

The Italian Renaissance

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. During the Italian Renaissance, people found new ways to see the world.
2. Italian writers contributed great works of literature.
3. Italian art and artists were among the finest in the world.
4. Science and education made advances during this time.

The Big Idea

New ways of thinking created a rebirth of the arts and learning in Italy.

Key Terms and People

humanism, p. 304

Dante Alighieri, p. 306

Niccolo Machiavelli, p. 306

perspective, p. 307

Michelangelo, p. 308

Leonardo da Vinci, p. 308

Petrarch, p. 310



HSS 7.8.1 Describe the way in which the revival of classical learning and the arts fostered a new interest in humanism (i.e., a balance between intellect and religious faith).

7.8.5 Detail advances made in literature, the arts, science, mathematics, cartography, engineering, and the understanding of human anatomy and astronomy (e.g., by Dante Alighieri, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo di Buonarroti Simoni, Johann Gutenberg, William Shakespeare).

If YOU were there...

You are an apprentice working in the studio of a famous painter. You admire him but think some of his ideas are old-fashioned. Most of the time, your job is to paint the background of the master's pictures. Now, though, you have finished a painting of your own. You are proud of it and want the world to know who made it. But the master says an artist should never put his name on a painting.

Will you sign your painting?

BUILDING BACKGROUND The Renaissance period brought new ways of thinking. Like this young painter, people began to value individuals and their personal achievements. This was a big change from the way people thought during the Middle Ages.

New Ways to See the World

During the Middle Ages, most people in Europe had devoted themselves entirely to Christianity. People looked to the church for answers to problems in their lives, and most of Europe's brilliant and influential thinkers were church figures.

By the late 1300s, however, scholars had begun to study subjects besides religion. They studied history, literature, public speaking, and art, subjects that emphasized the actions and abilities of humans. Together, these subjects are called the humanities. **The study of the humanities led to a new way of thinking and learning known as humanism.**

Humanism and Religion

The humanists of the Renaissance were no less religious than people had been before. Like the people of the Middle Ages, they were devout Christians. At the same time, however, people in the Renaissance were interested in ideas besides religion.

People's newfound interest in the humanities led them to respect those who could write, create, or speak well. As a result, talented writers and artists won great fame and honor. This too was a great change from the Middle Ages, when most people had worked only to glorify God.

Rediscovering the Past

The popularity of the humanities was due in large part to a new interest in ancient history. This interest had been caused by the rediscovery of many ancient writings that Europeans had thought to be lost.

During the 1300s, Turks had conquered much of the Byzantine Empire. Scholars

seeking to escape the Turks fled to Italy. In their luggage these scholars carried rare, precious works of literature.

Many of the works they brought to Italy were ancient **classical** writings, such as works by Greek thinkers. You may remember some of their names—Plato and Thucydides, for example. Europeans had thought that these ancient writings were lost forever. Excited by their return, scholars then went looking for ancient texts in Latin. They discovered many Latin texts in monasteries, where the monks had preserved works by Roman writers. As Italian scholars read the ancient texts, they rediscovered the glories of Greece and Rome. As a result, they longed for a renewal of classical culture.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

