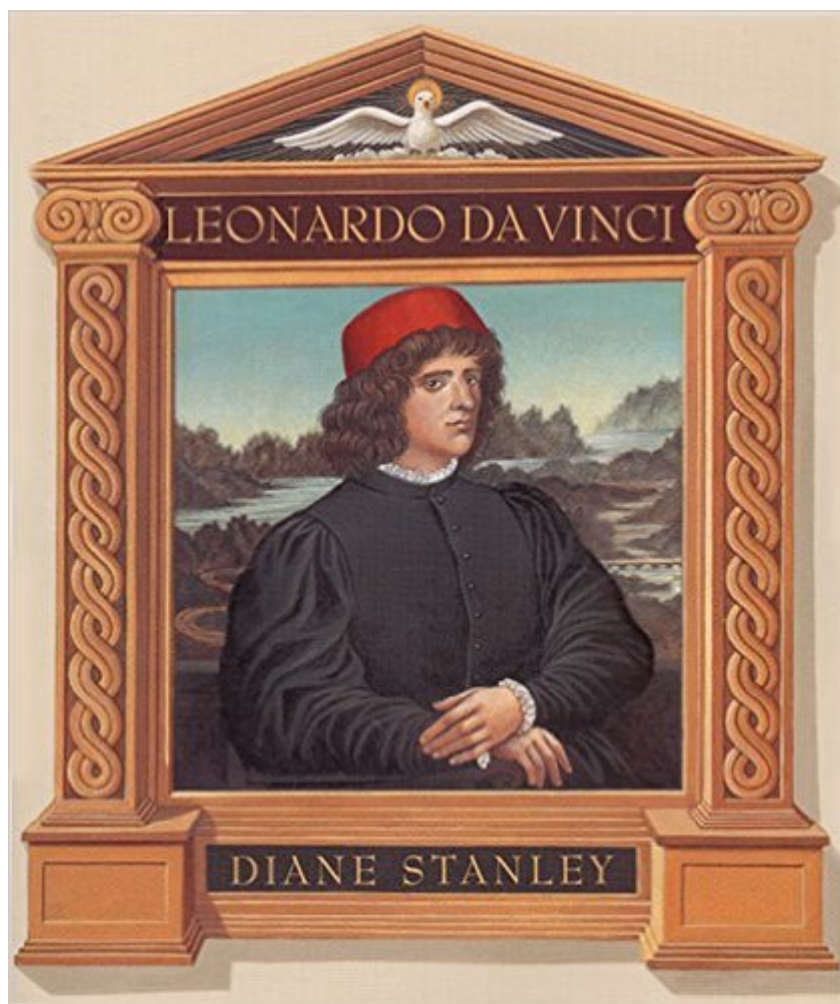


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# Leonardo Da Vinci



## Synopsis

An unwanted child. A brilliant genius. Born in 1452 to a peasant woman and a country gentleman, Leonardo da Vinci was one of the most amazing people who ever lived. He grew up to be a great painter, sculptor, architect, scientist, and inventor. As a boy, Leonardo was apprenticed to a famous artist. But he quickly became more skillful than his teacher, and his passionate interests went far beyond art. Fascinated with the human body, he carried out his own experiments in secret. He filled thousands of pages with plans for incredible inventions including a submarine, an air-cooling system, "glasses to see the moon large," and even a flying machine! In this magnificent addition to a distinguished series that includes Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, and Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare, award-winning author-artist Diane Stanley blends wonderful storytelling with gorgeous illustrations to convey the

A 1996 ALA Notable Book  
A 1997 Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Book for Nonfiction  
A 1997 Orbis Pictus Award  
A 1996 Publishers Weekly Best Books Award  
00-01 Land of Enchantment Book Award Masterlist (Gr. 3-6)

## Book Information

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Grade Level: 4 - 6

## Customer Reviews

Meet Leonardo da Vinci, a man of vision who was centuries ahead of his time. Born April 15, 1452, and raised in his father's house, Leonardo was the illegitimate son of Ser Piero, "...an important man, a leading citizen of Vinci." and a peasant girl. Because of the circumstances of his birth, he was not entitled to an upper class education in banking, medicine, or law, and "what little schooling

he got probably came from the parish priest and was limited to reading, writing, and simple arithmetic. He later described himself as an omo senza lettere, a man without education." As a boy, Leonardo showed talent for drawing, and was sent to Florence to apprentice with the famous artist, Andrea del Verrocchio. And it was there that the course of his life began to take shape. Though his superb artistic talents were quickly recognized, and Leonardo was commissioned to paint many important works during his lifetime, he had a short attention span and was always restless, often failing to complete his pieces. His imagination, his interests and genius went far beyond art and painting. He was fascinated with anatomy, engineering, science, and music, and filled thousands of pages in his now famous notebooks with his ideas, plans, drawings and inventions. He was employed by kings, princes and popes, and was the friend of Machiavelli, Cesar Borgia and King Francis I, of France. But throughout his life he never married, and was a very solitary man..... Diane Stanley brings Leonardo da Vinci to life in this beautifully written and well researched, introductory biography. Her easy to read, conversational text is entertaining, engaging and intelligent, and packed full of history, drama, mystery, fun facts, anecdotes, and sketches from Leonardo's notebooks.

Leonardo Da Vinci is, in many ways, the perfect subject for a children's biography. Above and beyond his myriad of accomplishments (scientist, inventor, artist) his life is one of adventure and interest. The illegitimate son of a leading man of Vinci, Leonardo went into the artistic life precisely because he was considered too base for a, "noble profession". This book is a combination of good artistry and confounding problems. On the one hand, Stanley has drawn beautiful accompanying pictures for each point in Leonardo's life. On the other hand, these pictures sometimes take liberties with the few details of the artist's life we know of. When the text states that Leonardo, "found a loving friend in his young uncle Francesco", the accompanying picture shows the boy piggyback on his uncle. It would be nice if such facts were given appropriate footnotes, but all sources are listed in the end of the book without any references to pages. Also, the aging of Leonardo is a little haphazard. One moment he's a young man writing a letter. The next moment he's bearded and about to slice up a corpse. The Duchy of Milan is described as having black hair and dark skin, but appears to be more of a slightly tan Italian. These are tiny details, but they distract from an otherwise interesting text. Undoubtedly, the actual drawings and sketches Leonardo made in his lifetime are some of the best parts of this book. It would have been nice if Stanley had included more of them in the story. Leonardo's paintings are nicely presented, but they're usually seen from a distance. At no point do we get a detailed and close look at any art that Leonardo created. Finally, a

timeline would have been helpful in this story, but it has not been included.

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