



Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel



Reading Test

EXAMPLE

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Teacher's Notes

Lesson Contents	
1.	Instructions
2.	Text 1 without reference words underlined.
3.	Text 2 with reference words underlined.
4.	Reading test questions.
5.	Reading test answer key.

Instructions

Option 1 [Medium] *** ** [B2/C1]

1. Distribute **text 1 (without reference words underlined)** a week before the test. Students read, check vocabulary and meanings.
2. Test day. Distribute **text 2 (with reference words underlined)** and the **questions** (no dictionaries or notes allowed).
3. Set **ONE** hour to read the text and answer the questions.
4. Take in and correct or go through answers in class (pass mark is 70%).

Option 2 [More challenging] **** * [C1]

1. Test day. Distribute **text 2 (with reference words underlined)** & the **questions** (no dictionaries allowed).
2. Set **ONE** hour to read the text and answer the questions.
3. Take in and correct or go through answers in class (pass mark is 70%).

Extension Task

1. Students take a set of notes and write a *summary (add 60 minutes to the test or complete as a standalone task).

⇒ Note: the summary lesson also contains additional critical thinking questions as an extension task.

Link for Additional Material

Summary writing	www.academic-englishuk.com/summary
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Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel (Text 1)

By A. Watson (2025) EXAMPLE

The Sistine Chapel ceiling [REDACTED] Renaissance art. Commissioned by Pope Julius II in 1508, it was painted by Michelangelo Buonarroti over four years and completed in 1512. [REDACTED] as a sculptor, he accepted the commission under pressure, and the result transformed the history of Western painting. [REDACTED] and contains hundreds of figures. It continues to astonish visitors with its combination of scale, complexity and visual power (Forcellino, 2022).

Michelangelo's [REDACTED], and his reluctance to take on the project reflected both personal and technical concerns. The fresco technique required applying [REDACTED]. In addition, the artist had to construct scaffolding and work for years while standing and painting overhead. In letters to his friends, he described [REDACTED] and the paint dripping into his eyes (Wallace, 2013). Despite these challenges, the project demonstrated his [REDACTED].

At the heart of the ceiling are nine central panels illustrating stories from the Book of Genesis. [REDACTED] *Adam and Eve*, and scenes from the story of Noah. The most celebrated image is the [REDACTED] his hand to spark life into the reclining figure of Adam. This image has become one of the most [REDACTED]. Recent scholars have even suggested that Michelangelo embedded imagery of the human brain within the design, symbolising the [REDACTED] (Ashford and Tatem, 2024).

Surrounding the central panels are monumental figures of twelve prophets and sibyls. [REDACTED], suggesting that the search for truth is universal. The inclusion of the sibyls, female seers from the ancient world, reflects Renaissance [REDACTED]. In the triangular lunettes above the windows, Michelangelo painted the ancestors of Christ, linking the Old Testament with the [REDACTED] history (Müller, 2022).

The ceiling is celebrated [REDACTED] his deep knowledge of classical sculpture, giving the figures muscular bodies and dynamic poses. The foreshortening and use of [REDACTED] breaks open the flat surface of the ceiling. By combining complex narrative with dramatic physicality, [REDACTED], setting new standards for artistic ambition. This work marked a turning [REDACTED] both spiritual and emotional intensity (Wallace, 2013).

[REDACTED]. Contemporary accounts describe crowds entering the chapel and marvelling at the scale and beauty of the work. Its impact on later artists was immense, [REDACTED]. The ceiling's reputation has [REDACTED] study argues that a female figure in *The Flood* scene may depict signs of breast cancer, showing how Michelangelo's realism extended

to the representation [redacted] continued into modern times, though debates over [redacted] and 1990s.

Today the Sistine Chapel ceiling is considered one of the masterpieces of world culture. It combines theology, philosophy and [redacted] and the ideals of Renaissance humanism. Designated as part of the Vatican's UNESCO World Heritage [redacted]. The ceiling's enduring power lies in its ability to merge biblical narrative with human [redacted] but also a timeless celebration of artistic genius (Forcellino, 2022).

