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# The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci: Complete & Illustrated

*By Leonardo Da Vinci*



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## The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci: Complete & Illustrated By Leonardo Da Vinci

Vasari says, and rightly, in his Life of Leonardo, "that he laboured much more by his word than in fact or by deed", and the biographer evidently had in his mind the numerous works in Manuscript which have been preserved to this day. To us, now, it seems almost inexplicable that these valuable and interesting original texts should have remained so long unpublished, and indeed forgotten. It is certain that during the XVIth and XVIIth centuries their exceptional value was highly appreciated. This is proved not merely by the prices which they commanded, but also by the exceptional interest which has been attached to the change of ownership of merely a few pages of Manuscript. That, notwithstanding this eagerness to possess the Manuscripts, their contents remained a mystery, can only be accounted for by the many and great difficulties attending the task of deciphering them. The handwriting is so peculiar that it requires considerable practice to read even a few detached phrases, much more to solve with any certainty the numerous difficulties of alternative readings, and to master the sense as a connected whole. Vasari observes with reference to Leonardos writing: "he wrote backwards, in rude characters, and with the left hand, so that any one who is not practised in reading them, cannot understand them". The aid of a mirror in reading reversed handwriting appears to me available only for a first experimental reading. Speaking from my own experience, the persistent use of it is too fatiguing and inconvenient to be practically advisable, considering the enormous mass of Manuscripts to be deciphered. And as, after all, Leonardo's handwriting runs backwards just as all Oriental character runs backwards—that is to say from right to left—the difficulty of reading direct from the writing is not insuperable. This obvious peculiarity in the writing is not, however, by any means the only obstacle in the way of mastering the text. Leonardo made use of an orthography peculiar to himself; he had a fashion of amalgamating several short words into one long one, or, again, he would quite arbitrarily divide a long word into two separate halves; added to this there is no punctuation whatever to regulate the division and construction of the sentences, nor are there any accents—and the reader may imagine that such difficulties were almost sufficient to make the task seem a desperate one to a beginner. It is therefore not surprising that the good intentions of some of Leonardo's most reverent admirers should have failed. Leonardo's literary labours in various departments both of Art and of Science were those essentially of an enquirer, hence the analytical method is that which he employs in arguing out his investigations and dissertations. The vast structure of his scientific theories is consequently built up of numerous separate researches, and it is much to be lamented that he should never have collated and arranged them. His love for detailed research—as it seems to me—was the

reason that in almost all the Manuscripts, the different paragraphs appear to us to be in utter confusion; on one and the same page, observations on the most dissimilar subjects follow each other without any connection. A page, for instance, will begin with some principles of astronomy, or the motion of the earth; then come the laws of sound, and finally some precepts as to colour. Another page will begin with his investigations on the structure of the intestines, and end with philosophical remarks as to the relations of poetry to painting; and so forth. Leonardo himself lamented this confusion, and for that reason I do not think that the publication of the texts in the order in which they occur in the originals would at all fulfil his intentions. No reader could find his way through such a labyrinth; Leonardo himself could not have done it.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **About the Author**

Leonardo Da Vinci, Born on April 15, 1452, in Vinci, Italy, Leonardo da Vinci was concerned with the laws of science and nature, which greatly informed his work as a painter, sculptor, inventor and draftsmen. His ideas and body of work—which includes "Virgin of the Rocks," "The Last Supper," "Leda and the Swan" and "Mona Lisa"—have influenced countless artists and made da Vinci a leading light of the Italian Renaissance. Quotes "Iron rusts from disuse, stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind." – Leonardo da Vinci Humble Beginnings Leonardo da Vinci was born on April 15, 1452, in Vinci, Italy. Born out of wedlock, the love child of a respected notary and a young peasant woman, he was raised by his father, and his stepmothers. 'The Last Supper' In 1482, Lorenzo de' Medici, a man from a prominent Italian family, commissioned da Vinci to create a silver lyre and bring it to Ludovico il Moro, the Duke of Milan, as a gesture of peace. Da Vinci did so and then wrote Ludovico a letter describing how his engineering and artistic talents would be of great service to Ludovico's court. His letter successfully endeared him to Ludovico, and from 1482 until 1499, Leonardo was commissioned to work on a great many projects. It was during this time that da Vinci painted "The Last Supper." 'Mona Lisa' Da Vinci's most well-known painting, and arguably the most famous painting in the world, the "Mona Lisa," was a privately commissioned work and was completed sometime between 1505 and 1507. Of the painting's wide appeal, James Beck, an art historian at Columbia University, once explained, "It is the inherent spirituality of the human creature that Leonardo was able to ingenuine to the picture that raises the human figure to some kind of majesty." It's been said that the Mona Lisa had jaundice, that she was a pregnant woman and that she wasn't actually a woman at all, but a man in drag. Based on accounts from an early biographer, however, the "Mona Lisa" is a picture of Lisa Gioconda, the real-life wife of a merchant, but that's far from certain. For da Vinci, the "Mona Lisa" was forever a work in progress, as it was his attempt at perfection. The painting was never delivered to its commissioner; da Vinci kept it with him until the end of his life. Today, the "Mona Lisa" hangs in the Louvre Museum in Paris, France, secured behind bulletproof glass, and is regarded as a priceless national treasure.

### **Users Review**

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##### **Effie Phillips:**

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