Renaissance Politics and Economics

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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How to Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called "enduring understandings." The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the "essential questions" listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won't know which one.

2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.

3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide's topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. Use the "show set up" function in PowerPoint to present with "two monitors." Have yours set to include the 'notes view' and let the projector show only the slides to the students.

You don't need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it's broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the "enduring understandings." Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.

4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint

presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Renaissance Politics and Economics: Backwards Planning Activities

Enduring understandings:

- In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Italian peninsula was a region of small, wealthy city-states that were usually ruled by small elites made up of nobles and powerful merchants and bankers. This set them apart from the typical feudal systems in many other parts of Europe where nobles and knights on rural estates were vassals of other nobles or kings.

- In these Italian city-states, citizens also often had a role or were able to influence affairs. Many city-states were republics at times, and usually they viewed the ideal of a republic favorably.

- The Italian city-states grew strong due to their role in growing networks of trade which connected them with cultures outside Europe and often broadened their outlook intellectually.

- The Renaissance was a movement in which the central focus was on recovering the classical culture and texts of ancient Greece and Rome.

- The Renaissance fostered a spirit of individualism and an approach called "humanism," which celebrated the full range of human abilities and emotions, both secular and religious.

- The Catholic popes in Rome often reflected the more secular spirit of the Renaissance as well as the ruthless secular political concerns of the rulers of the city-states.

- The secular rulers of the city-states in Italy, as well as the Church, both often acted as key patrons supporting the greatest Renaissance artists and architects.

- As the Renaissance spirit spread north, aided by the printing press, it took on a less secular, more traditionally religious tone.

Essential questions:

- What factors made Italy the site for the rise of so many wealthy city-states in the 14th and 15th centuries?

- Why was the diplomatic interaction, rivalry, and conflict as intense and complex as it was in Italy during the Renaissance?

- Why did ruling dynasties, such as the Medici or the Borgias, so often rule over city-states in which the ideal of a republic as a political system was upheld so strongly?

- Why did the elites of the Italian city-state become such strong patrons of Renaissance scholars, artists, and architects?

- Why did the Catholic popes in Rome also become such strong patrons of these Renaissance artists and architects?

- Why did the great powers of Europe—Spain, France, the Holy Roman Empire—so often become involved in wars in Italy during the 15th and 16th centuries?

Learning Experiences and Instruction

Students will need to know…	Students will need to be able to…
1. where the key Italian Renaissance city-states were located	1. read and interpret primary source documents from the Renaissance era
2. that Italy was favorably located to take advantage of reviving trade networks from the 11th and 12th centuries on	2. understand some of the reasons for the rise of the Italian city-states and their flourishing during the Renaissance
3. that the city-states were often ruled by oligarchies that included merchants, bankers, and others who were not necessarily of noble birth	3. identify some major Renaissance figures from this era and be able to explain their importance
4. that the city-states constantly competed with one another in complex alliances and conflicts	4. understand and debate certain key controversies having to do with the Renaissance
5. what the Papal States were and why the Catholic popes were as concerned with political matters as with religious matters	5. identify causal relationships between various events and developments during this period.
6. that the city-state rulers became heavily involved as patrons of the arts	
7. that other major European nation-states saw Italy as a vulnerable and desirable target for wars of conquest.	

These lessons incorporate the following learning activities to help students reach the enduring understandings:

- Overview of essential questions and basic understandings
- Class discussion of subject matter questions in the presentation
- Teacher introduction of common terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
- Provide students with primary source materials with which they will complete the related projects in the unit
- Students conduct research in groups to be used later in individual and group projects
- Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
- Evaluation and delivered feedback on projects and research reports
- Students create and present their unit projects
- Posttest made of multiple-choice questions covering the presentation, with one or more essential questions as essay questions

Project #1: The Rise and Fall of the Medici

Overview:

The city-states of the Italian Renaissance were often ruled by wealthy oligarchies, small groups of powerful nobles and families whose wealth was derived from commerce or banking. At times, a single large family dynasty ruled. One of the most famous of these dynasties was that of the Medici of Florence. In this lesson, a small group of students role-play key members of this dynasty's senior branch, the one descended from Cosimo the Elder. Role-players explain how each particular Medici contributed to the dynasty's greatness and/or to its downfall. Other students also read about various Medici, question and challenge the role-players, and decide who was the best Medici and who was the worst.

Objectives:

As a result of completing the lesson, students will be able to:

- identify and better understand the political realities of Italian Renaissance city-states
- express their views in a meaningful and coherent manner
- make informed judgments about the character and significance of individual leaders.

Time required:

Four class periods (with one period for the small-group presentations and the vote)

Materials:

Computer(s) with Internet access, a printer, the "Medici Character Chart" (provided)

Procedures:

Choose members of a small group who will do research about the Medici and prepare to role-play the members of their dynasty listed here:

Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici (1360–1429)
Cosimo the Elder, son of Giovanni (1389–1464)
Piero, son of Cosimo (1416–1469)
Lorenzo, son of Piero (1449–1492)
Giovanni, son of Lorenzo (1475–1521)
Piero II, son of Lorenzo (1472–1503)
Giulio, nephew of Lorenzo (1478–1535)

Each student playing one of these dynastic figures should deliver a speech making the case for his or her importance to that dynasty and its place in history. Group members not performing as one of these figures can carry out other tasks. For example, these students might act as "research assistants" aiding participants in gathering information about their roles or developing possible scripts, or in providing additional information for a narrator for the group to use when introducing each dynasty member. Students not in this group should also read some of the background links provided on at least one of the Medici so they can be knowledgeable in asking questions after each role-player has finished his or her presentation.

This dynasty influenced the course of the Renaissance in many ways: as financiers, merchants, manufacturers, military leaders, political figures, popes and other high Church officials, patrons of the arts, etc. In making the case for each Medici's importance students should be as accurate as possibly about both that dynasty's accomplishments and its objectionable actions. Both of these may be a part of what helps to explain the importance of the dynasty's role in the Renaissance.

Questions

Role-players should organize their speeches and other aspects of their presentation around the following questions:

- What part, if any, did you play in your family's rise to power?
- What skills and character traits explain your success or failure in achieving and maintaining power and wealth?
- What were the most important ways you contributed to the prosperity of your city-state or of Italy in general?
- How did you add to your city-state's glory or prestige? In what ways did you contribute to the Renaissance and all its achievements?
- What, if anything, did you do for the Catholic Church?
- What crimes did you commit, and how would you explain the part they played, if any, in making your family so important or powerful?
- In general, do you think you contributed more to the success of the senior branch of the Medici or to its ultimate fall from power?

Depending on resources available as well as the time allotted to complete the project, you may choose to have students dress in character (in period clothes, makeup, etc.) in order to make them more believable to the audience.

Once roles have been assigned, allot sufficient time for students to complete research on their roles via the Internet, as well as through more traditional means such as books, magazines, and microfiche. As students find pertinent information, have them complete the "Medici Character Chart."

Once students have completed their research, have each group use it in the form of speeches by the role-players and as information provided by a narrator or other members of the group. Inform

them that in order to be successful, they'll need to be convincing. In addition, they should be able to give reasonable answers to questions or refute charges made by audience members without looking extensively at their notes or other printed resources. Allot a reasonable time for the presentation (likely a class period). If desired, you may also wish to allow for a debriefing period for critiquing student performance.

Evaluation:

After the presentations, you should evaluate student role-players based on their knowledge of their character and how convincingly they portrayed their dynasty figure. Evaluate all students on their research skills in completing the "Medici Character Chart." While you may wish to develop your own rubric for this project, a sample rubric is included as a guideline.

Suggested Web resources:

The following is a sampling of possible resources for the panel show. You should supplement this list by assisting students in finding related information via a reputable search engine.

The Medici in general

- http://arts.jrank.org/pages/13231/Medici.html
- http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10120a.htm
- http://galileo.rice.edu/lib/student_work/florence96/alexc/medici.html
- http://www.suite101.com/external_link.cfm?elink=http://www.mega.it/eng/egui/epo/medici.htm

Giovanni di Bicci (1360–1429)

- http://www.yourwaytoflorence.com/db/medici/medici1.htm
- http://www.palazzo-medici.it/mediateca/en/Scheda_Giovanni_di_Bicci

Cosimo the Elder, son of Giovanni (1389–1464)

- http://www.renaissance-spell.com/Cosimo-de-Medici.html
- http://www.answers.com/topic/cosimo-de-medici

Piero, son of Cosimo (1416–1469)

- http://www.topfamousbiography.com/biography/27379/piero_di_cosimo_de_medici_biography.html
- http://www.palazzo-medici.it/mediateca/en/Scheda_Piero_il_Gottoso

Lorenzo, son of Piero (1449–1492)

- http://www.yourwaytoflorence.com/db/medici/medici2.htm
- http://www.biography.com/articles/Lorenzo-de'-Medici-9386497

Giovanni, son of Lorenzo (1475–1521)

- http://worldroots.com/brigitte/royal/bio/popeleoxbio1475.html
- http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09162a.htm

Piero II, son of Lorenzo (1472–1503)

- http://www.geni.com/people/Piero-the-Unfortunate-di-Lorenzo-de-Medici/6000000001841992452

Giulio, nephew of Lorenzo (1478–1535)

- http://www.answers.com/topic/pope-clement-vii
- http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04024a.htm

Medici Character Chart

Name of Medici figure researched:
Biographical information:
Important contributions to the success of the Medici dynasty:
Important actions harmful to the Medici dynasty's success:
Any other relevant information to add:

The Rise and Fall of the Medici Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Student score
Research for character chart	Character chart completely filled out; student shows mastery of material	Most of chart filled out; student shows good understanding of dynastic figure's importance	Approximately half of chart completed; student shows some understanding of dynastic figure's importance	Less than half of chart completed; student shows lack of understanding of dynastic figure's importance	
Mastery of character (role-players only)	Student remains in character; is convincing throughout	Student usually remains in character; somewhat convincing	Student frequently lapses out of character; rarely demonstrates knowledge of subject	Student has little knowledge of subject; not convincing to audience	
Speaking ability (role-players only)	Student projects voice effectively; uses proper grammar throughout	Student generally projects voice effectively; generally uses proper grammar	Student does a below-average job of projecting voice; uses proper grammar infrequently	Student does not project voice; uses poor grammar throughout	
Other criteria as set by the teacher					
Total score					

Project #2: Machiavelli— Yesterday and Today

This lesson gives students a chance to better understand the thought of a key Renaissance figure, Niccolo Machiavelli, and his most famous work, *The Prince*. It also enables them to use Machiavelli's ideas to assess and better understand a number of major historical figures from the Renaissance era and compare them to leaders from a time much closer to students' own.

