

# ◆ Classroom Spice ◆

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## Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo was born in 1452, the illegitimate son of a wealthy Italian notary and a peasant girl. In December 2006 anthropologists, using the latest fingerprint technology, were able to extrapolate that Leonardo's mother was probably an Arabic slave imported from Constantinople. Leonardo did not grow up with all his siblings, as he had 17 half brothers and sisters! He was fortunate to be one of the children raised by his father, receiving an excellent education, and apprenticed when he was 15 to a famous painter. He worked for the Duke of Milan from 1482-1499, but less of his time was spent on artistic endeavors and more on designing weapons, buildings, and machinery. Eventually Leonardo became the Premier Painter and Engineer and Architect of Francis I, King of France.

Leonardo, considered one of the greatest painters of all time, is known for his mastery of technical innovations. These can be seen for example in *Last Supper* and *Mona Lisa*. He mastered and/or introduced such techniques as delicate transitions resulting in an atmospheric smoky effect especially in landscape backgrounds; and modeling and defining forms through contrasting light and shadow. Leonardo was, however, better at starting projects than completing them. While he worked for the Duke of Milan he completed

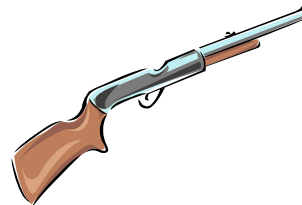
*(Continued on page 3)*

## Who Was the First Female Superstar?

Phoebe Ann Mosey could easily have laid claim to being the First Female Superstar. Why? Well, Phoebe Ann is more commonly known as Annie Oakley. She was born in 1860 in Ohio. Her family's life took a turn for the worse when she was only 6 years old and her father died from pneumonia after being caught in a blizzard. Her mother later remarried, but when Annie's stepfather died Annie's mother was left with six children and Annie was sent to live with the Superintendent of the County Infirmary. The infirmary/county poor farm housed the elderly, the poor, orphans, and the mentally ill. Annie's job was to help with the children, for which she got room, board, and was taught sewing, a skill she would use later in making her stage costumes. While at the County Infirmary she spent some time in servitude with a local family. The family appeared to be a normal family needing help with an infant, but Annie later referred to them as "the wolves," as she suffered both mental and physical abuse at their hands. Annie managed to run away

when she was about 12 and went back home. She had started hunting as a very young girl and was very good, so when she returned home she designed a business hunting rabbits and selling them to the Katzenberger Brothers, grocers, who resold them to fancy restaurants in Cincinnati. Amazingly by the time she was fifteen she had paid off the mortgage on the family's house!

Annie had a local reputation as a sharpshooter and when marksman Frank Butler challenged local shooters, a hotel owner in Cincinnati invited Annie to accept the challenge. The prize was \$100 (close to \$2,000 in today's money). Annie was only 21, so Frank at 31



was much more experienced. He hit 24 targets in a row, but Annie hit 25. Annie not only won the bet, but Frank's heart as well and they married about a year later. Annie took the stage name of Annie Oakley, but off stage was always known as Mrs. Frank Butler. After they were married, Frank

usually performed with an assistant but one performance Annie was called in to help. She eventually became his regular assistant, and after Frank became ill she stepped in as headliner. Frank recognized her talent and audience appeal and chose to become her assistant and manager. This marriage and business arrangement even today is seen as a model for celebrity marriages, and lasted 44 years. What celebrity couples today do you know who could claim such a successful marriage? The Butlers performed with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show and Annie earned the nickname of "Little Sure Shot," by Sitting Bull. There are many tall tales about Annie's marksmanship. The following are just a few of her documented performances. In one day she shot 4,472 glass balls out of 5,000. She could not only hit a dime tossed in the air at 90 feet, but also a playing card facing her from 90 feet and hit it another 5-6 times as it fell to the ground. She would shoot an apple off her dog Dave's head, who would then grab the largest piece of apple while still in the air. She shot ashes off of

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## *Inventors*

How informed are you and/or your students about successful African American Inventors? This is a great conversation starter and research motivator. Take a few minutes and see how well you do. Answers on page 4.

