

Lesson

4

The Renaissance

Find!
out!

How did the Renaissance change life in Europe?

Lesson Outline

- Roots of the Renaissance
- Renaissance Writers and Painters
- The Renaissance Spreads

VOCABULARY

Renaissance
humanism
patron
perspective

PEOPLE

Lorenzo Medici
Petrarch
Christine de Pisan
Niccolo Machiavelli
Leonardo da Vinci
Michelangelo
William Shakespeare
Miguel de Cervantes

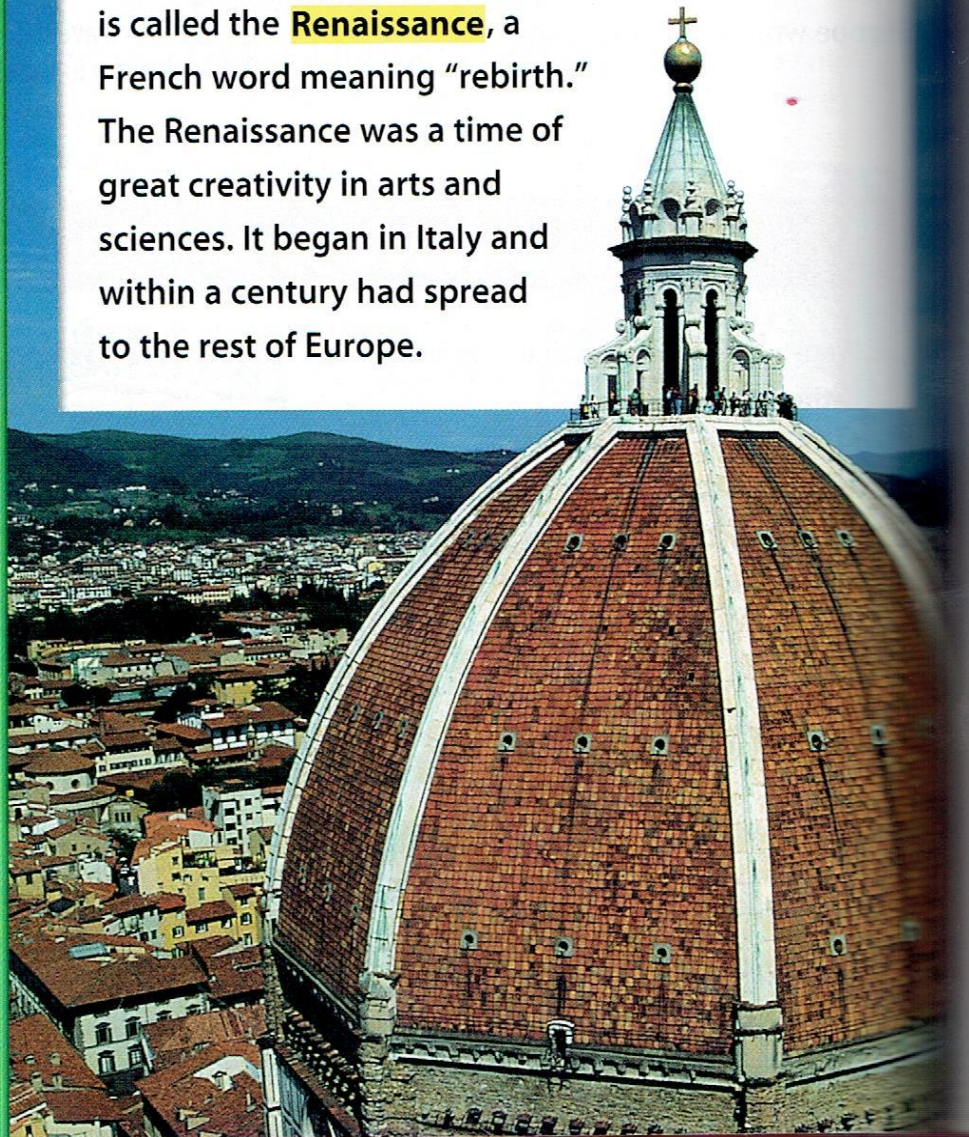
READING STRATEGY

Copy the chart. Write "Renaissance" in the top box. Name artists and writers in the other boxes.

BUILD BACKGROUND

"I used to marvel [be surprised] . . . that so many . . . arts and sciences from the . . . antique past could [have been] almost wholly lost."

