

Revised Sept. 2011

**FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES: MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI
(1475 –1564)**

Detail of the Sistine Chapel, 1508-1512
128' x 45'
Vatican Palace, Vatican City, Italy

Supplies Needed:

- * Laminated visual aids, selection of Michelangelo's works from supply box (9 total)
- * Framed print of Sistine Chapel
- * White construction paper or white "mural" paper for project from teacher workroom
- * Students will need their colored markers
- * Tape from supply box
- * Marble block from supply box
- * Book *Michelangelo* from supply box
- * tape measure from supply box
- * *Michelangelo: The Frescos of the Sistine Chapel*, by Hall in supply box for reference

Reference Books

- * Michelangelo and His Times V. Milande
- * Michelangelo, Art for Children E. Raboff
- * Michelangelo Elizabeth Ripley
- * Michelangelo and His World Joachim Poeschke
- * The Sistine Chapel: A Glorious Restoration Harry Abrams
- * Michaelangelo M Venezia
- * The World of Michelangelo Robert Coughlan
- * The Art of Michelangelo Nathaniel Harris
- * Michelangelo The Sistine Chapel Rizzoli

AHEAD OF TIME NOTE: Please make copies of the master "Famous Artist Series" note to hand out to students.

Michelangelo Buonarroti (pronounced bone ah row tee) was born near Florence, Italy, in 1475 during a time known as the "Renaissance". Renaissance means rebirth. During that time, new ways of thinking allowed for tremendous creativity in the arts, literature, science and architecture. People who lived at that time wanted to learn more about the world around them. Perhaps few were as talented as Michelangelo, who was often referred to as the "divine Michelangelo" or the "Renaissance Man." He certainly possessed all the qualities of a genius. He created masterpiece after masterpiece and worked as a painter, sculptor, architect and poet.

Show visual aid #1, Portrait of Michelangelo and flip side, mention quotes.

Florence was a center of the Renaissance culture and artistic life. Although now it is a city in Italy, back then each city was its own state with its own government. City officials were constantly commissioning new works of art, and Michelangelo was exposed to this. These are things he saw daily as he walked through the city. **Point out statues and structures to students on laminated Visual aid #2, "Hangin' with Michelangelo" -- point out the city of Florence where Michelangelo lived.**

At the age of 13, Michelangelo was apprenticed (a junior level worker) to the well-known artist Ghirlandaio (pronounced Geer lahn dow) and from him he learned the difficult art of fresco painting. Fresco is Italian for "fresh". To make a fresco you use special paint made by grinding minerals from the earth and mixing with distilled water. The artist then paints on wet plaster, which contains lime, while it is still "fresh". The lime in the plaster causes a chemical reaction as the plaster dries. The painting becomes part of the wall and lasts a very long time. It won't flake off; the only way to remove the painting is with a hammer!

Show laminate #3, picture of a fresco. Explain to the students how artists would have to paint very quickly before the plaster would dry.

Michelangelo's favorite art was sculpture. When he was 16, he studied at a school only for sculptors. It was started by the wealthiest and most powerful man in Florence, Lorenzo de' Medici (pronounced dee Med ee chee). De' Medici loved art of all kinds and paid artists to create works of art for him. People who paid artists in this way were known as patrons. Medici thought Michelangelo had special talent and invited him to live at his palace.

There, Michelangelo created one of his first famous statues called "The Pieta" (pronounced pee ay tah) when he was only 24 years old. A traditional image, "pieta" means piety or faith. A "pieta" is an image of the Virgin Mary holding the body of Christ. Michaelangelo's "Pieta" was so beautiful, people found it hard to believe it was done by such a young artist. He used marble because of its enormous value, prized for its whiteness and sheen. Cutting marble is difficult because it is both hard and extremely fragile. Pass around marble block.

Show laminated #4, “The Pieta”.

Michelangelo polished the marble with much patience to obtain an exceptional sheen. “The Pieta” is the only work Michelangelo ever signed, directly across Mary’s sash. A story is told that Michelangelo was standing among strangers who were admiring the statue and when one asked who had created it, someone said Solari, another artist. Michelangelo stood there, not saying a word, but thinking it was very odd to have all his work attributed to someone else. That night, he took his chisels and a light and carved his name on the statue. Take a close look at this picture. **Show marked page in book Michelangelo from supply box showing Michelangelo carving his name in the statue.**

Note the proportions are really off – her hands, arms and legs are exaggerated and if she were to stand up she would be over 7 ft. tall. But he hides it well in the folds of her dress.

