CHAPTER 13

# The Renaissance

CHAPTER 13 1300–1650

Around 1300, a revival of learning and the arts began in Italy, later spreading to northern Europe. This new movement was termed the Renaissance. Two famous German artists of the period were Hans Holbein the Younger and Albrecht Dürer. At left is Holbein's portrait of Erasmus, the "scholar of Europe"; at right is a drawing by Dürer of an artist using a so-called perspective machine to achieve a greater degree of realism in the portrait he is painting.

Men and women of the Middle Ages perhaps gave more serious thought to life after death than to life on earth. They were taught by the Christian Church that worldly concerns were of little importance. Church authority, along with the regulated system of feudalism, gave the individual few chances to express independent ideas. He was expected to accept his position in society without question.

During the period from the 14th to the early 17th century, this approach to life changed gradually. Pleasures and problems of earthly life became important to people, who wanted to live their own lives and to form their own opinions. Confident of their own powers, they also became defiant of authority. During this period towns grew, trade expanded, and political units increased in size. Men's interests also widened; they became aware of their own individual traits and of the world around them.

Out of this increased awareness of life, this new spirit of curiosity and independence, came a revival of learning and an outburst of creative activity that produced some of the greatest art and literature the world has known. These changes—a rebirth of learning and a great creative flowering—are known as the *Renaissance* (a French word meaning "rebirth"). The term is also applied to the period during which the changes took place, a period of transition from medieval to modern times.

In the following sections, this chapter describes the Renaissance and the outstanding figures who were a part of it:

1. **The Renaissance began in Italy.**
2. **The Renaissance was based on humanism and a revival of learning.**
3. **Italians created masterpieces of Renaissance art.**
4. **The Renaissance spread to other countries.**

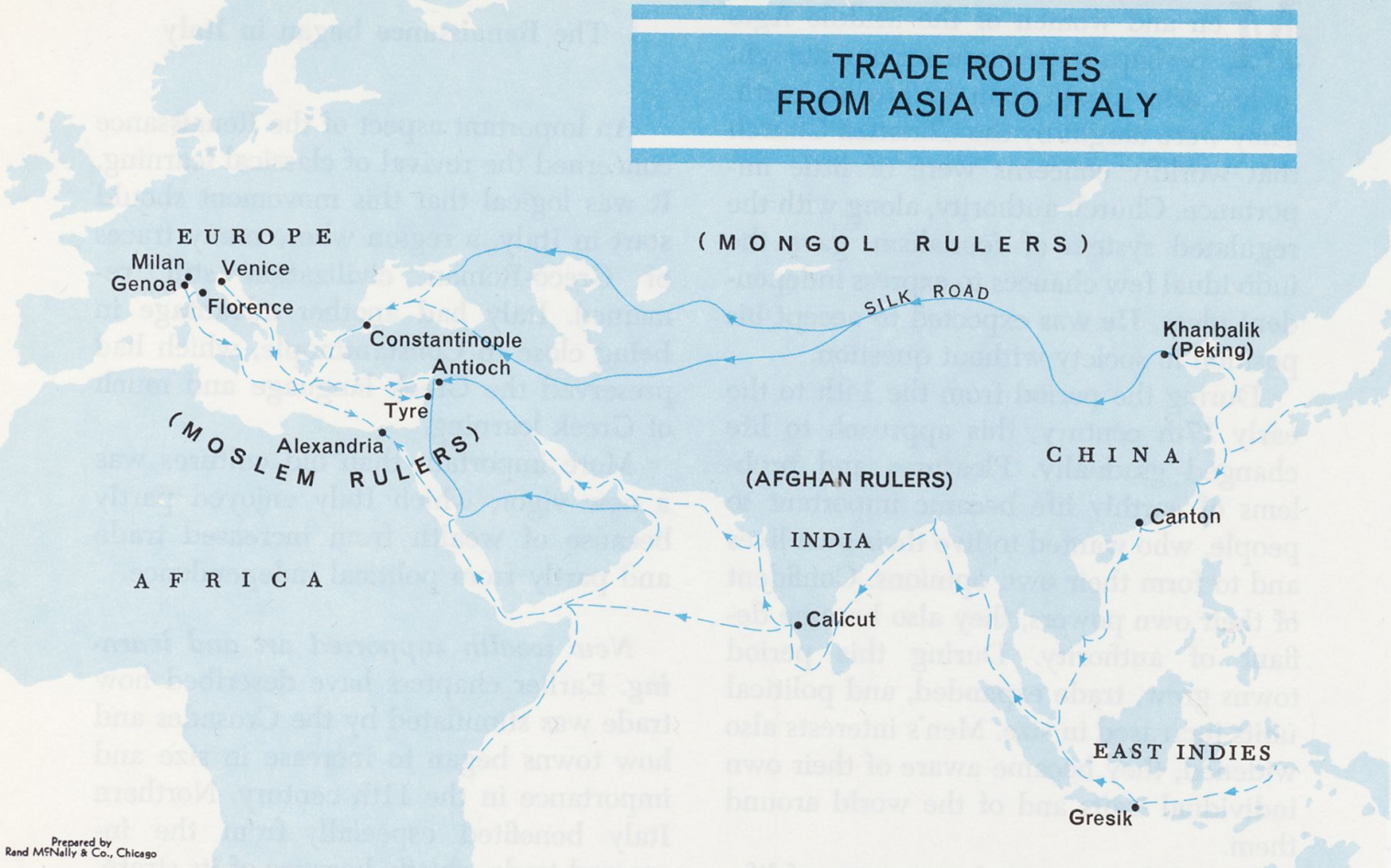
## 1 The Renaissance began in Italy

An important aspect of the Renaissance concerned the revival of classical learning. It was logical that this movement should start in Italy, a region where many traces of Greco-Roman civilization still remained. Italy had another advantage in being close to Constantinople, which had preserved the Greek language and much of Greek learning.

