

Book Report of
Michelangelo & The Pope's Ceiling

This novel is a biographical drama of Michelangelo Buonarroti, focusing on the creation of the Sistine Chapel's frescoed ceiling. The story begins by a chapter of Michelangelo's life and artwork before his involvement with Pope Julius II. Then, it begins the exciting tale of how the Pope's different desires. The pope is considered the antagonist of the story and is discussed almost as much as Michelangelo himself. Finally, the surprisingly adventurous tale ends when the ceiling is complete.

Michelangelo was born in Caprese, Florence, on March 6th, 1475. His father, Ludovico Bounarroti sent Michelangelo to live in a workshop with another family because of financial problems. There, Michelangelo learned workshop skills and obtained an interest in sculpture. He began sculpting in a school called the Medici Garden, founded by the rich patron Lorenzo de' Medici. At an early age, he managed to create a few relief sculptures and attracted great attention. His most famous artwork was *David*, a biblical statue. Michelangelo remained simply a talented sculptor until Pope Julius II noticed his talent.

After seeing Michelangelo's *Pieta*, the pope was so thrilled that he proposed a tomb creation for Michelangelo to build. He would be paid three times more than an average sculptor and extra money in advance and at the end. Michelangelo accepted and the pope explained what he generally wanted. Michelangelo's job was to interpret what Pope Julius II said. Sure enough, the job began well. Massive marble blocks were transported from Florence to Rome. Michelangelo worked as hard as he could to do his

job right, but the pope began to lose interest. The pope's money was being drained and he began to despise the tomb's creation. Michelangelo couldn't work without the pope's assistance and it seemed that at the rate it was going, the tomb would never be completed. One day, Michelangelo vanished. He took a horse to Florence and changed mounts constantly, since he knew that the pope would send horsemen to bring him back. Unfortunately, five horsemen found Michelangelo. They told him to come with them, but Michelangelo claimed that he would kill them. With compromise, Michelangelo wrote a letter to the pope about his decision to never return to Rome. He stayed in Florence for a while, but didn't keep his promise.

Julius II was an angry pope. He is described as a brutal, violent, person who frequently shocked the church. The government of Florence sensed increasing tension between it and Rome, all because of Michelangelo's denial to return to Rome. The Florentine government begged for Michelangelo to leave, since a war over a single person, however valuable, would not be worth it. With discomfort, Michelangelo left to Rome with the pope's assurance that he would not be harmed in any way.

The violent pope was known as "The Warrior Pope" and "*Il Pope Teribile*", which means the Terrible Pope. He was the first pope that decided to enter war. He wanted more land to expand his empire and decided to fight for it. Since he was busy, the Pope didn't have time to deal with Michelangelo. Pope Julius II gave mixed, vague orders to the sculptor, who was again furious.

When the Pope took control of Bologna, a city-state to the east of Florence, he requested that Michelangelo create a bronze statue of him there. Michelangelo was surprised, since he had barely any experience with casting. But the pope wasn't interested

in excuses. Michelangelo was paid ten times the amount of money that an average sculptor makes in a year to make the statue. The statue didn't go well. Michelangelo wrote to his siblings, who depended on his money, "*Since I have been here, it has only rained once and has been hotter than I ever believed it could be anywhere on earth.*" Michelangelo put all of his effort into the statue and claimed to almost die making it. He failed casting the first time, since only the torso and below was left standing, but succeeded the next. He returned to Rome with great relief and fatigue.

Finally, the Pope asked for Michelangelo to fresco his ceiling. The foolish and ambitious pope wanted a sculptor to fresco a ceiling. Most artists at the time considered frescoing to be a very masculine technique. Only the greatest artists could paint on wet plaster. His rival, Leonardo de Vinci, insulted Michelangelo and didn't believe that he could finish it. But, Michelangelo did complete the gigantic painting and it has been considered one of the world's artistic wonders since. Thousands of tourists visit the Sistine Chapel every day. The most fascinating part of it to many is, of course, the Pope's Ceiling.