless curiosity and impulse to investigate. He wanted to find out all there was to know; to think new thoughts and bring new things into being.

His quest for universal knowledge through observation, speculation and experimentation, lay the groundwork for future studies in many fields. In fact, he sketched the first parachute, first helicopter, first airplane, first tank, first repeating rifle, swinging bridge, paddle boat and first motor car, and he made observations that changed how we think about many, many subjects.

Da Vinci lived during the Renaissance, when people were looking again to



ancient writers, philosophers, poets and artists for wisdom and inspiration. At the same time, assumptions were being questioned and rules broken. Da Vinci was born right at the time that the printing press was invented; he was 40 years old when Columbus 'discovered' the Americas. This was a time of new thinking and a new-found respect for beauty and humanity.

Da Vinci loved challenging accepted notions and assumptions. He pushed the boundaries of what was known, opening himself to his pure observations of the natural world around him.

"The mind of a painter should be like a mirror which always takes the colour of the thing it reflects, and which is filled by as many images as there are things placed before it." (da Vinci)

Not an Ordinary Child

As a boy, Leonardo was endlessly curious about the natural world – water, animals, light. He'd dissect dead animals and systematically experiment, interchanging their parts and drawing his hideous creations. His love of the scientific method was apparent even in his play as a child.

Since he was an illegitimate child, da Vinci didn't have a formal grammar school education. Though being illegitimate wasn't considered shameful at the time, it impacted his access to formal education. He wasn't taught Greek or Latin (and most books were written in Greek or Latin at the time). Perhaps being excluded from studying the past helped him to develop his openness to novel ideas. He learned by observation more than following the teachings of the past.

About Us

We provide **1-on-1, in-home tutorial support** throughout Victoria, Saanich and Sooke.

STR was established in Victoria, BC in 2002 and has built a solid reputation for creativity and professionalism.

With over 50 tutors, we are able to find the best match for each student. Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals, all carefully screened. After talking with each student to learn more about the details of his or her learning history and needs, **we chose a tutor specifically to match the needs and learning styles of each student.**

Our goal is to enhance students' skills and to cultivate learning confidence through support that is truly individualized: matched specifically to each student's needs, recognizing each student's unique talents and abilities.

We support families in education.

For more information and resources, visit us on-line at:

www.SmartTutorReferrals.com

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Da Vinci was schooled in reading, writing and math in preparation for an apprenticeship in a trade (artists were considered trades people at the time). He was then apprenticed in the workshop of the sculptor-goldsmith-painter, Verrocchio, who trained many of Florence's young artists.

After a few years into his apprenticeship, da Vinci was assigned to paint an angel in one of Verrocchio's artworks, the 'Baptism of Christ'. Rather than using the customary egg tempura paint which was challenging to work with, da Vinci chose to use oil paints which were relatively unknown at the time. The results showed his brilliance in technique as well as artistic ability. After seeing da Vinci's work on the angel, Verrocchio put down his brush, vowing never to paint again.

Seeking To Know It All

"Principles for the Development of a Complete Mind: Study the science of art. Study the art of science. Develop your senses – especially learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to every thing else." (da Vinci)

Da Vinci brought science and art together. He felt that artists should be adept at mathematics and geometry so as to accurately demonstrate perspective in their art (depth, relationships between objects). A pen and ink sketch from when he was 21 years old demonstrates his understanding of the degradation of light with distance (physics), his awareness of rock formations (geology) and his eye for detail.

He started keeping journals when he was 37 years old. Totalling about 15-20,000 pages, these notes express his questioning and exploration of life. They were unedited outpourings – a mixture of observations about the world around him: theories, drawings, observations and ideas.

He didn't limit himself in his notebooks (not even with punctuation) and instead looked for how things may be connected in novel ways. These notebooks demonstrate a restlessness in da Vinci's thinking. The pages are a jumble of ideas and lines of inquiry, jumping from topic to topic:

anatomy, botany, optics, architecture, astronomy, military engineering, aerodynamics, music, painting, flight, costume design, robotics and more.

Being left-handed, he found an interesting solution to smudged ink in his writing. He used 'mirror' writing. Though da Vinci was writing in Italian which reads right to left like English, his journals were written from left to right as though written in a mirror, with all the letters backwards.

Da Vinci was relentlessly curious. He asked himself questions about the world around him and attempted to answer them – questions like, 'How do birds fly?' In fact, his interest and life-long study of birds led him to a fascination with aerodynamics and flight.

Another characteristic which was foundational to the exploration of da Vinci's genius was his extreme willingness to move into the unknown with confidence.

As a young man, da Vinci applied to Ludovico Sforza in Milan wanting a position at court as an engineer. In his portfolio, da Vinci had drawn the plans for many military inventions: light portable bridges, naval vessels, tunneling machines, tanks. He claimed to be an architect and a military engineer though to date he'd produced only paintings and sculptures.

What made this man such a genius? Perhaps it was that he didn't limit the extent of his interests and natural talents. In fact, he seemed to allow his mind to roam over any and all topics that caught his imagination.

The thing that impresses me the most about da Vinci is his relentless pursuit for universal knowledge. He felt that we ought to seek out and recognize the interconnectedness of nature and the reality around us. He investigated the world around him with a fervency and passion and became an expert in a wide range of fields.

What might happen if you gave yourself the license to explore the world and the creative reaches of your imagination in the same way that Da Vinci did?

Atalay, Bulent & Keith Wamsley. 2008. *Leonardo's Universe: The Renaissance World of Leonardo da Vinci*. Washington: National Geographic.