More important than old cultures was a new vigor, which Italy enjoyed partly because of wealth from increased trade and partly from political independence.

***New wealth supported art and learning.*** Earlier chapters have described how trade was stimulated by the Crusades and how towns began to increase in size and importance in the 11th century. Northern Italy benefited especially from the increased trade, chiefly because of its strategic location. Most of the trade routes from the East, whether by sea across the Indian Ocean or overland through Asia and the Near East, converged on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. Italian merchants purchased their goods there and transported them to the ports of northern Italy, from which they were carried across the Alps into northern Europe.

Northern Italy was divided into a number of city-states, similar in plan to those of ancient Greece. Each consisted of a city proper and a tract of surrounding land. The growth of trade brought great prosperity to these cities, the most important of which were Venice, Florence, Milan, and Genoa. Venice, the "Queen of the Adriatic," was built on 117 small islands, and drew its power and wealth from the sea. As early as 1500, Venetian merchants had a fleet of 3000 ships. Florence was famous for its textile industry, which employed 30 thousand persons.




As Italian bankers and merchants grew rich from trade, their new wealth enabled them to enjoy leisure, to study, and to learn to appreciate the arts. They invited artists and philosophers to live and work in their palaces. Because of their patronage of the arts, it has been said that "the oil of commerce lighted the lamp of culture."

Italian rulers also took a leading part in encouraging artists and writers, for the glory not only of their own families but also of the cities they ruled. The Este family, which governed the city of Ferrara, supported such painters as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Titian. The Medici family of Florence were patrons of the artists Donatello and Michelangelo, among others. The popes, too, played an important role in supporting culture. Leo X, himself a Medici, made Rome a great center of art and learning.

***Political conditions encouraged individualism.*** German kings during the Middle Ages wanted to unite Italy and Germany in the Holy Roman Empire. This ambition aroused strong opposition from the popes. In order to gain the support of the Italian cities, both sides—the German emperors and the popes—granted them special privileges, including the right to elect their own officials, to make their own laws, and to levy taxes. Most of the cities developed a republican form of government.

Because there was no effective central government in Italy, each city became a law unto itself. As trade grew, the merchant class became more powerful. Quarrels broke out between various groups of wealthy merchants; often noble families joined in the feuds. People longed for law and order, and in response to this need, a class of *despots*, or dictators, arose in the 14th century. These daring men seized

power by force and guile, but most of them were interested in the people's welfare and gave their cities efficient government. Some despots, like the Medici family of Florence, had been bankers and merchants. Others, like the Sforzas of Milan, began as soldiers called *condottieri.*

The Italian despots came to power because of their strength, cleverness, and ability. If their heirs lacked these qualities, they soon lost influence. Birth hardly mattered; talent was the chief essential. Once on top, a ruler had to be constantly alert for plots to overthrow him. Life in 14th-century Italy was both exciting and dangerous. People were skilled in the use of the dagger, the poisoned drink, and the convenient "accident."

In such an atmosphere, the old medieval idea of the unimportance of the individual gave way to the notion that he was all-important. Old barriers to freedom of thought and action broke down. Men began to express their own ideas about life and art, to criticize long-held customs and beliefs, and to glory in their own strength.

***Machiavelli justified the use of force and deception in politics.*** In the Middle Ages, treatises on government were rare and consisted for the most part of manuals describing the desirable traits a ruler should possess. These guidebooks were pious, well-intentioned, and dull. In 1532 was published a slim volume entitled *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli. It too contained advice to a hypothetical ruler, but it differed radically from its predecessors. It was to become one of the most notorious works ever written.

Born in 1469, Machiavelli served his native city of Florence for many years as a diplomat and government official. While in retirement from public life, he wrote *The Prince,* intending it as a realistic set of rules by which a strong ruler could create a unified government for Italy and ward off invasions by other newly powerful European nation-states. Central to his thinking was the concept that society is subject to the passions and interests of men, not divine rule or moral law. In this respect, Machiavelli offered an example of Renaissance man's revolt from traditional ideas of authority.

Ever since its publication, which was five years after Machiavelli's death, *The Prince* has been the subject of heated debate and analysis. To some, Machiavelli was a shrewd observer of his fellow man and a clever judge of human motives and actions; to others, he appeared as an evil influence, callous to the demands of morality and religion. Machiavelli believed that the state should be all-powerful and that every political action must be measured against one standard only: success. In *The Prince,* he frankly proposed the use of any available means to achieve and maintain power. Lying, cheating, and murder were of no consequence if these methods were necessary for the ruler's purposes. The rights of citizens included only those granted them by the ruler for the benefit of the state; in truth, the people were viewed as mere putty in the hands of their ruler. In his emphasis upon the stability of the state at all costs, Machiavelli offered a blueprint for the development of the strong and cohesive nation-state.