Objectives:

As a result of completing the lesson, students will be able to:

- better understand Machiavelli and the ideas he developed in *The Prince*
- better see how Machiavelli's ideas reflect or do not reflect the political practices of certain key Renaissance figures
- assess the relevance of Machiavelli's ideas in explaining the political practices of some important recent leaders.

Time required:

Four class periods

Materials:

Computer(s) with Internet access, a printer, the "Machiavelli Leadership Worksheet" (provided)

Procedures:

Divide the class into ten small groups. Each group will be responsible for researching one of the ten historical figures listed here.

- Lorenzo de' Medici
- Cesare Borgia
- Pope Julius II
- Girolamo Savonarola
- Francisco Sforza

- Winston Churchill
- Adolf Hitler
- Margaret Thatcher
- Franklin Roosevelt
- Richard Nixon

Explain that all of the five leaders in the left column played important parts in the Italian Renaissance. The five leaders on the right were all key figures in the history of the 20th century. Each group should devote two class periods to discussing the figure they have been assigned. In a third class period, the groups discuss Machiavelli, including this passage from *The Prince*:

> *The question arises: whether it be better [for a prince] to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved… Because this is to be asserted in general of men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous, and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely…but when [the need] approaches, they turn against you. …[L]ove is preserved by the link of obligation which…is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails.*

Explain that this activity will help students think about how useful Machiavelli's ideas are in trying to understand political leadership in his own time and how useful they are in understanding leadership in more modern times.

Ask each student to use the "Machiavelli Leadership Handout" to organize information about the figure their group has been assigned. Using these handouts, each group should prepare a brief presentation on its figure and on how helpful Machiavelli's ideas are in explaining that leader's actions. In making their presentations, you may want to have students all address a set of questions such as the following:

- What were the major political challenges faced by the leader you have discussed?
- What of importance, good or bad, did that leader accomplish?
- What skills and character traits explain that leader's success or failure?
- How closely did that leader follow the advice Machiavelli gives in the passage cited here from *The Prince*?
- Based on this leader's career, do you think Machiavelli was correct in the passage cited here?

After all the groups have made their presentations, have the entire class discuss Machiavelli and the usefulness as well as the moral relevance of his insights.

Evaluation:

After this lesson is complete, evaluate student work using a suitable rubric. A sample rubric is included with this lesson, which you may either use or adapt to meet your individual circumstances.

Suggested Web resources:

The following is a sampling of possible resources for the research. You should supplement this list by assisting students in finding related information via a reputable search engine.

Machiavelli

- http://www.ctbw.com/lubman.htm
- http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/machiavelli.html
- http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/REN/MACHIAV.HTM

Lorenzo de' Medici

- http://www.yourwaytoflorence.com/db/medici/medici2.htm
- http://www.biography.com/articles/Lorenzo-de'-Medici-9386497

Cesare Borgia

- http://www.nndb.com/people/172/000092893/
- http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0808360.html

Pope Julius II

- http://www.nndb.com/people/520/000097229/
- http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08562a.htm

Girolamo Savonarola

- http://www.nndb.com/people/631/000094349/
- http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/savonarola.html

Francisco Sforza

- http://www.economicexpert.com/a/Francesco:Sforza.html
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesco_I_Sforza

Winston Churchill

- http://www.toy-soldier-gallery.com/Articles/Churchill/Churchill.html
- http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/winston_churchill.htm

Adolf Hitler

- http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/hitler.html
- http://www.secondworldwar.co.uk/ahitler.html

Franklin Roosevelt

- http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988153,00.html
- http://www.vcsc.k12.in.us/staff/mhutch/modpres/fdr/index.htm

Margaret Thatcher

- http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988166,00.html
- http://www.answers.com/topic/margaret-thatcher

Richard Nixon

- http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ni-Pe/Nixon-Richard.html
- http://www.biography.com/articles/Richard-Nixon-9424076

Machiavelli Leadership Handout

Name of leader researched:
Major political challenges faced this leader faced:
Most important accomplishments, good or bad:
Key skills and character traits explaining this leader's success or failure:
How closely did this leader follow Machiavelli's advice?

Machiavelli Leadership Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Student score
Facts, specific examples, and details about the leader	Student shows great mastery of material	Student portrays the figure generally well	Student shows some understanding of figure	Student shows little understanding of figure	
Summary of the leader's challenges and achievements	Clear summary of the most important challenges and achievements	Adequate summary of some key challenges and achievements	Only a vague summary of some of what this leader did	Little or no detail about this leader's challenges or achievements	
Assessment of the leader's character traits	Student shows insight about the leader's character and its impact on his or her decisions	Student shows good understanding of the leader's key character traits	Student only rarely shows understanding of the leader's key character traits	Student has little knowledge of the leader's key character traits	
Relating the leader's actions to Machiavelli's ideas	Student effectively relates the leader's actions to Machiavelli's key ideas	Student makes a reasonable effort to relate the leader's actions to Machiavelli's key ideas	Student does a poor job of relating the leader's actions to Machiavelli's key ideas	Student does not clearly understand the leader's key actions or Machiavelli's ideas	
Total score					

Project #3: Renaissance City-State Fair

Overview:

This lesson helps students better understand the rich variety of city-states that made Renaissance Italy such a vibrant and dynamic region in the 14th and 15th centuries. In small groups, they prepare materials to display during a fair, illustrating the history and key contributions of several major city-states to the political and economic life of Renaissance Italy.

Objectives:

As a result of completing the lesson, students will be able to:

- describe some of the key leaders and major features of each of five major Renaissance states and city-states
- better understand the complex interactions of those city-states during the Renaissance era
- gain an appreciation of the political and economic creativity that formed the basis of the Renaissance's other, more artistic achievements.

Time required:

Four class periods

Materials:

Computer(s) with Internet access, a printer, the "Renaissance City-State Worksheet" (provided)

Procedures:

Students will meet in one of five small groups to read about and research one of the following states in Renaissance Italy:

- The Republic of Florence
- The Duchy of Milan
- The Papal States
- The Republic of Venice
- The Kingdom of Naples

Each small group will read about one of these states and prepare a display about it for inclusion as part of a Renaissance Italy City-State Fair to be held in the classroom or some other space

suited for it. Students should be encouraged to be as creative and colorful as possible in assembling their displays, but each display should at least include the following:

- Pictures of key figures of that state's main rulers, ruling dynastic family, other noble families, popes, financiers, merchants, etc. These should be displayed along with short written explanations of each illustration. Students should be encouraged to locate and include brief primary source documents to add detail to this part of their displays.

- A map showing that state's place within key trade routes with the rest of Europe, the Byzantine Empire, the Middle East, etc.

- Pictures of major Renaissance artists associated with that state or city-state and some of their artistic or architectural creations

- A timeline of that state or city-state's history in the 14th or 15th centuries. The timeline should include information on the type of government(s) the state had, and it can be illustrated with key personalities and events in the state's development.

In preparing these displays, students should set up a booth for the fair and be prepared to guide other students through it and explain the displays in it. Allot sufficient time for students to complete research via the Internet, as well as through more traditional means such as books, magazines, and microfiche. As students find pertinent information, have them complete the "Renaissance City-State Worksheet" provided.

Depending on resources available, as well as the time allotted to complete the project, you may choose to have students dress in character (in period clothes, makeup, etc.) in order to make them more believable to those viewing their group's display.

Evaluation:

At the end of the fair, evaluate student work using a suitable rubric. A sample rubric is included with this lesson. This rubric evaluates each student's worksheet along with an evaluation of the performance overall of the student's small group efforts. You may either use the rubric or adapt it to meet your individual circumstances.

Suggested Web resources:

City-States of Renaissance Italy

- http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/texts/carrie_books/gilbert/03.html
- http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/REN/BACK.HTM

The Republic of Florence

- http://www.aboutflorence.com/history-of-Florence.html
- http://www.learner.org/interactives/renaissance/florence.html
- http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/Student/Florence/index.html

The Duchy of Milan

- http://www.sparknotes.com/history/european/renaissance1/section5.rhtml
- http://www.aboutmilan.com/art-and-culture-of-milan.html

The Papal States

- http://muse.tau.ac.il/museum/galileo/rome_eng.html
- http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Papal_States
- http://www.paradoxplace.com/Church_Stuff/Popes_Renaissance.htm

The Republic of Venice

- http://www.sparknotes.com/history/european/renaissance1/section5.rhtml
- http://muse.tau.ac.il/museum/galileo/venice_eng.html
- http://www.veneto.org/history/serenissima3.htm

The Kingdom of Naples

- http://www.naples-napoli.com/history_naples.htm
- http://www.lonelyplanet.com/italy/campania/naples/history
- http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10683a.htm

Renaissance City-State Worksheet

Name of city-state or state:

Key political or economic leaders, or family dynasties:

Most important historical events or turning points:

Key economic activities or trading relationships:

Most important cultural or artistic accomplishments:

Renaissance City-State Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Student score
Accuracy and relevance of worksheet	Accurate and relevant explanation of this state and its role in the Italian Renaissance	Adequate explanation of this state and its role in the the Italian Renaissance	Helpful in explaining some key aspects of this state's history	Inaccurate and unclear in explaining this state's history	
Small group: map and timeline accuracy and relevance	Accurate and very relevant information on this state and its role in the Italian Renaissance	Adequate information on this state and its role in the Italian Renaissance	Some valuable information on this state but not always accurate or relevant	Very little accurate or relevant information on this state	
Small group: illustrations and explanations	Vivid, relevant illustrations and clear and helpful explanations	Relevant illustrations and adequate explanations	Some relevant illustrations and vague but acceptable explanations	Illustrations not clearly relevant and explanations unclear or inaccurate	
Total score					

Extension Activity

- Have students present a talk show–style interview with a famous Renaissance character. This would entail extensive research on the character by both the interviewer and the person playing the character. Good candidates for this activity include Niccolo Machiavelli and Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici.

Discussion Questions

1. How were business and politics intertwined in Renaissance Italy?

2. The Medici ran Florence as an oligarchy, although they kept up the appearance of a republic and did many things for society. Should they be regarded as corrupt? Why or why not?

3. How did Erasmus, the Plague, and the printing press contribute to social, economic, and political change during this period?

Web Sites

http://www.learner.org/exhibits/renaissance/

From the Annenberg Foundation, this Web site is an excellent resource on all aspects of the Renaissance, including art, trade, society, and politics.

http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/glo/renaissance/

A site of the WebMuseum, this provides an exceptional overview of the Renaissance, particularly on the Northern Renaissance.

