

The Renaissance in Italy - Part One



The Italian Renaissance is generally accepted as being the approximately 200-year time period between the 14th and the early 16th Century. It was an era that saw a "rebirth" of knowledge and the arts and was the time period that followed the Late Middle Ages.

The Influence of the Church

The Renaissance started in Italy for a variety of reasons. Italy as we know it today is a united country, but during the Renaissance, Italy was a loose collection of independent city-states. Like the great city-states of Ancient Greece, each one had its own culture, laws, and rulers. The difference between the city-states of the Renaissance and the city-states of Ancient Greece was the influence of the Christian church. The Church became a dominant force in Europe during the Middle Ages and just because the Renaissance dragged people out of the "darkness", doesn't mean that the Church didn't have any influence. In fact, so much of the art that is going to be created during the Renaissance will be **commissioned** by the Church or will have religious themes or subjects that promoted the Church. It is almost impossible to separate art in the Renaissance with the religious beliefs and teachings of the Church.

Because the Church came out of the Middle Ages as the single largest landowner in Europe, it had a lot of money. Almost all of Europe was Christian and the power of the Church that was created by its wealth and ability to influence people through their religious beliefs made it an active participant in how Europe was being ruled. The Italian city-states may have had their own governments (some even democratic) and they may have had their own armies and their own ability to create wealth, but they were still heavily influenced by the **politics** and influence of the Church. This will become a common theme throughout European and even North American history; that countries or states are independent but are still in practice, influenced by religion.

The influence of the Church will only be challenged by the wealth and power of independent governments. Like the Barons who challenged the power and authority of the King because they could afford bigger armies as a result of the wealth created by the new middle class of the Late Middle Ages, city-states could only challenge the power and authority of the Church with the wealth and the power that they created. Wealth and the ability to create wealth was one of the lasting influences of the Renaissance and much of this creation of wealth was due to the creation of banks.

Commissioned - when an artist is paid by a group or an institution to create art that is reflective or represents what that group or institution wants.

Politics - the word used to describe how governments use words, language, and viewpoints to get others support their idea as to how governments should govern and rule people.

City-States and Banks

The city-states of Florence and Venice became powerful due not only to their business ability, but also due to the development of banks. Banks in the Renaissance were not all that different from banks today. Florentine bankers developed systems that encouraged trade, provided a currency and even the concept of cheques that promoted the flow of money that could provide **capital** that could be invested into business that could then create profits and more money. The term "bank" comes from the Renaissance as did some of the modern accounting methods that still help run our modern economies. Florence and Venice were at the heart of this new banking invention.



Florence and Venice - Two Powerhouse City-States

During the Renaissance, Florence was the center of the European wool trade and serves as an example of what business and trading can do, even if you do not produce the **raw materials** needed to create products. Florence would import raw wool from England and turn wool into high quality cloth. This cloth was then either sold as cloth or sold to businesses who would then create clothing. Both the cloth and the clothes would then be sold all over Europe. Even today, in the 21st Century, Italian and worldwide fashion is associated with Florence.

Venice was an international trading center. Venice was located on the coast and the city itself was built in shallow water. Because the buildings were essentially built into the sea, the streets of Venice became a series of canals. Today, Venice is still associated with its canals and when people mention Venice the image of a "gondola" or a Venetian boat comes to mind.

The Venetians figured out early that wealth could be created by trading and importing goods from around the Mediterranean Sea. Venice created a huge navy of trading and warships that would dominate sea trade. Each time a good or a product was traded it created more wealth or profit. The Venetians were experts at this. Their banks would provide the necessary money or capital to invest in ships or to buy goods, and the trading companies and the banks would then profit from the trade that they created. During the Renaissance, it is the Venetian "Ducat" and the Florentine "Florin" that would become the most widely accepted currencies in Europe which in itself was a testament to the wealth and power of these two city-states.

Money, religion, and the power that both created were the dominate characteristics of the Renaissance. Banks and the businesses they helped, created more wealth and with that wealth came a revival of art and architecture often in the form of religious themes.

Capital - the banking term used to describe the amount of money needed to run or start a business.

Raw Materials - are any materials than are harvested that are then turned into products. Lumber is a raw material, a dresser made of wood is a finished product made of a raw material.

Currency - money that is associated with a particular country or state. Canadian currency is different and has a different value than American currency.

The Renaissance in Italy - Part One

Directions: **READ** the handout entitled; "The Renaissance in Italy - Part One" and then answer the following questions.

1. Use your handout to provide definitions for the following terms: (1 mark each)

Commissioned	Politics	Capital
Raw Materials	Currency	

2. On a separate piece of paper, answer the following questions using **COMPLETE SENTENCES**.

- a. In your own words, describe why Renaissance Italy was like Ancient Greece in how it was organized. Who still had considerable influence over peoples' lives at this time? (2 marks for quality of response and inclusion of details)
 - b. In your own words describe how city-states could somewhat challenge the power and influence of the church. What innovation involving money help make that possible? (2 marks for the quality of your response and evidence of thought and effort)
 - c. In your own words, describe who were the two most powerful and influential Italian city-states during the Renaissance. Describe or provide an example as to how they became so powerful. (2 marks for quality of response and evidence of insight)
3. Italy Map (about 1500) - Colour AND label the attached map that outlines the major areas controlled by the major Italian city-states of the Renaissance in and around 1500 CE

You will be marked out of 5 for accuracy, quality of work
and evidence of effort

Total: ____ /16

Directions: Colour **AND** label the attached map that outlines the major areas controlled by the major Italian city-states of the Renaissance in and around 1500 CE.

Republic of Milan	Republic of Venice	Republic of Genoa	Republic of Florence
Republic of Siena	The Papal States	Kingdom of Naples	Corsica
Sardinia	Sicily	Mediterranean Sea	Adriatic Sea
Tyrrhenian Sea	France	Holy Roman Empire	Ottoman Empire