### *Section Review*

1. Why was the geographic location of Italy important in making it the home of the Renaissance?
2. Why was it said of Renaissance Italy that "the oil of commerce lighted the lamp of culture"?
3. How did the quarrels between the popes and the Holy Roman emperors affect the Italian city-states? What factors encouraged individualism there?
4. Why did Machiavelli write *The Prince*? What were the basic ideas of this work?

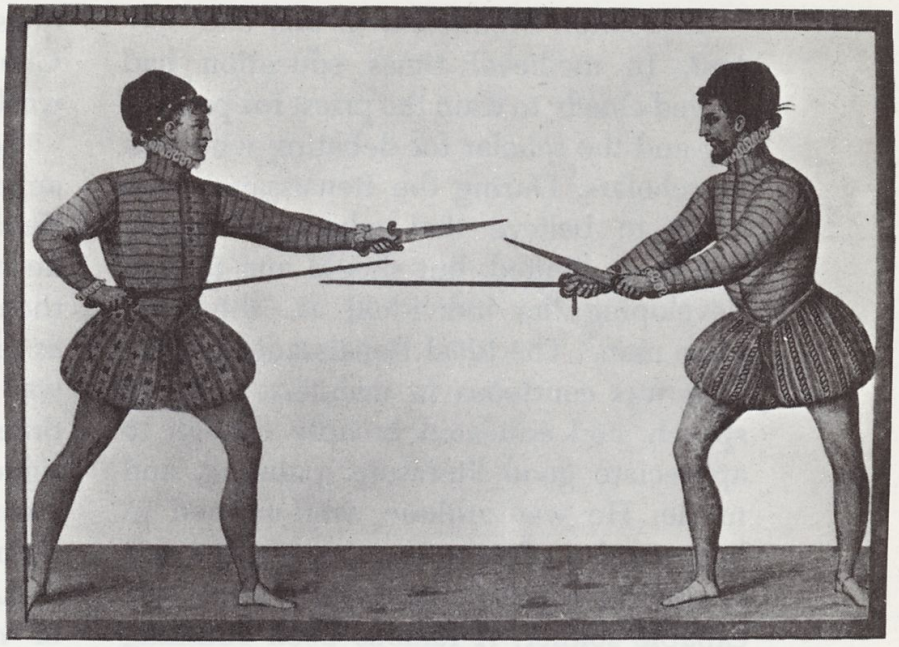
## 2 The Renaissance was based on humanism and a revival of learning

A movement called *humanism* was one of the first products of the spirit that characterized 14th-century Italy. Humanism is a way of looking at life that is marked by an interest in man and in the beauties and opportunities of existence here on earth. Humanists taught that man should live a full life and welcome new experiences. They believed that he should try to better his life in this world, rather than to expect improvement only in the hereafter.

The new humanistic movement was closely related to a revived interest in classical learning, because humanists felt that the writings of Greece and Rome best embodied their attitudes toward the world. It was to this rebirth of learning that the word Renaissance originally referred.

***Petrarch and Boccaccio were pioneer humanists.*** Humanism owed much to the work of an Italian writer named Francesco Petrarca, better known as Petrarch. This writer, born in 1304, resented his father's desire to have him become a lawyer and, for consolation, turned to reading Cicero and Vergil. According to one story, Petrarch's father once hurled the boy's books of these two writers into the fire. The youth set up such a wail, however, that his father snatched them from the fire.

Petrarch dedicated his life to a study of classical writers, and from his study developed a new approach to life. He found that the Romans had believed in the importance of this world, as indicated in their



**The Renaissance Spirit** stressed individualism and worldliness. Men and women wished to become well versed in the social graces and able to enjoy life fully. Left, a public game in 16th-century Florence typifies the elaborate kind of festival that people of the Renaissance enjoyed. Two teams play a ball game while spectators surround the field and crowd the windows of a nearby palace. Above left, fashionably dressed ladies in a garden listen to the music of a lute. No longer confined to the home, women played an important part in civic and cultural affairs. The two gentlemen at right, each armed with a rapier and dagger, square off for a fencing match, an activity that replaced jousting as one of the favorite sports of the wealthy class.

writings about love, the beauties of nature, and the pleasures and problems of everyday existence.

Petrarch and the later humanists tried to recover both the spirit and the actual writings of the ancient authors. They studied Greek and Latin and spent much money and time trying to find old manuscripts. They ransacked ruins, sent agents to Constantinople to buy what they could, and searched monasteries for the precious pieces of parchment. Greek manuscripts became more plentiful after 1453, when the Turkish seizure of Constantinople forced many Greek scholars to flee from the Byzantine Empire and take refuge in Italy.

As a writer, Petrarch tried to imitate the Latin works of Cicero and Vergil. However, it was the group of sonnets written in Italian and inspired by his love for a woman named Laura that made him one of the greatest lyric poets of all time. This love poetry of Petrarch indicates the great interest which humanism had in human emotions.

Another noted humanist was Giovanni Boccaccio, famous for both his poetry and prose. In 1348 the horrible plague known as the Black Death struck Florence, where Boccaccio was living. Thousands died from the dreaded disease. Boccaccio made this event the background for his famous work, the *Decameron.* This is a series of diverting tales, in Italian, told by three young men and seven young women who have fled to an isolated country house to escape the plague. Many of the stories mirrored the spirit of the times by ridiculing feudal customs.

