

The Renaissance in Italy- Part Two



Lorenzo Medici - a true
"Renaissance Man"

The Renaissance took advantage of its location in Italy in a number of ways. The Physical location of the Italian Peninsula made it the center of Mediterranean trade and its climate with its good farming land made life a little easier than the rest of Europe. Trading, the wealth it created, and a greater abundance of food allowed for people to devote time and efforts to new ideas and new artistic interests.

There also existed at this time, collections of writing and thinking left over from the Roman Empire. Not only did the ruins of Rome inspire a new generation of public architecture, but re-discovered writings that dated back to Rome and Ancient Greece were serving to inspire new ways to think about the new world that was being created.

Patrons and Thinkers

The wealth that was being created in places like Florence and Venice created very wealthy, powerful, and influential families. The Medici family of Florence was an excellent example of what it meant to be a **patron** during the Renaissance. The Medici family made its fortune in banking and trading starting in the 13th Century and dominated political and cultural life in Italy and most of Europe for close to 300 years. Each generational head of the Medici family was a patron who would use their wealth to support great artists and support great thinkers and philosophers. The term "**Renaissance Man**" came from this desire to learn as much as one could from as many different areas of knowledge as possible and to demonstrate an understanding and appreciation for the arts. Today, to be described as a "Renaissance Man" is a very big compliment that says that you are not only knowledgeable and skilled in many areas, but that you also have a strong desire to constantly learn more and improve your and other's understanding of the world around you.

Like the Middle Ages, artists were heavily inspired by religious themes and their paintings, sculptures and architecture reflected this influence. The Church was still very wealthy, powerful, and influential during the Renaissance and the Church was a patron of the arts as well. Some of greatest works of art like the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome was created by great artists like Michelangelo and reflected religious themes like; "The Creation of Man". The wealthy patron families of the Renaissance also promoted great works of religious art, but they also promoted ideas that were not religious. Taking their inspiration from the great Greek and Roman philosophers like Aristotle, Socrates and Cicero, a new way of thinking began to evolve that focused more on the goals of humans in the present rather than the effects of a spiritual religious afterlife. This new way of thinking was called **Humanism** and it would radically alter the way in which people viewed their lives.

Patron - a wealthy person who would spend money to support great artists, writers, and thinkers. Patronage of the arts would fuel the Renaissance.

Renaissance Man - the term used to describe a person who is skilled and knowledgeable in many areas and is constantly trying to learn more to improve their life and the lives of those around them.

Humanism - a new way of thinking that was not religious in nature and instead focused more on reason and rational thought and that humans can determine the course of their own lives through their own efforts.

Humanism for Humans

Many Christians at this time saw themselves as sinful and looked to the bible or the Church to provide them with guidance, direction, and a sense of being. Humanists believed that instead of blindly listening to what the Church wanted you to believe, people should instead, focus their thoughts and efforts on finding meaning based upon reason and truthful knowledge. Instead of believing in "**fate**" or that one's life was in God's hands, Humanists believed that people through their own efforts, thoughts, and reflections, could shape their own lives.

Needless to say, Humanism was a radical departure from how Europeans saw themselves. It is important to note that early Humanists did not see a conflict between Christian beliefs and Humanist ideas. This was a time of transition; early Humanists were often priests and were raised in religious families and gained their education in religious institutions. It is not surprising then to find writings from early Humanists like Giovanni Pico della Mirandola who promoted the idea that humans were made in the "image of God". However, the ideas that Humanism represented began to find broader support due in part to what as seen as the **excesses** of the Church and its leaders.

One of the most famous Humanists was a preacher called Savonarola. Savonarola saw the riches and excesses of the Church and noticed the poverty of the majority of the people around him. He began to question the right of Church officials to live so grandly while others suffered. His preaching made him an enemy of the Church and in 1498 after being excommunicated; he was arrested, tortured, and then found guilty of speaking out against the Church. Savonarola was hanged, his body was burned, and his ashes thrown into the Italian Arno River.

Savonarola and other early Humanists would challenge traditional thinking and acceptance of what the Church was telling people and the wealth and power that it represented. This would lead to the next great movements in human history where challenges to the Church would bring about its division. The great thinkers and writers of the Renaissance would pave the way for the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the Age of Exploration.



Savonarola - 1452-1498

Fate - the idea that a person's life is beyond their control and is instead determined by a supernatural power.

Excesses - a word used to describe something that is more than necessary or needed; often associated with greed or gluttony.

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

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

Patron

Renaissance Man

Humanism

Fate

Excesses

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

- a. In your own words, describe two reasons as to why the physical location of Italy made it the perfect place for the Renaissance to start. (2 marks for quality of response and inclusion of details)
- b. In your own words describe why being a "Renaissance Man" can be considered to be a great compliment. Provide an example of a true "Renaissance Man" from that period. (2 marks for the quality of your response and evidence of thought and effort)
- c. In your own words, describe why the Church would feel threatened by Humanism. Provide an example of an influential Humanist from the Renaissance era. (2 marks for quality of response and evidence of insight)

3. Renaissance Word Search - Complete the following word search.

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

Total: ____ /16

Renaissance

WORD SEARCH

Apprentice

Ballet

Caravel

City-State

Classicism

Commission

Education

Elizabethan Era

Florence

Fresco

Guild

Humanism

Italy

Knowledge

Landscape

Leonardo Da Vinci

Literacy

Lute

Medici

Michelangelo

Patron

Perspective

Portrait

Printing Press

Realism

Rebirth

Reformation

Rhetoric

Shakespeare

Vernacular

