

**PAIRED PASSAGE:
HUMANITIES (ACT)**

Passage A is an anonymous personal account of a visit to the Louvre Museum in Paris, France.

Passage B is adapted from the essay "The Serious and the Smirk: The Smile in Portraiture" by Nicholas Jeeves.

Passage A:

5 Because she's the most famous painting
in the world, you have to go and see her. For
at least a few moments during your trip to
Paris, you'll feel like this is the sole reason
you're in the city at all. Don't be intimidated
by the crowds that perpetually surround the
Louvre's entrance. Be not seduced by the
convenience of simply finding a poster or
t-shirt displaying her likeness—the *Mona
Lisa* is someone you have to meet in person.

10 The Louvre is a spectacular museum, and
certainly Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is
far from the only famous work of art here.
15 The halls themselves are storied and full of
history and significance. As you read the
visitors guide, you'll learn that you've just
entered a 12th century fortress that was later
the residence of Louis XIV. Now it's the
20 home of the painted lady whose enigmatic
smile is a beacon for all visitors. She's
upstairs and down the hall; best not to keep
her waiting.

25 Walking to the open staircase to leave the
ground floor, you'll first come upon *Winged
Victory*, a Greek statue so grand that it causes
you to pause. She might have smiled at you
like *Mona Lisa* will, but her head hasn't
survived the passage of time. Still, there's a
30 palpable grandeur to her, and the feelings of
hope and Heaven aren't lost on you.

A few short minutes later, as you walk
through the Sully Wing with the other
pilgrims, you'll pause briefly to try and
lock eyes with the *Venus de Milo*. But she's
35 looking off into the distance, and because
her arms are missing, there's no chance of an
embrace.

40 Then, around the corner and deep into
the Denon Wing, you find the *Mona Lisa*.
She's smiling, as you've heard, but what's
much more initially striking is the mass of
backs of heads between you and her. It's no
surprise that everyone has stopped to see her;

45 they are leaning forward and likely staring
at the upturned corner of her mouth. Even if
you could push closer to the rope barrier and
the thick plate glass behind which she rests,
the connection would have already been
50 established. *Victory* and *Venus* couldn't elicit
this kind of face-off, this temporary paralysis.
What you've heard about the smile seems to
be true: it's arresting; it's hiding something;
and it has you standing amongst a crowd of
55 hundreds of men, women, and children also
contemplating their meeting with the *Mona
Lisa*. Did da Vinci know that this would be
the response? Would art critics find your
reaction reverent or superficial? No matter
60 what those answers may be, the memory of
this room will follow you—just as the smile
does now while you eventually, reluctantly
make your exit.

Passage B:

65 Today when someone points a camera
at us, we smile. This is the cultural and
social reflex of our time, and such are our
expectations of a picture portrait. But in the
long history of portraiture the open smile has
been largely, as it were, frowned upon.

70 A walk around any art gallery will
reveal that the image of the open smile
has, for a very long time, been deeply
unfashionable. 'Smirks' do, however, make
more frequent appearances: a smirk may
offer artists an opportunity for ambiguity
75 that the open smile cannot. Such a subtle
and complex facial expression may
convey almost anything—piqued interest,
condescension, flirtation, wistfulness,
80 boredom, discomfort, contentment, or mild
embarrassment. This equivocation allows
the artist to offer us a lasting emotional
engagement with the image. An open smile,
however, is unequivocal, a single moment of
85 unselfconsciousness.

90 Such is the field upon which the mouth
in portraiture has been debated: an ongoing
conflict between the serious and the smirk.
The most famous and enduring portrait in
the world functions around this very conflict.
Millions of words have been devoted to the
Mona Lisa and her smirk—more generously
known as her 'enigmatic smile'—and so
today it's difficult to write about her without
95 sensing that you're at the back of a very
long and noisy queue that stretches all the

100 way back to 16th century Florence. But to
write about the smile in portraiture without
mentioning her is perverse, for the effect of
the *Mona Lisa* has always been in its inherent
ability to demand further examination.
105 Leonardo impels us to do this using a
combination of skillful *sfumato* (the effect of
blurriness, or smokiness) and his profound
understanding of human desire. It is a kind
of magic: when you first glimpse her, she
appears to be issuing a wanton invitation, so

110 alive is the smile. But when you look again,
and the *sfumato* clears in focus, she seems
to have changed her mind about you. This is
interactive stuff, and paradoxical: the effect
of the painting only occurs in dialogue,
yet she is only really there when you're
115 not really looking. The *Mona Lisa* is thus,
in many ways, designed to frustrate—and
frustrate she did.