***Education broadened in aim and content.*** In medieval times education had served chiefly to train the priest for preaching and the scholar for debating with other scholars. During the Renaissance men came to believe that education should not be so limited, but should aim toward developing the individual as "the complete man." The ideal Renaissance gentleman was courteous in manners, witty in speech, and educated broadly enough to appreciate good literature, painting, and music. He was athletic, well formed in body, and proficient in sports. In the arts of war the complete man was a brave and capable soldier. A famous book outlining this all-round individual was *The Courtier,* by Baldassare Castiglione, himself a scholar, poet, and courtier.

In order to achieve the goal of Renaissance education, Italian schools tended to concentrate less on theology and more on literature, especially Latin and Greek. The classical writings were known as *literae humaniores* ("humane letters," or literature dealing with humanity), and it is from this term that the word humanism is derived. The humanists, who taught Greek and Latin language and literature, gained great respect. People came long distances to attend their lectures. Rich men and rulers employed them in their own households to teach their daughters as well as their sons.

Although humanists stressed the importance of man and his earthly life, most of them remained religious. Those who criticized the Church believed in reform, not revolt. Humanistic scholars performed a service by carefully translating Greek and Hebrew sources of the Bible.

***Versatile men typified the Renaissance.*** The Renaissance attitude toward the individual gave men faith in their own powers. They were eager to search for new continents, explore the secrets of nature, question the authority of the established Church, and express their love of life in works of literature and art.

Seldom has the world seen so many amazingly versatile men as during the Renaissance. Many were able not only to do many different things, but also to do them extremely well. Leonardo da Vinci, as one example of this many-sided ability, was one of the greatest painters of all time. As an engineer and architect, he designed buildings, canals, and military devices. In addition, he studied geology, chemistry, and human anatomy.

Leonardo da Vinci left over 5000 pages of notes and drawings. The notebooks contained sketches, not only of human figures, but also of cannons, engines, flying machines, and hundreds of other devices, some of which were not to be developed until centuries later. Leonardo left many projects unfinished, but people marveled at his many skills and admired him almost as if he were superhuman.

Some of the people of the Renaissance went to extremes in overstressing the importance of the individual. They scorned the group, had no concern for laws or morality, and openly admired the successful scoundrel. Anything a man could get away with seemed to be all right to them. Benvenuto Cellini was an example of this type of person. A great artist in metalwork and sculpture as well as a good writer, he was also an unscrupulous liar, braggart, and murderer. In his autobiography, he wrote honestly of his adventures, many of which reveal his cool ruthlessness.

### *Section Review*

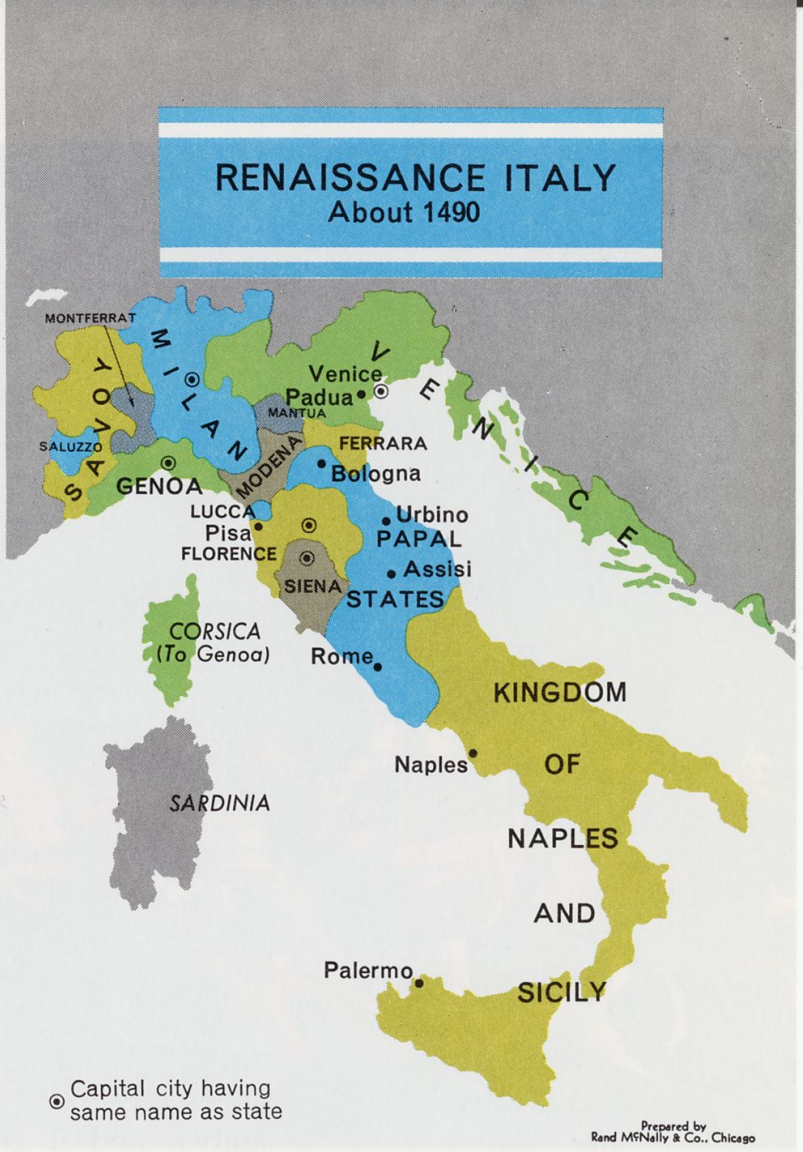
1. How did humanism offer a change in outlook? Why did humanists study Greek and Roman classics?
2. What aspects of the Renaissance spirit are seen in Petrarch's life and works?
3. How did education change during the Renaissance?