Renaissance Politics and Economics: Multiple-Choice Quiz

1. What does "Renaissance" mean?
   A. Reincarnation
   B. Reform
   C. Radical
   D. Rebirth

2. Citizenship in a commune was based on:
   A. marriage
   B. yearly income
   C. holding property
   D. political connections

3. All of the following were Italian city-states *except*:
   A. Venice
   B. Nice
   C. Florence
   D. Milan

4. The Sforzas ruled which city-state?
   A. Florence
   B. Genoa
   C. Milan
   D. Venice

5. In general, who were the most powerful people in each city-state?
   A. Merchants
   B. Politicians
   C. Religious figures
   D. Artists

6. All of the following were part of the intellectual basis of the Renaissance *except*:
   A. spirituality
   B. individualism
   C. revival of antiquity
   D. celebration of humanity

7. What were the main businesses of Florence?
   A. Shipbuilding and banking
   B. Banking and textiles
   C. Textiles and artistry
   D. Artistry and shipbuilding

8. Who was the ruling family of Florence?
   A. Sforza
   B. Borgia
   C. Medici
   D. Castiglione

9. What ruling family supported Renaissance music more than others?
   A. d'Este
   B. Borgia
   C. Medici
   D. Sforza

10. Who was the author of *The Prince*?
   A. Baldassare Castiglione
   B. Niccolo Machiavelli
   C. Leonardo da Vinci
   D. Michelangelo Buonarotti

11. *The Prince* is about:
   A. economics
   B. proper behavior
   C. political power
   D. artistic techniques

12. Which Dominican friar briefly ruled Florence?
   A. Grimaldi
   B. Savonarola
   C. Erasmus
   D. Georgione

13. The papacy is most closely associated with which city?
    A. Venice
    B. Rome
    C. Milan
    D. Genoa

14. Who was known as the "warrior pope"?
    A. Julius II
    B. John Paul I
    C. Alexander VI
    D. Sixtus IV

15. Which of the following *best* describes Pope Alexander VI?
    A. Handsome
    B. Corrupt
    C. Cheerful
    D. Intelligent

16. Who invented the printing press?
    A. More
    B. Luther
    C. Gutenburg
    D. Erasmus

17. Who translated the New Testament into Greek and Latin?
    A. Leonardo da Vinci
    B. Desiderius Erasmus
    C. Niccolo Machiavelli
    D. Pope Julius II

18. Who was the author of *The Courtier*?
    A. Caterina Sforza
    B. Niccolo Machiavelli
    C. Desiderius Erasmus
    D. Baldassare Castiglione

19. Who was the most famous Christian humanist?
    A. Savonarola
    B. Ferdinand
    C. Erasmus
    D. Elizabeth I

20. All of the following were consequences of the Plague *except*:
    A. labor shortages
    B. an increase in intolerance
    C. greater trust in local authorities
    D. a shift away from religion and towards science

Renaissance Politics and Economics: Multiple-Choice Quiz Answer Key

1. D
2. C
3. B
4. C
5. A
6. A
7. B
8. C
9. A
10. B
11. C
12. B
13. B
14. A
15. B
16. C
17. B
18. D
19. C
20. C

Renaissance Politics and Economics
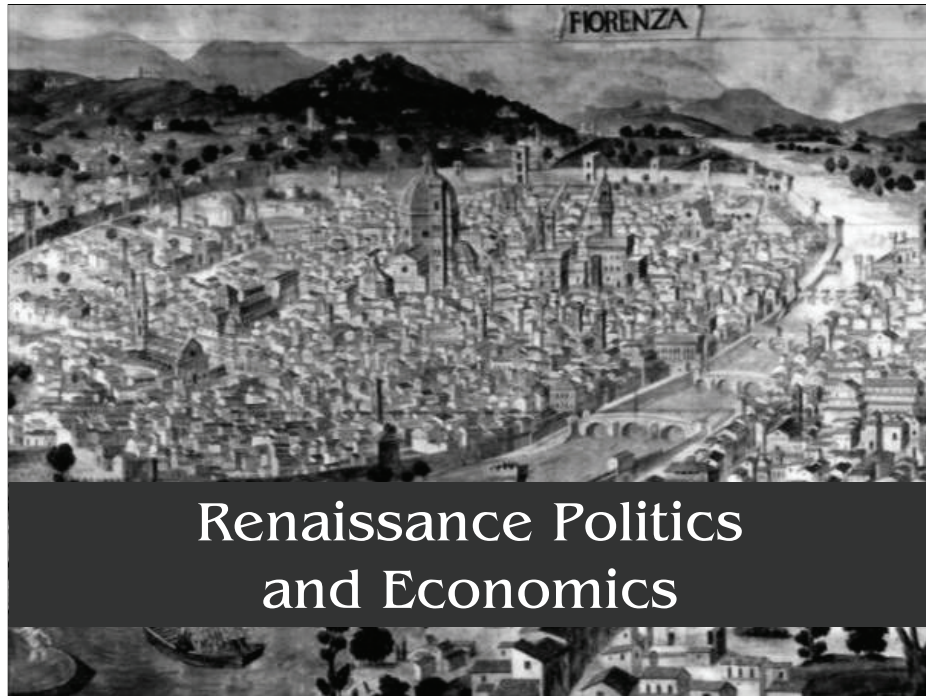
After the Middle Ages, many Europeans developed new attitudes and views about the world around them in a period called the Renaissance. This historic period began in the city-states of Italy and eventually spread north into the rest of western Europe. It was a time of creativity and change—political, economic, social, and cultural.

The Renaissance saw the rise of a wealthy merchant class, some of whose members would establish large international banks and also become patrons of the arts, thus making it possible for some of the greatest works of art, architecture, and sculpture the world has ever seen to be created.

Politics became the domain of competing cities and their wealthy rulers, and the papacy in Italy. One of the most widely read and used books on politics was a guide to rulers on how to gain and maintain power. Its author's name has become synonymous with ruthless politics—Machiavelli—and the ideas in his book are still debated today.

Although the Renaissance is most widely known for the Italian artists of the period, its impact on politics, economics, and other aspects of society was felt throughout Europe and around the world. A class of wealthy merchants became a dominant force in economics, politics, and the arts. The invention of the printing press led to a dramatic increase in information available to the public and contributed to the spread of new ideas, which in turn led to more change through events such as the Reformation, and later nationalism, imperialism, and modern-day globalization.

Essential Questions

1. What factors made Italy the site for the rise of so many wealthy city-states in the 14th and 15th centuries?

2. Why was the diplomatic interaction, rivalry, and conflict as intense and complex as it was in Italy during the Renaissance?

3. Why did ruling dynasties, such as the Medici or the Borgias, so often rule over city-states in which the ideal of a republic as a political system was upheld so strongly?

4. Why did the elites of the Italian city-states become such strong patrons of Renaissance scholars, artists, and architects?

5. Why did the Catholic popes in Rome also become such strong patrons of these Renaissance artists and architects?

6. Why did the great powers of Europe—Spain, France, the Holy Roman Empire—so often become involved in wars in Italy during the 15th and 16th centuries?

Setting the Stage for the Renaissance:
Economics

Revival of trade: 11th century
- Improved agricultural techniques
- Population increase
- New trade routes
- Improved transportation

A Renaissance-era moneychanger

During the Middle Ages, the development and rise of feudalism had put much of Europe into what was largely a subsistence economy in which trade centered more around local fairs than international markets. Beginning in the 11th century, however, trade began to revive due to a number of factors: improved agricultural techniques, which led to increased crop production; a rise in population, which contributed to the development of towns and cities; the emergence of new trade routes in the wake of the Crusades; improvements in transportation (especially shipbuilding); and the emergence of a currency-based economy (as opposed to a barter economy). With the shift to a currency-based economy, a new class of bankers, merchants, tradespeople, and artisans began to arise in cities and towns.

Setting the Stage for the Renaissance:
Politics

- City-states
- Communes
- New economic elite
- The *popolo*
- Oligarchies and dictatorships
- *Condottieri*

A group of *condottieri*

The Renaissance originated in the city-states of northern Italy. Italy hadn't developed a strong central government during the late Middle Ages; instead, it was made up of about 250 small states or "city-states." Initially, many northern Italian city-states developed as communes—associations of local merchant guilds that took care of most city services, such as building city walls and keeping civil order. Many local nobles chose to move into these growing cities, drawn by the economic and political opportunities available there. The merchants and the nobles in the cities merged in many ways—through economic partnership as political allies, and through intermarriage and other social ties—to create a new urban elite. Communes thus represented both a break from the feudal system and the creation of a new economic hierarchy.

Politics in the communes was chaotic and often violent. Citizenship in the communes was initially based on holding property, which meant that many artisans and lesser merchants were excluded from political power; they also suffered under the burden of heavy taxation. Known collectively as the *popolo* (meaning "the people"), they pushed for political change. In many Italian cities, they eventually managed to get republican (representative) governments established—in some cases through force of arms. Many of these popular governments, however, failed either because the leaders didn't extend political power to the groups that had put them in office, or because they couldn't maintain civil order. Many city-states ultimately ended up as dictatorships or oligarchies (i.e., ruled by a small powerful group), although most retained the trappings and outward appearance of republican government. In several city-states, mercenary soldiers known as *condottieri* provided defense and kept order.

Italian City-States

Italian city-states not only suffered from internal conflict, but also came into conflict with one another in several different ways. They vied with each other economically, struggling for control of commercial trade routes, control of natural resources, and access to seaports. They fought over territory when one city-state sought to expand into another's domain. They went to war with one another when one city-state seemed to become too powerful. They also competed socially, with each trying to outdo the other in terms of opulence, sophistication, and artistic achievement. Throughout the 15th century, Italian city-states conducted a complex foreign policy marked by constantly shifting alliances, diplomatic intrigue, and the establishment of embassies and ambassadors to maintain and manage delicate political relationships.

The five most important city-states were Florence, Venice, the Papal States, Milan, and Naples.

Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the factors explaining the rise of trade and a merchant class in Italy and elsewhere in Europe starting in the 11th century?

2. Italy's city-states grew out of communes formed in the late Middle Ages. In what ways were the new urban elites in these communes a break with the feudal past in most of Europe?

3. The Italian city-states were like little laboratories where European rulers learned to carry out complex foreign policies marked by constantly shifting alliances, diplomatic intrigue, the use of ambassadors, etc. What about the context of Italy in the 1400s encouraged this learning process?

1. Beginning in the 11th century, trade began to revive due to improved agricultural techniques and productivity, a rise in population, growth of towns, the emergence of new trade routes in the wake of the Crusades and across central Asia; better shipbuilding techniques, and the more widespread use of currency, banking, and insurance.

2. Many local nobles moved from rural estates into these growing cities. There the merchants and nobles merged in many ways—through economic partnerships, political alliances, intermarriage, etc.—to create a new urban elite that differed from the feudal system in more rural parts of Europe.