References

Ashford, J.W. and Tatem, S.B. (2024) 'Michelangelo's images on the chapel ceiling depicting Creation describe the course of vertebrate brain development', *Neurocase*. doi:10.1080/13554794.2020.1813477.

[redacted]: *History of a Masterpiece*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Müller, J. (2022) [redacted] Reflections on Michelangelo's design of the Sistine Chapel', *Theological Studies Journal*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368352552_An_exceeding_marvel (Accessed: 28 August 2025).

[redacted] 'Depictions of disease in art: Identifying breast cancer in the Sistine Chapel's "Flood" scene', *The Breast*, 74, pp. 158–163. doi:10.1016/j.breast.2024.04.008.

Wallace, W.E. (2013) [redacted]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel (Text 2)

By A. Watson (2025)

1. The Sistine Chapel ceiling [REDACTED] Renaissance art. Commissioned by Pope Julius II in 1508, it was painted by Michelangelo Buonarroti over four years and completed in 1512. [REDACTED] as a sculptor, *he* accepted the commission under pressure, and the result transformed the history of Western painting. [REDACTED] and contains hundreds of figures. It continues to astonish visitors with its combination of scale, complexity and visual power (Forcellino, 2022).
2. Michelangelo's [REDACTED], and his reluctance to take on the project reflected both personal and technical concerns. The fresco technique required applying [REDACTED]. In addition, the artist had to construct scaffolding and work for years while standing and painting overhead. In letters to his friends, he described [REDACTED] and the paint dripping into his eyes (Wallace, 2013). Despite *these challenges*, the project demonstrated his [REDACTED].
3. At the heart of the ceiling are nine central panels illustrating stories from the Book of Genesis. [REDACTED] *Adam and Eve*, and scenes from the story of Noah. The most celebrated image is [REDACTED] out his hand to spark life into the reclining figure of Adam. This image has become one of the [REDACTED]. Recent scholars have even suggested that Michelangelo embedded imagery of the human brain within the design, symbolising the [REDACTED] (Ashford and Tatem, 2024).
4. Surrounding the central panels are monumental figures of twelve prophets and sibyls. [REDACTED], suggesting that the search for truth is universal. The inclusion of the sibyls, female seers from the ancient world, reflects Renaissance [REDACTED]. In the triangular lunettes above the windows, Michelangelo painted the ancestors of Christ, linking the Old Testament with the New [REDACTED] history (Müller, 2022).
5. The ceiling is celebrated [REDACTED] his deep knowledge of classical sculpture, giving the figures muscular bodies and dynamic poses. The foreshortening and use of [REDACTED] that breaks open the flat surface of the ceiling. By combining complex narrative with dramatic physicality, [REDACTED], setting new standards for artistic ambition. *This* work marked a turning [REDACTED] both spiritual and emotional intensity (Wallace, 2013).
6. [REDACTED]. Contemporary accounts describe crowds entering the chapel and marvelling at the scale and beauty of the work. Its impact on later artists was immense, influencing [REDACTED]. The ceiling's reputation has [REDACTED] study argues that a female figure in *The Flood* scene may depict signs of breast cancer, showing how Michelangelo's

realism [REDACTED] The ceiling's reputation continued into modern times, though debates [REDACTED].

7. Today the Sistine Chapel ceiling is considered one of the masterpieces of world culture. It combines theology, philosophy and [REDACTED] and the ideals of Renaissance humanism. Designated as part of the Vatican's UNESCO World Heritage [REDACTED]. The ceiling's enduring power lies in its ability to merge biblical narrative with human [REDACTED] but also a timeless celebration of artistic genius (Forcellino, 2022).

References

Ashford, J.W. and Tatem, S.B. (2024) 'Michelangelo's images on the chapel ceiling depicting Creation describe the course of vertebrate brain development', *Neurocase*. doi:10.1080/13554794.2020.1813477.

[REDACTED] *The Sistine Chapel: History of a Masterpiece*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Müller, J. (2022) [REDACTED] Reflections on Michelangelo's design of the Sistine Chapel', *Theological Studies Journal*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368352552_An_exceeding_marvel (Accessed: 28 August 2025).

[REDACTED] 'Depictions of disease in art: Identifying breast cancer in the Sistine Chapel's "Flood" scene', *The Breast*, 74, pp. 158–163. doi:10.1016/j.breast.2024.04.008.

