Renaissance

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*This article is about the European Renaissance of the 14th–17th centuries. For the earlier European Renaissance, see*[*Renaissance of the 12th century*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_of_the_12th_century)*. For other uses, see*[*Renaissance (disambiguation)*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_(disambiguation))*.*

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelo's_David_2015.jpg)

[*David*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_(Michelangelo)), by [Michelangelo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo) ([Accademia di Belle Arti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accademia_di_Belle_Arti_di_Firenze), [Florence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence), [Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy)) is a masterpiece of Renaissance and world art.

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| **Renaissance** |
| [Sanzio 01.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sanzio_01.jpg)  "[The School of Athens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_School_of_Athens)", [Raphael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raphael), 1509–1511 |
| **Topics** |
| * [Humanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_humanism) * [Exploration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Discovery) * [Architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture) * [Dance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_dance) * [Fine arts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_art) * [Literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_literature) * [Music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_music) * [Philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_philosophy) * [Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_science_in_the_Renaissance) * [Technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_technology) * [Warfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_modern_warfare) |
| **Regions** |
| * [Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance) * [England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Renaissance) * [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Renaissance) * [Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Renaissance) * [Poland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_in_Poland) * [Portugal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portuguese_Renaissance) * [Spain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Renaissance) * [Scotland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_in_Scotland) * [Northern Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Renaissance) * [Low Countries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_in_the_Low_Countries) |
| * [v](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Renaissance) * [t](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template_talk:Renaissance) * [e](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Renaissance&action=edit) |

The **Renaissance** ([UK](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_English): [/rɪˈneɪsəns/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English), [US](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_English): [/rɛnəˈsɑːns/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English))[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-1) was a [period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periodization) in [European history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Europe), from the 14th to the 17th century, regarded as the cultural bridge between the [Middle Ages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages) and [modern history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_history). It started as a [cultural movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_movement) in [Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy) in the [Medieval period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_period) and later spread to the rest of Europe, marking the beginning of the [Modern age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_age).

The intellectual basis of the Renaissance was its own invented version of [humanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_humanism), derived from the concept of Roman [Humanitas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanitas) and the rediscovery of classical Greek philosophy, such as that of [Protagoras](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protagoras), who said that "Man is the measure of all things." This new thinking became manifest in art, architecture, politics, science and literature. Early examples were the development of [perspective](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspective_(graphical)) in [oil painting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_painting) and the recycled knowledge of how to make [concrete](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concrete). Although the invention of [metal movable type](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movable_type#Metal_movable_type_in_Europe) sped the dissemination of ideas from the later 15th century, the changes of the Renaissance were not uniformly experienced across Europe.

As a cultural movement, the Renaissance encompassed innovative flowering of Latin and vernacular literatures, beginning with the 14th-century resurgence of learning based on classical sources, which contemporaries credited to [Petrarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrarch); the development of linear perspective and other techniques of rendering a more natural reality in [painting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Painting); and gradual but widespread [educational reform](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_education). In politics, the Renaissance contributed to the development of the customs and conventions of [diplomacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diplomacy), and in science to an increased reliance on observation and [inductive reasoning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inductive_reasoning). Although the Renaissance saw revolutions in many intellectual pursuits, as well as social and political upheaval, it is perhaps best known for its artistic developments and the contributions of such [polymaths](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymath) as [Leonardo da Vinci](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci) and [Michelangelo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo), who inspired the term "Renaissance man".[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-2)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-3)

The Renaissance began in [Florence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence), in the 14th century.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-4) Various theories have been proposed to account for its origins and characteristics, focusing on a variety of factors including the social and civic peculiarities of Florence at the time: its political structure; the patronage of its dominant family, the [Medici](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Medici);[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-strathern-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-6) and the migration of [Greek scholars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_scholars_in_the_Renaissance) and texts to Italy following the [Fall of Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Constantinople) to the [Ottoman Turks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_people).[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-Britannica1-7)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-Harris-8)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-Norwich-9) Other major centres were northern [Italian city-states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_city-states) such as [Venice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Venice), [Genoa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Genoa), [Milan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duchy_of_Milan), [Bologna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bologna), and finally [Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome)during the [Renaissance Papacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_Papacy).

