

April 15th

Memory verse for the week:

Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. Psalm 143:10

Something to Read¹

Dr Samuel Johnson's Dictionary was first published on **April 15th** 1755.

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was a writer and **literary critic** renowned for his **witty** and sometimes wise sayings. He compiled the first adequate English dictionary. This was a huge task and it took him seven years. He had no help except for a **clerk** who wrote out for him the quotations he used to illustrate the words in the dictionary. Johnson was always short of money but although his dictionary was a great success he was still poor until the king (George III) granted him a small pension in 1762. All dictionaries made since Johnson's time are laid out in the way he **established**. However, it is usual for a dictionary to be compiled by a whole team of people not just one man. "The world contemplated with wonder so **stupendous** a work achieved by one man, while other countries had thought such undertakings fit only for whole academies." wrote Johnson's biographer Boswell.

There are some mistakes in the dictionary, which is hardly surprising given that Johnson made it all on his own. We get a little flavour of Johnson's character from his reaction to a lady who asked him how he came to define "**pastern**" as the knee of a horse. "Instead of making an elaborate reply, as she expected, he at once replied, 'Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance.'"

Here are a few of Johnson's famous sayings which show us a little of his personality:

"Curiosity is one of the most permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous intellect."

"Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance."

"Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it."

"Being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned."

"The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do him absolutely no good."

Something to do

Do you know how to use a dictionary?

You need to know the alphabet well to use a dictionary. Practice saying it now if you have only just learned it or find it difficult. I was the last person in my class at school to learn to say it which was very embarrassing. My husband still can't say it but has long since ceased to be embarrassed! However, don't be like us – life is so much easier when you know the order of the letters.

I have **highlighted** some words in the story above that you could look up in a dictionary if you have one. If you do not have one you will have to use an online dictionary. You can find Dr Johnson's dictionary [on line](https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com)² but don't use it to try to find out what "pastern" means!

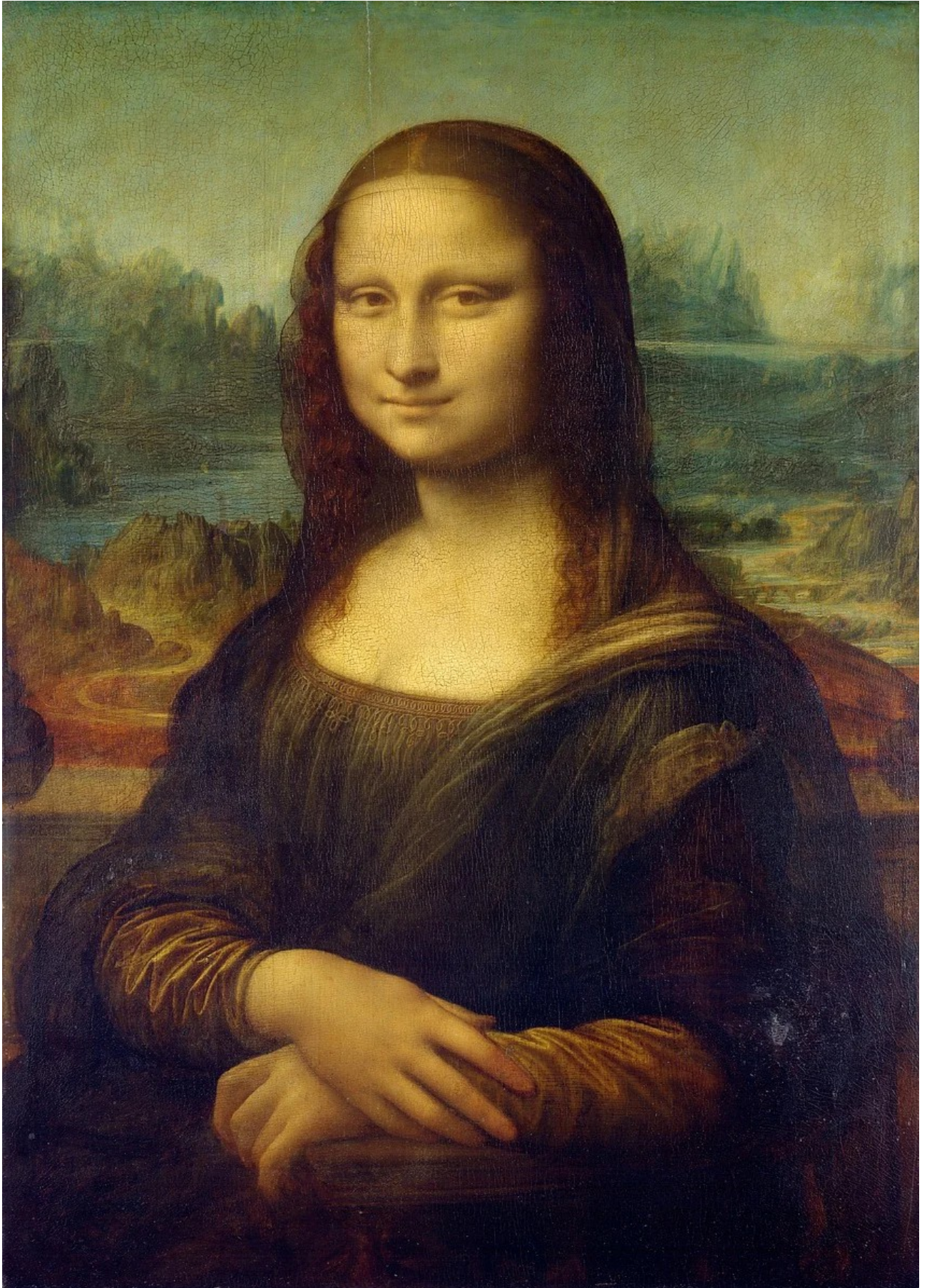
To get a feel for what Dr Johnson achieved, try compiling your own dictionary just for a few words beginning with one letter of the alphabet. Not easy is it?

