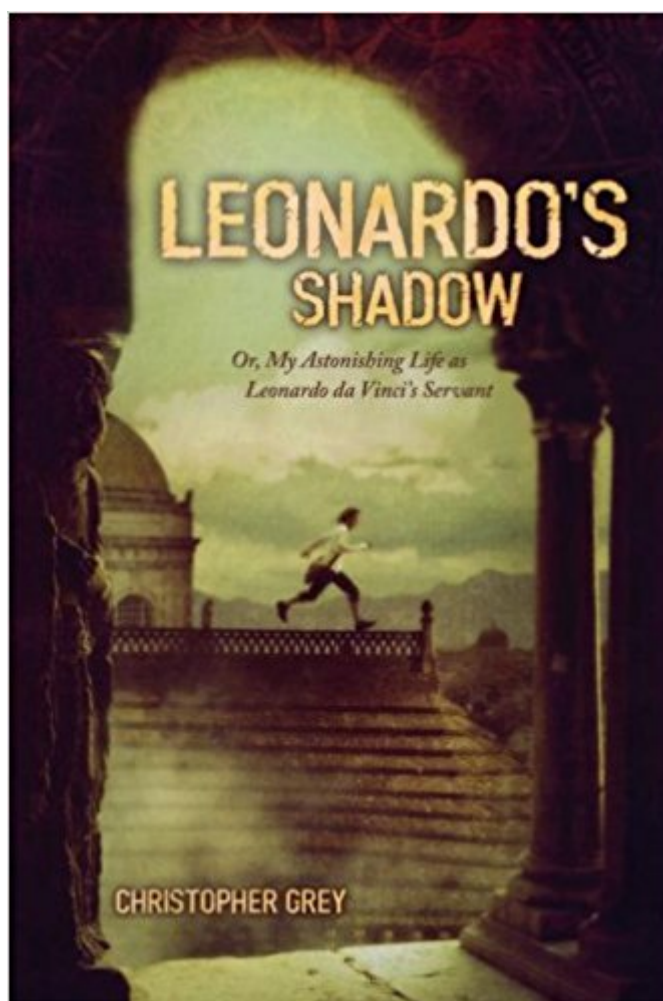


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# Leonardo's Shadow: Or, My Astonishing Life As Leonardo Da Vinci's Servant



## Synopsis

Milan, 1497. The height of the Renaissance. And for Giacomo, servant of the famous painter Leonardo da Vinci, it's the most difficult time of all. His Master has been working on the Last Supper, his greatest painting ever, for nearly two years. But has he finished it? He's barely started! The all-powerful Duke of Milan is demanding that it be completed by the time the Pope visits at Easter. And Giacomo knows that if Leonardo doesn't pick up his pace, the Duke may invite a young genius -- Michelangelo -- to finish the painting instead. Which means that Leonardo won't be paid, which means that Milan's shopkeepers (to whom he owes massive amounts) will take drastic measures against him. It's all down to Giacomo, and whether he can come up with a brilliant solution. And if he does, will his Master go for it? After all, Leonardo still doesn't seem to trust him. He refuses to teach Giacomo how to paint; he won't help him find his parents; nor will he discuss the significance of the medallion, ring, and cross that Giacomo was carrying when Leonardo found him. But with the secret arrival of a powerful stranger, Giacomo is about to discover much more than the answers he has been looking for. And he will also receive an invitation to help arrange a meeting that could change his life. . . and the future course of history. With more twists and turns than a spiral staircase, this thriller is as unique as its two heroes -- the most celebrated artist who ever lived, and a young man without a past, who will stop at nothing to find the truth about his life.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 6-9  
It is 1497, and young Giacomo does chores for his master, accompanying him when needed and running errands to the merchants of Milan. He also spends much of his time making excuses to those who have commissioned the artist's work and fending off the many merchants who come trying to collect debts. With smooth words and false promises, the boy keeps them at bay for the time being. Da Vinci has a commission for a great painting, but he will not work. Why is a mystery, but until he finishes this painting of the Last Supper, he will not be paid. Even worse, the Duke of Milan, whose temper is legendary, is getting impatient. Giacomo worries about starving, about freezing, and about dying by order of the duke or the gentlemen whom Da Vinci insults. But, mostly, he worries about his great master, whom he thinks might be his father. In the beginning of the book, he is chatty and breezy as he introduces his city and surroundings. As the book progresses, he becomes more serious, and readers can see him maturing and becoming more responsive to the atmosphere and problems around him. Grey seamlessly blends fact and research about the inventor/artist with imagination. The basic time line and characters of the story fit with what we know of Da Vinci's life. Easily readable, this novel incorporates adventure and mystery with history.  
Heather E. Miller, Homewood Public Library, AL Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gr. 7-10. A disoriented runaway boy, Giacomo, is taken in by Leonardo da Vinci and grows up as the great man's servant, protecting him from his creditors even as Leonardo is pressured to finish The Last Supper. Although part of Leonardo's life, Giacomo still has dreams of his own: to be an artist and to find the secret of his parentage (which he hopes will lead back to da Vinci). Grey cleverly takes Dickensian conventions (a sweeping saga featuring an orphaned lad seeking his fortune, who bumps up against a host of memorable characters) and resettles them during the Renaissance. A first-time author, Grey writes intelligently, but even sweeping sagas sometimes need trimming. Moreover, the book needs an author's note. There's a short bit at the end, about The Last Supper, but the fact and fiction about da Vinci's art, his inventions, and even his sexuality, an issue raised in the novel, need clarification. The story itself, however, is enticing, and Giacomo's yearnings about his past and future will speak to readers. Ilene Cooper  
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this title.

This book isn't perfect but it puts you straight in the middle of Renaissance Italy, to the point where you're roaming its chaotic streets, haggling in the marketplace, and praying you'll survive the tussles between the apprentices and the servants. That said, the one thing that could have been better is creating depth in the characters. It simply isn't consistent. Still I highly recommend it for some fantastic time traveling through Italy.

This book was exciting at the beginning, but began to drag midway through. It picked up towards the end. Leonardo da Vinci is such an interesting figure, more could have been included about his life.

Very good story. Very well written.

I had to read this for a project and enjoyed the book much more than I thought I would

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It's extremely well written, so that it stays interesting for my son to read. When the class trip went to Florence it made more sense than just learning about the renaissance by visiting museums

Nice little plot twist, just when you think the puzzle was solved.... You realize that your assumptions were so very wrong!

good

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