3. Italian city-states came into conflict with one another in many ways, in struggles for control of commercial trade routes, natural resources or access to seaports. They fought over territory or when one city-state seemed to become too powerful. They also competed socially and culturally.
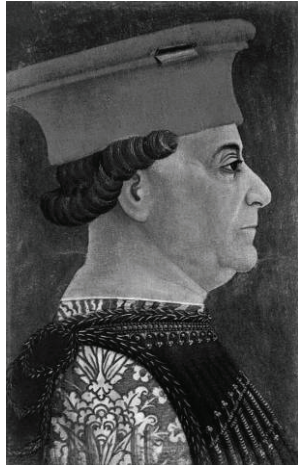
Milan

- The Visconti family
- Territorial expansion

Milanese ruler
Gian Galeazzo Visconti

Located in northern Italy, Milan became one of the richest and most powerful of the Italian city-states, due in large part to the fact that it lay at the juncture of several important trade routes; its rulers also established an effective tax system that helped the city remain prosperous. In the 14th century, Milan came under the rule of the Visconti family, who became the city-state's first ruling dynasty. In the early 1300s, the Viscontis embarked upon a quest for territorial expansion, using a variety of means (mostly peaceful, such as purchase or negotiated surrender) to gain control over other cities and small city-states. Milan eventually came to encompass much of northwestern Italy, and even came close to conquering Florence in the early 1400s.

The Sforza Family

Francesco Sforza

- Ruled Milan (1450–1535)
- Francesco Sforza (1401–1466)
- War with Venice (1450) and Peace of Lodi (1454)
- Ludovico Sforza (1451–1508)

In the mid-15th century, the last of the Visconti rulers died without leaving an heir. Milan briefly established a republic and hired a group of *condottieri* led by a man named Francesco Sforza to defend the city against potential attacks by Venetian forces. Sforza had worked for the Viscontis before, providing defense for Milan on several earlier occasions. This time, however, he used the opportunity to attack the city and seize power. The Sforzas would become Milan's ruling dynasty for almost a century.

Francesco Sforza's takeover prompted Venice to declare war on Milan. The war saw a shift in traditional alliances between the city-states. Florence in the past had had a long-standing alliance with Venice; in this conflict, however, Cosimo de' Medici (the Florentine ruler) chose to support Milan. Naples continued to support Venice. The war ended with the Peace of Lodi in 1454, in which Venice agreed to recognize Sforza as Duke of Milan in exchange for some minor territories. The Peace of Lodi also served as an informal nonaggression pact between the four main city-states involved in the war, and a period of relative stability ensued that would last for the next 40 years.

Francesco Sforza ruled until his death in 1466. The next great Sforza ruler, Ludovico (sometimes known as "Ludovico the Moor"), took over in 1480. Though all the Sforzas were great patrons of the arts, Ludovico was the most prominent, making extensive use of his position as one of the wealthiest and most powerful princes of Italy to provide support for some of the most famous artists and architects of the Renaissance. With his wife, Beatrice d'Este, he held a brilliant court and spent immense sums of money to further the arts and sciences. He is remembered especially for his patronage of Leonardo da Vinci and the architect Donato Bramante.

After helping Charles VIII of France invade Naples, he was forced out of Milan by Louis XII in 1499. One of his sons, Francesco II, was restored to the duchy of Milan, and was the last of the male line.

Venice

- Major center of trade
- Doge
- Merchant oligarchy

Customs House and entrance to the Grand Canal (Venice)

The city-state of Venice, bordering the Adriatic Sea in northeastern Italy, was a major center of trade, due both to its key geographic location and the special trading privileges Venetian merchants were able to secure from the Byzantine and German emperors. By the time of the Renaissance, the city was the main trade crossroads between east and west, supplying most of Italy, Germany, and France with goods from Asia and the Middle East.

Venice had begun as a republic in the sixth century CE, with an elected ruler called a "Doge" who oversaw several lesser officials. By the time of the Renaissance, however, the Doge had become little more than a figurehead. Real political power in Renaissance Venice lay with a merchant oligarchy: some two hundred merchant families dominated Venice's Great Council and controlled the city's government. As a crucial seaport, Venice developed not only a strong merchant fleet but a powerful navy as well.

War Between Venice and Genoa
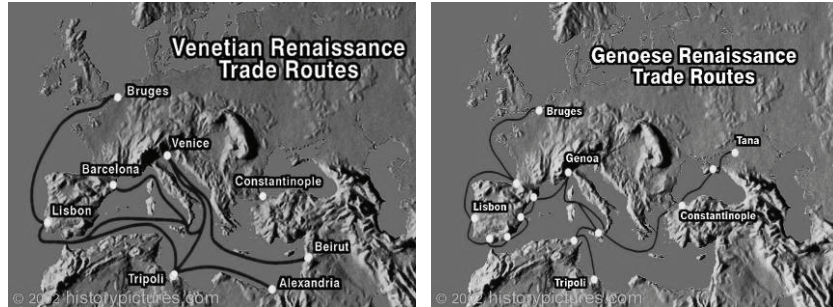
Venetian merchants zealously protected their hard-won trade and struck hard at any potential rivals. When the city-state of Genoa began to encroach on some of Venice's trade routes (as can be seen in the maps in this slide), Venice declared war on Genoa. The city-states fought sporadically throughout most of the 14th century, with Venice finally emerging victorious in 1381. After its defeat, Genoa declined as a major trading power while Venice went on to become the greatest trading center in Europe in the 15th century.

Venice in the 15th Century

- Mainland expansion
- Constantinople
- The Ottoman Turks

The Capture of Constantinople by Renaissance artist Jacopo Tintoretto

In the 15th century, Venice began to attempt to expand to the Italian mainland, which brought it into conflict with other Italian city-states—especially Milan, which bordered it to the west. Venice and Milan went to war in 1450; though neither emerged victorious, Venice did gain some territory. By 1500, Venice controlled a significant portion of northern Italy.

In the 13th century, Venice had managed to get Frankish soldiers on the Fourth Crusade to attack and conquer Constantinople; Venice subsequently established a commercial colony there and gained control of the trade routes of the Byzantine Empire. Venice used its position in Constantinople to dominate commerce between Europe and Asia up through the middle of the 15th century. In 1453, however, the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople and destroyed the Venetian colony there. The Ottomans continued to fight with Venice up through the 16th century, capturing many areas the Venetians had controlled and gradually weakening Venice's position as the prime center of trade in Europe.

Florence

The dome of the Florence Cathedral

- Center of banking and textiles
- Bankers for the papacy
- The gold florin
- Nominally a republic, but controlled by an oligarchy of bankers and merchants

Florence, located slightly north of the center of Italy, grew wealthy and powerful as a center of banking and a manufacturer of textiles. Though the city became known for producing some of the finest woolen cloth in Europe, it gained greater renown as Europe's premier financial center. Florentine bankers transacted all financial business for the Vatican, and because of this, popes often granted the city special privileges in other areas as well. Florence became so successful as a financial center that it was able to issue the gold florin, a coin that became a widely recognized and respected international medium of currency.

Florence functioned as a commune in the 12th century, and by the time of the Renaissance, the city-state was officially a republic. By the late 14th century, however, the city had come to be controlled by an oligarchy of wealthy bankers and merchants. Even so, the city still clung to republican ideals.

The Medici Family

- Powerful bankers
- Ruled Florence for most of the 15th century
- Cosimo de' Medici
- Patrons of the arts

Cosimo de' Medici

The Medici family, which had made its fortune in banking, effectively controlled the government of Florence for much of the 15th century. The first great ruler from this family dynasty was Cosimo de' Medici, who assumed power in 1434 and held it until his death in 1464. Though Cosimo firmly held the reins of authority, he wisely chose to exercise that authority in a behind-the-scenes fashion so as to preserve the appearance that Florence was a republic. He held no formal title as ruler, didn't lead an extravagant lifestyle, and didn't publicly flaunt his power.

Cosimo also established the Medici's reputation as Italy's premier patrons of the arts, supporting notable figures like the sculptor Donatello and the painter Fra Angelico. He also funded several important building projects in Florence, including the construction of Brunelleschi's dome on Florence Cathedral, and he founded the first public library in Europe at the monastery of San Marco.

Lorenzo de' Medici

LAVRENTIVS MEDICES PETRI FILIVS

- Grandson of Cosimo
- Assumed power in 1469 at age 20
- "Lorenzo the Magnificent"
- The Pazzi consipracy
- War against Rome and Naples

Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo, assumed power in 1469 at the age of 20. Like his grandfather, Lorenzo held absolute power; he also continued Cosimo's tactic of exercising that power mostly from behind the scenes. Lorenzo proved to be an even greater supporter of the arts than Cosimo had been, and was himself an accomplished poet. Renaissance author Niccolo Machiavelli called him "the greatest patron of literature and art that any prince has ever been." He was also very popular among the people of Florence, who called him "Lorenzo the Magnificent."

Yet not everyone loved the Medici; some prominent Florentine merchant families resented the Medici domination. In 1478, an event known as the "Pazzi consipracy" unfolded. Pope Sixtus IV had wanted to end the Medici rule of Florence and replace it with his nephew, Girolamo Riario. With indirect encouragement from the pope, members of the Pazzi and Salviati families—Florentine banking rivals of the Medici—planned to assassinate Lorenzo de' Medici and his brother Giuliano. On April 26, 1478, the conspirators managed to kill Giuliano but only wounded Lorenzo, who escaped. Upon learning of the attempt on Lorenzo's life, enraged Florentine crowds hunted down and killed the conspirators.

After the failure of the Pazzi conspiracy, the pope enlisted Naples, its traditional ally, to attack Florence. Fighting went on through 1479, with Florence gradually weakening. In December of that year, Lorenzo decided to go to Naples and negotiate directly with the Neapolitan king. This risky diplomatic move paid off, and Naples and Florence came to a settlement in February 1480 that ended the war. From then until Lorenzo's death in 1492, Florence enjoyed a period of peace.

Savonarola

- Dominican friar
- Preached against Florence's "sinfulness" and "immorality"
- Expulsion of the Medici (1494)
- The Bonfire of the Vanities
- Hanged and burned (1498)
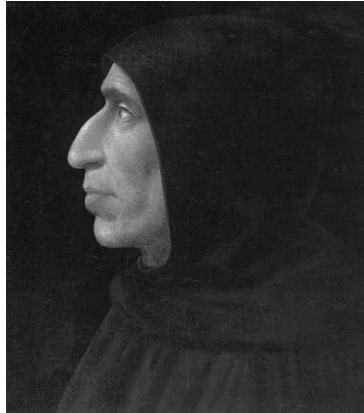
Girolamo Savonarola

Florence in the 1490s came under the influence of a Dominican friar named Girolamo Savonarola. Savonarola had begun to make a name for himself at the monastery of San Marco by preaching against what he characterized as the sinfulness and immorality of life in Florence. He especially criticized the Medici family as corrupt, extravagant, and even "pagan," because of their support of artists who created secular works. His words struck a chord with many who were tired of the Medici's domination of Florence, and he began to win many followers.

