The Italian Renaissance

“Christ Giving the Keys to St. Peter,” Perugino (1481-82)

AP European History

J.F. Walters (2007)
Italian Renaissance: Essential Questions

1. In what ways did classical and medieval Europe impact the Renaissance?
2. What was it about Florence that made it the center of the Italian Renaissance?
3. What was humanism and how did it impact the Italian Renaissance?
4. What was virtù and how was it demonstrated in Renaissance Italy?
5. How did the visual arts (painting/sculpture/architecture) in the Italian Renaissance differ from that of the medieval period?
6. What were the major accomplishments of Ghiberti, Brunelleschi, Botticelli, Michelangelo, Raphael, and da Vinci?
7. What roles did women play in Renaissance Europe?
8. Who was Savonarola and how did he impact Renaissance Florence?
9. What were the major ideas of Niccolò Machiavelli and his work, The Prince?
10. What were the major ideas/influences of Montaigne and Bodin?
Journal 1: The Greeks and Romans made major contributions to European civilization.
Journal 4: In the High Middle Ages, religion permeated every aspect of life.
Background to the Renaissance: The Middle Ages

- Early Middle Ages
  - insecurity from barbarian invasions and collapse of centralized government
  - dominance of feudalism and manorialism
  - collapse of Roman-style infrastructure and civilization

- dominance of the Roman Catholic Church (the Latin Church)
  - Church most powerful aspect of life in Middle Ages
  - operated much like a “state” in organization, power and influence
  - headquarters in Rome; Church led by the pope

Chartres, France
Exemplar of the Gothic style
Background to the Renaissance: The Middle Ages

- **medieval (Christian) outlook on life**
  - man’s life on earth not as important as the “after life” in heaven
  - man was inherently weak and sinful
  - life devoted to being a good Christian

- **critical developments in the Late Middle Ages**
  - lasting influence of the Crusades: cultural diffusion and trade
  - The Black Death (1347-48)
  - The Hundred Years’ War: England v. France
  - European use of gunpowder
  - growth of city-states on Italian peninsula

“The Dance of Death”
Hans Holbein the Younger (c. 1538)
The Mind of the Middle Ages
Journal 6: It was in Renaissance Italy that an almost purely “secular” society first appeared.
Italian Renaissance Basics

- the Italian Peninsula: location at geographic center of the Mediterranean
  - allowed for contact with advanced Arab civilization
  - allowed easy access to & inspiration from classical civilizations (Ancient Greece & Rome)
  - ideal for trade between Eastern Mediterranean & Western Europe
- Renaissance wealth
  - trade (ex. silk, spices, glass, jewelry)
  - banking (ex. the Medici family)
  - allowed nobles and merchants to enjoy secular lives: comfortable palaces, grand banquets, patrons of the arts (sculpture, painting, architecture)
Renaissance Florence

- population: about 60,000 in 15th Century
- wealthy due to trade & banking
- city was constantly at war with rival city-states such as Pisa
- birthplace of incredible talent
  - Ghiberti (sculptor & goldsmith)
  - Brunelleschi (architect & engineer)
  - Botticelli (artist)
  - da Vinci (artist)
  - Michelangelo (artist)
  - Machiavelli (political scientist)
  - Medici family (bankers & patrons of the arts)

Palazzo Vecchio
Florence’s city hall
Renaissance Florence
Renaissance Humanism: New Conception of Life

- secularism: valued life on earth
  ✓ there was more to life than trying to achieve salvation (heaven)
  ✓ wealth was to be enjoyed
  ✓ stressed an active life
  ✓ civic responsibilities important
  ✓ looked to classical Europe (Greece & Rome) for models, inspiration & heroes

- promoted individualism
  ✓ optimistic about the range of human powers
  ✓ stressed importance of individual attainments
  ✓ argued that humans were the shaper of their own destiny

- religion was still incredibly important but religion was interpreted more humanistically (“the humanization of the divine”)
Literary Humanism

- humanism began as a literary movement
  - Humanists wrote for themselves and other people
  - Early humanists wrote in Latin, but as time passed began to write in vernacular languages
- Humanism later spread to other areas: art & architecture, political science, and religion

Pico della Mirandola
1463-94
Notable Humanists

• Petrarch
  ✓ wrote love sonnets in Italian
  ✓ writing revealed conflict between flesh and spirit and his desire for earthly temptations

• Pico della Mirandola
  ✓ studied poetry, philosophy, architecture, music, languages and astrology
  ✓ looked for truths not written in Christian scripture
  ✓ Wrote *On the Dignity of Man* (1486): contradicted medieval view of man; instead man could be what he “wills to be.”

