

1 – The Italian Renaissance and the Northern Renaissance (1450-1550)

Key Terms

Renaissance	Boccaccio	Christian Humanism
City-States	Niccolò Machiavelli	Baldassare Castiglione
Medici Family	Desiderius Erasmus	Humanism
Leonardo da Vinci	Leon Battista Alberti	Individualism
Michelangelo	Lorenzo Valla	Donatello
Buonarroti	Johann Gutenberg	Filippo Brunelleschi
Petrarch	Albrecht Dürer	Raphael
	Elizabethan Age	
	Secularism	

OVERVIEW

While the Renaissance was a period of artistic, cultural, and intellectual revival, the term *renaissance*, a rebirth, can be misleading. It implies that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries marked a distinct awakening for Europeans from the “darkness” of the Middle Ages. Actually, the medieval period gave rise to the basic institutions of Europe: its laws, languages, and economics. The elite culture that developed during the fifteenth century in the city-states of the Italian peninsula not only borrowed from ancient Greece and Rome, but also expressed a new conception of humankind, *individualism*, through innovative art and literature. It was in these independent domains, governed by a merchant class, by despots, or by republicans, that pure *secularism* (a belief that life was more than a preparation for the hereafter) first appeared in the modern world. The name Renaissance was not used until Jules Michelet employed it in the late nineteenth century, which explains why some historians may now see the delineation of the Renaissance as a separate era from the Reformation, the Age of Exploration, the Enlightenment, and the Scientific Revolution as arbitrary. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Ottoman Turks caused many scholars of the Byzantine Empire to relocate in Italy, which helped usher in the Renaissance.

Humanism (a literary and educational movement that was truly modern in that a class of non-clerical writers concerned themselves with secular issues but based their answers to current problems on the wisdom of the ancient Greeks and Romans), rose in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. With their special affinity to classical Greek and Roman culture, schools such as the Florentine Academy emerged based upon studying classical authors

such as Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. In northern Europe, the “pagan” humanism of the Italian Renaissance was rejected in favor of a blend of religion and classical literature. Christian Humanists, such as Erasmus and Thomas More, tried to recapture the moral force of early Christianity by studying the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers.

Whether or not the Renaissance marks the beginning of the modern age, it provided a conception of the role and destiny of humankind vastly different from the ideas of the Middle Ages, and its artistic achievements influenced the culture of all Europe.

Since the Renaissance is defined less by specific events than by individual accomplishments and ideas, the following review focuses on significant personalities, achievements, and concepts. First, though, a few words about the setting for one of the most creative periods in all of human history.

The Italian Renaissance

The Italian City-States

Italy was not so much a nation as an idea in the fifteenth century. It was an amalgamation of many distinct political entities known as city-states. By the fifteenth century, certain northern Italian towns that had been trade centers of the Roman Empire expanded into independent city-states that ruled wide areas of the surrounding countryside.

“Geography is destiny” proved true for the Italians of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Fragmented as a nation since the fall of Rome, and their land becoming a battleground for the more unified peoples of Europe, Italians took advantage of their proximity to the sea. They applied the energy that springs from being always at the focus of crisis to establish a seagoing trade with the peoples in the eastern Mediterranean. They became the “middlemen” of Europe.

The Major City-States

- The Republic of Florence (considered the cultural center of the Italian Renaissance; often compared to ancient Athens for its utter brilliance over a brief period).
- Republic of Genoa
- Duchy of Milan
- Rome, the Papal States
- Naples, Kingdom of the Two Sicilies
- Venice, Venetian Republic
- Venice, Genoa, and Pisa (in the Republic of Florence) used their strategic locations on the Mediterranean Sea to control the European trade with the Middle East and Asia.
 - Florence, and to a lesser extent Rome, Naples, and Milan, thrived as manufacturing and market centers.
- Bankers from these prosperous cities made profitable loans to the people who shaped European life at the time:
 - Popes and monarchs of Europe financed successful commercial ventures.
 - The economic power of these city-states, combined with Rome as the center of Catholic power, made Italy a center of culture and luxury in Western Europe during the fourteenth

and fifteenth centuries.