After Lorenzo's death in 1492, his son Piero took over. Unlike his father and grandfather, Piero was neither a wise nor an effective ruler. After Piero surrendered Florence to the invading French king Charles VIII in 1494, the Florentine citizenry rose against the Medici, drove them from the city, and established a new constitution that, while democratic in form, also incorporated many of Savonarola's religious ideas. From this point, Savonarola in effect ruled Florence. Under Savonarola, life in Florence became much more strict and pious; there were even special police officers charged with enforcing morality. In 1497, Savonarola and his followers carried out the infamous "Bonfire of the Vanities," confiscating luxury items, books by "immoral" writers, and "pagan" works of art; they burned them in a huge pyre in the city's Piazza della Signoria.

Savonarola's downfall was due to his conflict with Pope Alexander VI, and his refusal to obey orders from Rome. In 1497, he was excommunicated; in April 1498, the citizens of Florence, fed up with his repressive regime, attacked the San Marco monastery, hanged Savonarola, and burned his body.

Discussion Questions

1. What similarities do you see in the way the Sforza dynasty in Milan and the Medici dynasty in Florence developed over time?

2. What advantages did Venice have, even over other Italian city-states, in developing as a center of trade? Why did the rise of the Ottoman Turks present Venice with a big problem after 1453?

3. Why do you think rulers like the Medici in Florence and those in other Italian city-states became such strong patrons of the arts, supporting the great Renaissance painters and sculptors of the 15th century?

1. Answers may vary. Each dynasty was founded by a forceful patriarch whose success in taking control was based mainly on commercial, financial, or military power, but then also devoted attention to the arts, the city's architecture, and to other communal works designed to enhance both the city's prestige and that of the ruling family. Each dynasty declined in power when its later generations turned out to be less competent or when they aroused anger among the citizens.

2. Its powerful merchant elite was able to secure special trading privileges in many places; its location between Europe and the Byzantine Empire and Muslim lands in the Mideast, as well as the trade routes across Asia.

3. Answers will vary and should be discussed. As merchant or banker families founding young dynasties, they may have had a special drive to enhance their prestige and that of their small city-states.

Rome and the Papal States

- Renaissance popes: both religious and political leaders
- During the Renaissance, the papacy became more political and secular

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A distant view of Vatican City in Rome

Popes during the Renaissance were both heads of the Catholic Church and political rulers who governed Rome and the territories it controlled, known as the Papal States; the area as a whole included much of central Italy. For most of the 14th century, the papacy had been relocated to the city of Avignon in France. This had weakened the political power of Rome and its ability to govern the various city-states that made up the Papal States. Once the papacy returned to Rome for good in the early 15th century, Renaissance popes had to spend a great deal of effort rebuilding Rome's political authority, holding the Papal States together as a political entity, and preserving the power of the Papal States among the major city-states of Italy. This made the papacy more political; other developments also led it to become more secular.

Popes and the Arts During the Renaissance

Pope Nicholas V

Interior view of the Sistine Chapel

Several popes during this time helped spur some of the major artistic and intellectual developments of the Renaissance. Perhaps the first real "Renaissance pope" was Nicholas V (1447–1455), who brought many notable artists and scholars to Rome and also founded the Vatican Library. Pope Sixtus IV (1471–1484) commissioned the building of the Sistine Chapel and the Sistine Bridge, which spanned the Tiber River to connect the Vatican with the heart of the city of Rome. Pope Julius II (1503–1513) had St. Peter's Basilica constructed and was also a patron of the architect Bramante, the painter Raphael, and the great artist and architect Michelangelo, whom he commissioned to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Papal Politics During the Renaissance

Pope Sixtus IV   Pope Alexander VI   Pope Julius II

Much of the political disorder in Rome during the Renaissance came from struggles for power between several of the city's wealthiest noble families: the Colonnas, the Orsini, the della Roveres, and the Borgias. They all vied with one another to get their own members chosen as pope.

Pope Sixtus IV (1471–1484)

- Member of the della Rovere family
- Favoritism towards relatives
- Pazzi conspiracy
- Encouraged Venice to attack Ferrara

A member of the della Rovere family, Sixtus was unfortunately renowned for his nepotism (favoritism shown towards one's family members), naming several of his relatives as cardinals and indirectly agreeing to the Pazzi conspiracy, which tried to oust the Medici from Florence and replace them with his nephew. In 1481, he encouraged Venice to attack the small city-state of Ferrara, hoping that once the Venetians won he would be able to put another nephew of his in charge there. His plan failed, however, and he died in 1484.

Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503)

- Member of the Borgia family
- One of the most corrupt and immoral popes
- Put his son Cesare in charge of papal armies

Rodrigo Borgia became Pope Alexander VI by bribing several cardinals to vote for him. Famous for being one of the most corrupt and immoral popes in history, Alexander not only had a mistress and threw scandalous parties, but he also sold Church offices and confiscated property from cardinals and nobles in order to enrich himself. He also placed his son, Cesare, in charge of the papal armies and allowed him to use the wealth and might of the papacy to try to carve out a kingdom for himself in central Italy.

Pope Julius II (1503–1513)

- Member of the della Rovere family
- The "warrior pope"
- Restored territories in Romagna, Perugia, and Bologna to the Papal States
- Orchestrated wars against Venice and France

Another member of the della Rovere family and the nephew of Sixtus IV, Julius was known as the "warrior pope" because he used military might to restore most of the territories in Romagna, and also Perugia and Bologna, to the Papal States. He was also active diplomatically, orchestrating multi-country wars first against Venice and then against the French.

Cesare Borgia (1475–1507)

- Son of Pope Alexander VI
- Campaigns in Romagna
- Admired by Machiavelli
- Power declined after the death of Alexander

Cesare Borgia was the illegitimate son of Pope Alexander VI. After Alexander put him in charge of the papal armies, Cesare conquered the cities of the Romagna. Alexander named him duke of the region, and Cesare created a centralized, orderly state. In 1502, he defeated a plot against him by his *condottieri* by luring the leading conspirators to a meeting then having them killed. Famed Renaissance author Niccolo Machiavelli, who knew him personally, admired his ruthless efficiency and thought that he might even be able to unify all of Italy. Cesare's power, however, was dependent upon papal assistance. After the death of Alexander, Pope Julius II—a determined enemy of the Borgias and of Alexander in particular—stripped Cesare of his power and imprisoned him. Cesare later went into exile and eventually died in battle fighting as a mercenary.

Naples

- Only kingdom in Italy during the Renaissance
- Vassal state of Rome
- More feudal than other city-states
- King Alfonso (1396–1458)
- King Ferdinand I (also known as "Ferrante"; 1458–1494)

Statue depicting the coronation of the Neapolitan king Ferdinand I

Naples, the only actual kingdom in Italy during the Renaissance, was actually a vassal state of Rome. Comprising most of the southern half of Italy, Naples—unlike many other Renaissance city-states—did not have a dominant merchant class and remained more feudal in nature. The first major Neapolitan Renaissance ruler was King Alfonso, also known as "Alfonso the Magnanimous." During the late Middle Ages, both France and Spain had claimed the right to rule in southern Italy: from 1282 to the mid-1400s, France held Naples while Spain held the neighboring island of Sicily. In 1442, Alfonso—a member of the Spanish royal kingdom of Aragon—conquered Naples, uniting the mainland and Sicily under his rule. He was a devotee of the classic writings from ancient Greece and Rome, and he brought renowned scholars to Naples to be part of his court.

Alfonso was succeeded by his son, Ferdinand I, known popularly as "Ferrante." In 1478, Ferrante joined Pope Sixtus IV to wage war on Florence and the Medici; however, Lorenzo de' Medici personally journeyed to Naples and convinced Ferrante to enter into a peace settlement. Unlike his "magnanimous" father, Ferrante ruled tyrannically and was hated by much of the Neapolitan nobility. In 1485, the nobles unsuccessfully revolted against him; Ferrante was able to crush the revolt and had several nobles put to death.

Discussion Questions

1. After many decades of exile and uncertainty, the papacy returned to Rome in the 15th century. After it did, it also became much more political and more secular. What might have been the reasons for that?

2. The Renaissance popes did a great deal to beautify the papacy's buildings in Rome and glorify the Catholic Church. They often employed some of the most famous Renaissance artists, such as Michelangelo. Yet by the early 1500s, anger at the popes was rapidly increasing in Germany especially, and in other parts of northern Europe. This anger soon led to the break with the Catholic Church by Martin Luther and others during the Reformation. What might account for the growing anger felt in other parts of Europe toward the Church and the popes?

3. In what ways was Naples different from the northern Italian city-states, and why do historians say it was more of a feudal state than those other parts of Italy?

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1. The popes found themselves ruling small states surrounded by many other small but wealthy and competitive Italian city-states. They had to rebuild Rome's political authority and strengthen the Papal States as a political entity in order to deal effectively with those other major city-states of Italy.

2. Many of the popes were actually from the powerful and wealthy noble families that ruled the Papal States, such as the Borgias. They were often more interested in political matters and/or in increasing their own family's wealth and power, and some were corrupt in their personal lives as well.

3. Naples was a larger realm, a kingdom, mainly rural with a smaller merchant class. Its nobles were vassals of the king. It was also in a feudal relationship as a vassal state of Rome, etc.

Exploration and Trade

- Marco Polo
- Quest for sea routes to the Far East
- Portuguese traders
  - The African "Gold Coast"
  - Vasco da Gama
  - The spice trade
- Christopher Columbus

Vasco da Gama

Marco Polo at the court of Kublai Khan

Marco Polo was a Venetian trader and explorer. Along with his father and uncle, he traveled extensively, including a famous trip along the Silk Road to China. While in China, he entered the service of Kublai Khan for several years, eventually being captured at sea during a battle of the fleets of Genoa and Venice. He wrote an account of his experiences called *The Travels,* which became immensely popular and sparked European interest in exotic items from the Far East such as spices and silks.

As demand for such products increased, traders and sea captains looked for easier and safer routes to nations that produced these goods. Portuguese traders were some of the first Europeans to begin searching for these new routes, finding new markets and resources as well. In the 1420s, Portuguese ships began sailing down the western coast of Africa. They discovered that what is now the country of Ghana was a rich source of gold and established a trading colony there—the first European settlement along Africa's "Gold Coast." In 1498, explorer Vasco da Gama became the first to sail around the southern tip of Africa and continue on to the port of Calicut in India. Da Gama returned to Portugal with a valuable load of spices, beginning the lucrative spice trade between Europe and India.

