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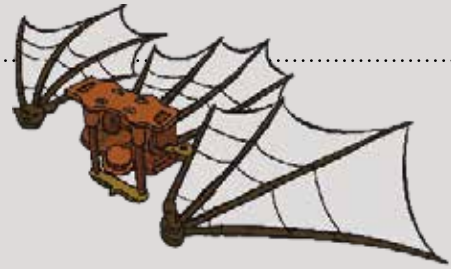
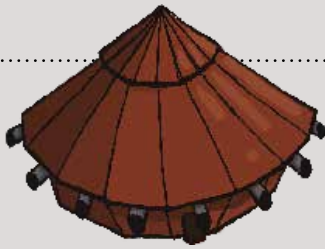
Twelve ideas you should know about Leonardo da Vinci

An alchemist, anatomist, architect, artist, astronomer, botanist, scientist, cook, draughtsman, writer, sculptor, philosopher, engineer, inventor, literary man, musician, paleontologist, painter, poet and urban planner ... Our character on this occasion could not be anyone else but Leonardo da Vinci: the genius of the Renaissance, whose fifth centenary of death is commemorated this year.

Illustration:
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- 1** | Lionardo di Piero da Vinci, that is, Leonardo, son of Piero da Vinci, was born on April 15, 1452 in Vinci, a town in the province of Tuscany, near Florence, in Italy. His father, Messer Piero Fruosino di Antonio da Vinci, was a notary, and his mother, Caterina, was a peasant. Leonardo was with his mother until he was five years old; later, he went to live with his father.
- 2** | Unlike other greats of the Renaissance, Leonardo never had formal education. However, he received home-based training in reading, writing and mathematics. Because he was very intelligent and stubborn, he learned to read and write at age five.
- 3** | He grew up in rural Tuscany, so his outdoor life allowed him to marvel at the natural world. Animals, birds –particularly birds–, trees and even water with its properties and movements are detailed in his writings. He had a very macabre sense of humor: he was once punished for making a hideous gargoyle from the trunk of a tree in the patio.
- 4** | At age 15, da Vinci displayed his skills as an artist by the hand of painter Andrea de Verrochio, in Florence (Italy), when he became his apprentice. Leonardo was so good at what he did that Verrochi said “that he exceeded him”.
- 5** | Leonardo was left-handed and, in addition, dyslexic, hence his bad spelling. Therefore, he acquired the habit of writing upside down; a style that made it difficult to read his writings: it was almost impossible to understand his notes and steal his ideas. This led him to develop the technique of writing with a mirror. In addition, he altered his drawings to protect his inventions.
- 6** | Although at that time it was forbidden to open corpses, his friendship with kings and popes allowed him to extract 30 bodies from hospitals and cemeteries. Thanks to this, Leonardo was able to study and get to know the human figure in a very detailed manner, which later made it easier to draw with more definition.



7 | During his artistic life, he filled dozens of notebooks with ideas, thoughts, equations, illustrations, experiments and scientific and anatomical observations. He wrote more than 13 000 words about organs, blood vessels, bones and muscles, and drew them –there are 240 of them–. *The Vitruvian man* is the best known of his sketches.

8 | To expand his world, he traveled to Milan, a political city and military court, where he met Duke Ludovico Sforza, a successful military leader called “the Dark One”. Thus, he began to develop many of his innovative war inventions. This period, 17 years, is considered the most productive of da Vinci.

9 | For him there was no separation between art, science and technology. His extensive skills allowed him to create ideas about mechanics, and thus, draw them. Modern models of some of these old machines can be seen at the Leonardo da Vinci National Science and Technology Museum in Milan.

10 | He spent his last years between Venice and Rome, when he painted the *Monalisa* (1503), the most popular painting of his authorship. Hence, we often think that da Vinci was a painter, but the truth is that he only made 20 paintings in his whole life: that is why they are so valued.

11 | Leonardo was a man with many ideas and projects, but he was a very slow worker. For that reason, upon his death, most of his works were incomplete and many of his drawings were only drafts.

12 | Leonardo, the visionary, was the first person to explain why the sky is blue on a sunny day. He argued: “We see the sky of this color due to the combination of the black color of space and the white light that comes from the Sun, which is reflected by the atmosphere”. Leonardo died on May 2, 1519 at the age of 67, in Amboise.

In addition to all this, da Vinci invented contact lenses and devised city pipes. Historians say that he used his right hand to draw and his left hand to write, at the same time! He designed a mechanical figure prototype, which is included as one of the first attempts to make a robot. This polymath, vegetarian and defender of animals, used to hire musicians to play for him while he painted. He preceded many inventions and theories thanks to the perfect fusion of his rational and analogical mind.

These 12 ideas about the life of Leonardo da Vinci resulted from an exhaustive search in different sources of public domain. The text was prepared, reviewed and approved by the Editorial Board of the Ingenio Magazine.