In 1436, an Italian philosopher wrote that he saw a revival of interest in ancient Roman and Greek learning in his city. This renewed interest is called the **Renaissance**, a French word meaning "rebirth." The Renaissance was a time of great creativity in arts and sciences. It began in Italy and within a century had spread to the rest of Europe.





You Are Here
1350 - 1600

ROOTS OF THE RENAISSANCE

People of the Renaissance were usually very religious, but during this time, people also developed a powerful interest in **humanism** (HYOO muh niz um). Humanism is the concern for human interests and values.

Florence

The Renaissance began in a city in northern Italy called **Florence**. Traders from Florence brought spices and silks to Europe from Asia and Africa. Florence also had many workshops that made high quality woolen cloth and other goods. By

1400 Florence was one of the richest cities in Europe. One of the wealthiest families in Florence was the Medici (MED ih chee). It gained wealth through banking and trade. The most famous member of the family was **Lorenzo Medici**. He came to power in 1469.

Some people thought Lorenzo was a tyrant, but one citizen said, "If Florence was to have a tyrant, she could never have a better or more delightful one."

Lorenzo was a **patron**, or supporter, of the arts. Scholars and artists flocked to Florence, where "Lorenzo the Magnificent" supported their work.

The dome of the cathedral of Florence, Italy, rises above the city, an important center of the Renaissance.

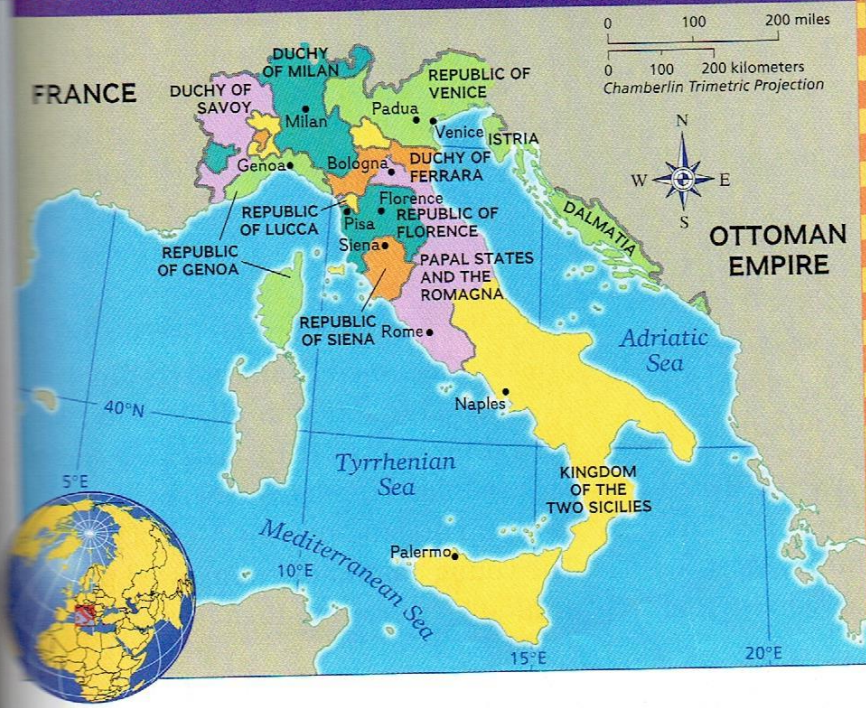


Why did the Renaissance start in Italy?



Italian City-States, c. 1494

Map Skill



1. Which city was located at the northern end of the Adriatic Sea?
2. How far was Rome from Florence?
3. What form of government did the majority of city-states have?

RENAISSANCE WRITERS AND PAINTERS

During the 1300s, humanists began to search the Italian countryside for artifacts from ancient Greece and Rome. They found examples of classical cultures such as manuscripts, coins, and statues to study.

Arab scholars in Baghdad had preserved and developed Greek, Roman, and Indian scientific knowledge. As a result of the Crusades, trade between Europe, Asia, and Africa grew, spreading new products and knowledge.

A New Kind of Writer

Beginning in the 1200s, writers began to write in their own languages for local readers. One of these was **Petrarch** (PEH trahrk), an Italian poet who lived from 1304 to 1374. He loved to read, and he decided that the works of classical Greek and Roman writers were better than the works written later.

Petrarch wrote in Italian, but translations made him the most famous poet in Europe. He wrote about his love of reading and literature in these words:

“There is no lighter burden, nor more agreeable, than a pen. As there is none among earthly delights more noble than literature, so there was none more lasting, none gentler or more faithful. . . .”