As Portugal came to dominate the spice trade, other Europeans tried to find new, speedier routes to the riches of India. Christopher Columbus, a Genoese sailor, had gone from country to country seeking financing for a voyage to find a quick route to the Far East. He finally convinced King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to support his voyage. Columbus, of course, did not find a fast route to the East, but instead unwittingly found the Americas (even though he believed he had reached the Indies). Columbus's voyage transformed the nature of European exploration, as countries shifted their focus from the Far East to the "New World."

The "Black Death"
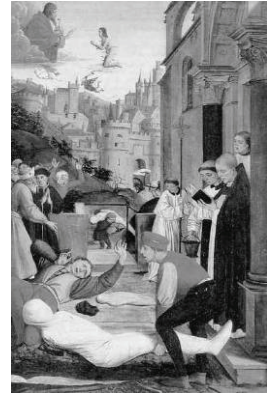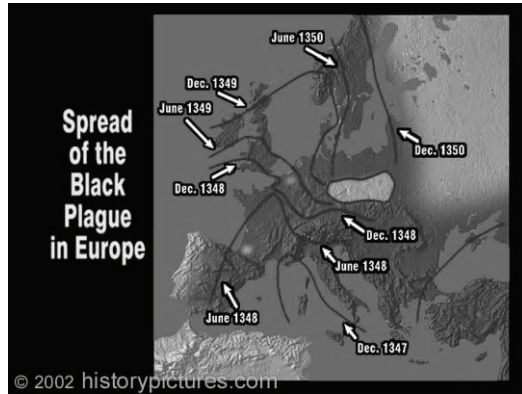
During the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, the bubonic plague—commonly referred to as the "Black Death"—ravaged the population of Europe. The map in this slide shows how the plague came into Italy in 1347 and spread to northern Europe within three years. It was transmitted to humans by fleas that had bitten infected rats. The plague killed an estimated one-third to one-half of the population of western Europe.

The population decrease caused by the plague led to an economic downturn; both the number of available laborers and consumers declined sharply. Merchants and tradespeople had fewer people to whom they could sell their wares. Products therefore accumulated, and the merchants and those who dealt with them—bankers, suppliers, and shippers—all lost revenue.

The plague slowed but did not destroy the economic recovery that had been taking place in Italy. The Renaissance involved an economic recovery from the damage inflicted by the plague.

Patronage

- Financial support of artists
- Means for the wealthy and powerful to compete socially with one another
- Types of patronage

Wealthy Renaissance merchants, as depicted in a fresco by artist Domenico Ghirlandaio

The wealthy and powerful merchants of Italy's city-states competed with each other not just economically but socially as well. One of the main ways in which they did this was through patronage—financial support of artists. Before the Renaissance, only nobles or the Church could afford to sponsor artists; however, the rise of the merchant class rejuvenated the patronage system and made possible many of the great artistic achievements of the era. There were two main types of patronage in Renaissance Italy: first, a patron could commission an artist to create a specific work; second, an artist would take up residence in a patron's household and create several works for that patron. For merchants who became patrons, possessing fine art not only proved to demonstrate their wealth but also showed that they had sophisticated enough taste to be accepted into the higher reaches of society.

Intellectual Basis of the Renaissance

A page from a Renaissance-era version of Diomedes's *Grammatica,* a text on Latin grammar

- Humanism
- Revival of antiquity
- Importance of the individual
- Celebration of humanity
- Secular/worldly focus

At the core of the Italian Renaissance lay an intellectual movement known as "humanism." It was based on the study of classical culture—from ancient Greece and Rome—and focused on secular or worldly subjects rather than religious ones. Humanists stressed education as a stimulant to creativity and believed that the subjects that were taught in ancient Greek and Roman schools—grammar, poetry, and history—should be revived. Many of the important figures of the Italian Renaissance considered themselves the direct inheritors of the classical tradition.

Recognition of the importance of the individual—something which happened rarely, if at all, in the medieval era—was a critical aspect of the Renaissance. Much of Renaissance artwork reveals a glorification of humanity and a celebration of the beauty of the human body.

The Renaissance focused less on religion and the afterlife and more on enjoying the pleasures of life in the here and now. Humanists wanted to expand the focus of Christianity beyond sin and redemption to include the full range of human experience—a desire which often led to conflict with the Catholic Church.

Education and Thought: Machiavelli

- *The Prince*
- Advised rulers to use force or deceit if necessary
- Better for rulers to be feared than loved
- Admired Cesare Borgia

One of the most famous political works of the Renaissance era was Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince,* in which he analyzed politics in Renaissance Italy. In *The Prince,* Machiavelli advised rulers to be prepared to use force and deceit to accomplish their aims and maintain power. He also took issue with the idea that rulers should be popular with their subjects: he stated that regarding "…the question of whether it is better to be loved more than feared…it is much safer to be feared than loved." Machiavelli spent a significant amount of time with Cesare Borgia and admired his ruthless efficiency as a ruler. While some power-hungry leaders like Cesare Borgia embraced *The Prince* as legitimizing their methods, many attacked the book because of the ideas Machiavelli advocated.

Courtly Education: Castiglione

- *Libro del Cortegiano* (*The Courtier*)
- Described ideal behavior for social elites
- *Sprezzatura*
- Role of women

Baldassare Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano* (*The Courtier*) had a great impact on social mores and the behavior of the European elite for years after it was written. *The Courtier* is structured as a series of fictional dialogues in which the speakers describe the ideal courtier: of noble birth; possessing military skills but also trained in dance, music, and art; having knowledge of both classical and modern languages; well-versed in academic, spiritual, and physical matters; and polite in conversation. A courtier was also expected to do everything with what Castiglione called *sprezzatura*—a certain ease and effortlessness.

The Courtier also offered a much different view of women than had existed in medieval ideals of chivalry. In the Middle Ages, women had been viewed as weak, intellectually inferior, and in need of protection; Castiglione dismissed this view, boldly stating, "Everything that men can understand, can also be understood by women." He offered a new conception of an ideal female courtier: she should also be able to write well and know the classics; she should be able to make music and to dance; she should inspire poetry and art; and, like her male counterpart, she should be charming, gracious, and display *sprezzatura*.

Women and the Renaissance

Isabella d'Este

- Education
- Roles as patrons of the arts
- Women political leaders in Italy

Caterina Sforza

In Renaissance Italy, girls from upper-class families received an education similar to that of boys. Both studied classical works in Greek and Latin, both received instruction in the fine arts, and both learned to speak "modern" languages of the day, such as Spanish and French. Whereas upper-class boys were expected to grow up to become leaders and participate in public affairs, upper-class girls were expected to grow up to become social figureheads of their husbands' households. Many women of the era did become great patrons of the arts, but there were no formal political roles for Renaissance women.

Though Italian women by and large were kept out of a politics, circumstances gave a few a chance to become important leaders. Isabella d'Este (1474–1539) ruled the northern city-state of Mantua for three years after her husband, the Marquis of Mantua, had been taken prisoner by enemy forces. Later, after her husband died in 1519, she ruled as regent in her son's name for more than a decade and continued to counsel him even after he became Duke of Mantua. She was also one of the great patrons of the Renaissance, drawing notable artists like Raphael to her court and making it one of the most renowned in Europe. Caterina Sforza (1463–1509), who came from Milan's ruling family, was countess of the small central Italian city-state of Forli. After her husband's murder in 1488, she ruled Forli until 1500, when Cesare Borgia's invasion forced her to surrender the city-state.

Discussion Questions

1. "Renaissance" means "rebirth." The Italian Renaissance humanists felt a stronger connection to the classical culture of ancient Greece and Rome than they did to the Christian and Catholic culture of the Middle Ages. Why do you think this leap back to a distant past was so attractive to thinkers growing up in Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries?

2. Think about what you know of the views of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Castiglione's *The Courtier*. Do these two books both express the humanist sprit of the Renaissance? Do they seem mainly to fit with one another, or are they opposed to each other in some ways? Explain your answer.

3. How much can we conclude about the place of women generally in Renaissance Italy from the specific examples of a few women such as Isabella d'Este or Caterina Sforza?

1. Answers will vary and should be discussed. Perhaps the growth of a new kind of more urban society based more on trade led many to feel less sympathy for the feudal era of the Middle Ages. Increased trade and contact with other cultures might have led them to question their own culture more.

2. Answers will vary and should be discussed. In one way, *The Prince* seems to be praising a harsh, ruthless brand of political behavior, while *The Courtier* stresses softer emotions such as those expressed by graceful and polite manners, appreciation of the fine arts, respect for women, etc. On the other hand, both books concentrate on the abilities and secular ambitions of the individual, a central concern of humanism.

3. These two women gained political power because of highly unusual circumstances. Yet many upper-class women were encouraged to become educated and strong individuals, and so they were perhaps more able to take advantage of such circumstances.

The Italian Wars

- 1494–1559
- European powers fought for control of various Italian city-states
- Helped spread the Renaissance to western Europe

Entry of the French king Charles VIII into Florence at the start of the Italian Wars

The Italian Wars were not a single sustained campaign but rather a series of conflicts in which various European powers tried to gain control of different Italian city-states. Many of these conflicts grew out of the rivalries between the Italian city-states. France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire all got involved at one point in the chaotic politics of Italy. Though the wars caused great upheaval and destruction in Italy, they did help expose western Europe to the Renaissance and thus aided its spread.

Charles VIII of France

Charles VIII

Ludovico Sforza

- 1470–1498
- Encouraged by Ludovico Sforza to invade Italy and lay claim to Naples
- France entered Italy in 1494
- Charles took Naples, but was then defeated by the League of Venice

During the late Middle Ages, both France and Spain had claimed the right to rule in southern Italy since members of the royal families of each of these countries had at one point been rulers of Naples. In the 1490s, Ludovico Sforza of Milan used this to start what would become known as the "Italian Wars." Ludovico had come to view Naples as a threat to his power, so he encouraged King Charles VIII of France to invade Italy and lay claim to Naples. French troops entered Italy in 1494 and marched south, forcing Florence and the Papal States to submit to them along the way. Charles reached southern Italy in early 1495 and was crowned king of Naples.

Things at this point started to turn against Charles: The French invasion had provoked a great deal of resentment and fear among the various peoples of Italy, and even Ludovico Sforza came to realize he might have made a mistake. In 1495, the League of Venice was formed against France. It consisted of Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, the Papal States (under Pope Alexander VI), Milan, Venice, and a few smaller Italian city-states. The league had just one purpose—to drive Charles out of Italy. Charles realized he had overreached and began to retreat, but his troops were defeated by league armies at the Battle of Fornovo, ending his imperial ambitions in Italy.

