



Leonardo and the Flying Boy

Laurence Anholt

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There were no spaceships or airplanes when Zoro was a boy. He lived in Italy during the era we now call the Renaissance, a time when the sky belonged to the birds. But one unusual man dreamed of incredible flying machines. "One day, Zoro," he told his pupil, "people will sail through the clouds and look down at the world below." Zoro was curious. He knew that his teacher did more than merely dream about the future, but was an important artist and inventor. Then Zoro made an astonishing discovery. His teacher was building a mysterious machine. A machine intended to fly! Here begins a fascinating story based on a true event, for Zoro's master was the famous artist and inventor, Leonardo da Vinci. Full-color illustrations throughout this beautiful book include reproductions of some of Leonardo's famous artworks.

Leonardo and the Flying Boy Details

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From Reader Review Leonardo and the Flying Boy for online ebook

Amy says

With few facts and much fabrication, this book still could have overcome these failings except the story fell as flat as the boy Zoro, who hurts himself by sneakily using Leonardo's flying machine. It might interest a preschool or early-elementary-aged child in Leonardo da Vinci; for me, both the educational value and the story are scattered and inadequate.

Janelle says

A children's book about Leonardo da Vinci, told from the point of view of his student Zoro (modeled after an actual apprentice.)

The illustrations are colorful and are mingled with real da Vinci sketchings. It highlights some of his most famous inventions and studies. I love the scene with the birds as inspiration for his "flying machine."

I think it's wonderful for children to look back on history to see where some of the daily conveniences we take for granted come from.

This is just one book in a series about great artists.

Cruth says

From Anholt's artists collection we get the story of da Vinci's apprentice Zoro and how he flew (and crashed) on one of da Vinci's greatest inventions. Beautifully illustrated in the style of da Vinci, Anholt gives the reader a peak into the artist's life.

30ish pages, easy vocabulary, full colour, full page illustrations along with sketches drawn from da Vinci's notebooks.

Plot is good - da Vinci as seen through a lowly (but real) young apprentice's eyes, and his flying the machine. Given my daughter's response -- "That's naughty! He should have asked first!" -- we can assume the characters are engaging and story easy to follow!

A wonderful introduction to da Vinci and a must for the collection of any budding artist.

Read aloud 5+

Read yourself 8+

Catherine says

Can you believe I was in Hay-on-Wye and did not set foot in a book shop? We were staying overnight in the hall (opposite the Conservative club for those of you who know the place) and, having been one of the people who unloaded the van, made copious cups of tea and got dinner on the go, decided I would not be able to do them justice in the half hour or so for which they were likely to remain open. So when those who had run out to explore in spite of aching feet returned with their booty, the area around my sleeping mat turned into a reading corner. This is one of three little books I actually read, along with others looked through and yet more discussed, before dinner was served. A tale I am told is based on fact that, although written with worthy aims, manages to be fun at the same time.

Mrs. Ruigrok says

This historical fiction by Laurence Anholt is a wonderful addition for teaching students art history. Leonardo da Vinci was not just an artist but a sculptor, inventor etc. This book tells the story of Zoro and Salai and da Vinci and the flying machine.

Heather says

An interesting story based loosely on actual events. We enjoyed the illustrations mixed with da Vinci's actual drawings. I didn't much care for the fact that the boys stole the flying machine, the "bad" boy causing the "good" boy to choose the wrong.

We enjoyed the last page of actual information the most.

Recommended as long as you talk about the poor moral choices of the boys.

Kat says

Zoro is a boy living in the 17th century but he has a very special job. He is the apprentice to none other than Leonardo da Vinci. What makes this job so special is he is helping da Vinci with the plans for his flying machine. Zoro brings joy and innocence to da Vinci's life as he is creating the model for his airplane.

This book is so enjoyable because it shows a side to da Vinci that is not shown often, which is his relationships with someone around him. While this story may not be true, it is heartwarming to think of how his life could have changed and been touched by a child in his life. It is also amazing to think at this time da Vinci was coming up with the plans for an airplane.

Paired book: Van Gogh and the Sunflowers

"There were no spaceships or airplanes when Zoro was a boy. The sky belonged to the birds. But one man dreamed of something incredible. "One day, Zoro," He told his pupil, "People will sail through the clouds and look down at the world below. Anything is possible." The different aspect of this book humanizes da Vinci and shows the power of relationships.