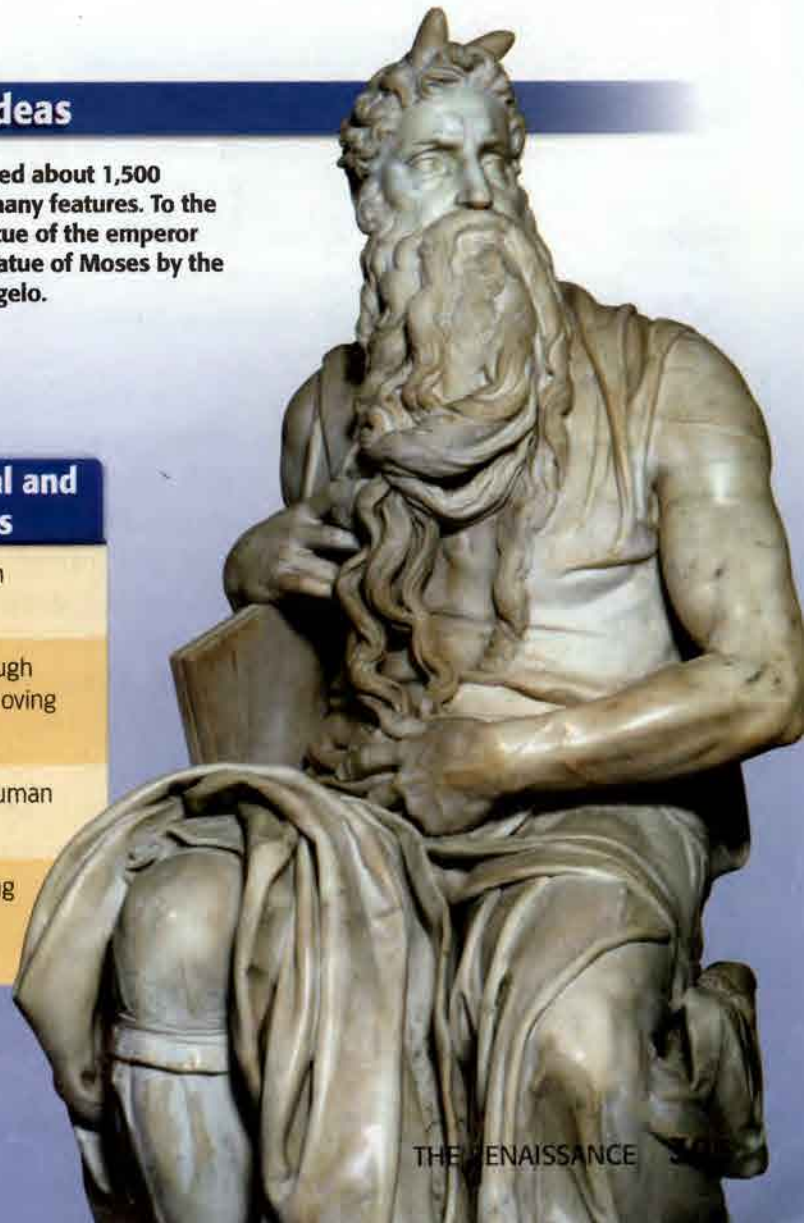
classical
referring to the cultures of ancient Greece or Rome

Rebirth of Classical Ideas

These two statues were carved about 1,500 years apart, yet they share many features. To the left is an ancient Roman statue of the emperor Augustus. To the right is a statue of Moses by the Renaissance artist Michelangelo.

Features of Classical and Renaissance Statues

- Both figures are shown in realistic, lifelike poses.
- Both statues look as though the subject could start moving at any moment.
- Both statues show the human body in great detail.
- Both figures wear clothing that appears to drape and fold like real cloth.



Primary Source

BOOK

The Prince

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli offers advice for rulers on how to stay in power. In this famous passage, he explains why in his view it is better for rulers to be feared than to be loved.



“A controversy has arisen about this: whether it is better to be loved than feared, or vice versa. My view is that it is desirable to be both loved and feared; but it is difficult to achieve both and, if one of them has to be lacking, it is much safer to be feared than loved . . . For love is sustained by a bond of gratitude which, because men are excessively self-interested, is broken whenever they see a chance to benefit themselves. But fear is sustained by a dread of punishment that is always effective.”

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

Do you think that Machiavelli gave good advice in this passage? Why or why not?

FOCUS ON READING

What does the root **re-** in **revive** mean? What other word on this page has the same root?

Among the ideas that Italian scholars wanted to revive were subjects that the Greeks and Romans had studied. These subjects included grammar, speaking, poetry, history, and the Greek and Latin languages—the humanities.

Other ancient sources of inspiration for Renaissance artists and architects were all around. Roman ruins still stood in Italy. Fine classical statues were on display, and more were being found every day. Throughout the Renaissance, Italian artists studied these ancient statues. They tried to make their own works look like the works of the Romans and Greeks. In fact, some artists wanted their works to look ancient so badly that they buried their statues in the ground to make them look older!

READING CHECK

Summarizing What sources inspired Renaissance artists and scholars?