Louis XII of France

- 1462–1515
- Succeeded Charles VIII
- Invaded Italy in 1499, taking Milan and Genoa
- Partitioned Naples with King Ferdinand of Spain
- Treaties of Blois (1504 and 1505)

Louis was the cousin of Charles VIII, and succeeded him as king of France after Charles died in 1498. Louis moved almost immediately to reassert French claims in Italy. He took Milan and Genoa, then came to an agreement with King Ferdinand to partition Naples between France and Spain. This agreement didn't last long, however, and fighting broke out between the two countries. Spain prevailed, and the Treaties of Blois forced Louis to give up France's claim to Naples.

Pope Julius II
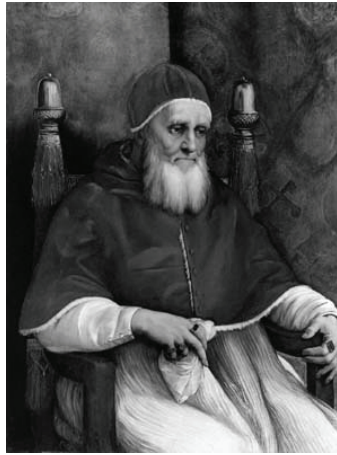
- 1503: Romagna cities annexed by Venice
- 1509: The League of Cambrai (France, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Papal States) vs. Venice
- 1510: The Holy League (the Papal States, Venice, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire) vs. France
- 1516: Peace of Noyon

The next phase of the Italian Wars came about because of the schemes of Pope Julius II. In 1503, Pope Alexander VI had died, weakening the power of his son Cesare Borgia, who had used the military might of the papacy to establish rule over the cities in the Romagna region of central Italy. Seeing an opportunity to escape Cesare's oppressive rule, several cities allowed Venice to annex them in exchange for military protection. When the new pope, Julius II, took office, he demanded that the cities be returned to the Papal States. Venice refused, so in 1508, Julius encouraged his ally Maximilian I of the Holy Roman Empire to attack Venice. The attacks failed, however, so Julius and Maximilian entered into an alliance with Louis XII of France. The alliance, known as the "League of Cambrai," proposed to defeat Venice and split up its territories among themselves. After French troops defeated the Venetians at the Battle of Agnadello in 1509, Venice decided to cut its losses and made a peace settlement with the Papal States.

France continued to attack Venetian territory. Julius, concerned now about French armies potentially turning on the Papal States, forged an alliance with Venice in 1510. He then recruited Spain and the Holy Roman Empire by enticing them with the possibility of taking over French territory if Louis could be defeated. The so-called "Holy League" was in place by late 1511. Fighting in northern Italy went back and forth for three years, with Venice leaving the league and joining the French in 1513. A decisive battle came at Marignano in 1515, with the French soundly defeating league forces. By this time, both Julius and Louis had died. The next year, the Treaty of Noyon ended the fighting: the French now controlled Milan, and Venice received some territory as well.

Holy Roman Emperor Charles V

- Grandson of both Ferdinand of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I
- 1521: War to take Milan from France
- 1525: Battle of Pavia—France defeated
- 1527: Sack of Rome
- The Italian Wars finally ended in 1559, when France renounced all claims in Italy

Charles V (1500–1558) was the grandson of King Ferdinand of Spain (who funded Columbus's voyage to the Americas) on one side and of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I on the other side. Charles became king of Spain after Ferdinand's death in 1516 and Holy Roman Emperor after Maximilian's death in 1519. In 1521, Charles began a war to take Milan from France.

At the Battle of Pavia in 1525, he soundly defeated the French forces and captured French King Francis I. Charles forced Francis to agree to give up all of France's claims in Italy and to cede the French province of Burgundy to the Holy Roman Empire. Once released and back in France, however, Francis went back on the agreement and formed an alliance against Charles with Pope Clement VII, Henry VIII of England, Venice, and Florence. The Papal States had traditionally allied with the Holy Roman Empire; Charles responded to the pope's betrayal by allowing his troops to sack Rome in 1527. Charles subdued the alliance against him, and in a 1529 treaty, Francis was forced to give up France's claims in Italy; however, in the 1540s and then again in the 1550s, France started two more wars trying to get back Italian lands. Both wars failed, and in a final peace settlement in 1559, France formally renounced all claims in Italy, ending the Italian Wars.

Discussion Questions

1. What aspects of Renaissance Italy might have made it attractive to Spain, France, and the Holy Roman Empire as a potential field for military conquest?

2. Why do you think Ludovico Sforza of Milan thought it was a good idea to invite France to invade Italy and attack Naples? What does his plan suggest about the nature of political life in Italy during the Renaissance?

3. While Spain, France, and the Holy Roman Empire all tried to conquer various northern Italian city-states, they rarely succeeded in holding these state for very long. Why do you suppose that was so?

1. The city-states of Italy were wealthy, but also small and militarily weak compared to the growing power of Europe's largest monarchies. The Italian city-states were also often divided and ready to work against one another.

2. Answers will vary and should be discussed. Personal ambition and unrealistic self-confidence might have been one reason. Fears and insecurities about the way Naples might ally with others against Milan could have been another.

3. While the city-states were weak and often divided, they were also wealthy and capable of mobilizing their own citizens to defend themselves. Italy's terrain is also a difficult one for invaders to manage.

The Northern Renaissance

Altarpiece for the Cathedral of St. Bavo in Ghent, created by Northern Renaissance artist Jan van Eyck

- More focused on Christianity than the Italian Renaissance
- Began late 15th century/early 16th century

The influence of the Italian Renaissance eventually spread into northern Europe. The Northern Renaissance, however, developed with a more Christian character than the Italian Renaissance; it was also characterized by a greater attempt to reconcile the new secularism with traditional Christianity. Historians usually pinpoint the beginnings of the Northern Renaissance in the late 15th century or early 16th century.

The Printing Press

- Invented by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-1400s
- Made printed works cheaper and more readily available
- Increased literacy in Europe
- Helped spread new ideas
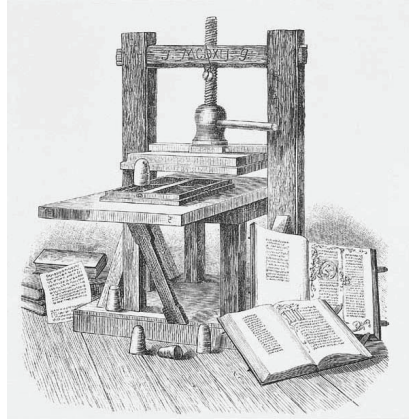
A replica of Gutenberg's printing press

One of the more important developments of the Renaissance outside of Italy was the invention of printing with moveable type. In the mid-1400s, Johannes Gutenberg invented a printing press. Gutenberg's invention made the printing and distribution of written works far easier; previously, reproducing manuscripts involved a time-consuming method known as "illumination" in which books were copied and illustrated by hand. The invention of the printing press affected the world in two important ways. First, because printed material was more readily available, more people learned to read. In addition, the possibility of mass-producing the printed word made it easier for new ideas to spread and become popular—a fact that would have major political implications with the coming of the Reformation.

Christian Humanism

- Union of classical influences and Christianity
- Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536)
- Influence on northern Renaissance art

Christian humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus
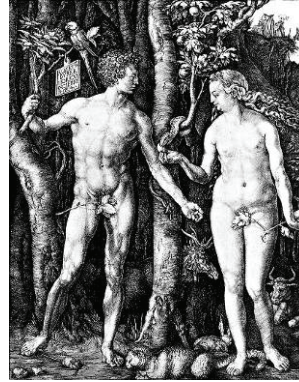
A woodcut of Adam and Eve by Albrecht Dürer, a German Renaissance artist

In Northern Europe, the Renaissance spirit also took hold. The humanist movement that had arisen in Italy in the second half of the 15th century emphasized study of classical works from ancient Greece and Rome as a means to truly fulfill one's intellectual and moral potential. As the movement spread north, an offshoot known as "Christian humanism" developed, which stressed fulfilling one's spiritual potential. Christian humanists also sought to reform the Church "from the ground up," urging each person to strive every day to live a pious, "good life."

The most famous Christian humanist was Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus, whose 1509 work *In Praise of Folly* satirized and criticized the excesses and corruption of the Church—particularly attacking the misdeeds of Renaissance-era popes. Erasmus encouraged other humanists to study Greek and Hebrew in order to study older versions of the Bible. To spread his ideas, he produced modernized Greek and Latin translations of the New Testament.

The influence of Christian humanism can be seen in the works produced by artists in northern Europe such as Jan van Eyck, Albrecht Dürer, Pieter Brueghel, and Hans Holbein the Younger.

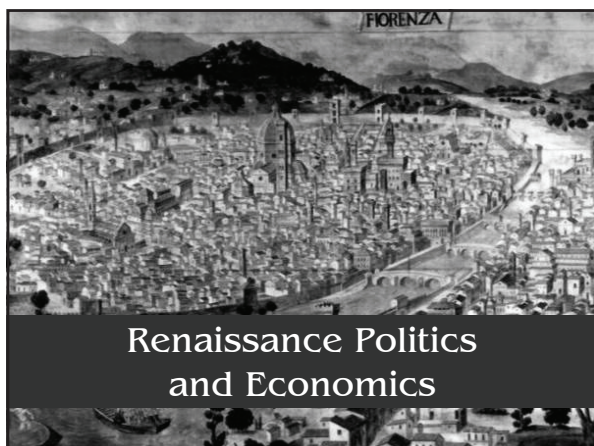# Renaissance Politics and Economics: Legacy
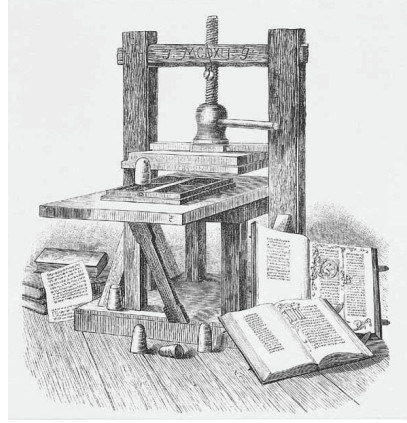
Although the Renaissance is most widely known for the Italian artists of the period, its impact on politics, economics, and other aspects of society was felt throughout Europe and around the world. A class of wealthy merchants became a dominant force in economics, politics, and the arts. The invention of the printing press led to a dramatic increase in information available to the public and contributed to the spread of new ideas, which in turn led to more change through events such as the Reformation and later nationalism, imperialism, and modern-day globalization.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the Northern Renaissance took on a more Christian character than the Renaissance in Italy?

2. In what ways might the printing press have helped to spread the influence of the Renaissance while also perhaps changing its audiences and its central concerns?