- As a major cog in trade routes between Europe and Asia, Italian city-states helped to spread ideas from different cultures around the world throughout Europe.
- The city-states shared Arab mathematics and technology as well as Asian ideas and products with the continent (for a price-and a hefty profit).
- Ideas from many cultures including the revival of ancient Greek and Roman ideas were present.
 - Revived a sense of Italian pride in their past.
 - These factors all contributed to creating a prosperous merchant-centered society that fostered the age of the Renaissance .
- The powerful middle class of merchants and bankers controlled the governments of the city-states and served as patrons to the artistic geniuses of the times.
- Their newfound wealth encouraged appreciation of earthly pleasures and diminished dedication to the pious traditions of the Middle Ages.
- It was not that most were irreligious, but rather that accidents of history and geography presented them with great wealth, far beyond any expectations of the subsistence feudal economy that had ruled Europe for a thousand years.
- Money was meant to be spent; it just so happened that the more they spent on the beautiful handiwork of the skilled artisans in their cities, the more beautiful things were made for the buying.
- Thus, the Renaissance saw the beginning of the market economy in art, which drew the most talented geniuses to the field in search of profits and fame, setting the stage for other markets to emerge in labor and other resources, for example,
 - Beauty for its own sake, and art for art's sake-values absent from European culture since the end of the ancient world-replaced the medieval notion that art that is not dedicated to God is irreverent.
 - To these people, the world could be changed without the help of God. "Money is power" was becoming true regardless of one's status at birth.
 - *Secularism*, the concept of pursuing the pleasures of this life rather

than the promises of the afterlife, was born: the rich nurtured it; the lower classes copied it.

The Medici Family

This was the most famous dynasty of those merchants and bankers who used their vast wealth both to govern the city-states and to patronize illustrious creators in the arts.

- *Giovanni de' Medici* (d. 1429): Merchant and banker of Florence, founder of the dynasty
 - Could be considered one of the world's first modern persons, an ultimate adapter who ignored the Church's prohibitions of lending for interest to provide the necessary funds for a changing world economy.
 - Although his son and great-grandson were the ones who brought glory to the family name by spending the fortune that he established, his originality is reflected in his deeds rather than his ideas, and he is one of the people of Europe whose restless genius molded the modern world.
- *Cosimo de' Medici* (1389-1464): Son of Giovanni who used the family fortune to fill the vacuum of power resulting from the lack of a national monarchy.
 - Allied with other powerful families of Florence, he became unofficial ruler of the republic.
- *Lorenzo the Magnificent* (1449-1492): Cosimo's grandson, not only the republic's ruler but a lavish patron of the arts.
 - He personified the Renaissance attitude of living life rather than waiting for its fulfillment after death.
 - His genius was his recognition and support of the creative talent in his city; his luck was to be surrounded by geniuses.

The Medici family ruled the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, of which Florence was the principal city, well into the eighteenth century. Two popes, many cardinals, and two queens of France belonged to the family.

Individualism: A New Conception of Humankind

"Man is the measure of all things." A sense of human power replaced religious awe. Pleasure and accomplishment superseded the medieval dedication to the cloistered life of the clergy. Instead of the disdain for the

concerns of this world that the piety of the Middle Ages had fostered, people now valued involvement, a life of activity.

Virtu: Literally, “the quality of being a man”; possible for a woman to express, but expected among aggressive males, the “movers and shakers” of the day; whatever a person’s pursuit, in learning, the arts, or even in war, it meant living up to one’s highest potential and excelling in all endeavors. The “Renaissance man” was an all-around gentleman, as comfortable with the pen or the brush as with the sword—a lover, poet, painter, conversationalist.