The Renaissance has a long and complex [historiography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historiography), and, in line with general scepticism of discrete [periodizations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periodization), there has been much debate among historians reacting to the 19th-century glorification of the "Renaissance" and individual culture heroes as "Renaissance men", questioning the usefulness of *Renaissance* as a term and as a historical delineation.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-brotton-10) The [art historian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_history) [Erwin Panofsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erwin_Panofsky) observed of this resistance to the concept of "Renaissance":

It is perhaps no accident that the factuality of the [Italian Renaissance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance) has been most vigorously questioned by those who are not obliged to take a professional interest in the aesthetic aspects of civilization—historians of economic and social developments, political and religious situations, and, most particularly, natural science—but only exceptionally by students of literature and hardly ever by historians of Art.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-11)

Some observers have called into question whether the Renaissance was a cultural "advance" from the Middle Ages, instead seeing it as a period of pessimism and [nostalgia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nostalgia) for [classical antiquity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_antiquity),[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-huizinga-12) while social and economic historians, especially of the [*longue durée*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longue_dur%C3%A9e), have instead focused on the continuity between the two eras,[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-starn-13) which are linked, as Panofsky observed, "by a thousand ties".[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-14)

The word *Renaissance*, literally meaning "Rebirth" in French, first appeared in English in the 1830s.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-15) The word also occurs in [Jules Michelet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jules_Michelet)'s 1855 work, *Histoire de France*. The word *Renaissance* has also been extended to other historical and cultural movements, such as the [Carolingian Renaissance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carolingian_Renaissance) and the [Renaissance of the 12th century](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_of_the_12th_century).[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance#cite_note-mur-16)



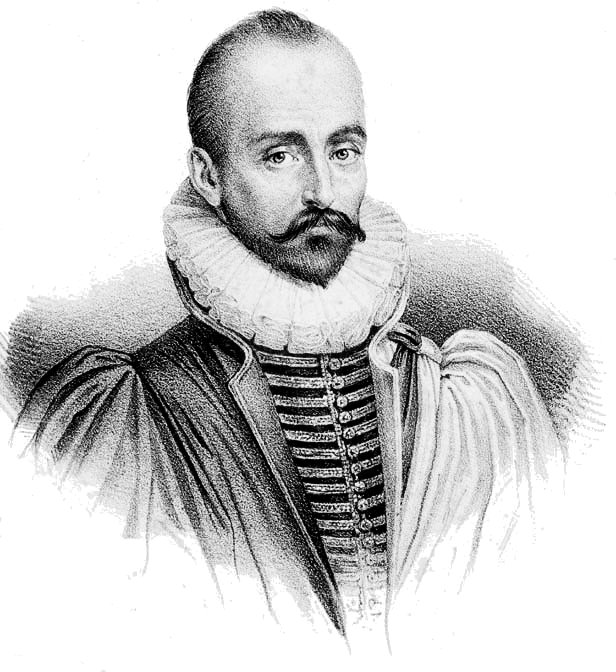
John Calvin

**John Calvin** ([/ˈkælvɪn/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English);[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Calvin#cite_note-1) [French](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_language): *Jean Calvin*, pronounced [[ʒɑ̃ kalvɛ̃]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/French); born ***Jehan Cauvin***: 10 July 1509 – 27 May 1564) was a [French](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_people)[theologian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology), [pastor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastor) and [reformer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformers) in [Geneva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva) during the [Protestant Reformation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation). He was a principal figure in the development of the system of [Christian theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_theology) later called [Calvinism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvinism), aspects of which include the doctrines of [predestination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predestination) and of the [absolute sovereignty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monergism) of God in [salvation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation) of the human soul from death and [eternal damnation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damnation), in which doctrines Calvin was influenced by and elaborated upon the [Augustinian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo) and other Christian traditions. Various [Congregational](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_church), [Reformed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_churches), [Reformed Baptists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_Baptists) and [Presbyterian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian)churches, which look to Calvin as the chief expositor of their beliefs, have spread throughout the world.