Another Renaissance writer, **Christine de Pisan**, was born in Venice in 1364 but spent most of her life in France. Most women writers of the Renaissance wrote

about personal subjects, such as family or friendship. Christine de Pisan wrote poems, histories, and political commentaries.

The Florentine **Niccolo Machiavelli** (NIHK oh loh mah kee ah VEL lee), who lived from 1469 to 1527, wrote many books about government. His most famous book, *The Prince*, gives advice to rulers on how to run their governments efficiently.

Artists of the Renaissance

Renaissance painters in Italy and the Netherlands also studied ancient Greek and Roman artifacts. One of the skills they learned was a drawing technique called **perspective**. This technique

seems to create three dimensions on the flat surface of a painting. Perspective made Renaissance paintings seem more realistic than paintings of the Middle Ages.

Renaissance painters also changed the subjects of their art. In addition to painting religious themes, Renaissance artists began to paint more worldly subjects. Inspired by Roman and Greek models, their subject matter often came from ancient myths and legends.

One of the most famous Renaissance artists was named **Leonardo da Vinci** (lee uh NAHR doh duh VIHN chee), who lived from 1452 to 1519. Leonardo was so talented that Lorenzo Medici invited him to set up his studio in the Medici garden. The young painter often followed people around Florence and then went back to



Niccolo Machiavelli

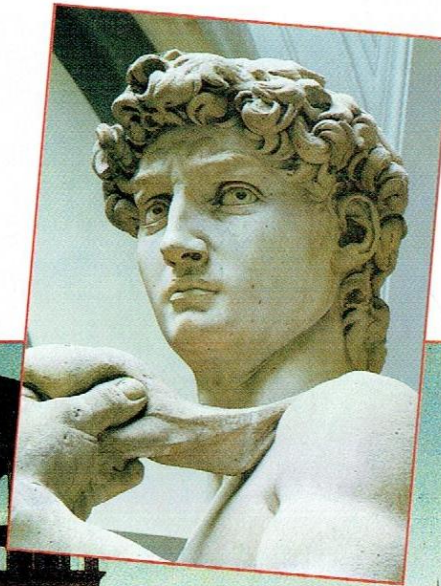
studio to paint them from memory. Leonardo was a very talented painter, but painting was only one of his interests. He also studied engineering, music, and the natural world around him. He sketched his ideas, such as an armored man, human muscles, and even a helicopter, in hundreds of notebooks. Another famous Renaissance artist was **Michelangelo** (MY kuhl an jel oh) who lived from 1475 to 1564. He, too, used classical and ancient ideas in his paintings, sculptures, and architecture.

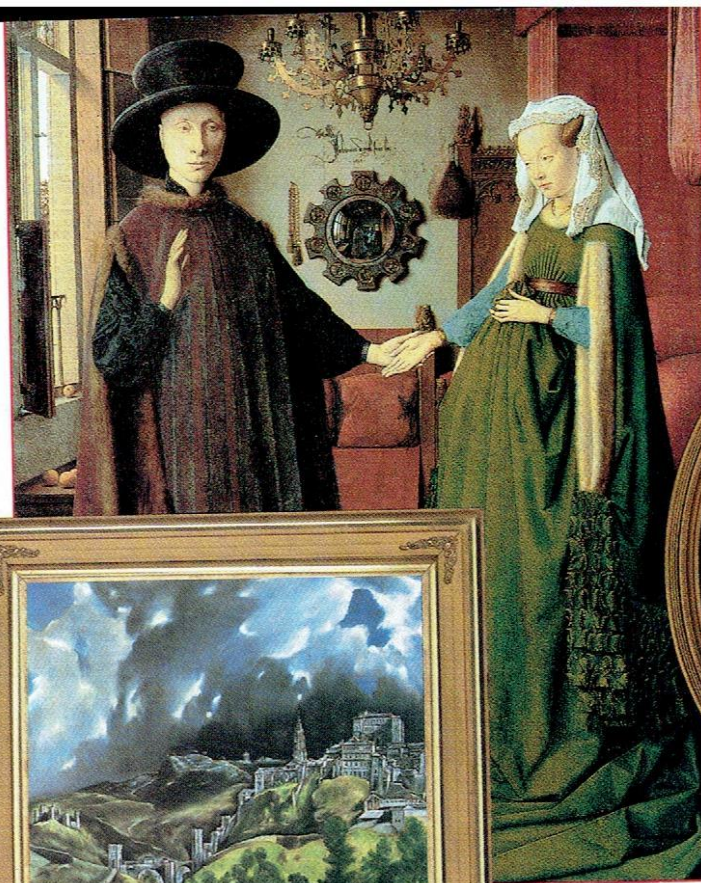
His famous paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome show scenes from the Bible. His sculpture, *David*, shows us the Biblical hero as a Greek or Roman warrior might have appeared.