4. In what way does the life of Leonardo da Vinci provide an example of Renaissance versatility?

## 3 Italians created masterpieces of Renaissance art

During the Middle Ages, religion had inspired the building of beautiful churches, although painting and sculpture had been restricted because they were considered mere parts of church architecture. Artists worked anonymously to illustrate the teachings of the Church, and concentrated on depicting human suffering and the joys of the hereafter.

Artistic expression changed with the growth of humanism and the Renaissance emphasis on the importance of man and life on this earth. Painting and sculpture became independent art forms. Individual artists expressed their own observations of life by depicting the grace of the human body and the beauties of nature.




***Florence led the way.*** Changes in the art of painting became evident early in the 14th century. The forerunner of the new style was a Florentine, Giotto di Bondone, born about 1266. He was the first European artist to give figures a sense of movement, of being alive. Giotto decorated the walls of churches in Florence, Padua, and Assisi with *frescoes,* or paintings on wet plaster. Most of these illustrated scenes in the life of Christ.

In the years following Giotto's achievements, Florence became the art center of Europe. Perhaps only in ancient Athens has such a brilliant group of artists ever been assembled in one place. The Florentines learned to draw human figures accurately, and attempted to portray ideas and emotions by means of human posture and facial expressions. They used shading to achieve special effects and developed new colors. Perhaps most important, they solved the problem of perspective so that their paintings achieved a lifelike three-dimensional quality. One Florentine artist noted for this technique was Paolo Uccello. Although his works are often crowded with figures, his careful placement of them and his use of perspective create a pleasing sense of order.

***Three artists were outstanding.*** Within less than a century, from the late 1400's to the middle 1500's, three of the most important figures in the history of art—Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael—created masterpieces that are known throughout the world.

Leonardo da Vinci, born in 1452, left fewer than twenty paintings, but their influence on Renaissance art was great.

**Painting of the Italian Renaissance** was more realistic than that of the Middle Ages. In Giotto's "Lamentation over the Dead Christ," left, the figures have a solidity and roundness not found in medieval painting. Uccello concentrated on discovering scientific principles of perspective. In his painting "The Hunt," above, the geometric arrangement of trees and careful placement of men and animals create a three-dimensional quality. Raphael was a master of realistic portrait painting. He captured a mood of deep contemplation in the portrait of his friend Count Tommaso Inghirami, an Italian poet, above right. In Tintoretto's "Jacob Wrestling with the Angel," below right, the subtle contrast of light and shadow heightens the vitality and dramatic interest of a popular Bible story.

Two of Leonardo's paintings, "Mona Lisa" and "Virgin of the Rocks," are noteworthy for the formal dignity of their composition and also for their detailed backgrounds. Leonardo's interest in experimentation led him to try new techniques of fresco painting on the "Last Supper"; they did not work well, and little of the original painting remains.

Michelangelo, like Leonardo a man with many talents, was a skilled sculptor, painter, and architect, and even a fair poet. He was born Michelangelo Buonarroti, near Florence in 1475. At thirteen he became an assistant to a painter and learned to make frescoes. For a number of years, Lorenzo de' Medici, ruler of Florence, helped him carry on his studies.

Michelangelo liked sculpture better than painting, and many of his painted figures have the massive solidity of statues. He was fond of saying, "It is only well with me when I have a chisel in my hand"; but people always wanted him to paint. Against his wishes, Pope Julius II persuaded Michelangelo to paint frescoes on the walls and ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. Lying on his back on a scaffold most of the time, Michelangelo painted the Bible story of Genesis from the Creation to the Flood, a gigantic task that took him four years. The design covers nearly 10 thousand square feet and includes over 300 figures, some of which are 10 feet high. These frescoes have been called "the greatest single masterpiece in the history of painting."

Michelangelo lived only for his art and had little interest in money or comfort. According to men who knew him, he took no pleasure in eating or drinking, and was satisfied with a little bread, a bit of cheese, a bed, and a workshop. He slept in his clothes to save time, and worked so hard that his sides became swollen, his face grew seamed with wrinkles, and his back became misshapen.

Raphael, whose full name was Raffaello Santi, was born in Urbino in 1483. He began to paint at an early age. Most of his paintings were of religious subjects, and he became especially noted for his tranquil, sweet-faced Madonnas. Critics consider him a master of space composition. Raphael was a great favorite of two popes. For Julius II he painted several frescoes in the Vatican, and Leo X appointed him chief architect of St. Peter's Church.