Calvin was a tireless [polemic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polemic) and [apologetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_apologetics) writer who generated much controversy. He also exchanged cordial and supportive letters with many reformers, including [Philipp Melanchthon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philipp_Melanchthon) and [Heinrich Bullinger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinrich_Bullinger). In addition to his seminal [*Institutes of the Christian Religion*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutes_of_the_Christian_Religion), Calvin wrote commentaries on most books of the Bible, [confessional documents](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confession_of_faith), and various other theological treatises.

Originally trained as a [humanist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_Humanism) lawyer, he broke from the [Roman Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church) around 1530. After religious tensions erupted in widespread deadly violence against [Protestant Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestants) in France, Calvin fled to [Basel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basel), Switzerland, where in 1536 he published the first edition of the *Institutes*. In that same year, Calvin was recruited by Frenchman [William Farel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Farel) to join the Reformation in [Geneva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva), where he regularly preached sermons throughout the week; but the governing council of the city resisted the implementation of their ideas, and both men were expelled. At the invitation of [Martin Bucer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Bucer), Calvin proceeded to [Strasbourg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strasbourg), where he became the minister of a church of French refugees. He continued to support the reform movement in Geneva, and in 1541 he was invited back to lead the church of the city.

Following his return, Calvin introduced new forms of church government and [liturgy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_liturgy), despite opposition from several powerful families in the city who tried to curb his authority. During this period, [Michael Servetus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Servetus), a Spaniard regarded by both [Roman Catholics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church) and [Protestants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant) as having a [heretical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_heresy) view of the [Trinity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity), arrived in Geneva. He was denounced by Calvin and [burned at the stake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_by_burning) for heresy by the city council. Following an influx of supportive refugees and new elections to the city council, Calvin's opponents were forced out. Calvin spent his final years promoting the Reformation both in Geneva and throughout Europe.



Michel de Montaigne

**Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, Lord of Montaigne** ([/mɒnˈteɪn/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English);[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-3) French: [[miʃɛl ekɛm də mɔ̃tɛɲ]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/French); 28 February 1533 – 13 September 1592) was one of the most significant philosophers of the [French Renaissance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Renaissance), known for popularizing the [essay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essay) as a [literary genre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_genre). His work is noted for its merging of casual anecdotes[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-4) and autobiography with serious intellectual insight; his massive volume [*Essais*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essays_(Montaigne))contains some of the most influential essays ever written.

Montaigne had a direct influence on Western writers, including [Francis Bacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bacon), [René Descartes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren%C3%A9_Descartes),[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-5) [Blaise Pascal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blaise_Pascal), [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Jacques_Rousseau), [Albert Hirschman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Hirschman), [William Hazlitt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Hazlitt),[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-Kinnaird_p._274-6) [Ralph Waldo Emerson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Waldo_Emerson), [Friedrich Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Nietzsche), [Stefan Zweig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stefan_Zweig), [Eric Hoffer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Hoffer),[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-7) [Isaac Asimov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov), and possibly on the later works of [William Shakespeare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare).

In his own lifetime, Montaigne was admired more as a [statesman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politician) than as an author. The tendency in his essays to digress into anecdotes and personal ruminations was seen as detrimental to proper style rather than as an innovation, and his declaration that, "I am myself the matter of my book", was viewed by his contemporaries as self-indulgent. In time, however, Montaigne would come to be recognized as embodying, perhaps better than any other author of his time, the spirit of freely entertaining doubt which began to emerge at that time. He is most famously known for his [skeptical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skepticism) remark, "*Que sçay-je*?" ("What do I know?", in [Middle French](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_French); now rendered as *Que sais-je?* in modern French).