The Arts as an Expression of Individualism

Before the Renaissance, the Church was the greatest patron of the arts. Painters and sculptors labored anonymously to fill the churches and cathedrals of the Middle Ages with figures of the saints—figures that lacked the proportions and animation of real human forms or faces. During the Renaissance, although the Church remained a major patron, the new commercial class and the governments of the city-states also supported the arts. Even though the work was religious in nature, the forms were anatomically proportional, the faces filled with emotion, and the artists reveled in their individuality of style.

- Architecture adapted Greco-Roman symmetry, classical columns, arches, and domes.
 - Architects such as *Filippo Brunelleschi* (1377-1446), famous for II Duomo (the first dome built since ancient times in Florence), and *Leon Battista Alberti* (1404-1472) studied ancient Roman buildings and used their principles of design to build cathedrals.
- Sculpture once again became freestanding, not designed to fit in niches of churches, and portrayed nude subjects in the Greek tradition in both religious and mythological representations.
 - *Lorenzo Ghiberti* (1378-1455): sculpted a set of bronze doors for the Florentine baptistery with not only crowds of human figures but the illusion of depth. -*Donatello’s* bronze *David* (c. 1440): was the first free-standing nude sculpted since Roman times in Europe and a tribute to his teacher, Brunelleschi.

Painting was primarily religious in theme but radically different from medieval art because of the invention of oil paints and because of the illusion of three dimensions created by precise variation of size (perspective). Art was less symbolic, more representational, depicting real people in recognizable settings, and glorifying the beauty of the corporeal world.

- *Giotto* (1267-1337): painted on walls in Florentine buildings and created the illusions of depth and movement.
- *Massaccio* (1401-1428): used light and shadow; the adoption of linear perspective, nude figures, and the illusion of perspective.
- *Sandro Botticelli* (1444-1510): painted themes from classical mythology, such as his *Birth of Venus*.
- *Raphael* (1483-1520): considered one of the greatest painters of any era; his portraits and Madonnas epitomize the Renaissance style.

The Greatest of the Great

- *Leonardo da Vinci* (1452-1519): personification of the “Renaissance man”; painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, writer, scientist.

The versatility of his genius marks the last time that a single human could command virtually all the realms of knowledge and create masterworks in several areas of competence.

His *Mona Lisa* and his *Last Supper* rival any of the world’s great paintings for the perfection of their execution and sheer beauty.

- *Michelangelo Buonarroti* (1475-1564): Primarily a sculptor whose *Pietà* (Mary mourning the body of Christ lying across her lap), is often considered the most perfect marble carving.
 - His awesome statues of *Moses* and *David* are unrivaled masterpieces that reflect religiosity and real human emotion.
 - His paintings on the *Sistine Chapel* in Rome, over which he labored for four years, portray biblical and allegorical figures with power, grace, and human clarity.
 - He glorified God by depicting the beauty of His earthly creations.

Humanism

This was a literary and educational movement distinct from the writing of the late Middle Ages in both its subject matter (it dealt with issues of politics and personal concern outside the realm of religion) and in its practitioners (laypeople who considered writing a profession rather than being a pursuit of the clergy). They drew on antiquity, which ironically had been preserved by monks laboriously copying ancient manuscripts. They wrote in Italian rather than Latin, and thereby created the first European vernacular literature.

- The works of the great poet, *Dante* (1265-1321), especially his *Divine Comedy*, along with the speech patterns of Florence influenced the

standard form of modern Italian.