### WHO DONE IT?

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ This is the first Black person believed to have received a U.S. patent. It dealt with a dry cleaning process. Most of the income the inventor received from the dry cleaning business went to support abolitionist activities.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ This person invented an improved street sweeper truck. This invention made it possible to convert the street sweeper truck into a snow removal truck when needed. (Definitely something Oklahoma could use this year!)
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_ This person patented a device in 1951 that allowed arm amputees to feed themselves, but was unable to successfully market it due to race. Ultimately the inventor “gave” the patent to the French Government who then used it to help countless War Veterans in France
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ This assistant patent examiner invented a special secret code to identify patents submitted by Blacks. Years later it was discovered and enabled Black inventors to be recognized for their inventions.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ This biracial, African American/Native American invented the potato chip in response to an irritating customer.
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ This person was issued 57 patents during his lifetime and is best known for a cup that lubricated steam engine bearings.
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ This person invented a hand held paper punch with a built-in receptacle to collect the round waste pieces.
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ This person invented a gas inhalator and was awarded a medal for his bravery in using it to rescue a group of men caught in an explosion in a smoke-filled tunnel under Lake Erie. However, he was unable to market it because of racial prejudice, until WWI when the U.S. Army bought the gas masks in mass.
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ This individual invented numerous items used in space travel, such as the multiple stage rocket and a parachute release mechanism.
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_ This person invented the “Supersoaker” watergun.

### Name Bank

- |                 |                    |                      |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| A. Henry Baker  | B. Bessie Blount   | C. Charles Brooks    |
| D. George Crum  | E. Thomas Jennings | F. Lonnie Johnson    |
| G. Elijah McCoy | H. Garrett Morgan  | I. Seargent A. Samms |

(da Vinci—cont'd from page 1)

only six works, including *Last Supper*. He completed none of his sculptural nor architectural endeavors, however, he left detailed drawings of both. Many of his drawings were in his journals (13,000 pages of notes), but most of the notes were not read for years after his death. Was his handwriting that bad? Well, as a left-hander he chose to use the unusual technique of mirror-writing, which could only be deciphered in a mirror.

Sometimes referred to as "The Universal Man," Leonardo epitomized the Renaissance. His fields of expertise included not only art, but music, architecture, hydraulic and mechanical engineering, astronomy, anatomy, physiology, mathematics, physics, paleontology, meteorology, aerodynamics, and Latin. Most of his scientific ideas were well ahead of his time. Some of his innovative ideas/plans included a helicopter, an armored tank, solar power, machine guns, a submarine, the first mechanical calculator, a programmable robot, and an initial understanding of plate tectonics.

We regularly see his influence in today's world. His plan for building a bridge to span the Golden Horn, was approved for construction by the Turkish Government in May 2006! By studying Leonardo's diagram of how the heart valves move the flow of blood a heart surgeon in 2005 pioneered a new way to repair heart damage. Leonardo's sketch of the continuously variable transmission (CVT) is now used in cars, tractors, snowmobiles, and motorscooters. Of course Leonardo's painting, *Last Supper* and his supposed membership in The Priory of Sion played integral parts of both the book and movie *The Da Vinci Code*.

A great website for teachers, "Exploring Leonardo," can be found at [www.mos.org/snl/Leonardo](http://www.mos.org/snl/Leonardo). It is designed for 4-8th graders but can easily be adapted for high school students. It includes many of his inventions, techniques for representing the 3D world in 2D, his mirror-writing style, and a brief biography of many of his images. Needless to say there is much more to learn about this son of a slave and a notary.

## The Literature Connection

Since Annie Oakley was the feature article in this issue, I recommend *Shooting for the Moon: The Amazing Life and Times of Annie Oakley* by Stephen Krensky. The watercolor illustrations are always informative, often humorous and/or touching. The book follows her life from 1865 through her time with the Wild West Show. The text is appropriate for third grade and up, but will be most appreciated by middle school and up. Having read this book to several adult groups I can assure you that even high school students will find it fascinating. The afterward provides some additional interesting information more appreciated by the older student and includes a photograph of Annie provided by the Western History Collection of the Denver Public Library. ISBN 0-374-36843-0.

*Minty: A Story of Young Harriet Tubman* by Alan Schroeder is biographical, historical fiction. It tells a story of a short period in the life of young Harriet Tubman whose "cradle" name was Araminta and whose nickname was Minty. Set on a Maryland Plantation in the 1820s it follows Minty, who was anything but a well-behaved slave, and the consequences of her actions, and her



training to prepare her for "running away." This book also has an afterward, providing additional information of Harriet's later work with the Underground Railroad. Jerry Pinkney, who did the wonderful illustrations, was also the artist who created the first Harriet Tubman commemorative stamp for the U.S. Postal Service. ISBN 0-14-056196-X

Speaking of stamps Nicki Weiss's *The World Turns Round and Round* describes packages from relatives around the world and shows sample stamps from each of the countries. While written at a primary level it includes native words for relatives and various presents from each of the countries, and a phonetic guide to their pronunciation. ISBN 0-439-38903-8.

