

**“Uncle Marcos”** by Isabel Allende  
**Reading Warm-up A**

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

You are probably acquainted with Leonardo da Vinci as the artist who painted the *Mona Lisa*. The painting is a major attraction that draws thousands of museum visitors every year. If your impression of Leonardo is based strictly on his paintings, however, you may not know that he was also one of the greatest scientific thinkers of all time.

Leonardo was born in Vinci, Italy, in 1452. He was a brilliant inventor and engineer. Leonardo believed in using observation and experimentation to solve problems. At that time, the scientific method was almost completely unknown. Most thinkers and other authorities of the day had no interest in such methods. Leonardo acquired vast technical knowledge on his own. He used his scientific know-how to conduct experiments. When he could not get the materials he needed, Leonardo made improvisations with materials he was able to find.

Leonardo loved to think of new ways of doing things. Although he hated war, he designed cannons, machine guns, parachutes, and armored military vehicles that were far beyond anything that existed at the time. Leonardo loved the idea of flying and studied birds for many years to learn how they soared through the sky. He even designed a flying machine that he hoped could carry a man high into the air. The contraption he designed would have been too heavy to get off the ground. Nevertheless, the ideas on which it was based would later be used to develop the modern helicopter.

Leonardo’s genius is confirmed by the many writings he left behind. He filled thousands of notebook pages with notes and drawings. They described some of the amazing projects that he never got around to completing. These notebooks have inspired generations of scientists and engineers ever since.

If any man could truly be said to have lived before his time, that man would be Leonardo da Vinci.

1. Underline the way in which the author thinks you may be acquainted with Leonardo. Then, tell what **acquainted** means.
2. Circle the words that identify the painting that is a major attraction. What **attraction** might draw you into a museum?
3. Circle the words that tell what some people’s impressions of Leonardo are strictly based on. Tell why this is not a good idea.
4. What group of people is identified as the authorities of the day? How did Leonardo differ from them?
5. Underline the synonym for “technical knowledge.” What kind of **technical** knowledge might be useful for an inventor?
6. Underline the words that tell when Leonardo had to make improvisations. When might **improvisations** be useful?
7. Circle the words that identify Leonardo’s contraption. Describe a **contraption** that you might like to build.
8. Underline words that tell how Leonardo’s genius is confirmed. What else might **confirm** someone’s genius?