- *Petrarch* (1304-1374): Considered the first “modern” writer, he wrote sonnets in Italian, other works in Latin, and used writing to contemplate the ebb and flow of his life and the human condition itself.
 - The irony is that he is most known as a modern writer, but his largest contribution to the era was popularizing the study of the classical writers such as Plato and Cicero.
- *Juan Luis Vives* (1493-1540): a humanist writer who outlined a theory of education based upon the classics that came to define humanism. He was also a strong influence on Montaigne.
- *Marsilio Fieino* (1433-1499) A Catholic priest and an influential philosopher of the Italian humanist movement; he was the first to translate Plato’s works into Latin and was named by Cosimo de’ Medici as the first heir to the revived Platonic Academy.
- *Boccaccio* (1313-1375): A contemporary of Petrarch and, like him, a Florentine.
 - His most famous work is the *Decameron*, which satirized society and the clergy with entertaining tales that reflected upon the human condition.
- *Leonardo Bruni* (1370--1444): A chancellor of the Republic of Florence in the late fourteenth century, he wrote perhaps the first modern history, an account of the development of Florence, using narrative, drawing on authentic sources, and introducing new historical periods.
- *Baldassare Castiglione* (1478-1529): offered a manual for the manners of the modern gentleman, *The Book of the Courtier*.
 - A gentleman is trained for polite company, poised and well dressed, skilled in arms and sports, capable of making music and conversation, a reader of the classics, a social mixer who is good humored, lighthearted, and considerate of others’ feelings.
 - It was a civilized antidote to the crude social habits of the day, when even the wellborn spit on the floor, wiped noses on sleeves, ate without utensils, shrieked, and sulked.
- *Niccolo Machiavelli* (1469-1527): *The Prince* was the first meaningful treatise on political science, an observation of how governments actually rule without moral judgment or exhortation.
 - It is one of the most maligned and misinterpreted books of

modern times, called “cynical and ruthless,” the “handbook of dictators,” and the origin of the concept “The end justifies the means.”

- Machiavelli discovered that successful governments throughout history, whether Italian city-states or national monarchies, acted in their own political interest, making war or keeping the peace, true to their word or deceitful, benevolent or brutal when it was useful.
 - Religion had virtually ceased to influence the process of governing as the rise of the nation-state became the ultimate goal.
- *The Prince* (1513) offers keen insights and is meant as a guide to the survival of the independent city-states of Italy, which were vulnerable to the predatory powers in the north.
- *Laura Cereta* (1469-1499): A well-known humanist and early feminist, she probably taught moral philosophy at University of Padua, a center of Renaissance learning .
 - Her 1488 *Epistolae familiares* (Familiar Letters) were widely condemned for her criticism of fifteenth-century gender bias.
 - When told by a man that intelligent women were unattractive, she retorted that so were unintelligent men.

The Northern Renaissance

The Northern Renaissance was the spread of Renaissance ideals from Italy to northern Europe, including what are modern-day Germany, England, Switzerland, France, Belgium, and Holland. This period saw the emergence of market economies in England and the Netherlands, bringing prosperity and artistic renewal to northern Europe. The Northern Renaissance differed from the Italian Renaissance in that the Italian Renaissance was much more secular, whereas religion was emphasized in the north. Social reform through Christian values and an emphasis on reforming all of society through better Christian living were the hallmarks of the Northern Renaissance. Pietism, encompassing more arduous religious devotion of the laity, emerged as an aspect of this line of reasoning.

- *Christian Humanism* also emerged as the thinkers and writers in the north adopted a Renaissance curiosity for knowledge, but based their research on the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible, while the Italians had applied their new zeal for knowledge to earlier pagan texts (works from

outside the Judeo-Christian ethic were referred to as pagan then, and by historians now) of ancient Greece and Rome.

- The Northern Renaissance originated in part because of cultural diffusion as northern students went to Italy to study and came back with new ideas and ideals.
- The thirst for knowledge and the new artistic and engineering techniques of the Italian Renaissance were transferred to northwestern Europe, leading to a Renaissance that was strongest in the Germanic areas and the Low Countries (Holland and Belgium).

