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**A.**

On 6th March 1475, one of the world’s greatest painters and sculptors was born in Italy. His name was Michelangelo.

When Michelangelo was born, his parents were very poor, though at one time they had been one of the richest families in Florence. From his early days, Michelangelo wanted to be an artist. His parents tried to make him change his mind, but without success. They sent their son to the famous painter Ghirlandao.

Later, Michalengelo entered the school for sculptors run by the powerful ruler of Florence, Lorenzo the Magnificent. Lorenzo was so impressed by Michelangelo’s work that he took him into his own household. Michelangelo remained there until Lorenzo’s death in 1492. He was then called to the Vatican and was asked to work on a tomb that had to be ready for the Pope when he died.

In 1508, the Pope ordered him to decorate the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. This work took him over four years, and is to this day one of the finest art treasures in the world.

Later, Michelangelo designed fortifications for the town of Florence, but his heart was in Rome, and he returned there in 1534.

The Pope appointed him chief sculptor, architect and painter to the Vatican. He began to paint his famous fresco, The Last Judgement, on the end wall of the Sistine Chapel.

Michelangelo died in 1564 in Rome, but was buried in Florence.

**B.**

Marble is one of the most beautiful kinds of stone in the world. It is a type of limestone, made up of the bones of millions of tiny sea creatures which died many thousands of years ago. These tiny skeletons gradually piled up and, in the course of time, became pressed togeter to form rocks. The colour of marble depends on the purity of the limestone from which it is made. Pure marble is white.

Marble is found in many parts of the world. Some of the most famous marble comes from Italy. The famous Carrara marble, used by Michelangelo in many of his wonderful statues, comes from the north of Italy. Marble is also found in Ireland. Marble from Galway is usually green and marble from Kilkenny black.

Marble is used mainly for statues, monuments and in the decoration of buildings. The Taj Mahal, in India, one of the most beautiful buildings in the world, owes much of its glory to the use of white marble.