***Venice rivaled Florence as an art center.*** By the 16th century, Venetian painters had created their own traditions. They became particularly known for their use of rich, glowing colors. Giovanni Bellini, born about 1430, came from a family of famous painters. He created a gentle, soft style, which influenced two famous pupils, Giorgione and Titian. The former painted many scenes from Greek and Roman mythology. Titian, born Tiziano Vecellio in 1477, was the greatest master of the Venetian school. Like many other Venetian painters, he was skilled in the use of color and gave his name to a particular shade of red-brown.

Titian's work typifies a change that occurred in art in the middle of the 16th century when painting became more worldly. Artists still painted scenes from the Bible, but they also began to depict scenes and people from the world around them. They did fewer frescoes and more easel paintings on canvas, especially portraits of rich and powerful patrons.

Another great Venetian artist, born in 1518, was Jacopo Robusti, known as Tintoretto. His bold use of light and space make his paintings of religious and mythological subjects extremely dramatic.

***Sculpture and architecture flourished.*** An outstanding sculptor of the early 15th century was a Florentine, Donatello. He

was the first sculptor of this period to show a knowledge of human anatomy. Perhaps his greatest claim to fame is his magnificent statue of a Venetian *condottiere,* Gattemelata. This statue was the first monumental figure on horseback since Roman times. In the face of the general, Donatello caught the spirit of the Italian despot—proud, powerful, and cruel. Another soldier on a horse, Colleoni, was the subject of a great bronze statue by a pupil of Donatello, Andrea del Verrocchio, who became the teacher of Leonardo.

In a class by himself was Michelangelo. Great as he was with brush and paint, he was even greater with chisel and stone. In his statue of the Biblical character David, the sculptor presented his idea of the ideal young hero, with a fine head, classic features, and supple body. Michelangelo also carved sculptures for the Medici chapel in Florence and for the tomb of Pope Julius.

Italian Renaissance architects based their work on Greek and Roman models, but adapted them to their own times to produce original work of great beauty. Types of buildings unknown to classical architects—churches and palaces—called for different treatments of the pillars and domes of Greek and Roman architecture. New combinations of classical elements included barrel-vaulted naves and domes crowned with cupolas. Several buildings were the work of more than one architect. One of the greatest Renaissance structures, the church of St. Peter in Rome, represented the efforts of ten different architects. It is the largest Christian church in the world and is especially noted for its huge dome, designed by Michelangelo.

### *Section Review*

1. How did artistic expression change with the coming of the Renaissance?
2. What developments characterized Florentine painting after the time of Giotto?
3. For what artistic qualities were the following Italian Renaissance artists known: Giotto? Leonardo? Raphael? Titian? Uccello? Tintoretto?
4. What changes occurred in painting in the mid-16th century?
5. On what earlier styles was Renaissance architecture based? Why and how did it differ from them?

## 4 The Renaissance spread to other countries

From its home in Italy, the Renaissance spread to many parts of Europe. Scholars and artists from the north traveled southward to study with Italian masters and returned home with new attitudes and knowledge. The Renaissance also spread through books printed by means of a new invention—movable type.

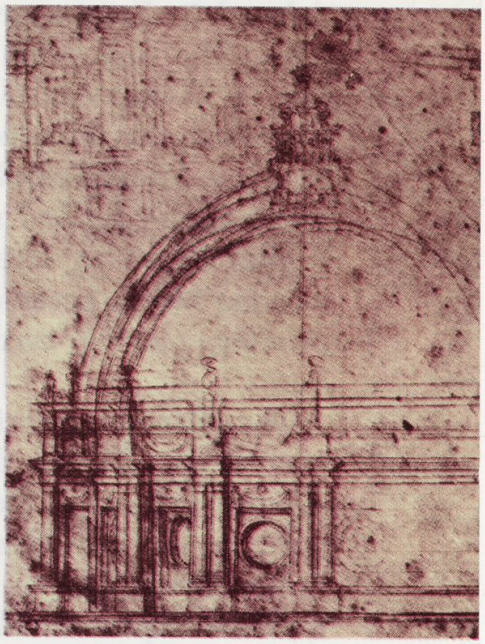
***Printing helped spread the Renaissance.*** During the Middle Ages, writing had been done on *parchment,* made from sheepskin or goatskin, and on *vellum,* made from calfskin. Parchment was expensive; one book might require the skins of twenty-five sheep. Vellum cost even more. Early in the 12th century, Europeans learned about paper from the Moors in Spain. The Moors knew about it through the Arabs, who in turn had learned its use from the Chinese. Even though paper was less expensive than parchment or vellum, books were still expensive because they were written by hand. When the Medici family in Florence wanted 200 books for their library, forty-five skilled copyists worked two years to make them. Under such conditions, it was not surprising that even large libraries had only a few hundred volumes. The average man never saw a book, much less owned one.

The technique of imprinting, or marking by pressure, is as old as man himself.

## Italian Architecture and Sculpture

A renewed interest in classical traditions influenced Renaissance architecture. In the palace under construction above, Roman features include the columns, an extravagant use of statues, and a symmetrical design. The dome of Florence Cathedral, above right, was conceived by the Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi after he had observed ancient Roman ruins. Next to it is Michelangelo's sketch for the dome of St. Peter's in Rome. He did not live to see his plan realized, but his successor carried it out. Both of these churches are the products of many architects.

An expressive work of sculpture located in Florence Cathedral is Michelangelo's "Pieta," left. The body of Christ sinks heavily into the arms of sorrowful mourners. Another famous sculptor, Verrocchio, depicted the forceful character of his patron, Lorenzo de' Medici, in the terra cotta bust at right.