Gerry says

Vasari, the Italian painter, architect, writer, and historian, most famous for his 'Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects', once said of Leonardo da Vinci that he was 'marvellously endowed by heaven with beauty, grace and talent in such abundance that he leaves other men far behind'; he also added that this gentle vegetarian was strong enough to bend a horseshoe with his bare hands. There is no horseshoe bending in this volume but there is ample evidence of Leonardo's supreme talent.

The flying boy in question is Zoro, one of Leonardo's young pupils and the artist told him, 'One day people will sail through the clouds and look down at the world below. Anything is possible.' And Zoro admired Leonardo's work, looking in his notebooks and seeing drawings of how life began, how a plant grew, how planets moved and how people could fly like a bird. But he was unable to read the text for he found it written back to front!

There was only one place Zoro could not go while he worked with Leonardo and that was his mysterious workshop where the door was always locked. Zoro wondered what was inside, he thought of a fantastic sculpture or a huge war machine and decided that when he grew up he, too, would have his own studio with a secret workshop attached. And Leonardo encouraged him to think that way.

Being a kind man, Leonardo often took sick or hungry animals into his home to look after them and one day he went in with a wild and noisy creature that was kicking, fighting and spitting. When Zoro asked what it was, he was told that it was a boy whose mother had asked Leonardo to give some work to keep him out of prison. 'I'll call you Salai,' said Leonardo, 'It means "Little Devil", and that's exactly what you are.'

Meanwhile Zoro saw Leonardo dreaming up things such as a parachute, a bicycle, a deadly war machine, a gadget for walking on water, a life belt, a diving suit and a machine for cutting and polishing glass and he even saw a pair of spectacles that Leonardo had made for himself. 'Now I can keep an eye on Salai,' joked Leonardo.

One day Leonardo and Zoro went to town and, after the artist had sketched many interesting faces of people who he had encountered, he purchased the complete stock of birds in tiny cages that a market seller had for sale. Much to Zoro's and the other onlookers' surprise he immediately released them all. 'A bird should be free,' said Leonardo, 'Look, Zoro! Can you see how their wings push against the air? It gives me an idea ...'

And on his return to his studio he locked himself in his secret room and began banging and sawing, activities that went on for days. He also painted a lady called Mona Lisa and Zoro thought that the mysterious smile on the lady's face meant that she knew what was going on inside the locked room.

Then Salai, who had been in trouble through stealing Leonardo's purse, crept up behind Zoro with a bunch of keys he had stolen. Much to Zoro's surprise he took him into the locked room where an extraordinary machine was seen with wings like a great eagle. Realising that it was meant for flying the pair pulled it outside and as Zoro was the only one small enough to fit in it Salai told him, 'You will be the Flying Boy.'

They took it to the top of an adjacent hill where Zoro was strapped in and pushed off. Terrified, he began pedalling and was quickly flying like a bird. But the machine proved to be too heavy and it fell from the sky and crashed into a tree. Leonardo dashed out and pulled Zoro's limp body from the wrecked machine and

carried him home with Salai, hanging his head in shame, following behind.

Once home Zoro recovered but the accident had caused Leonardo to rethink; 'Perhaps I was wrong. Perhaps people will never fly. We are not birds. I will stick to painting,' he told Zoro. But Zoro told him, 'No. Remember what you told me - one day people WILL fly! The machine was too heavy, that's all.'

Leonardo thought for a moment then jumped up and began redesigning his flying machine in his notebooks and as he did so he smiled as though he could see into the future when boys and girls just like Zoro would sail through the clouds ... Anything is possible!

This is another in Laurence Anholt's excellent 'Anholt's Artists series' and, just like the others, it gives a different, nice storyline perspective on how the great artists lived and worked and is an ideal introduction to the art world for youngsters.

Footnote: Historically 'Salai' Giacomo (1480-1524) was untalented and mischievous but he worked with Leonardo until the artist's death in 1519, when he inherited substantial property, before, perhaps not surprisingly, meeting an untimely death when he was killed by a crossbow. As for Zoro, little is known of him thereafter but he undoubtedly became a highly talented artist who had contributed to his master's great paintings, where their brush strokes are now inseparable.