Italian Writers

Many Italian writers contributed great works of literature to the Renaissance. The earliest was the politician and poet named **Dante Alighieri** (DAH-n-tay ahl-eeg-YEH-ree), or simply Dante. Before Dante, most medieval authors had written in Latin, the language of the church. But Dante wrote in Italian, which was the common language of the people. By using Italian, Dante showed that he considered the people's language to be as good as Latin. Later writers continued to use common languages in their works of literature.

Dante's major work was *The Divine Comedy*. It describes an imaginary journey he took through the afterlife. On this journey, Dante meets people from his past as well as great figures from history. In fact, the Roman poet Virgil is one of the guides on the journey. In the course of his writing, Dante described many of the problems he saw in Italian society.

A later Italian writer was also a politician. His name was **Niccolò Machiavelli** (neek-koh-LOH mahk-yah-VEL-lee). In 1513 Machiavelli wrote a short book called *The Prince*. It gave leaders advice on how they should rule.

Machiavelli didn't care about theories or what *should* work. In his writings, he argued that rulers had to focus on the “here and now,” not theories, to be successful. He was only interested in what really happened in both war and peace. For example, Machiavelli thought that sometimes rulers had to be ruthless to keep order. In this way, Machiavelli serves as a good example of Renaissance interest in human behavior and society.

READING CHECK

Drawing Conclusions

How did Dante and Machiavelli reflect the ideas of the Renaissance?

Italian Art and Artists

During the Renaissance Italian artists created some of the most beautiful paintings and sculptures in the world. Rich families and church leaders hired the artists to create these works. New techniques made their work come alive.

New Methods for a New Era

Renaissance ideas about the value of human life are reflected in the art of the time. Artists showed people more realistically than medieval artists had done. Renaissance artists studied the human body and drew what they saw. However, because artists often used classical statues as their guides, many of the human beings they drew were as perfect as Greek gods.

Artists also used a new discovery—**perspective**, a method of showing a three-dimensional scene on a flat surface so that it looks real. Perspective uses various techniques. For example, people in the background are smaller than those in front. Also, straight lines, such as on floor tiles, appear diagonal. Colors could also show distance. So mountains in the background of a picture are a hazy blue.

Great Artists

In the work of the greatest Italian artists the people shown are clearly individuals. In this way, the art reflects the Renaissance idea of the value of human beings. For example, the figures in the painting below by the artist Raphael have clear personalities.

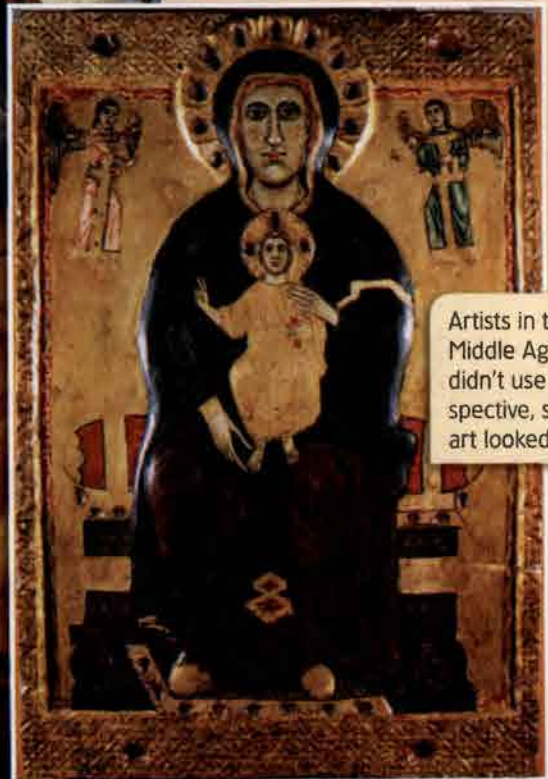
Renaissance Art



The people in this painting appear larger and have more detail than the mountains in the distance, creating a sense of depth.

Renaissance art was very different from medieval art. Renaissance artists used new techniques to make their paintings more realistic.

How are these two paintings similar and different?



Artists in the Middle Ages didn't use perspective, so their art looked flat.

The Genius of Leonardo da Vinci



Leonardo was born in Vinci, a small town near Florence. He showed artistic talent at a young age. But no one could know that Leonardo would become one of the great geniuses of history.

