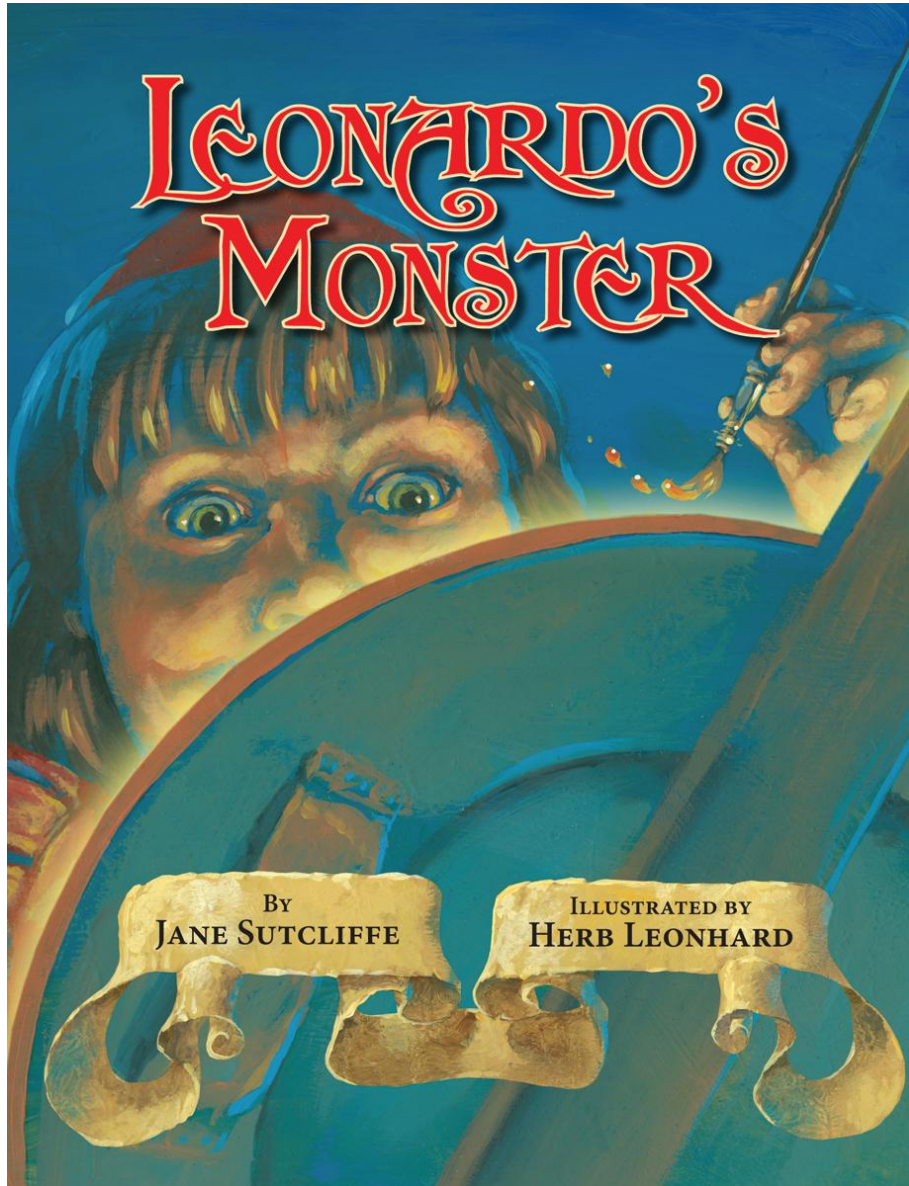


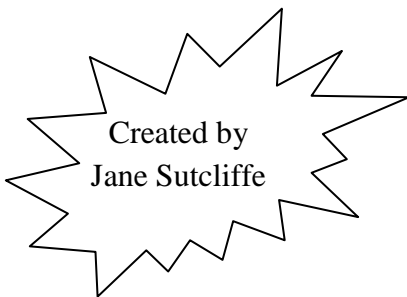
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Teachers' Guide for



Leonardo's Monster
by Jane Sutcliffe, illustrated by Herb Leonhard



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the traits that make Leonardo “pretty unusual”?
2. Do you know someone who is good at everything? Is it difficult or easy to like that person?
3. Here is the painting by Verrocchio with Leonardo’s angel in the lower left corner: http://smarthistory.us/site/wp-content/images/leonardo_Verrocchio.jpg Do you agree with Leonardo’s teacher that the angel is the best part of the painting? Why or why not? Why do you think that the teacher quit after seeing Leonardo’s angel?
4. Why do you think Leonardo collected animals to use as models for his monster instead of just making one up? Could a made-up monster look as real as one drawn from live animals?
5. According to the book, Leonardo never noticed the smell of the animals in his room. What does that tell you about Leonardo?
6. Have you ever worked hard on something and wanted it to be perfect? Do you understand why Leonardo kept starting his monster painting over?
7. Why do you think Leonardo needed to trick his father to see if the monster was scary enough? Why didn’t he just show him the painting?
8. Leonardo was not only a famous painter. He was also an inventor. Can you identify some of his most famous works on pages 28 and 29?
9. What do you think happened to the shield? How might it have gotten lost?
10. There is no picture of the monster in the book. Why do you think the illustrator chose to do that? Do you agree with his choice?