Petrarch
1306-74
Virtù

• virtù: quality of being a man
• man demonstrated his wide range of powers
• man knows what he wants and uses his own resources and talents to achieve it
• example of someone with virtù: Benvenuto Cellini (1500-71)

✓ Florentine sculptor, goldsmith, architect and writer
✓ wrote: Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini (c. 1538)

• women could have virtù: Elizabeth I, Catherine de Medici
Renaissance Education

• expanded traditional curricula of theology, medicine and law
  ✓ classics
  ✓ rhetoric
  ✓ history

• university education was to prepare student for life

• Latin remained language of study, but with the Renaissance Latin was seen as a way to improve the vernacular. Greek also studied to help understand the classics.

• education remained a privilege of the social élite

All Soul’s, Oxford: NOT a center of Renaissance learning
• development of modern European manners

• Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) wrote *The Book of the Courtier* (1528): a handbook of etiquette for modern European gentlemen

✓ gentlemen is one of good birth and good training

✓ characteristics of a gentleman

  ➡ mix agreeably with company of equal social stature

  ➡ neat clothes and graceful movements

  ➡ good at sports, arms, dance, and appreciates music

Baldassare Castiglione
by Raphael (1510-16)
Featured Artist: Lorenzo Ghiberti

• background: Florentine sculptor and metalworker

• accomplishments

✓ collector of classical artifacts
✓ won the commission to sculpt the doors of the baptistry in Florence
  ➡ beat Brunelleschi in competition
  ➡ doors used new humanism and naturalism in art
  ➡ sculpted two self-portraits on the doors
✓ spread humanist ideas through art and writing

Lorenzo Ghiberti
1378-1455
Featured Artist: Lorenzo Ghiberti
Featured Artist: Filippo Brunelleschi

- **background**
  - ✓ Florentine architect, goldsmith, sculptor, and engineer
  - ✓ great rival of Ghiberti

- **accomplishments**
  - ✓ re-discovered mathematical principles of linear (single-point) perspective
  - ✓ designed the dome of the cathedral in Florence (Santa Maria del Fiore), known as “The Duomo.”
  - ✓ designed hydraulics, fortifications, clocks

Filippo Brunelleschi
1377-1446
Featured Artist: Filippo Brunelleschi
Featured Artist: Sandro Botticelli

• background
  ✓ trained as goldsmith
  ✓ influenced by painter Massacio
  ✓ commissioned by Medici family
  ✓ interested in pagan religions

• artistic accomplishments
  ✓ Venus and Mars
  ✓ Birth of Venus
  ✓ Primavera

Botticelli
self-portrait (alleged)
Featured Artist: Sandro Botticelli

Venus and Mars
by Botticelli (1483)
Featured Artist: Sandro Botticelli

Birth of Venus
by Botticelli (c. 1486)
Featured Artist: Michelangelo

• background
  ✓ Florentine sculptor, painter, and architect
  ✓ commissioned by elite of Italy: Medici family, Pope Julius II
  ✓ one of the most influential artists of European history

• artistic accomplishments
  ✓ *David*
  ✓ ceiling of Sistine Chapel (and later the *Last Judgment* fresco in the Baroque style)
  ✓ *Pietà*
  ✓ *Moses*
  ✓ Dome of St. Peter’s basilica
Featured Artist: Michelangelo

Pietà
by Michelangelo (1499)
Featured Artist: Michelangelo

David
by Michelangelo (1501-04)
Featured Artist: Michelangelo

Sistine Chapel ceiling
by Michelangelo (1508-12)
Featured Artist: Michelangelo

Sistine Chapel ceiling (detail): *The Creation of Adam*
by Michelangelo (1508-12)
Featured Artist: Michelangelo
Featured Artist: Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio)

- **background**
  - ✔ born in Urbino (1483)
  - ✔ painter & architect
  - ✔ worked in the court of Pope Julius II

- **artistic accomplishments**
  - ✔ School of Athens
  - ✔ The Small Cowper Madonna
  - ✔ Wedding of the Virgin
  - ✔ Portrait of Pope Julius II
  - ✔ Alba Madonna
Featured Artist: Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio)

School of Athens
by Raphael (1509-10)

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Featured Artist: Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio)

The Alba Madonna
By Raphael (c. 1510)
Classic Renaissance Portraiture

An Old Man and his Grandson
By Domenico Ghirlandaio (c. 1490)
Classic Renaissance Portraiture

Mona Lisa (La Gioconda)
By Leonardo da Vinci (c. 1503-06)
Classic Renaissance Portraiture

Portrait of a Young Man
By Sandro Botticelli (1480-85)
Other Notable Renaissance Art

Virgin of the Rocks
By Leonardo da Vinci (1483-86)
Isabella d’ Este

• background
  ✓ well educated woman from noble Italian family
  ✓ skilled musician
  ✓ espoused ideas of Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*
  ✓ known as the “The First Lady of the Renaissance”