Germany

Much like Italy, Germany was a collection of principalities that would not be united into a single nation until the late nineteenth century. Often referred to in this text as the Germanic states, Germany consisted of over 300 individual political units during the fifteenth century. At the turn of the sixteenth century, on the eve of the Reformation, Germany was at the heart of European progress. Although politically diverse (the German-speaking world included most of central Europe, Switzerland, and parts of the Netherlands), its economy thrived anyway. Towns sprouted, grew, traded. Banking expanded: the Fuggers and other German families controlled more capital than the Italian bankers and all other Europeans combined.

Science and Technology

The **printing press** was popularized by *Johann Gutenberg* (c. 1400-1468), but Johann Faust and Peter Schoffer also used it around the same time as Gutenberg. The first printing press was actually invented in China, but Gutenberg was the first to make *interchangeable moveable type* from lead molds. The introduction of the printing press in Europe had a massive impact on society because it became easier to spread ideas, propaganda, and stimulate education. Books became cheaper so more people read, which caused a **reading revolution** in society as reading became an individualized activity, rather than one person reading aloud to a group. Now the Bible was printed in many vernacular languages for the laity to read for themselves, which would have a significant social impact. This also helped lead to the advent of the Reformation as many in Europe did not need the Catholic priest to be God's intermediary, and worship became much more individualized.

- *Regiomontanus* Johann Muller, 1436-1476) and *Nicholas of Cusa* (1401-

1464) laid the foundations for modern mathematics and science in the fifteenth century.

- *Martin Behaim* (1459-1507) and *Johannes Schoner* (1477-1547) developed the era's most accurate maps.
- *Nicolaus Copernicus* (1473-1543) upset the time-honored *geocentric view* (that heavenly bodies revolved around the Earth) of astronomy with calculations that offered proof of a *heliocentric* (sun-centered) system.
 - This view contested the Aristotelian model adopted as the official Roman Catholic view of the solar system.
 - This contradiction is a *major milestone in the creation of a divide between religion and science* that began during the period of the Renaissance and continued as a theme throughout European history, helping to mark the Renaissance as the start of the modern era.
- The notion that humankind could understand and control nature evolved from the work of these Germans.

Mysticism

This involved the belief that an individual, alone, unaided by church or sacraments, could commune with God. The mystics, such as *Meister Eckhart* (1260-1328) and *Thomas à Kempis* (1380-1471), author of the inspirational *Imitation of Christ*, pursued religious depth rather than rebellion. They stayed true to the Church, but sought to offer, to the few faithful who could understand, a substance that transcended traditional religiosity.

- *Gerard Groote* (1340-1384): A Dutch lay preacher, he organized the Brothers of the Common life in the late fourteenth century, a religious organization that stressed personal virtues of Christianity rather than doctrine. Its movement of *modern devotion* preached Christ-like love, tolerance, and humility.
- Both mysticism and the basic religious devotion of many laypeople contrasted, ominously, with the worldliness and smugness of the clergy.
- *Desiderius Erasmus* (1456-1536): “The Christian Gentleman” personified Christian humanism in his philosophic stances known as “the philosophy of Christ.”
 - A man of letters, he disdained the Middle Ages, ignored hard philosophy, admired antiquity, and wrote on humanist issues in purified Latin.

- The ultimate moderate, he championed gradual reform, ridiculed hypocrisy among the powerful, distrusted the fickle opinions of common people, and abhorred violence.
- Satirized the worldliness of the clergy and was critical of the Catholic emphasis on saints in *The Praise of Folly*.
- Offered a model of practical Christian behavior in *Handbook of a Christian Knight*.
- Wrote new Greek and Latin editions of the Bible.
- Confidant of kings and a critic of Church abuses.
- Aimed at gentle reform of the Church from within.
- He was the most famous and influential intellectual individual of his times, and used his writings and his example to preach peace, reason, tolerance, and loving reform.

Artists

- *Albrecht Dürer* (1471-1528): one of the master artists of the era.

His self-portraits and woodblock prints, such as *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, are still revered today. He was a mathematician who was painting landscapes and self-portraits at age thirteen.

