The Renaissance

The Rebirth of Greek and Roman Ideals
The Italian Renaissance

- The word renaissance means rebirth. This was a rebirth of Greek and Roman ideals. The renaissance began in Italian city-states in the mid-1300s and spread north through Europe.
- Italy of the renaissance was an urban society. Powerful city-states of Venice, Florence, Milan, and Genoa became political, economic, and social centers.
- A secular (worldly) viewpoint developed in these cities as wealth grew. This concern for this world, rather than the next, co-incited with the decline of Church power.
Florence - The Duomo Church
The Italian Renaissance

- This new view of the world emphasized the individual. The ideal renaissance man was one who was well-rounded and capable in many areas of life.

- Leonardo da Vinci was a painter, sculptor, architect, inventor, and mathematician. *Mona Lisa* is one of his most famous paintings.

- The upper classes were more effected by the renaissance than the lower because they had the money and time to embrace the classics.
Leonardo da Vinci

Mona Lisa

The Last Supper

Pieta
The northern Italian city-states of Milan, Venice (the “Queen of the Adriatic”), and Florence were the most powerful in the renaissance. Their wealth grew from the Mediterranean trade which brought Asian goods into Europe. These trading centers were created during the crusades.

Milan controlled the main route through the Alps to central Europe. In 1447, Francesco Sforza conquered the city making himself the duke.

Because of the trade through Venice, it was the main link between Asia and Europe.
The Duomo at Milan
Florence dominated the Tuscany (north-central Italy) region. In 1434 Cosimo de Medici took control of Florence. His Grandson Lorenzo de Medici made Florence the cultural center of Italy.

In the 1440s, Florence’s economy declined because of English and Flemish competition in the cloth market. At the same time a Dominican preacher, Girolamo Savonrola condemned the Medici family for corruption and excesses. This led to the Medicis losing control of Florence until 1498 when Savonrola criticized the pope and was executed for heresy. The Medicis returned to power.
1494 - France’s Charles VIII led 30,000 men into Italy occupying Naples. The Italians asked Spain for help. For the next 30 years, France and Spain fought in Italy.

In 1527, the Spanish sacked Rome, leaving Spain the dominant force in Italy.
In 1450, Johannes Gutenberg printed the first book to be produced in movable type in Europe, The Gutenburg Bible. It is a copy of the Vulgate, a Latin translation of the Bible. Printing soon led to a revolution in learning in Europe.
Machiavelli and the New Statecraft

- *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli is one of the most influential political books in the western world. It concerns how to gain and keep power.
- Previous authors had stressed that princes should follow ethical and Christian principles. Machiavelli said the prince’s action should be based on understanding that human nature is self-interested.
- The prince should act on what is best for the state. Any means possible for getting and keeping power were acceptable.
A wise ruler... cannot and should not observe faith when it is to his disadvantage and the causes that made him give his promises have vanished. If men were good, this advice would not be good, but since men are wicked and do not keep their promises to you, you likewise do not have to keep yours to them.
IV. Renaissance Society

- The Renaissance saw changes in the Medieval social order of three estates.

- The noble, or aristocrat was expected to fulfill certain ideals. These are expressed in Baldassare Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier*.
  - Nobles were expected to have talent, character, and grace.
  - They had to have physical and military skills.
  - They had to have a well-rounded education
  - They had a code of conduct to follow
  - They were to serve the prince with honesty.
Peasants and Townspeople

- Peasants made up 85 to 90% of the total European population. Serfdom decreased as townspeople grew in number and got some political strength.

- Three classes of townspeople:
  - Patricians - Wealth came from trade, banking, and industry
  - Burghers (Bourgeoisie) - shopkeepers, artisans, guild members
  - Workers and the unemployed. Wages were very low resulting in a growing urban poverty.
Family Life

- Marriages were arranged, often to strengthen family or business ties. The marriage contract was sealed with a dowry paid to the father of the groom.
- The father was the center of the family. He gave the family its name, managed the finances, and made the decisions.
- The father’s power over the children was absolute. A father had to go before a judge and formally free a child from his authority before that person was considered an adult.
- The mother’s role was to supervise the household.
Humanism

- Humanism is marked by
  1. The emphasis on the individual
  2. The importance of life on earth
  3. The interest in classical learning

Humanism was a turning away from the medieval ideals of a focus on the spiritual rather than the physical.

This is not to say that the humanist were against religion, for they were not. Many of the best renaissance works of art and architecture were religious. However, they had a new appreciation for the physical world.
Petrarch is called the “father of renaissance humanism.” Humanism was the study of Greek and Roman writings of grammar, poetry, philosophy, history, etc.

These humanist put an emphasis on the study of Latin.
Desiderius Erasmus

- Christian Humanism - “The philosophy of Christ” that Christianity should show people how to live good lives rather than a system of beliefs that people should practice to be saved.

- *The Praise of Folly* (1509) humorously criticized aspects of society that Erasmus felt needed to be reformed. He singled out monks for special treatment.
Instead of Latin, writers began writing in the language of their region, vernacular languages.

- Dante - *Divine Comedy*
- Geoffrey Chaucer - *The Canterbury Tales*
- Christine de Pizan - *The Book of the City of Ladies*
Education in the Renaissance

- The Renaissance emphasized education because of the belief in the importance of the individual.
- Liberal studies (history, art, philosophy, writing, math) were to help individuals follow the path of virtue and wisdom.
- Women rarely went to school. They were to be taught to be good wives and mothers.
The Artistic Renaissance in Italy

- The focus of attention in Renaissance art was human beings.

- **New Techniques in Painting**
  - Frescoes are paintings on wet plaster with water based paint. Masaccio mastered the art of perspective making his paintings more realistic.
  - Renaissance style of painting.
    - Stress the technical side of painting.
    - Investigation of movement and the human anatomy.
Frescoes by Masaccio in Florence

Trinity

Tribute Money
Sculpture and Architecture

- Donatello studied and copied the statues of the Greeks and Romans.
- Filippo Brunelleschi copied the classical buildings of the Greeks and Romans in his architecture.

Donatello’s St George
The High Renaissance is the period between 1490 and 1520 at the end of the renaissance. Leonardo da Vinci once mastered realistic painting, but began painting and sculpting idealized forms of perfection. Raphael painted idealized Madonnas and the School of Athens. Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.
Michelangelo at the Sistine Chapel

*Creation of Man*

*Christusrex*

(Christ is King)
The Northern Artistic Renaissance

- Northern artists did not paint as many frescos as the Italians because the Gothic cathedrals did not have the large wall spaces and they painted illustrations for books at a smaller scale. They put people in more realistic settings.
- The most important school of art was at Flanders (today in Belgium).
- Jan van Eyck was the first to use oil paint and tried to paint realistic without the use of perspective.
- Albrecht Durer blend northern and Italian styles by keeping the minute details of northern artists and using the technical styles of the Italians.
Northern Renaissance

van Eyck, *Marriage of Giovanni du Arnolfini*

Durer’s *Adoration of the Magi*
Conclusion

- The Renaissance was a rebirth of the long forgotten cultures of the Greeks and Romans.
- The humanist emphasis on the individual led to more realistic art and to the growth of learning.