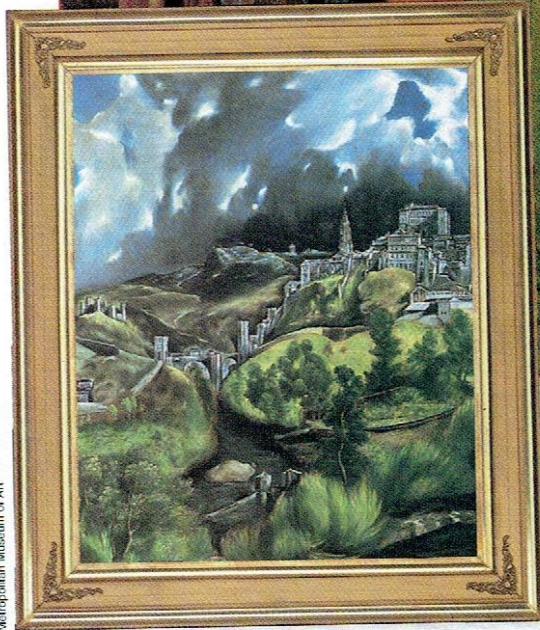
How did art change during the Renaissance?

Renaissance developments in art included the use of **perspective** (below) and sculptures of the human form such as Michelangelo's *David* (right).





Erasmus (below) was painted by Hans Holbein. Other Renaissance paintings were by El Greco (below left), and Jan Van Eyck (left).



Metropolitan Museum of Art

THE RENAISSANCE SPREADS

In the late 1400s ideas from the Italian Renaissance began to move into northern Europe. People from present day France, England, Germany, and the Netherlands came to Italy to study or for business. They carried Renaissance ideas back to the countries where they lived.

Two of these men were Erasmus (1466–1536) from the Netherlands and the Englishman, Thomas More (1478–1535). Interestingly, these men were friends as well as fellow humanists. In fact, Erasmus wrote his most famous book, making fun of greedy merchants and conceited leaders, while he was a guest at Thomas More's house.

The most famous writer of the Northern Renaissance was an Englishman named **William Shakespeare**. Born in 1564, he was an actor, a poet, and a playwright. Many consider Shakespeare to be the greatest playwright of all time. The plays of Shakespeare show a deep understanding of human thoughts and feeling. By the time he died in 1616, Shakespeare had written 37 plays and 154 poems.

Art in the North

Painting also flourished in the north, especially in the Netherlands and Germany. The Flemish artist Jan Van Eyck (1395–1441) was one of the first to use the new technique of painting with oil on canvas. Van Eyck's oil paintings have a more natural, glowing quality than the egg tempera on wood that other artists of the time were using.

Other northern artists included the German Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543).

Dürer is known for his self-portraits and his study of nature. Holbein was a portrait artist. Both artists carved woodcuts that illustrated the first printed books.

The Renaissance in Spain

Throughout the Renaissance, Spain enjoyed prosperity, but its art did not change that much. Still, Spain was home to one of the Renaissance's great artists, a Greek painter named Domenikos Theotokopoulos (doh MEN ee kohs thay oh toh KOH poo lahs), who lived from 1541 to 1614. Known as El Greco, or "the Greek," Theotokopoulos was known for painting in flowing colors.

Renaissance Spain was also home to one of the world's great writers, **Miguel de Cervantes** (mee GEL dee sair VAHN tais), who lived from 1547 to 1616. He wrote *Don Quixote*, a novel that made fun of old-fashioned nobles.

Impact of the Renaissance

The Renaissance marks a turning point in the history of Europe. The growth of banking and trade spread luxury goods all over Europe and enabled merchants to gain vast fortunes. By studying ideas such as those of Machiavelli, kings began to turn their kingdoms into nations.

In addition to artistic advances, there were scientific discoveries. The telescope and the microscope helped scientists to study the world around them. Other inventions such as eyeglasses and portable clocks made daily life easier.

Gunpowder had been made since the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, better techniques of metalworking made the first practical guns possible. Guns ended the age of knights because a com-

mon soldier with a gun was no longer at the mercy of the mounted knight.

Most important was the impact of the Renaissance on thought. Human society and the matters of trade, government, and business were seen as important and worthy of study. It was also during this time that "Greensleeves" and other songs about feelings became popular.