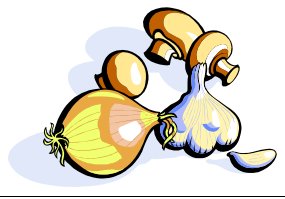
If your students enjoy folktales you might want to read *The Chinese Mirror: Adapted from a Korean Folktale*. A man brings back to his village a mirror, an item unknown to anyone, which he decides to hide away. The story then follows the reactions of his family as they surreptitiously look into his mirror, and misunderstand what they see. While the story is for a primary class, it could easily be used as a writing prompt for upper elementary students. ISBN 0-15-332974-2.

## Justice for All?

Johnson Chester Whittaker was born on a plantation in the 1858 to a slave mother and a freedman father. He was fortunate to get an education under the private tutelage of Richard Greener, the first African American Harvard graduate, and later went to the University of South Carolina, a freedmen's school, and was appointed by his Congressman to West Point in 1876. He was not the first Black cadet to attend but replaced the first Black cadet who was dismissed on academic grounds. But Whittaker found out quickly that Blacks, regardless of their academics, were not welcome. The other cadets vacillated between insulting him and isolating him. His only friends at school were Black servants. He took comfort in his Bible, believing he was never alone as God was always with him.

On April 4, 1880, he received an anonymous handwritten note warning that he would be "fixed" and to "...keep awake." He deliberated what to do. Should he show it to someone in authority, or ignore it? He showed it to one of the black servants, but before he could show it to an authority he was attacked in the middle of the night by 3 masked men. They choked and punched him, tied up his hands, slashed his face, ears, and hands with a razor, and cut out chunks of his hair. After breaking a mirror over his forehead they tied his legs to the rails of his cot and threatened to kill him if he yelled out. When he tried to call out later his voice was too weak to be heard. He eventually passed out. He was discovered unconscious, tied up,

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Answers from page 2

1—E, 2—C, 3—B, 4—A, 5—D,  
6—G, 7—C, 8—H, 9—I, 10—F

**In This Issue...**

Annie Oakley; Leonardo da Vinci; Inventors; Whittaker; Literature Connection; Indian Tribes

**What are the Ten  
Largest American  
Indian Tribes?**

**According to the 2000  
census, they are**

- 10—Pueblo, 9—Iroquois,
- 8—Blackfeet, 7—Apache
- 6—Chippewa, 5—Sioux,
- 4—Choctaw,
- 3—Latin American Indian,
- 2—Navajo
- And 1—Cherokee

Of these, all but the Latin American Indian are represented in Oklahoma. The two largest tribes in Oklahoma by far are Cherokee with 97,317, followed by Choctaw with 43,620,

*(Whittaker—Cont'd from page 3)*

and covered with blood the next morning after missing roll call.

To his dismay he discovered that it was not only the cadets who did not want him there. The West Point Inquiry determined that Whittaker had done it to himself! He was later court-martialed and given a dishonorable discharge, and sentenced to a year at hard labor. The decision was reversed two years later by President Arthur .

Whittaker went on to earn a law degree, teach at a college, marry, and have children and grandchildren, some of which were lawyers, doctors, and even a Tuskegee Airman. In 1995 President Clinton made partial amends and provided some justice granting Whittaker, posthumously, his army commission, and returning to his family his Bible which had been confiscated 114 years earlier.

*(Annie Oakley—Cont'd from page 1)*

cigarettes, usually from a cigarette in Frank's mouth, but once from a cigarette held by Crown Prince Wilhelm (Annie chose to have him hold it in his hand). In one trick using 6 different guns she hit 11 targets, in 10 seconds!

Annie was more than a performer. She offered to raise a regiment of woman sharpshooters for both the Spanish-American War and WWI, and even offered to help train the troops in marksmanship. However, when the government refused her offers she proceeded to work to raise money during the war for the Red Cross. She was a philanthropist in other ways as well always, raising money for needy causes, especially those involving orphans and women.

Often the evening news today will tell of sensational journalism and libels being published about superstars. In 1903 William

Randolph Hearst published an article that Annie was arrested for stealing to support a cocaine habit. It did not take much investigation to find that the person arrested just used the name of Annie Oakley and was really someone else. But Annie's reputation took a big hit when the story was published. Annie took Hearst and the other newspapers that picked up the story to court and won 54 of 55 libel lawsuits. She died November 3, 1926 at the age of 66. Frank died 18 days later.

Annie had to overcome many hurdles including poverty, abuse, and sexism. And yet she still helped break barriers for women in many areas, not just sports. She is recognized by many as one of the first great female sports figures, and the first female superstar.