Source: Passage B - <http://publicdomainreview.org/2013/09/18/>

1. One of the main arguments that the author of Passage A is trying to make is that:

- A) Leonardo da Vinci would be upset by the response to his painting.
- B) visitors make the mistake of ignoring other works of art in the Louvre.
- C) one should see the *Mona Lisa* while visiting the Louvre.
- D) visiting the Louvre is more trouble than it is worth.

2. With respect to Passage A as a whole, the author includes descriptions of *Winged Victory* and the *Venus de Milo* in order to:

- A) provide a basis of comparison for his description of the experience of viewing the *Mona Lisa*.
- B) suggest alternative sights in the Louvre, should the crowds at the *Mona Lisa* be too large.
- C) provide historical context amplifying the meanings inherent in Da Vinci's painting.
- D) contrast the effect of sculptures on audiences with those of paintings like the *Mona Lisa*.

3. It can be reasonably inferred that the author of Passage A has written this account in the second person because he:

- A) has never been to the Louvre.
- B) wrote this account for a specific person.
- C) is attempting to hide details about a specific experience at the Louvre.
- D) wants the reader to imagine what the author has already experienced.

4. According to Passage A, all of the following are true about the *Mona Lisa* EXCEPT:

- A) a rope cordon and heavy glass protect the painting.
- B) da Vinci intended that *Mona Lisa's* smile would surpass that of *Venus de Milo*.
- C) the painting is the subject of souvenirs.
- D) the painting is located in the Denon Wing of the Louvre.

5. According to the author of Passage B, which of the following statements best characterizes the overall difference between smirks and smiles?

- A) Smirks are more emotionally complex than are smiles.
- B) Smiles are more widely used in paintings than are smirks.
- C) Smirks only exists in photographs, but smiles can be seen anywhere.
- D) Smirks indicate piqued interest; whereas smiles indicate unselfconsciousness.

6. The author of Passage B writes that "today it's difficult to write about her without sensing that you're at the back of a very long and noisy queue that stretches all the way back to 16th century Florence" (lines 93-96) to show that:

- A) the *Mona Lisa* is most popular in Florence.
- B) writing about the *Mona Lisa* is frustrating.
- C) writers have been discussing the *Mona Lisa's* smile for centuries.
- D) writing is the most effective way to understand the *Mona Lisa's* significance.

7. Which of the following statements from Passage B supports the argument that “the *Mona Lisa* is thus, in many ways, designed to frustrate” (lines 113-114)?

- A) “A walk around ... deeply unfashionable” (lines 69-72).
- B) “Such a subtle ... mild embarrassment” (lines 75-80).
- C) “Such is the field ... serious and the smirk” (lines 85-87).
- D) “But to write ... her is perverse” (lines 96-98).

8. The authors of Passage A and Passage B would most likely agree that:

- A) da Vinci should have painted the *Mona Lisa* with a serious expression.
- B) sculptures cannot engage a viewer as well as a painting can.
- C) the popularity of the *Mona Lisa* is its greatest mystery.
- D) the engaging nature of *Mona Lisa's* smile has made her famous.

9. Which of the following statements from Passage A supports the argument in Passage B that Leonardo da Vinci had a “profound understanding of human desire” (lines 103- 104)?

- A) “The Louvre is ... work of art here” (lines 11-13).
- B) “Still, there’s a ... Heaven aren’t lost on you” (lines 28-30).
- C) “They are leaning ... corner of her mouth” (lines 44-45).
- D) “Would art critics ... reverent or superficial?” (lines 57-58).

10. Which of the following themes is supported by both Passage A and Passage B?

- A) Artwork is open to interpretation.
- B) Museums are too serious.
- C) Smiles are just as complex in real life as in paintings.
- D) Writers dive too deep to find meaning.