• accomplishments
  ✓ collector of Roman art & coins
  ✓ home court of Mantua (Lombardy) became a center of Renaissance culture
    ➡ famous artists (ex., Raphael, Titian & da Vinci) and composers came to Mantua
    ➡ many new buildings and sculptures were commissioned by d’Este
  ✓ played an important role in city politics after the death of her husband
Savonarola

• background
  ✓ Dominican friar in the Roman Catholic Church
  ✓ spent time in Florence, where he delivered passionate speeches about the end of the world, the moral corruption of the clergy and the immorality of recent developments in art
  ✓ in 1494 France invaded Florence and drove out the ruling Medici family, paving the way for Savonarola to emerge as the leader of the city-state

• Savonarola’s government of Florence (1494-97)
  ✓ Savonarola established a Christian Republic (a theocracy) in Florence
  ✓ made sodomy a capital offense
  ✓ established the infamous “Bonfires of the Vanities”
    ➡ boys went door to door collecting items deemed immoral by Savonarola: pagan books, cosmetics, gaming tables and chess pieces, women’s hats, selected musical instruments
    ➡ “immoral” items were burned in a large bonfire in the town square in Florence
  ✓ many followers eventually turned against Savonarola; some rioting occurred
  ✓ Savonarola was eventually executed (1498), burned-at-the-stake in the same square where the Bonfires of the Vanities had been held
Niccolò Machiavelli

- background
  - Florentine statesman and political theorist
  - classical education
  - worked in government of Florentine Republic (1494-1512)
    - held posts in the military and diplomatic services
    - experience allowed him to observe foreign governments and militaries
  - wrote *The Prince* (1513) while in exile (to the countryside) after the Medici overthrow of the Florentine Republic

Niccolò Machiavelli
1469-1527
Niccolò Machiavelli

• Machiavelli as a product of the Renaissance
  ✓ employed examples from the classical world
    ➡ writers
    ➡ generals
  ✓ adopted a secular attitude toward politics
  ✓ studied the problems of the state in Renaissance Italy empirically and analytically
  ✓ drew conclusions based on his observations of government

Statue of Machiavelli
Façade of Uffizi, Florence
Machiavelli’s The Prince

• views on politics in Italy
  ✓ called for a unified Italy
  ✓ sought to end foreign control of territory
  ✓ Roman Catholic Church should use its resources to unify the Italian states
  ✓ looked to France and Spain as examples of centralized states

• impact of The Prince: huge!
  ✓ political theory
  ✓ government & diplomacy
  ✓ business

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Machiavelli’s *The Prince*

- view and role of “the prince”
  - ✓ prince was the personification of the good of the state
  - ✓ prince stood for the interests of the subjects of the state
  - ✓ to maintain power, prince must utilize amoral politics
  - ✓ prince must be entitled to do whatever he wanted provided it is for the benefit of the subjects and not personal gain
  - ✓ prince must be both a “fox and a lion”
  - ✓ for the prince, it is “better to be feared than loved” because people are untrustworthy
  - ✓ prince should avoid being hated
  - ✓ prince should gain the favor of the people enough to avoid conspiracies
  - ✓ prince should not be afraid to use repression, but it must be used wisely to avoid the hatred of the subjects
Niccolò Machiavelli
Journal 7: The religious interests of the northern Renaissance were reflected both in religious scholarship and in the religious impulse of individual mystics.

Palmer Chapter 7 • pp. 69-72
The Renaissance Outside Italy: Notable Humanist

- Michel de Montaigne
  - French-born writer and statesman
  - not an Italian, but an influential figure of the Renaissance
  - accomplishments
    - popularizer of the essay as a genre of writing
    - wrote essays commenting on contemporary Europe
    - wrote autobiographical essays
    - in his writings, blended the intellectual with anecdotal story telling

Montaigne
1533-92
The Renaissance Outside Italy: Political & Economic Theory

• Jean Bodin

✓ French writer, economist, historian and political theorist

✓ major ideas

→ developed his views on sovereignty in his book *The Six Books of the Commonwealth* (1576): the ruler is accountable only to God

→ called for religious toleration and dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims

→ theorized that the Price Revolution in Europe was related to the amount of gold and silver that was being imported from Spanish colonies in South America

→ advocated the use of torture to help determine “witchcraft”
Sources

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  ✓ Gardener’s Art Through the Ages, 10th edition, Richard Tansey, et. al., 1995.
  ✓ Wikipedia.com (en.wikipedia.com).

• Video clips
  ✓ Dana Ross, “Engineering an Empire: DaVinci’s World” (History Channel), 2007.

• Still images & art: public domain images available at Wikipedia.com