Dillon says

The illustrations were done through paint. Anholt does a great job illustrating the scenes in the story, and either has the pictures take up the whole page or keep them within a small frame. For the historical aspects of the story she includes the actual images (i.e. the painting of Mona Lisa). There were a few pages in the book where Anholt illustrated the images in brown colored pencil. These images were only inventions that Leonardo Da Vinci dreamed up, so I'm guessing that's why they're in brown colored pencil and not paint. This belongs to the genre of historical fiction because not all the stories in this book are true, but some are as well as the characters. You could read this book to students to help them learn who Leonardo Da Vinci was, and all the inventions that he inspired. This book also has a page in the back that has historical information about Da Vinci that you could teach to the students.

In this book Da Vinci has a young pupil named Zorro. One day Da Vinci finds a boy in the streets and decides to take him in. He names him Salai. Salai always caused trouble and even stole from Da Vinci. One day Salai convinces Zorro to break into Da Vinci's secret workshop and take out his secret flying machine. They go to a cliff where Zorro takes off with it, only to come crashing down soon after. Luckily, Da Vinci catches him but frowns upon them for their actions.

Jeremy says

Zoro succumbs to peer pressure and suffers the consequences. Zoro's enthusiasm for the project makes Leonardo continue working on his invention. Good illustrations.

Kate read parts of this.

Brittney Sabatini says

Zoro is a young boy who is an apprentice for the great artist and inventor, Leonardo Da Vinci. This book takes you through the artworks and inventions by Da Vinci. Zoro is curious about Leonardo's secret room and all the strange noises that come from it. It isn't until the end that he discovers Leonardo is building something wonderful-a flying machine!

I feel that this book would be great to use for an art class or for a lesson plan about past artist/inventors. I think it's a fun way to show students what Da Vinci did in his lifetime and how his inventions and art have influenced today's world. I personally did not take much from the book because I previously knew the information, but I feel a younger child would take a lot from this. There is a great moral dilemma in the storyline and it helps show children right from wrong.

Kelly says

Leonardo DaVinci took in a young boy who was terrible trouble for his mother. This story is about that boy and another boy who befriended DaVinci, and a little about DaVinci himself. Not enough about DaVinci.

Book Bazaar says

I disagree with the other reviewer - this is a great picture book! I read this book with my daughter and she really enjoyed finding out about the early inventions of Leonardo DaVinci and she now wants to visit the Louvre to see the Mona Lisa!

This series is great for kids who like to know more about the world they live in and get an insight into a famous artist of the past. The story is lively and engaging and there are all sorts of facts sprinkled lightly throughout the narrative.

Highly recommended for 4 - 10 year olds.

Jessica says

This book really engaged my eldest daughter when she was 4 and in kindergarten. We are reading it again in 1st grade and it still captivates her. She's noticing more details, asks more questions, and enjoys it even more.

We all enjoy the illustrations and the parts of history that are incorporated. My girls ask if we have the other art books in this series. We have a few but they ask for more. I think I may have to oblige them.

Kristanne Duncan says

In a time when there were no spaceships and no airplane, Leonardo da Vinci told his student Zoro that anything is possible. Da Vinci, a man with a dream, was a profoundly skilled artist and a self taught scientist and engineer. Leonardo and the Flying Boy is a great story about the great mind of Leonardo da Vinci. The book discusses how we must try to understand everything! Laurence Anholt did a wonderful job filling this book with sketches (from Leonardo's sketch books) and bright colorful illustrations about Leonardo, the children he helped, and events that took place. I liked how this book had actual sketches of Leonardo's drawings as well as a clear copy of the Mona Lisa. This is such a great way of introducing art and science to children as well as providing some history about the time period. Behind the door of the secret workshop, Leonardo had been working on one of the most spectacular inventions. Anything is possible. And one day, people would learn how to fly like birds. Many children, if they haven't experienced flying themselves, have at least seen a plane flying through the air. This is a great way to encourage children to dream and dream big. Instilling the lesson in children that anything is possible is important. Who know, one of our young students could one day dream of the next big advance in technology or science.