- *Peter Brueghel the Elder* (1520-1569): focused on lives of ordinary people and painted and made prints that depicted them at work and play, which challenged the notion of the Italian Renaissance that art should be focused only on religious and aristocratic subjects.

England

The Renaissance in England coincided with, and was fostered by, the reign of *Elizabeth I* (1558-1603). An era of intense nationalism produced by the resolution of dynastic rivalries and religious turmoil, it gave birth to perhaps the greatest vernacular literature of all time.

- An era of profound economic and cultural growth known as the *Elizabethan Age* prevailed under her reign.
- The dramatist *Christopher Marlowe* (1564-1593).
- Poet *Edmund Spenser* (1552-1599).
- Scientist *Francis Bacon* (1561-1626).
- The greatest writer in English, perhaps in any language, *William Shakespeare* (1564-1616) reflected the influence of the dramatists of the

ancient world and also the writers of the Italian Renaissance.

- He single-handedly set the standard for the English language.
- During the reign of Elizabeth's father, *Henry VIII* (1491-1547), a contemporary of Erasmus, *Sir Thomas More* (1478-1535), had fostered the Erasmian spirit in his *Utopia*, a book that criticized the correctible abuses of various institutions and that offered a blueprint for a perfect society.
 - A devout Roman Catholic, he was beheaded for not supporting the king against the Pope during the English Reformation.

France

After the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), the monarchy in France was strengthened by a renewal of commerce, which expanded and enriched the middle class. France was also realizing a wave of nationalism during the Renaissance era, possibly in part as a reaction to the Hundred Years' War. Government was centralized because the nobility had been weakened by a century of warfare and the **bourgeoisie** (servant-keeping middle class) provided an ample source of revenue for the royal treasury. Through the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, a succession of strong kings such as *Louis XI*, *Charles VIII*, and *Louis XII* reduced the power of the nobility, firmed up the structure of the modern nation-state, and brought the middle class into government as advisors.

- *Rabelais* (1494-1553), a priest and a classicist, attacked the failings of French society and the Church in his *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, while advocating rational reform.
- *Montaigne* (1533-1592) invented the format of the essay, which is derived from the French term, *essaier*, meaning to test. His *Essays* preached open-mindedness and rational skepticism and offered an urbane, modern view of life.

Spain

Locked into Catholic orthodoxy by centuries of warfare against the Moslems (Moors), who had conquered much of the Iberian Peninsula, the Spanish reached the height of their expansion in the sixteenth century through exploration and overseas colonization.

Xenophobia and rigidity diluted the impact of Renaissance individualism and humanism. In 1492 (when Aragon and Castille united to form modern

Spain), the Jews and Moslems, the core of the nation's educated middle class, were expelled.

The century from 1550 to 1650 marks the "Golden Age" of Spanish culture:

- *Miguel de Cervantes* (1547-1616) satirized his society's anachronistic glorification of chivalry and medieval institutions in one of the world's greatest novels, *Don Quixote*.
- *Lope de Vega* (1562-1635) wrote hundreds of dramas.
- *Bartolome Estaban Murillo* (1617-1682) was one of the great Baroque painters.
- *Domenikos El Greco* (1541-1614) invented his mannerist style that was popular in Spain.
- *Diego Veldzquez* (1599-1660) painted magnificent pictures on religious themes.
- *Francisco Suarez* (1548-1617) was a Jesuit priest who wrote widely admired works on philosophy and law.

The Low Countries

There were many societal and artistic achievements made in the Low Countries, which became a center of banking and commerce. This wealthier society placed greater importance on knowledge and art, and thus produced some magnificent artists.

