

## THE RENAISSANCE

The **Renaissance** Period: (14th - 17th Centuries)

1. **Meaning** rebirth or revival --- historical period of approximately 300 years marked by a revival in art, literature, and learning.
2. The **period** served as a **bridge** or **transition** between **medieval** and **modern** Western Europe.

### Distinctive Feature

1. It began with the rediscovery of **Greco-Roman Civilization** which had been neglected during the **Middle Ages**.
2. It **emphasized** reason, a questioning attitude, experimentation, and free inquiry.

This is **contrasted** with the **medieval** concern with **faith, authority, and tradition.**

3. It glorified the individual and approved worldly pleasures, viewing life as worthwhile for its own sake, not chiefly as a preparation for the life to come (salvation).
4. Focused attention upon **secular society** rather than the medieval preoccupation with the **Church** and religious affairs.
5. Featured great achievements in literature, art, and science.

### Origin of the Renaissance in Italy:

1. It had been the center of **Greco-Roman Culture**, Italy contained sculpture, buildings, roads, and manuscripts that excited curiosity about **classical civilization**.
2. Located on the **Mediterranean**, Italy had absorbed stimulating new ideas from the more advanced **Byzantine and Moslem Worlds.**

3. Benefiting from the revival of trade that resulted from the Crusades, Italy had wealthy influential people who became **patrons** (supporters) of literature, art, and science.

### **Leading Patrons:**

- a. Certain Popes in Rome.
- b. The **Sforza** family in **Milan**.
- c. The **Medici** family in **Florence**.

### **FLORENCE: PREEMINENT RENAISSANCE CITY**

1. **15th Century:** Florence came under the control (rule) of the **Medici** family.

\* Originally a merchant family who amassed a fortune in the wool trade and then expanded into banking.

2. The Medici's (especially **Lorenzo the Magnificent**, 1469-1492) became outstanding patrons of Renaissance Art.

3. Florence attracted people of talent from elsewhere in Italy, and the city acquired many priceless works of art.

### **The Renaissance Spreads**

1. In the 15th Century, Renaissance ideas began to spread from Italy to France, the German states, Holland, and England.

2. The spread of these ideas resulted from religious, military, and commercial contacts.

3. Many northern scholars also traveled to Italy to absorb Italian art and learning.

**HUMANISM:** Illustrated the Spirit of the Renaissance (a literary movement that began in 14th Century Italy.)

1. Concerned themselves, not with religious matters, but with everyday human problems.

2. Drew inspiration from classical civilization - eagerly seeking, studying, and publicizing ancient Greek and Roman manuscripts.
3. Revived interest, chiefly among educated people, in literature and writing.

### **Early Humanist Writers:**

#### 1. **Petrarch** (1304-1374)

- a. Italian who studied the classics and wrote in both Italian and Latin.
- b. He imitated the style of classical writers.

#### 2. Pico della **Mirandola** (1463-1494)

- a. An Italian, who lived for a while near Florence, was a scholar of law, philosophy, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic.
- b. He spoke in praise of the **dignity of human beings**.

#### 3. **Erasmus** (1466?-1536)

- a. He was Dutch and a brilliant classical scholar.
- b. In his book, **Praise of Folly**, he ridiculed superstition, prejudice, upper class priveledges, and Church abuses.
- c. By satirizing social evils, Erasmus encouraged people to think about reforms.

#### 4. **Sir Thomas More** (1478-1535)

\* An Englishman, he wrote **Utopia**, a book about an ideal country that was free from war, injustice, poverty, and ignorance.

### **The Vernacular Replaces Latin In Literature**

1. In the **Middle Ages**, Latin was the language of literature, of the Church, and of educated people.

2. Over the centuries: other languages had been evolving through **everyday usage**.

\* French, Italian, Spanish, German, and English are **vernacular or national** languages.

3. At the end of the Middle Ages, writers began to use the vernacular.

### **Writers of the Vernacular**

#### 1. **Dante** (1265-1321)

a. An Italian, born in Florence, served that city in various governmental positions until he was exiled by political opponents.

b. Known as the "**Father of Modern Italy**", he was the first to write an important piece of literature in the Vernacular.

c. His **Divine Comedy**, a long poem in which Dante describes an imaginary trip through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven during which one of his guides is the **Roman poet Virgil**.

#### 2. **Boccassio** (1313?-1375)

a. An Italian who lived in Florence during his formative years and was influenced by the Renaissance spirit of Humanism.

b. He is best known for his **Italian Prose** in a collection of short stories called **The Decameron**.

\* these stories were related by a group of young men who fled to a villa outside Florence to escape the **Black Death** (plague).

#### 3. **Chaucer** (1340?-1400)

- a. An Englishman who became familiar with the works of Dante and Bocaccio while traveling in Italy.
  - b. Chaucer used English in his collection of stories in verse, the **Canterbury Tales**.
- \* Supposedly these stories were related by pilgrims journeying to the religious shrine at Canterbury.

### **The Invention of Printing:** Encourages Literature

1. **ca. 1450:** printing with **movable type** was invented by a German, **Johan Gutenberg**.
2. During the **Middle Ages** books had to be hand copied (time consuming and expensive) on parchment (goat skin).
3. **12th Century:** Europeans discovered paper from the Moslems.
4. **Impact:** printing tremendously increased output and accuracy and decreased the cost.