What changes did the Renaissance bring to Europe?

Exploring ECONOMICS

The Growth of Banking

Many of the practices of modern banking began in Italian cities during the Renaissance. The revival of trade required a better system of borrowing and lending large sums of money. The Medici family, for example, had grown rich on the woolen trade in Florence, and they invested their profits by making loans to other merchants. In many ways, the Medici family was like a modern international bank. They had a headquarters in Florence, but they also had branch offices in most Italian cities and in most of the important trading cities of Europe. Merchants could deposit funds in one Medici bank and withdraw the same amount in another city. The Medici family charged a percentage of the money as their profit.

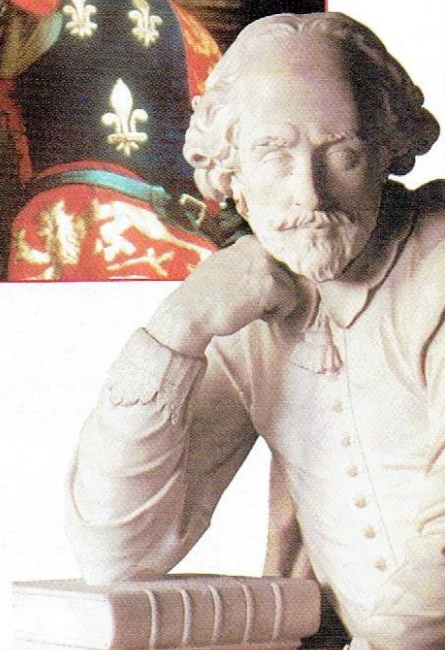
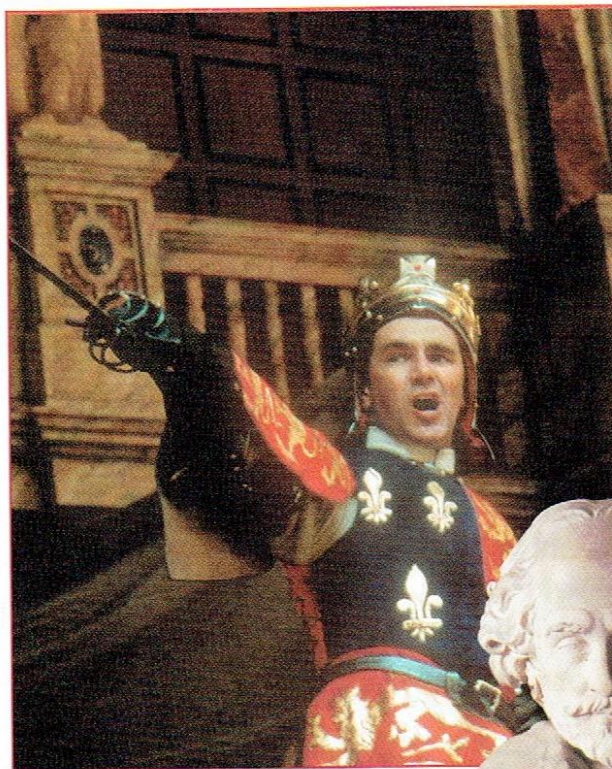
Activity

Do research to learn how a bank transfers money today. Explain your findings to your class.



PUTTING IT TOGETHER

The Renaissance began in Italy around 1400 and changed the way Europe thought. There was a new interest in the art and writings of ancient Rome and Greece. Authority shifted away from the church, and more interest was shown in studying human society and human beings. Beginning in Florence, wealthy patrons supported artists and scholars. People began to think and live in new ways as the ideas of the Renaissance spread. Artists began to use perspective and other techniques to make their paintings and sculptures more realistic. Writers began to write about new themes and to suggest ways to improve human life. The world of the Middle Ages had become a human-centered world of exploration and discovery.



William Shakespeare (right) wrote many plays. His play, *Henry V*, (above) portrays events from English history.

Review and Assess

1. Write a sentence for each vocabulary word.

humanism **perspective**
patron **Renaissance**

2. Who was Lorenzo Medici?

3. What changes did the Renaissance bring to Europe?

4. How did the Renaissance contribute to new developments in **technology** and science?

5. **Summarize** changes the Renaissance brought to painting and sculpture.

Activities

Look at the map on page 357. Write a speech for a citizen of Florence. Explain why Florence has the best location in Italy for trade and the arts.



Suppose you are an English merchant visiting Florence in the 1400s. **Write** a letter home describing what you find there.