

Oil and Marble by Stephanie Storey

Suggested Discussion Questions written by the author (who is “I”)

1. When I first started talking about the book, readers were surprised that Michelangelo and Leonardo lived at the same time — was anyone at your book club surprised? Did everyone know they lived at the same time? Why DON'T we know this about these two most famous artists?
2. Discuss the differences between Michelangelo's relationship with his family and Leonardo's — and how that affected their lives and art.
3. Discuss the Author's Note in the end about which parts of the book were based on the historical record and which parts were imagined. Did you like the balance or did things bother you (Insider tip here: I've had several people tell me they were HEARTBROKEN that the bird ring was imagined).
4. I always love hearing people talk about how each artist affected the other in the book. Do you think we would have Michelangelo without Leonardo and vice versa and why?
5. I feel like we are living in an era that is ripe to create another Michelangelo or Leonardo. I think we are living in a “New Renaissance.” Do you agree? Why/why not?
6. Who do you relate to more, Michelangelo or Leonardo and why?
7. Our society/history, puts artists like Michelangelo and Leonardo up on a pedestal/out of reach... *Oil and Marble* tries to make them HUMAN. Discuss their human struggles and flaws and personalities in this novel and how that element of humanity in these artists improves your experience of their art.
8. Who has seen the Mona Lisa and the David in person? What was the experience like; did reading this novel change that experience in retrospect, why?
9. These two artists create their art very differently — discuss their different creative processes and how their art is a product of their approach. How did their temperaments affect their process and their art?
10. Mona Lisa's smile... Was the “reason” given for her smile fulfilling and why or why not (I definitely only suggest discussing this one if everyone has read the book!)
11. What have Michelangelo and Leonardo taught you about creativity and success?
12. This question works for either book: do you think great artists like Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci achieved what they did primarily because of their talent or because of hard work?