\* Inexpensive printed materials afforded all people opportunities for literacy & learning, and encouraged talented people to write.

### **Renaissance Literary Achievements:**

1. **Machiavelli** (1469-1527)
  - a. An Italian born in Florence, served the **Florentine Republic** as a secretary and diplomat.
  - b. When the Medici family was restored to power in Florence, Machiavelli was dismissed from office and permitted to retire to his country home where he devoted himself to writing.
  - c. **The Prince**: major work on ethics and government describing how rulers maintain power by methods that ignore right or wrong and accept the philosophy that

**"the end  
justifies the  
means".**

d. The word **Machiavellian** has come to mean "cunning and unscrupulous" -- a prototype for a totalitarian dictator, right or left wing.

**2. Rabelais (1494?-1553)**

a. A Frenchman who wrote the romance **Gargantua and Panatagruel**.

b. A **humorist** who portrayed a comic world of giants whose adventures satirized education, politics, and philosophy.

**3. Montaigne (1533-1592)**

a. A Frenchman who wrote a series of essays.

b. He expressed **skepticism** toward accepted beliefs, condemning superstition and intolerance and urging people to live nobly.

**4. Cervantes (1547-1616)**

A Spaniard who ridiculed feudal society, especially knighthood and chivalry, in relating the adventures of the mad knight of La Mancha, **Don Quixote**.

**5. Shakespeare (1564-1616)**

a. His plays employed a **dramatic technique** to probe historical events and human character.

b. Best Known Plays:

**Histories:**

Henry IV and Henry V

**Comedies:**

Twelfth Night and  
Midsummer Night's  
Dream

**Tragedies:**

Romeo and Juliet,  
Hamlet, Julius Caesar,  
and Macbeth.

6. **Milton** (1608-1674)

a. Englishman:

**Paradise Lost**: retold the Biblical story  
of Creation and the Garden of Eden in  
this epic poem.

b. **Areopagitica**: in which Milton advocated  
freedom of the press.

7. **Moliere** (1622-1673)

a. Dominated French literature as its leading **comic**  
dramatist.

b. Best known plays: the **Misanthrope** and the  
**Imaginary Invalid**.

**Characteristics of Renaissance Art:**

1. Influenced by the artistic achievements of **Classical Greece  
and Rome**. Particularly in sculpture and architecture---  
Renaissance artists often imitated classical works.

2. Renaissance painting emphasized realism, attention to detail,  
and a desire for perfection.

3. **Early Renaissance** painters dealt with **religious themes** but  
with a lifelike approach.

**Later Renaissance** painters also employed a realistic style and continued to recreate Biblical themes.

**In Addition:** they also depicted worldly subjects, landscapes, portraits, and scenes of everyday life.

## **ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE RENAISSANCE**

### **Italian**

#### **1. Giotto (1266?-1337)**

a. A painter and architect born near Florence.

b. Portrayed religious themes in many **frescos** (wall paintings)----- he also designed the Cathedral of Florence with its famous bell tower known as **Giotto's Tower**.

#### **2. Ghiberti (1378-1455)**

A Florentine who sculpted a series of exquisite biblical scenes for the bronze doors of the baptistry in Florence.

#### **3. Donatello (1386?-1466)**

A Florentine sculptor best known for his life size statue of **St. George**.

#### **4. Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)**

a. He worked in Florence, Milan, and Rome.

b. He was a skilled painter, sculptor, architect, musician, engineer, and scientist.

c. In **military engineering** - he improved the method of loading cannons and devised equipment for scaling walls.

d. He devised the possibility of a parachute and a flying machine.

e. In painting he is best known for his **Self Portrait, The Last Supper, and the Mona Lisa.**

5. **Michelangelo** (1475-1564)

a. He worked in Florence and Rome; he was talented as a painter, sculptor, poet, and architect.

b. Famed for the biblical scenes he painted on the ceiling of the **Sistine Chapel** in the Vatican.

c. As a **sculptor** - he is best known for his **Pieta, David, and Moses.**

d. Michelangelo also designed the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

6. **Titian** (1477-1576)

A painter associated with **Venice** and known for his portraits of famous people and his scenes from mythology and the Bible, such as the **Assumption of the Virgin.**

7. **Raphael** (1483-1520)

a. Worked in both Florence and Rome.

b. Known for the Frescos he painted in the Papal Library at Rome.

## Spanish

1. **El Greco** (1547-1614)

A Greek who settled in Spain, painted religious scenes such as the **Assumption**, portraits of church officials, and the famous landscape, **View of Toledo.**

2. **Velasquez** (1599-1660)

a. Official painter to the court of King Philip IV of Spain; also did many paintings of royalty.

b. He commemorated a Spanish victory against the Dutch in his **Surrender of Breda**.

## **Dutch**

### **1. Hals (1580-1666)**

Painted portraits of ordinary people and scenes of everyday life. He is famous for his **Laughing Cavalier**.

### **2. Rembrandt (1606-1669)**

a. Considered the greatest painter of Northern Europe.

b. Portrayed everyday life and common people in his paintings.

**Notable Works:** The Night Watch, The anatomy Lesson, and Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer.

## **Flemish**

**Rubens (1577-1640)** -- depicted action in religious and historical paintings. **The Adoration of the Magi**