Anatomy Studies

This page from one of Leonardo's notebooks shows how he studied the human body.



THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

Art

Leonardo was one of the great artists of the Renaissance. His *Mona Lisa* is one of the most famous paintings in the world.



Sandro Botticelli (bot-ti-CHEL-lee), a painter from Florence, also showed respect for people. Many of his paintings show scenes from Roman myths. But he painted everyone—whether ancient gods, saints, angels, or farmers—in fine detail.

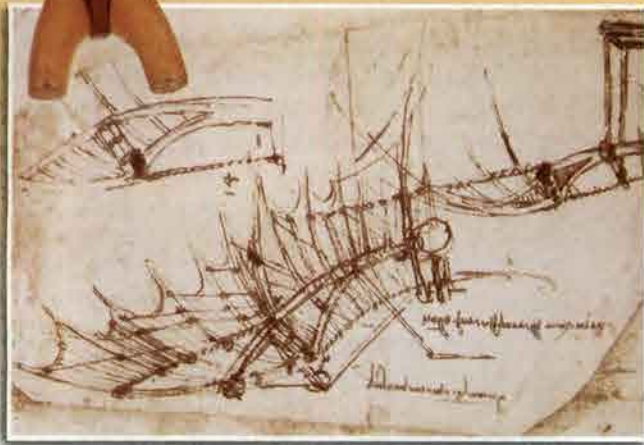
The work of Titian (TISH-uhn), the finest artist of Venice, reflects interest in the past. Like Botticelli, he often painted scenes from classical myths. For Venice's churches, though, Titian painted colorful scenes from Christian teachings.

Two Masters

Of all the Italian Renaissance artists, two stand above the rest. Each is what we call a Renaissance person—someone who can do practically anything well.

One of the greatest Italian artists was **Michelangelo** (mee-kay-LAHN-jay-loh). He had many talents. Michelangelo designed buildings, wrote poetry, carved sculptures, and painted magnificent pictures. Perhaps his most famous work is a painting that covers the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. The muscular human figures in this immense painting remind the viewer of Greek or Roman statues.

The true genius of the Renaissance was **Leonardo da Vinci**. In fact, some call him the greatest genius that has ever lived. In addition to being an expert painter, Leonardo was a sculptor, architect, inventor, and engineer. He was even a town planner and mapmaker.



Inventions

A notebook page shows Leonardo's sketch of a wing. He sketched many ideas for machines that would let people fly. Above is a model of one of his ideas.

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING VISUALS

How do these illustrations show that Leonardo was more than just an artist?

Both nature and technology fascinated Leonardo. Detailed drawings of plants, animals, and machines fill his sketchbooks. To make his art more real, Leonardo studied anatomy, or the structure of human bodies. He dissected corpses to see how bones and muscles worked. Yet Leonardo's paintings also show human emotions. For example, people who see his *Mona Lisa* can't help wondering what made the lady smile.

READING CHECK **Categorizing** Who were some of the great artists of the Italian Renaissance?

Science and Education

Many of the texts rediscovered in the 1300s dealt with science. For the first time in centuries, Europeans could read works by ancient scientists. After reading these works, Renaissance scholars went on to make their own scientific advances.

Mathematics

Some scholars thought mathematics could help them understand the universe. They studied ancient math texts and built upon

the ideas in them. In the process, they created symbols we still use in math today. For example, they created symbols for the square root ($\sqrt{\quad}$) and for positive (+) and negative (−) numbers.

Engineering and Architecture

Advances in math led to advances in other fields of science. For example, engineers and architects used new mathematical formulas to strengthen buildings.

One Renaissance architect who used these new ideas was Filippo Brunelleschi (broo-nayl-LAYS-kee). He designed a huge dome for a cathedral in Florence. But Brunelleschi ran into a problem. The dome that he wanted to build was so big that it would be too heavy for the cathedral's walls to support. To solve the problem, he built the dome out of two thin, light layers instead of one thick, heavy one.

Astronomy and Cartography

Other Renaissance scientists wanted to know more about the sky and what was in it. They studied astronomy to learn about the sun, stars, and planets.