Remarkably modern even to readers today, Montaigne's attempt to examine the world through the lens of the only thing he can depend on implicitly—his own judgment—makes him more accessible to modern readers than any other author of the Renaissance. Much of modern literary non-fiction has found inspiration in Montaigne and writers of all kinds continue to read him for his masterful balance of intellectual knowledge and personal storytelling.

Life[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Michel_de_Montaigne&action=edit&section=1)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:St_Michel_de_Montaigne_Ch%C3%A2teau01.jpg)

*Château de Montaigne*, a house built on the land once owned by Montaigne's family. His original family home no longer exists, though the [tower](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montaigne%27s_tower) in which he wrote still stands.

Portrait of Michel de Montaigne by [Dumonstier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Dumonstier)around 1578.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:St_Michel_de_Montaigne_Tour03.jpg)

The *Tour de Montaigne*([Montaigne's tower](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montaigne%27s_tower)), mostly unchanged since the 16th century, where Montaigne's library was located

Montaigne was born in the [Aquitaine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquitaine) region of France, on the family estate [Château de Montaigne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Montaigne), in a town now called [Saint-Michel-de-Montaigne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Michel-de-Montaigne), close to [Bordeaux](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bordeaux). The family was very wealthy; his great-grandfather, Ramon Felipe Eyquem, had made a fortune as a herring merchant and had bought the estate in 1477, thus becoming the Lord of Montaigne. His father, Pierre Eyquem, Seigneur of Montaigne, was a [French Catholic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_in_France) soldier in Italy for a time and had also been the mayor of Bordeaux.

Although there were several families bearing the [patronym](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronym) "Eyquem" in Guyenne, his father's family is thought to have had some degree of [Marrano](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marrano) ([Spanish and Portuguese Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_and_Portuguese_Jewish)) origins.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-8) While his mother, Antoinette López de Villanueva, was a convert to Protestantism.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-9) His maternal grandfather, Pedro Lopez,[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-10) from [Zaragoza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaragoza), was from a wealthy [Marrano](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marrano) ([Sephardic Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi_Jews)) family who had converted to Catholicism.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-11)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-12)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-13)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-14) His maternal grandmother, Honorette Dupuy, was from a Catholic family in [Gascony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gascony), France.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-15)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ArmoiriesMichelDeMontaigne.svg)

The coat of arms of Michel Eyquem, Lord of Montaigne

His mother lived a great part of Montaigne's life near him, and even survived him, but is mentioned only twice in his essays. Montaigne's relationship with his father, however, is frequently reflected upon and discussed in his essays.

Montaigne's education began in early childhood and followed a [pedagogical plan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedagogy) that his father had developed, refined by the advice of the latter's [humanist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism) friends. Soon after his birth, Montaigne was brought to a small cottage, where he lived the first three years of life in the sole company of a peasant family, in order to, according to the elder Montaigne, "draw the boy close to the people, and to the life conditions of the people, who need our help".[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-16) After these first spartan years, Montaigne was brought back to the château. The objective was for [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_language) to become his first language.

The intellectual education of Montaigne was assigned to a German tutor (a doctor named Horstanus, who could not speak French). His father hired only servants who could speak Latin, and they were also given strict orders always to speak to the boy in Latin. The same rule applied to his mother, father, and servants, who were obliged to use only Latin words he himself employed, and thus acquired a knowledge of the very language his tutor taught him. Montaigne's Latin education was accompanied by constant intellectual and spiritual stimulation. He was familiarized with Greek by a pedagogical method that employed games, conversation, and exercises of solitary meditation, rather than the more traditional books.

The atmosphere of the boy's upbringing, although designed by highly refined rules taken under advisement by his father, created in the boy's life the spirit of "liberty and delight" to "make me relish... duty by an unforced will, and of my own voluntary motion...without any severity or constraint"; yet he would have everything to take advantage of his freedom. And so a musician woke him every morning, playing one instrument or another,[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-17) and an [*épinettier*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%C3%89pinettier&action=edit&redlink=1) (with a [zither](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zither)) was the constant companion to Montaigne and his tutor, playing a tune to alleviate boredom and tiredness.