However, the application of printing to making copies of books or pictures was delayed in Europe until the late Middle Ages. The first printing in Europe, like that in China, was block printing. Europeans may have learned the art from the Far East; Marco Polo described the printed paper money he had seen in the court of Kublai Khan. In late medieval Europe, wooden blocks became quite common for printing playing cards and pictures of saints.

The Chinese invention of movable type may have affected the development of printing in Europe, though it is not known whether the influence was direct or indirect. Credit for the first use of movable type in Europe is usually given to a German, Johann Gutenberg. Probably the first European book printed with movable type was the famous Gutenberg Bible, completed about 1456. The process was introduced into Italy in 1464 and into France about four years later. The oldest example from England dates back to 1476. By the end of the 15th century, printing presses using movable type had been established in eighteen countries. European presses had printed 8 million books by the early 1500's.

The invention of movable type had important results. Books could be produced rapidly, in great quantities, and for a fraction of the cost required by the old system of hand copying. The new books were far more accurate, too. Formerly, producing two exact copies of the same book had been almost impossible, because copyists always made mistakes. More important, typographical printing made books available to a large number of persons.

Printing helped the spread of the Renaissance spirit. Italian books were sent all over Europe. The new movement in the rest of Europe, called the *Northern Renaissance,* took on a distinctive character as each country added some of its own native genius.

***Northern humanists emphasized social and religious problems.*** In general, the humanists of northern Europe were more serious and scholarly than those of Italy. Italian humanists were interested in their personal fortunes and in expressing themselves. Northern humanists were concerned with social problems, particularly those involving religion and ethics.

Erasmus, a Dutch scholar born about 1466, is often considered the greatest of the humanists. Although he was born in the Netherlands, his interests were cosmopolitan, and he knew many languages and many countries.

Erasmus was a priest who spent much of his time studying Greek and Latin writings. He wrote many books, all in Latin. In 1511, he published his famous satire, *The Praise of Folly,* which lashed out at the vices and evils of the time. Erasmus attacked superstition, warlike princes, insincere priests, and scholars who wasted time with silly problems. Erasmus also produced a Latin translation of the New Testament from Greek sources, showing that there were many errors in the Bible used at the time.

All his life, Erasmus carried on a struggle against ignorance, stupidity, and vice. He kept up a vast correspondence with scholars throughout Europe, and so helped spread humanistic ideals. When he died in 1536, he left behind a foundation on which later thinkers could build.

In England, humanism was introduced by a group of English scholars who had gone to Italy to study medicine and Greek. On their return, these English humanists gathered at Oxford University and became known as the *Oxford Reformers.* As teachers, preachers, and authors, they sought to bring the new learning to England.

The Oxford Reformers had a great influence on a young Oxford student named Thomas More. So did Erasmus, whom he met at an early age and corresponded with

for the rest of his life. Thomas More became a lawyer and served in many governmental posts under King Henry VIII. His most famous book, *Utopia,* indirectly criticized many contemporary evils by describing an ideal, imaginary community. His criticism was effective later on in bringing about legislation to help the poor.

***Northern artists created distinctive styles.*** Even before the innovations of Italian Renaissance art reached northern Europe, painters in the Low Countries had begun to break away from medieval traditions. Among the first to do so was Jan van Eyck, born about 1370. He painted realistic landscapes and portraits, taking infinite pains to show trees, grass, and flowers as they appeared in nature. It is to Van Eyck that credit is due for the invention of oil paints.

The skill of Italian painters, particularly their use of perspective and mastery of anatomy, impressed the artists of northern Europe. One of the earliest to be influenced directly was a German, Albrecht Dürer, who first visited Italy about 1494. He was struck by the high social position of artists there, commenting "Here I am a lord, at home a parasite." Dürer's work blended medieval and Renaissance styles. He realized the possibilities for illustrating the new printed books, and he produced a great number of woodcuts and engravings for this purpose.

Another German artist was Hans Holbein the Younger, who excelled in portraiture. He was appointed court painter to King Henry VIII of England, where he became famous for his lifelike portraits of the royal family. He also painted excellent portraits of the great humanists Erasmus and Sir Thomas More.

The Flemish artist Pieter Brueghel the Elder devoted his life to painting country landscapes and robust scenes of peasant life. This type of art, concerned with everyday life, is called *genre* painting. It reached its height in the Netherlands in the 17th century with the work of Frans Hals and Jan Vermeer. Two of the greatest 17th-century painters were Peter Paul Rubens, a Flemish artist known for his large, dramatic canvases, and Rembrandt van Rijn, a Dutch painter whose sensitive portrayal of character has made his works acclaimed among the most outstanding of all time.

***Renaissance literature culminated in Shakespeare and Cervantes.*** The English poet Chaucer, discussed in Chapter 7, is often considered a forerunner of English Renaissance literature. It was on the foundations laid by Chaucer and the Oxford Reformers that English writers of the late 16th and early 17th centuries created a literature unsurpassed in any nation. Queen Elizabeth I, like many rulers of the period, supported and inspired the work of writers. The *Elizabethan Age* boasted the poets Edmund Spenser and Sir Philip Sidney and such dramatists as Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson. But the greatest name in Elizabethan literature—and one of the greatest the world has ever known—was that of William Shakespeare.