- *Jan van Eyck* (c. 1385-1441) was a Dutch painter of the fifteenth century known as one of the great masters.
 - He was famed for his excellent, and often highly symbolic, oil paintings with meticulous detail that focused on either religious or secular themes.
- *Hieronymus Bosch* (c. 1450-1516) was a Dutch painter of the era who used complex symbolism and explored themes of sin and moral failing. - His complex, imaginative, and prevalent use of symbolic figures and obscure iconography was undeniably original and may have been an inspiration for the surrealist movement of the early twentieth century.
- *Rembrandt van Rijn* (1606-1669) was a Dutch master. He is generally considered one of the greatest painters and printmakers.
 - His use of chiaroscuro (dark and light) was powerful and manifested in his many self-portraits and paintings of stormy

scenes.

- He died very poor, as did many Northern Renaissance painters.

Renaissance Views on Gender and Ethnicity

The Renaissance was a period of loss of status for upper-class and merchant women. The protections on their property and bodies that had been strong during the medieval era were rescinded. Whereas the penalty for rape in the medieval era had been castration, the penalty in the fifteenth century was a fine payable to the father or husband, whosever's "property" had been damaged. Women were banned from many guilds, preventing them from inheriting their husbands' businesses. Few women were allowed into institutions of higher learning, and women were not taken seriously as intellectuals. This makes women like Laura Cereta, Isabella d'Este, and Catherine de Medici even more impressive.

- Cereta was a prototype feminist and a lecturer at the most advanced university of the day, Padua.
- Isabella d'Este created a court at Mantua that became a center of arts and learning in her day.
- Catherine de Medici was a power broker, queen, and regent of France as well as the mother of Louis XIII.
- The status of ordinary peasant women was not affected by the Renaissance.

This was also a time of renewed faith in many ways. Those who found that they disagreed with the Roman Catholic Church, which was the only official religion in Western Europe at the time, were often persecuted. Religious conflicts became more and more widespread in the sixteenth century. This era also saw the beginnings of racial bias against black African servants, who were simultaneously seen as exotic symbols of their masters' wealth and prestige and as evil because their dark skin was commonly believed to symbolize evil as portrayed biblically. Consequently, black Africans were not afforded access to the higher levels of European society.

Renaissance Points to Remember

- ✓ It was focused on three ideals: humanism, secularism, and individualism.
- ✓ It occurred primarily in cities because contact with other cultures happened there first.

- ✓ Secularism became more pervasive in the cities and in art, but the Renaissance *did not* abandon interest in religion; in fact, the greatest patron of the arts continued to be the Church.
- ✓ Intellectually, there was a focus on this world rather than on the afterlife, and on description of the world and universe rather than obeying a prescription to religious dogma.
- ✓ The use of the vernacular in literature revolutionized literature and helped national identities solidify.
- ✓ New intellectual ideals gained a following, especially in human experience, manners, politics, and so on; these new subjects were known as “the humane letters,” from whence the term “humanism” is derived.
- ✓ For the first time, artists of all types, from painters to authors, became wealthy; it was the birth of new professions that catered to wealthy patrons.
- ✓ The ideal of a “Renaissance man” emerged in the writings of Castiglione and Alberti as someone who is virtuous in every way and has many talents, such as the abilities to sing, compose poetry, dance, and engage in armed combat.
- ✓ Remember that the Renaissance was not a rebirth in law, government, or economic production; in most ways Europe was still medieval.
- ✓ There was some difference in the way that the Renaissance was perceived in northern and southern Europe.
 - Southern Europe was wealthier due to increasing trade with the Arabs and the Byzantines, providing the luxury to spend on arts, learning, and public projects.
 - The fall of Constantinople left the Italians without any means to trade with the Arabs after the Ottoman Turks destroyed the Byzantine Empire.
 - Northern Europe focused more on practical learning, science, and technology. This is one reason why the Reformation began there—that and its distance from Rome, where the wealth and power of the Church were so prevalent. Northern Europeans created many institutions of higher learning, while the Italians and Spanish focused on art and religion, respectively. The north used the precepts of the Renaissance spirit of the individual and took it in a religious direction toward mysticism. This belief holds that the individual soul can commune with God all by itself without the Church, other people, or sacraments.