

Neo Leo: The Ageless Ideas of Leonardo da Vinci

By Gene Barretta

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Common Core State Standards-English Language Arts-Literacy, Reading Informational Text, Grade 3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.3 Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.7 Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.9 Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.

Focus

Students will listen to Neo Leo: the Ageless Ideas of Leonardo da Vinci and discover biographies using print materials, electronic databases (such as PebbleGo, World Book Online or one subscribed by school).

Activation

Introduce author Gene Barretta to students and share information about his website www.genebarretta.com. Explain we will be reading a book written by Gene that talks about a very famous inventor from long ago.

Pre Reading Conversation:

- Who has heard of Leonardo da Vinci? Where and when did he live? Aside from inventing, what other skill made him famous?
- What was life like during the 15th and 16th centuries? (in Leonardo's Italy and the rest of the world).
- What did they do for transportation?
- How did they communicate long distance?
- What were their homes like?
- Why are inventors a valuable part of society?

Post Reading Conversation:

- How many of Leonardo's inventions exist in your modern life?
- How similar or different are his designs from the more modern versions?
- Does he inspire you to invent something?

- How would the world function differently without certain inventions like flying machines, SCUBA gear, projectors, robots, contact lenses, etc?
- Do you think Leonardo could ever imagine our modern conveniences and achievements, like computers, space travel, TV, etc?
- Would Leonardo be a fascinating person to meet?
- Would you have preferred to live at the same time as Leonardo Da Vinci?
- Which invention is your favorite or least favorite? Why?

Vocabulary:

Inventor

Invention

Inspiration

Communication

Transportation

Biography

Revolutionary

Passionately

Forerunner

Foreshadow

Piers

Truss

Pedestrians

Pacifist

Catapult

Prototype

Hover

Compress

Inflatable

Reinforce

Vortex

Dissection

Accurate

Rotisserie

Details for Discussion:

- His backwards mirror writing. Other possible theories on why he used it.
- The diversity of ideas.

Other Discussion/Lesson Idea Points:

Biography-

- Talk about biography as a genre. What is it? You may wish to discuss how biography combines informational writing with narrative. It's filled with facts and usually based on research, but also tells the story of a person's life.

- What did you learn or what can you assume about Leonardo's personal life?
- Is there enough information to describe his personality?
- What have you learned about Leonardo Da Vinci from reading Mr. Barretta's book that really made an impression on you?
- Some biographies begin with someone's birth and continue through to his or her death OR (if the person is still living) to the present time. Mr. Barretta's book focuses on da Vinci's inventions, rather than his life story. Is it OK to leave out some information? Why? If the writer did try to cover everything, how long might this book become?

Unpacking the process of inventing, using the book illustrations as a guide-

- Inspiration: the vignettes on the bottom corner of the right page - Leonardo becoming inspired to invent.
- Design: Leonardo's designs on the right page of the spread.
- Execution: The more contemporary items on the left page.
- How does one become an inventor? How old do you have to be?
- Name some famous inventions in the classroom.

Character Counts/Student character building attributes:

- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Ingenuity

Extra:

Share a Gene Barretta video about Neo Leo found on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3TJ2eQrIOY>

Guided Instruction:

- Have students think of a possible person they would like to have Mr. Barretta write about next.
- If students would like to research, have them access PebbleGo for more information.
- If students are using information from PebbleGo, have them cite their source.

Individual Learning:

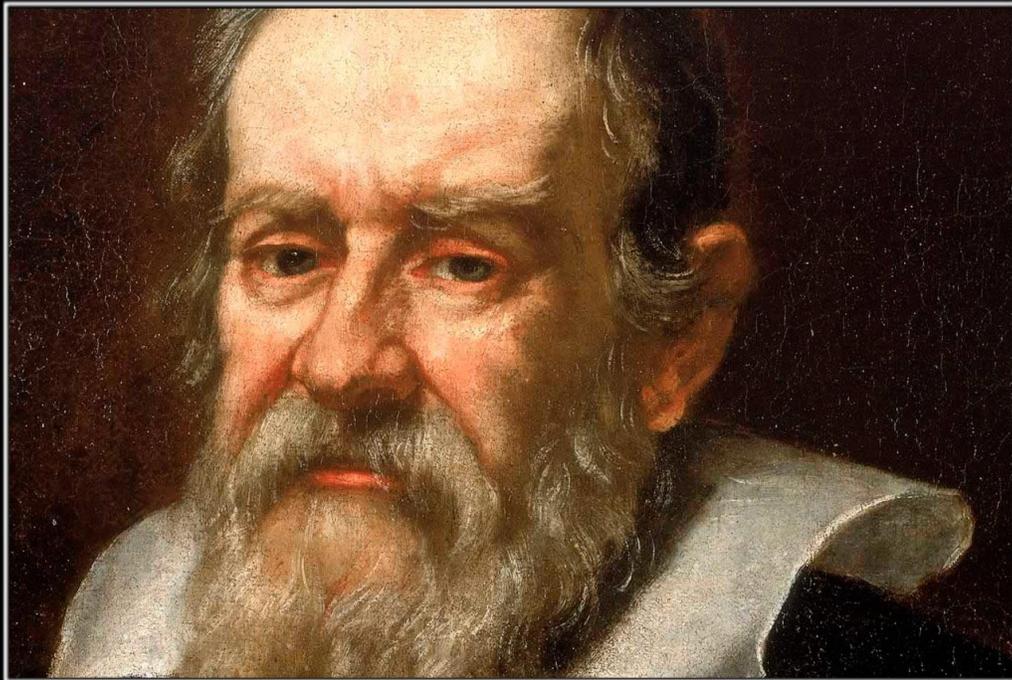
- Working in pairs (or individually), when students have found a person they wish to present to Mr. Barretta to write a book about, have them create a "Wanted" poster.
- Students will support their person with two reasons why they would like to see a biography written.
- The "Wanted Poster" can be created with simple paper and drawing materials. Or to incorporate computer technology, have students go to www.bighugelabs.com Once there, students can select "Motivator" and fill in the fields to create a Wanted Poster.
- If Mr. Barretta is visiting the school, hang work or email and get him to get a conversation started: gene@genebarretta.com

Technology:

PebbleGo database
www.bighugelabs.com

Reflection:

See examples of WANTED poster attached below, first from Big Huge Labs, second from MSPublisher:

**WANTED: BOOK ON GALILEO**

I like how you made the characters come to life in Neo Leo and Now & Ben and would like to see the same kind of picture book on Galileo. Galileo was a great man who was treated unfairly and I would like students to know about his great contributions to science and astronomy.

WANTED!

Dear Mr. Barretta,

Would you consider writing a biography about Galileo Galilei?

Here are my reasons:

1. I like how you made the characters come to life in Neo Leo and Now & Ben and would like to see the same kind of picture book on Galileo.
2. Galileo was a great man who was treated unfairly and I would like students to know about his great contributions to science and astronomy.