The plays of Shakespeare, like the King James Bible, are part of the priceless literary heritage of the English-speaking people. The Renaissance spirit was reflected in the breadth of his interests and in his deep understanding of human personality, manifested in such different characters as Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, Othello, and Falstaff. Out of the richness of his writing came not only the poetic imagery of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Tempest,* but also hundreds of sayings that have become part of the English language.

In France and Spain there were outstanding humanists who criticized the evils of their day. One of the most important of these was a Spaniard, Miguel de Cervantes.

**Northern Renaissance** art was noted for vivid scenes of everyday life and penetrating character analysis. In the painting of John Arnolfini and his wife, above, Jan van Eyck rendered with loving detail the clothing and room of a wealthy Flemish couple. A rowdy country marriage feast is the subject of "Peasant Wedding" by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, left above. Below, left, is a sensitive portrait of his mother by Rembrandt. Next to it, glowing with rich color, is Rubens' painting of himself and his wife.

Cervantes, who lived from 1547 to 1616, was the author of *Don Quixote,* one of the world's greatest novels. By the latter part of the 16th century, when Cervantes wrote his novel, feudalism and knighthood were outmoded although the codes of chivalry still appealed to many persons. The hero of Cervantes' book, Don Quixote, was a poor but proud Spanish gentleman who loved to read knightly romances. At the age of fifty, he made himself a suit of armor and, taking his old horse for a charger, went to seek adventure. He was accompanied by his servant, Sancho Panza, as his squire.

Cervantes showed himself to be a Renaissance figure both by vividly portraying contemporary Spanish life and by ridiculing the ideals of knighthood and chivalry through the amusing adventures of Don Quixote. In spite of his absurd actions, the hero's bravery and goodness represented ideals which Cervantes respected, although he seems to have felt that they were impractical in the world as he knew it.

### *Section Review*

1. What were some results of the invention of movable type?
2. How did northern European humanists differ from those of Italy? In what ways did Erasmus and More typify northern humanism?
3. For what were the following northern Renaissance artists known: Jan van Eyck? Albrecht Dürer? Pieter Brueghel the Elder? Rembrandt van Rijn?
4. How do Shakespeare and Cervantes reflect the Renaissance spirit?

# Chapter 13 A Review

## Section 1

The Renaissance, a movement characterized by a revival of learning and a great outburst of artistic creativity, first began in Italy. The key location of the Italian city-states on the trade routes between East and West brought new wealth to Europe, which enabled merchants and rulers to help support artists and writers. Rivalries among and within the city-states stimulated a new spirit of individualism and free inquiry.

## Section 2

One of the most important elements of the Renaissance was humanism, closely linked to a rebirth of interest in the classic writings of Greece and Rome. Italian humanists such as Petrarch and Boccaccio inspired much of this interest, which was transmitted through a broadened and more varied education. Renaissance humanism rediscovered man as an individual. People admired not only the versatility of a man like Leonardo da Vinci but also the successful intrigue of a scoundrel like Benvenuto Cellini.

## Section 3

The greatest manifestation of the Renaissance spirit occurred in the field of art, especially painting. Famous Italian artists of the period include Giotto, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Titian.

The Renaissance spread from Italy to the rest of Europe through personal contact and more importantly through books printed from movable type. The writings of Italian humanists influenced two of the greatest European scholars, Erasmus and Sir Thomas More, although these and other northern writers concentrated more on social problems than had their Italian predecessors. Northern painting also profited from the Italian example, and boasted such names as Dürer, Holbein, Brueghel, Rubens, and Rembrandt.

In England, the Renaissance blossomed in the Elizabethan Age with an amazing number of fine writers, the greatest of whom was Shakespeare. Cervantes of Spain created in Don Quixote one of the most memorable figures in fiction, and a symbol of the end of the medieval era.

## The Time

Some of the events named below occurred during the time of the Renaissance in western Europe (1300 to about 1650). Others did not. Rearrange the items on the list so that all events appear in their proper chronological order, and name those events that occurred during the Renaissance.

Capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks
Norman conquest of England
Establishment of the Mogul dynasty in India
Hundred Years' War
Spanish conquest of the Aztecs and Incas
Establishment of the University of Bologna
Beginning of Tudor rule in England
Golden Age of the Tangs
Reign of Yaroslav the Wise in Russia
Completion of the *Reconquista* by Ferdinand and Isabella

## The People

What contributions did each of these men make to the Renaissance?

Petrarch
Shakespeare
Cervantes
Erasmus
Castiglione
Lorenzo de' Medici
Boccaccio
Gutenberg
More
Machiavelli

## Key Historical Terms

1. Write a one-paragraph description of the *Renaissance.*

2. Define the following terms as they applied to 14th-century Italian politics: *despot; condottieri.*

3. Why was Greek and Latin literature called *literae humaniores*? Explain how *humanism* was related to the revival of interest in classical writings.

4. What is a *fresco*? In what way did *genre* painting reflect the spirit of Renaissance times?

5. Describe the difference between *parchment* and *vellum.*

## Questions for Critical Thinking

1. Why did the Renaissance begin in Italy almost two centuries before it spread to northern Europe?

2. In what ways would humanistic ideals conflict with traditional medieval religious beliefs and practices?