Something to look at

The artist who painted what is probably the most famous painting in the world, Leonardo da Vinci, was born on **15th April** 1452. This is the *Mona Lisa* which hangs in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

1 More about dictionaries in the 1st February lesson.

2 It is here: <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com>



Mona Lisa just means “my lady Lisa”, a polite form of address for Lisa del Giocondo, for whose husband it was painted. The lady's expression is one of the most famous things about the painting. Is she smiling or not? If so, is it her eyes that smile or her mouth? Cover up her eyes and then her mouth to see what you think. There is a lot of detail in the rocky background. Can you spot the winding path and the bridge? Although detailed, the background is hazy as though seen from a distance through the atmosphere. Leonard was one of the first to use this effect, known as “atmospheric perspective”.

Something to draw

Drawing faces – your own or someone else's – is not as difficult as it sounds. If you are going to draw your own face you will need a mirror. To draw someone else you need someone who can sit still!

Look at *Mona Lisa*. What shape is her face – roughly? I'd say oval so start with an oval shape. It can help to draw some guide lines on your portrait lightly in pencil (so that you can rub them out) draw two lines; one dividing the oval in half from top to bottom and the other dividing it in half from left to right. The eyes are on that middle horizontal line. That may surprise you but if you look at *Mona Lisa* you will see that it is true. *Mona Lisa's* head is turned a little. If you want to draw a face directly from the front you can position the eyes by dividing the horizontal line into five roughly equal parts. Put your middle finger on the vertical line and use the other two fingers to help you do this. Each eye fills one of the five part: parts two and four. Look at the shape of the eyes of the person you are drawing and try to copy them. Try to draw *what you see* not what you *think* a face looks like. To help position the mouth and nose halve the bottom part of your oval again. This line will help you position the bottom of the nose. Now halve the bottom part again and you will have a line to help you position the lips. We cannot see *Mona Lisa's* ears because of her hair but perhaps you will need to put ears into your portrait. They will probably start at the eye line and finish at the nose line.

You can put your portrait in front of a background just as Leonardo has done if you like. Make it fainter than the portrait to achieve an atmospheric perspective and use your imagination as he did!

Something to think about³

On **April 15th** 1989 protests began in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China. Students and workers in China were peacefully protesting about the lack of democracy in the country. Involved in the peaceful protests were Christian students. The Chinese government suppressed the movement, sending tanks and soldiers into the square and massacring the protesters.

The government of China denies its people not just democracy, but freedom of religion. That means that Christians are imprisoned for meeting together. Although the church in China was driven “underground” it was not by any means dead, a new generation of evangelists arose especially among students. One Christian western observer, British diplomat Tony Lambert, was amazed to hear hymn singing at the Tiananmen Square protest. When he talked to students involved he made an interesting discovery. The students told him that while looking for the principles behind democracy they had discovered the writings of Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) a Christian thinker who helped many Christians think in a more biblical way about the origins of free societies. Through Schaeffer's writings the students were led to the Bible.

Since 2018 there has been a crackdown on Christians by the government because it is alarmed by their growing numbers. China's government is communist and communism relies on atheism. If people turn to Christianity then communism itself is threatened. The Chinese government has been closing churches, and is trying to restrict the circulation of the Bible. It is even proposing to make its own “new translation” of the Bible which will then be the only one allowed in China. The

3 You will find more information on this topic and the story of the “Tank Man” in the lesson for 5th June.

government has its own churches called “Three Self” churches. Anyone who goes to these churches is spied on and the government watches the services by webcam to make sure it knows what is being said and who is there.

Atheism leaves people empty and the gospel finds willing listeners, in spite of everything the government does. This is especially the case among Chinese students. We can pray for China, not just that it might be allowed democracy, but that the gospel will flourish there in spite of everything the Chinese government does.

You could use a dictionary to find the definitions of “democracy” and “communism.”