Wallace, W.E. (2013) [REDACTED]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Comprehension Questions

1. Headings: Choose **ONE** subheading for each paragraph (P). One title is NOT needed.

P1.	A	A reluctant commission and physical strain
P2.	B	
P3.	C	From astonishment to reinterpretation and debate
P4.	D	
P5.	E	A ceiling that redefined Renaissance art
P6.	F	
P7.	G	Central biblical stories in paint
	H	

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2. Multiple Choice: Choose **ONE** answer for each paragraph (P).

P1.	What does the phrase "it continues to astonish ceiling?"	a.	
		b.	It still impresses viewers today.
		c.	
		d.	Visitors prefer Michelangelo's sculptures.
P2.	What difficulty did letters?	a.	Running out of pigments.
		b.	
		c.	Falling scaffolding.
		d.	
P3.	become the most iconic image?	a.	Creation of the World
		b.	
		c.	Story of Noah
		d.	The birth of Adam
P4.	What does the inclusion of sibyls alongside prophets suggest?	a.	
		b.	That Michelangelo preferred female figures.
		c.	
		d.	That sibyls were more important than prophets.
P5.	How did Michelangelo make dimensional?	a.	
		b.	By painting shadowed mosaics.
		c.	By using perspective tricks and painted structures.
		d.	
P6.	Which later artists were influenced by the ceiling?	a.	High Renaissance, then Mannerist and Baroque.
		b.	Gothic artists working in cathedrals across Europe.
		c.	
		d.	Abstract artists of the 20th century.
P7.	ceiling considered a world masterpiece today?	a.	
		b.	It unites faith with creativity.
		c.	
		d.	It contains no signs of restoration.

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That is the end of page 1.

3. True / False: Choose **ONE** answer for each paragraph (P).

		T / F
P1.	Michelangelo [redacted] he preferred painting to sculpture.	
P2.	Fresco painting meant working quickly because colours were added onto damp plaster.	
P3.	Scholars suggest [redacted] in the ceiling design.	
P4.	[redacted] in the central panels of the ceiling.	
P5.	The figures combine powerful anatomy with dramatic stances.	
P6.	A recent study [redacted] reveal signs of brain cancer.	
P7.	The ceiling is [redacted].	

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3. Reference Words: Choose what the underlined word in each paragraph (P) refers to.

	Word	Connection
P1.	He	
P2.	These challenges	
P3.	[redacted]	
P4.	They	
P5.	[redacted]	
P6.	One	
P7.	[redacted]	

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4. Key language: Search for the word in the paragraph (P) that means:

	Explanation	Word
P1.	The act of ordering someone to create something.	
P2.	[redacted]	
P3.	Widely recognised as a symbol.	
P4.	[redacted]	
P5.	A technique to show something as smaller or nearer.	
P6.	The [redacted] artwork.	
P7.	A cultural site recognised by an international organisation.	

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That is the end of page 2.

5. Citations: Match the source with the point they make about Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel.

	Source		Point
i.	Ashford & Tatem (2024)	a.	The [redacted] stories with classical wisdom, especially [redacted].
ii.	[redacted]	b.	Michelangelo may have portrayed illness in <i>The Flood</i> scene, showing [redacted].
iii.	Müller (2022)	c.	The <i>Creation of Adam</i> might also symbolise the structure of the brain, [redacted].
iv.	[redacted]	d.	Visitors are still struck by the ceiling's enormous size and detail; it is also preserved as [redacted].
v.	Wallace (2013)	e.	Letters [redacted] the work was for Michelangelo, describing physical discomfort.

i.		ii.		iii.		iv.		v.	
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Overall Total: ___ / 40

That is the end of the reading test.

Comprehension Questions KEY

1. Headings: Choose **ONE** subheading for each paragraph (P). One title is NOT needed.

P1.	<i>E</i>	A	A reluctant commission and physical strain
P2.	<i>A</i>	B	Prophets, sibyls, and a universal message
P3.	<i>G</i>	C	From astonishment to reinterpretation and debate

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ALL ANSWERS INCLUDED IN PAID VERSION...