Around the year 1539, Montaigne was sent to study at a prestigious [boarding school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boarding_school) in Bordeaux, the [Collège de Guyenne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College_of_Guienne), then under the direction of the greatest Latin scholar of the era, [George Buchanan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Buchanan), where he mastered the whole curriculum by his thirteenth year. He then began his study of law at the [University of Toulouse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Toulouse_II_%E2%80%93_Le_Mirail) in 1546 and entered a career in the local legal system. He was a counselor of the Court des Aides of [Périgueux](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C3%A9rigueux) and, in 1557, he was appointed counselor of the [Parlement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parlement) in Bordeaux (a high court). From 1561 to 1563 he was [courtier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Courtier) at the court of [Charles IX](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_IX_of_France); he was present with the king at the [siege of Rouen (1562)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Rouen_(1562)). He was awarded the highest honour of the French nobility, the [collar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collar_(Order_of_Knighthood)) of the Order of St. Michael, something to which he aspired from his youth. While serving at the Bordeaux Parlement, he became very close friends with the humanist poet [Étienne de la Boétie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89tienne_de_la_Bo%C3%A9tie), whose death in 1563 deeply affected Montaigne. It has been suggested by Donald M. Frame, in his introduction to *The Complete Essays of Montaigne* that because of Montaigne's "imperious need to communicate" after losing Étienne, he began the [*Essais*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essais)as his "means of communication" and that "the reader takes the place of the dead friend".[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-18)

Montaigne married Françoise de la Cassaigne in 1565, probably in an arranged marriage. She was the well-got daughter and niece of merchants of Toulouse and Bordeaux. They had six daughters, but only the second-born, Léonor, survived infancy.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-19) Little is known about their marriage, a few words only escaping from Montaigne himself on the subject – he wrote of his daughter Léonor, "All my children die at nurse ; but Léonore, our only daughter, who has escaped this misfortune, has reached the age of six and more without having been punished, the indulgence of her mother aiding, except in words, and those very gentle ones."[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-20) His daughter married François de la Tour and later Charles de Gamaches and had a daughter by each.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-21)

Following the petition of his father, Montaigne started to work on the first translation of the Catalan monk [Raymond Sebond](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_Sebond)'s [*Theologia naturalis*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theologia_naturalis), which he published a year after his father's death in 1568 (In 1595, Sebond's Prologue was put on the [Index Librorum Prohibitorum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index_Librorum_Prohibitorum)for its declaration that the Bible is not the only source of revealed truth). After this, he inherited the family's estate, the Château de Montaigne, to which he moved back in 1570, thus becoming the Lord of Montaigne. Another literary accomplishment was Montaigne's posthumous edition of his friend Boétie's works.

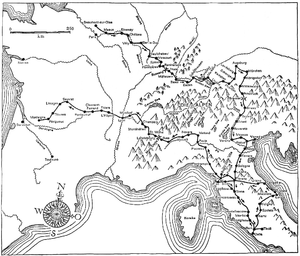
In 1571, he retired from public life to the [Tower of the Château](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montaigne%27s_tower), his so-called "citadel", in the [Dordogne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dordogne), where he almost totally isolated himself from every social and family affair. Locked up in his library, which contained a collection of some 1,500 works, he began work on his *Essais* ("Essays"), first published in 1580. On the day of his 38th birthday, as he entered this almost ten-year period of self-imposed reclusion, he had the following inscription crown the bookshelves of his working chamber:

In the year of Christ 1571, at the age of thirty-eight, on the last day of February, his birthday, Michael de Montaigne, long weary of the servitude of the court and of public employments, while still entire, retired to the bosom of the learned virgins, where in calm and freedom from all cares he will spend what little remains of his life, now more than half run out. If the fates permit, he will complete this abode, this sweet ancestral retreat; and he has consecrated it to his freedom, tranquility, and leisure.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-22)

During this time of the [Wars of Religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Wars_of_Religion) in France, Montaigne, a Roman Catholic, acted as a moderating force,[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)] respected both by the Catholic [King Henry III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_III_of_France) and the Protestant [Henry of Navarre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_of_Navarre). Montaigne believed that a knowledge of devastating effects of vice is calculated to excite an aversion to vicious habits.