The people of Florence heard about his beautiful statue and asked him to carve a statue for their city. They gave him a huge block of marble as a gift. His creation was inspired by the story of David and Goliath, when David surmounted the odds and toppled the giant Goliath. The result was his most famous statue, “David”. He posed David as if he were ready to fight Goliath. The image is a symbol of the people of Florence. Michaelangelo perceived them to be strong, brave, clever and ready to defend their city.

Show laminate #5, “David”. It is over 16 ft. high and weighs 11,000 pounds. What expression do you see in his face? Do you see courage and strength? Have two students use the tape measure to determine the size of the statue.

Michaelangelo’s reputation grew. Pope Julius II of Rome was a patron for some monumental building projects and selected only the best talent of the day to work on his projects. He asked Michaelangelo to sculpt a magnificent tomb in his honor and also to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, which is now part of the Vatican museums.* Michelangelo did not want to do it and told the Pope he was a sculptor, not a painter. Pope Julius did not care and practically forced him to paint for him. They had many arguments during the four years it took to paint the ceiling. It turned out to be one of the most awe-inspiring paintings in the history of art.

It tells the story of the beginning of man as told in the Bible, from the creation of Adam to the coming of Moses. There are 240 people in the scene. Michelangelo felt the human body was the most important subject an artist could paint or sculpt. He painted the faces and bodies in a way that made them look so real or “realistic”. People had never seen this before and suddenly he became known as one of the greatest painters in the world.

Show laminated picture #6 of Sistine Chapel. Explain how big it is – 127 ft. x 45 ft. Describe how he had to climb scaffolding and lay on his back to paint. Using the tape measure, have two students measure the size of the classroom to compare the size of the ceiling.

It is said that because Michelangelo had to look upwards for the duration of the project, his eyesight was impaired for years. **Show marked page in the book Michelangelo from supply box of Michelangelo painting the ceiling**. Just recently the Sistine Chapel has been restored and cleaned. With 500 years of grime removed, people were amazed at all the color in the fresco.

Show two laminates #8 “before and after” of the Sistine Chapel as it is restored. Ask children if they can see the difference and what colors do they now see. Explain it has taken 10 years to clean!

Michelangelo died in 1564 at 89 years old. The statues at his tomb represent his greatness in painting, sculpture and architecture. People mourned in great sadness the “divine” Michelangelo.

Show laminated picture #9 of his tomb.

*If you would like to discuss more about the Vatican, you can let the students know that it was and still is the center of the Roman Catholic Church, and about 350 years after Michelangelo’s time it became an independent state. Despite the fact that it was a part of Rome before that, popes had tremendous power and riches and were able to commission and acquire some of the world’s most famous art pieces.

PROJECT:

Just like the Pope Julius II commissioned Michelangelo to paint the story of the Bible, we are going to pretend that the principal is your patron, and has commissioned you to tell the story of Butterfield School. You need to draw with your markers one of your favorite memories of Butterfield School. There's only one catch – we are going to do it on our back like Michelangelo did! We will tape a piece of white construction paper underneath your desk and then you can begin to draw! (Note – check desk situation before undertaking the presentation. You may switch to one long piece of paper taped to a banquet table. Display the mural on ceiling if possible or if done individually, mount on a wall on one long piece of paper “mural” style.)

The children will moan and complain about how difficult the drawing project is – let them know Michelangelo had to work on his back for four years! Emphasize that the goal is not to make a gorgeous piece of art but to try to understand just how hard it is to paint upsidedown!

PLEASE LEAVE AT LEAST FIVE MINUTES AT THE END OF THE PRESENTATION FOR STUDENTS TO PRESENT THEIR ARTWORK.

FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES

Michelangelo Buonarroti

Today in class a volunteer parent presented the works of the Italian Renaissance artist Michelangelo to your child's class. They learned about his many talents as a sculptor and painter, as well as made an art project in the style of his work. Ask your child if they can name one of Michelangelo's sculptures. Can they describe fresco painting and what artwork Michelangelo is most famous for painting?

There are a few excellent children's storybooks about Michelangelo which would be fun to look at with your child:

Michelangelo

D. Stanley

Michelangelo's Surprise

Parillo

Sincerely yours,

Art Volunteer