



Time with Leo

Reading Guide

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info@gemmamedia.com.

GemmaMedia LLC
230 Commercial Street | Boston, Massachusetts 02109 | 617.818.2133
www.gemmamedia.com

Preliminary Remarks

- The following assignments offer tasks and activities, which the teacher or students can choose from.
- Many tasks are suitable for talks or presentations to the class.
- Some tasks overlap with others.
- The material can be edited and students may copy instructions, questions, and answers into their exercise books.

About the Book

When I was young, my two loves were astronomy and acting. Many people find this odd – they think of art and science as two separate pursuits. In Leonardo da Vinci’s day, such distinctions weren’t made. Today, we use the term “Renaissance Man,” to refer to someone who is equally gifted in many different fields.

When you hear the name Leonardo da Vinci, you may think of the *Mona Lisa* or the *Last Supper*. I wanted to shake the dust off the icon, and find the person underneath. I started with the idea of a young man from the present meeting an old man from the past. What common ground could they find? How could they learn from each other? As a man who was ahead of his time, Leonardo was a natural choice.

Although this book is fiction, most of the people, places, and things are true. Leonardo did create designs for a tank and a helicopter. His apprentice was nicknamed Salai, “the little devil.” He did draw maps and build military equipment for Cesare Borgia, who was both a soldier and a cardinal. After reading this book, I hope that you, like our hero Sam, are interested in learning more about Leo and his time.

About the Author

John Bliss has written several nonfiction books for young readers, including **Designer Babies**, **Art That Moves: Animation Around the World**, and **Pioneers to the West**. John worked in the theater for many years, as an actor and playwright. As a result, whether writing fiction or nonfiction, he starts with character and dialogue. **Time with Leo** is his first novel. John teaches theater and communication at Northeastern Illinois University.

Pre-Reading Questions

COVER:

Think of the two images displayed on the cover, a smart phone and Leonardo da Vinci's drawing. What do these images mean to you? What do they make you think of?

TITLE:

Think about the meaning of time. How does spending time with someone bring you closer to that person?

Activities While Reading

SETTING:

Setting is an important part of this book. Think about the drastic change in setting that takes place. Make a list comparing and contrasting Sam's impressions of the 21st century versus the 16th century.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES:

As you read, write a brief (two to three sentence) chapter summary focusing on what new knowledge Sam acquires through his experiences with Leo.

EXPLORE:

Go to <http://www.leonardo-da-vinci-biography.com/leonardo-da-vinci-maps.html> and learn more about Da Vinci and his incredible maps.

Post-Reading Questions

SETTING:

How does the change in setting alter Sam's character? What is it about the 16th century that makes him bolder than the 21st?

CHARACTER:

What are Leonardo's strongest qualities? What are his weakest? Do they overlap in anyway?

Is Sam a "good" student? What are the type of things that define being a "good" student?

How does Sam change from the beginning of the book to the end?

What makes Sam and Leo's friendship a meaningful one?

POINT OF VIEW:

This book is told through a third-person narrative. This type of narrative allows us to meet and interact with different characters in a more objective way. Write a journal entry from Salai's point of view on his impressions of Sam and the future.

THEME:

The importance of knowledge is a major theme in this book. Leonardo chooses to use the knowledge of the future to help Sam, while Cardinal Borgia would use it for personal gain. What would you do with knowledge from the future?

The power of friendship is also a theme in this book. Think of how Leonardo's friendship helps Sam build his confidence. Write about a friendship or special relationship that inspired you.

TITLE:

Now that you have finished the book, think about the title of the book. What are the double meanings of **Time with Leo**?

SUMMARY:

Write a 90 to 100-word summary of Sam and Leo's time-traveling adventures.

BOOK CRITIQUE:

Explain what you liked or did not like about **Time with Leo**. You can use specific passages to prove your point. Did **Time with Leo** change the way you think about Leonardo da Vinci? Or early science? If so, in what way?

WRITING ACTIVITY:

If you could go back in time and meet a famous historical character, who would you choose and why? Describe a day with your new friend.