In 1578, Montaigne, whose health had always been excellent, started suffering from painful [kidney stones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kidney_stone_disease), a sickness he had inherited from his father's family. Throughout this illness, he would have nothing to do with doctors or drugs.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-cne-23) From 1580 to 1581, Montaigne traveled in France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy, partly in search of a cure, establishing himself at [Bagni di Lucca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagni_di_Lucca) where he took the waters. His journey was also a pilgrimage to the [Holy House of Loreto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_House_of_Loreto), to which he presented a silver relief depicting himself and his wife and daughter kneeling before the Madonna, considering himself fortunate that it should be hung on a wall within the shrine.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-24) He kept a fascinating journal recording regional differences and customs[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-25) and a variety of personal episodes, including the dimensions of the stones he succeeded in ejecting from his bladder. This was published much later, in 1774, after its discovery in a trunk which is displayed in his tower.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-26)

During Montaigne's visit to the Vatican, as he described in his travel journal, the *Essais* were examined by [Sisto Fabri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisto_Fabri) who served as [Master of the Sacred Palace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theologian_of_the_Pontifical_Household) under [Pope Gregory XIII](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Gregory_XIII). After Fabri examined Montaigne's *Essais* the text was returned to its author on 20 March 1581. Montaigne had apologized for references to the pagan notion of "fortuna" as well as for writing favorably of [Julian the Apostate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_the_Apostate) and of heretical poets, and was released to follow his own conscience in making emendations to the text.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-27)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Michel_de_Montaigne_Italienreise.png)

Journey to Italy by Michel de Montaigne 1580–1581

While in the city of [Lucca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucca) in 1581, he learned that, like his father before him, he had been elected mayor of Bordeaux; he returned and served as mayor. He was re-elected in 1583 and served until 1585, again moderating between Catholics and Protestants. The [plague](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Death)broke out in Bordeaux toward the end of his second term in office, in 1585. In 1586, the plague and the Wars of Religion prompted him to leave his château for two years.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-cne-23)

Montaigne continued to extend, revise, and oversee the publication of *Essais*. In 1588 he wrote its third book and also met the writer [Marie de Gournay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_de_Gournay), who admired his work and later edited and published it. Montaigne called her his adopted daughter.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-cne-23)King [Henry III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_III_of_France) was assassinated in 1589, and Montaigne then helped to keep Bordeaux loyal to [Henry of Navarre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_of_Navarre), who would go on to become King Henry IV.

Montaigne died of [quinsy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peritonsillar_abscess) at the age of 59, in 1592 at the Château de Montaigne. The disease in his case "brought about paralysis of the tongue",[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-28) and he had once said "the most fruitful and natural play of the mind is conversation. I find it sweeter than any other action in life; and if I were forced to choose, I think I would rather lose my sight than my hearing and voice."[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-29)Remaining in possession of all his other faculties, he requested mass, and died during the celebration of that mass.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-30)

He was buried nearby. Later his remains were moved to the church of [Saint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint) [Antoine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoine) at Bordeaux. The church no longer exists: it became the [Convent des Feuillants](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Convent_des_Feuillants&action=edit&redlink=1), which has also disappeared.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne#cite_note-31) The Bordeaux Tourist Office says that Montaigne is buried at the Musée Aquitaine, Faculté des Lettres, Université Bordeaux 3 Michel de Montaigne, [Pessac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pessac). His heart is preserved in the parish church of [Saint-Michel-de-Montaigne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Michel-de-Montaigne).