In the Middle Ages, scientists had thought that the sun and stars revolved around the earth. They thought that the earth was the center of the universe. But Renaissance scientists learned that the earth moves around the sun. Later astronomers built on this discovery to lay the foundations for modern astronomy.

Other scholars were less interested in the stars and more curious about the earth itself. They wanted to know the exact size and shape of the earth and its lands. These scholars used measurements and calculations made by merchants and sailors to create better, more accurate maps.

subject that received more attention. An early Renaissance scholar named **Petrarch** (PEH-trahrk), wrote about the importance of knowing history:

“O inglorious age! that scorns antiquity, its mother, to whom it owes every noble art . . . What can be said in defense of men of education who ought not to be ignorant of antiquity [ancient times] and yet are plunged in . . . darkness and delusion?”

—Francesco Petrarch, from a 1366 letter to Boccaccio

Petrarch’s ideas would **affect** education for many years to come. Education and new ways of spreading information would take the Renaissance far beyond Italy.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

affect
to change or influence

Changes in Education

In time, these changes in literature, art, science, and technology would spread beyond Italy. For these changes to spread, however, required changes in education.

During the Middle Ages, students had concentrated on religious subjects. During the Renaissance, students learned about the humanities as well. History was one

THE IMPACT TODAY

Many American universities grant degrees in the humanities.

READING CHECK **Predicting** How do you think Renaissance ideas would change as they spread to other countries?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW A great rebirth of art, literature, and learning began in Italy in the late 1300s. Renaissance ideas changed as they spread across Europe.

Section 2 Assessment

go.hrw.com
Online Quiz
KEYWORD: SQ7 HPTI

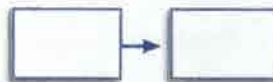
Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People **HSS** 7.8.1, 7.8.5

1. **a. Identify** What are some basic ideas of humanism?
- b. Summarize** How did ancient texts and statues affect Renaissance scholars?
2. **a. Recall** What set **Dante** apart from earlier Italian writers?
- b. Draw Conclusions** Why may a historian call **Niccolo Machiavelli** “the first modern Italian”?
3. **a. Identify** What are three techniques for showing perspective?
- b. Summarize** What are some characteristics of art by Raphael, Botticelli, and Titian?
- c. Evaluate** Which artist would you rather have met in real life—**Michelangelo** or **Leonardo da Vinci**? What is the reason for your choice?

4. **a. Identify** Name one Renaissance achievement in each category of mathematics, architecture, astronomy, and cartography.
- b. Summarize** How did the choice of school subjects change during the Renaissance?

Critical Thinking

5. **Identifying Cause and Effect** Draw a graphic organizer like the one shown here. Use it to show how Turkish conquests east of Europe contributed to the growth of the Renaissance.



FOCUS ON WRITING

6. **Thinking about Characters** The Renaissance was full of great writers, artists, and scholars. How could you use the people you read about in this section to make your movie interesting?

Michelangelo

Why is an Italian artist from the 1500s still popular today?

When did he live? 1475–1564

Where did he live? Michelangelo di Buonarroti Simoni was born in Florence, but he also lived and worked in Rome and Bologna.

What did he do? Michelangelo created some of the most famous works of art in world history. Many of these works he created for the Roman Catholic Church. Popes, bishops, and other church officials hired Michelangelo to decorate their churches with his brilliant statues and paintings.

Why is he important? Michelangelo represents the ideas of the Renaissance in many ways. He strove for perfection in his works and considered them ruined if he found even the tiniest flaw. In the end his perfectionism paid off, for his art leaves people in awe today just as it did in the artist's own time.

Make Generalizations How was Michelangelo an example of the ideal Renaissance person?

KEY EVENTS

- **1498** Michelangelo is hired to carve a statue of Jesus and Mary for the Vatican.
- **1501** He is asked to carve a statue of the Hebrew king David for Florence's cathedral.
- **1508** Pope Julius II hires Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.
- **1527** Michelangelo helps plan the defense of Florence, which is under attack.
- **1534** Michelangelo returns to Rome, where he redesigns St. Peter's Cathedral.

This painting by Michelangelo decorates part of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