ACTIVITIES

Social Studies:

Find Italy on a map of the world or a globe. Now try to find Vinci on a map of Italy like this one: <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/italy-map/>



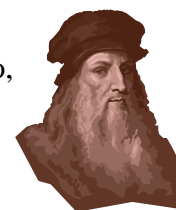
Is it hard to find? What does that tell you about the place Leonardo grew up? Do you know anyone who has friends or relatives from Italy? What cities or towns are they from? Can you find those places on the map?

History:

Leonardo lived during a period called “the Renaissance.” Find out what that means. Why was that period a “rebirth” and what was being born? What part did Leonardo play in the Renaissance?

Art History:

Look at some paintings and sculptures by other Renaissance artists such as Michelangelo, Donatello, Raphael, and Botticelli. Do you like them? Why? How are they similar? How are they different? How do they compare to Leonardo’s work?



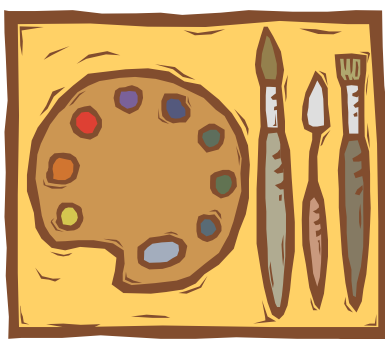
Technology:

Leonardo was also a gifted scientist, engineer, and inventor. Use your library or online sources to find out more about some of his inventions. Did they work? Find out why or why not.

Leonardo kept notebooks describing his work. He wrote his notes in “mirror writing”: backwards, from right to left, so that his writing only makes sense when reflected in a mirror. Some people think this was a kind of code. Others think it was just easier since Leonardo was left handed. Try writing the first sentence of the book this way. How difficult is it to do?

Art:

Look at pictures of different kinds of animals. Try drawing your own monster by mixing up the animals’ parts just like Leonardo did.



6 TRAIT WRITING

- 1. Ideas:** *Leonardo's Monster* ends with a mystery. No one really knows what happened to the monster shield. Write a sequel to the book in which the mystery is solved. Tell how Leonardo da Vinci's shield got lost, where it's been hiding, and what it would be like to be the one to find it. Use lots of details to make the story interesting. Remember to describe what the monster looks like!
- 2. Organization:** *Leonardo's Monster* is a biographical story. Because it's about an event in a person's life, it is told in chronological order, with a definite beginning, middle, and end. Identify these parts of the story. Then create a timeline of your own life. Use the timeline to write a story about something "pretty unusual" that happened to you. Identify the beginning, middle, and end of your story.
- 3. Voice:** What is the best word to describe this book: serious, scary, or funny? Read the story aloud and have members of the class raise their hands when they think something is funny. Does everyone agree on the funny parts? Why are the "pretty unusual" sentences funny? Read the story aloud a second time, this time leaving out those sentences. How does this make the book different? Try rewriting the book as a serious or scary story.
- 4. Word Choice:** Go through the book and look for **STRONG VERBS, COLORFUL PHRASES, and SURPRISING WORDS**. Make a chart and list the words you've found in the proper category. Revisit the story you wrote for the Ideas activity. List any great word choices you've used. Can you make them better?
- 5. Sentence Fluency:** *Leonardo's Monster* uses sentences of varying length as well as repetition to make the story easy to read aloud. Look at the description of Leonardo on pages 6 and 7. This is a group of short sentences followed by a long sentence. Why does this work? Write a description of someone you know using the same sentence organization. Read it aloud to see if it flows.
- 6. Conventions:** Discuss the role of quotations in a biography. How are quotations noted? In *Leonardo's Monster*, there is only one quotation. Find it. How can you tell that those are Leonardo's words?

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

Leonardo da Vinci by Diane Stanley (HarperCollins, 2000).

Leonardo: Beautiful Dreamer by Robert Byrd (Dutton Children's Books, 2003).

Leonardo da Vinci for Kids: His Life and Ideas, 21 Activities by Janis Herbert (Chicago Review Press, 1998)

LEONARDO'S MONSTER

By Jane Sutcliffe

Illustrated by Herb Leonhard

Although not much is known about Leonardo da Vinci's childhood, one rare story exists. When Leonardo was a young boy, his father received a request from a friend to have a shield painted. Knowing how talented his son was, he naturally asked Leonardo. Leonardo set out to paint a monster, a monster so terrifying even his father thought it to be real. Leonardo's father was so pleased with his son's work that he decided not to return the shield to his friend. Instead, he sold it and bought his friend a shield that wasn't so frightening.

The first picture book re-creation of this childhood tale examines the imaginative process in art. As he tries to create a horrifying monster, Leonardo studies a number of distasteful creatures, and only in combining the characteristics of living things with imaginary elements was he able to develop his frightful monster. Leonardo da Vinci was one of the greatest artists of all time. A man of many talents, he liked to accomplish the unimaginable.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jane Sutcliffe is the author of nineteen children's biographies. Her articles have been published in *Highlights for Children*, *Boys' Life*, and *Appleseeds*. She lives with her family and their dog in Tolland, Connecticut.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Herb Leonhard has worked as a freelance illustrator and graphic designer specializing in the illustration of children's books for more than twenty years. He has won numerous awards for his versatile freelance and professional work in both traditional and digital media. He earned a bachelor of fine arts in illustration from the Pacific Northwest College of Art, and he attended Mt. Hood Community College, concentrating in commercial art. Leonhard resides in Prosser, Washington, with his wife and son.

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