3. What do you think Erasmus might have thought about Machiavelli's *The Prince*? In what sense can both men be seen as humanists and as upholders of the Renaissance spirit?

1. Answers will vary and should be discussed. Perhaps because more secular commercial classes were smaller, and educated elites in the north were more settled within the feudal order and Christian culture, etc.

2. The printing press made humanist writings and other Renaissance works more widely available. This larger audience included more middle- and even lower-class readers, whose interests would have differed from the few wealthy readers with access to books prior to the printing press.

3. Answers will vary and should be discussed. Erasmus would likely have disagreed with Machiavelli's effort to understand leadership apart from moral considerations. But his embrace of classical scholarship, and his readiness to criticize Church authority put him on the side of humanist individualism.

FIORENZA

Renaissance Politics and Economics

Essential Questions

1. What factors made Italy the site for the rise of so many wealthy city-states in the 14th and 15th centuries?

2. Why was the diplomatic interaction, rivalry, and conflict as intense and complex as it was in Italy during the Renaissance?

3. Why did ruling dynasties, such as the Medici or the Borgias, so often rule over city-states in which the ideal of a republic as a political system was upheld so strongly?

4. Why did the elites of the Italian city-states become such strong patrons of Renaissance scholars, artists, and architects?

5. Why did the Catholic popes in Rome also become such strong patrons of these Renaissance artists and architects?

6. Why did the great powers of Europe—Spain, France, the Holy Roman Empire—so often become involved in wars in Italy during the 15th and 16th centuries?

Setting the Stage for the Renaissance:
Economics

Revival of trade: 11th century
- Improved agricultural techniques
- Population increase
- New trade routes
- Improved transportation

A Renaissance-era moneychanger

Setting the Stage for the Renaissance:
Politics

- City-states
- Communes
- New economic elite
- The *popolo*
- Oligarchies and dictatorships
- *Condottieri*

A group of *condottieri*

Italian City-States

MAJOR ITALIAN CITY-STATES 1494

- Kingdom of Naples
- Papal States
- Republic of Florence
- Duchy of Milan
- Republic of Venice
- Minor States

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Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the factors explaining the rise of trade and a merchant class in Italy and elsewhere in Europe starting in the 11th century?

2. Italy's city-states grew out of communes formed in the late Middle Ages. In what ways were the new urban elites in these communes a break with the feudal past in most of Europe?

3. The Italian city-states were like little laboratories where European rulers learned to carry out complex foreign policies marked by constantly shifting alliances, diplomatic intrigue, the use of ambassadors, etc. What about the context of Italy in the 1400s encouraged this learning process?
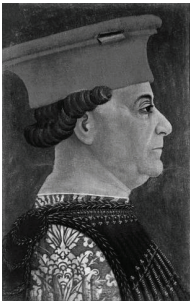
Milan

- The Visconti family
- Territorial expansion

Milanese ruler
Gian Galeazzo Visconti

The Sforza Family

Francesco Sforza

- Ruled Milan (1450–1535)
- Francesco Sforza (1401–1466)
- War with Venice (1450) and Peace of Lodi (1454)
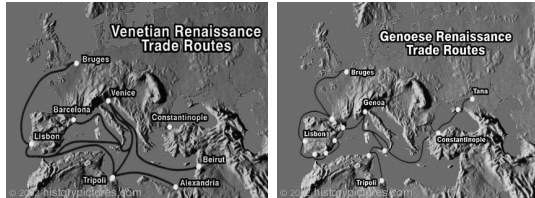- Ludovico Sforza (1451–1508)

Venice

- Major center of trade
- Doge
- Merchant oligarchy

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Customs House and entrance to the Grand Canal (Venice)

War Between Venice and Genoa

Venice in the 15th Century

- Mainland expansion
- Constantinople
- The Ottoman Turks

The Capture of Constantinople by Renaissance artist Jacopo Tintoretto

Florence

The dome of the Florence Cathedral

- Center of banking and textiles
- Bankers for the papacy
- The gold florin
- Nominally a republic, but controlled by an oligarchy of bankers and merchants

The Medici Family

- Powerful bankers
- Ruled Florence for most of the 15th century
- Cosimo de' Medici
- Patrons of the arts

Cosimo de' Medici

Lorenzo de' Medici

- Grandson of Cosimo
- Assumed power in 1469 at age 20
- "Lorenzo the Magnificent"
- The Pazzi consipracy
- War against Rome and Naples

Savonarola

- Dominican friar
- Preached against Florence's "sinfulness" and "immorality"
- Expulsion of the Medici (1494)
- The Bonfire of the Vanities
- Hanged and burned (1498)
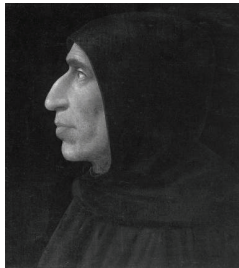
Girolamo Savonarola

Discussion Questions

1. What similarities do you see in the way the Sforza dynasty in Milan and the Medici dynasty in Florence developed over time?

2. What advantages did Venice have, even over other Italian city-states, in developing as a center of trade? Why did the rise of the Ottoman Turks present Venice with a big problem after 1453?

3. Why do you think rulers like the Medici in Florence and those in other Italian city-states became such strong patrons of the arts, supporting the great Renaissance painters and sculptors of the 15th century?

Rome and the Papal States

- Renaissance popes: both religious and political leaders
- During the Renaissance, the papacy became more political and secular

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A distant view of Vatican City in Rome

Popes and the Arts During the Renaissance

Pope Nicholas V

Interior view of the Sistine Chapel

Papal Politics During the Renaissance

Pope Sixtus IV   Pope Alexander VI   Pope Julius II

Pope Sixtus IV (1471–1484)

- Member of the della Rovere family
- Favoritism towards relatives
- Pazzi conspiracy
- Encouraged Venice to attack Ferrara

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Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503)

- Member of the Borgia family
- One of the most corrupt and immoral popes
- Put his son Cesare in charge of papal armies

Pope Julius II (1503–1513)

- Member of the della Rovere family
- The "warrior pope"
- Restored territories in Romagna, Perugia, and Bologna to the Papal States
- Orchestrated wars against Venice and France

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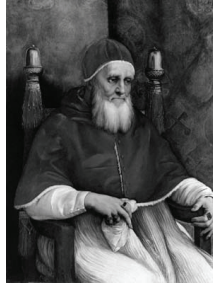
Cesare Borgia (1475–1507)

- Son of Pope Alexander VI
- Campaigns in Romagna
- Admired by Machiavelli
- Power declined after the death of Alexander

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Naples

- Only kingdom in Italy during the Renaissance
- Vassal state of Rome
- More feudal than other city-states
- King Alfonso (1396–1458)
- King Ferdinand I (also known as "Ferrante"; 1458–1494)

Statue depicting the coronation of the Neapolitan king Ferdinand I

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Discussion Questions

1. After many decades of exile and uncertainty, the papacy returned to Rome in the 15th century. After it did, it also became much more political and more secular. What might have been the reasons for that?

2. The Renaissance popes did a great deal to beautify the papacy's buildings in Rome and glorify the Catholic Church. They often employed some of the most famous Renaissance artists, such as Michelangelo. Yet by the early 1500s, anger at the popes was rapidly increasing in Germany especially, and in other parts of northern Europe. This anger soon led to the break with the Catholic Church by Martin Luther and others during the Reformation. What might account for the growing anger felt in other parts of Europe toward the Church and the popes?

3. In what ways was Naples different from the northern Italian city-states, and why do historians say it was more of a feudal state than those other parts of Italy?

Exploration and Trade

- Marco Polo
- Quest for sea routes to the Far East
- Portuguese traders
  - The African "Gold Coast"
  - Vasco da Gama
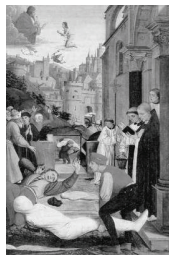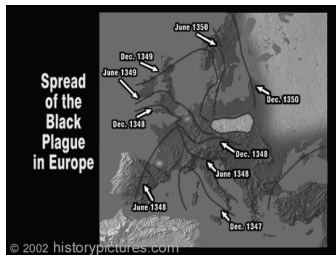 - The spice trade
- Christopher Columbus

Vasco da Gama

Marco Polo at the court of Kublai Khan

The "Black Death"

Spread of the Black Plague in Europe

June 1350
Dec. 1349
June 1349
Dec. 1350
Dec. 1348
Dec. 1348
June 1348
June 1348
Dec. 1347

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Patronage

- Financial support of artists
- Means for the wealthy and powerful to compete socially with one another
- Types of patronage

Wealthy Renaissance merchants, as depicted in a fresco by artist Domenico Ghirlandaio

Intellectual Basis of the Renaissance

- Humanism
- Revival of antiquity
- Importance of the individual
- Celebration of humanity
- Secular/worldly focus

A page from a Renaissance-era version of Diomedes's *Grammatica,* a text on Latin grammar

Education and Thought: Machiavelli

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- Advised rulers to use force or deceit if necessary
- Better for rulers to be feared than loved
- Admired Cesare Borgia

Courtly Education: Castiglione

- *Libro del Cortegiano* (*The Courtier*)
- Described ideal behavior for social elites
- *Sprezzatura*
- Role of women

Women and the Renaissance

- Education
- Roles as patrons of the arts
- Women political leaders in Italy

Isabella d'Este

Caterina Sforza

Discussion Questions

1. "Renaissance" means "rebirth." The Italian Renaissance humanists felt a stronger connection to the classical culture of ancient Greece and Rome than they did to the Christian and Catholic culture of the Middle Ages. Why do you think this leap back to a distant past was so attractive to thinkers growing up in Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries?

2. Think about what you know of the views of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Castiglione's *The Courtier*. Do these two books both express the humanist sprit of the Renaissance? Do they seem mainly to fit with one another, or are they opposed to each other in some ways? Explain your answer.

3. How much can we conclude about the place of women generally in Renaissance Italy from the specific examples of a few women such as Isabella d'Este or Caterina Sforza?
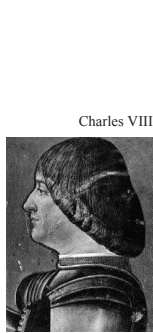
The Italian Wars

- 1494–1559
- European powers fought for control of various Italian city-states
- Helped spread the Renaissance to western Europe

Entry of the French king Charles VIII into Florence at the start of the Italian Wars

Charles VIII of France

Charles VIII

Ludovico Sforza

- 1470–1498
- Encouraged by Ludovico Sforza to invade Italy and lay claim to Naples
- France entered Italy in 1494
- Charles took Naples, but was then defeated by the League of Venice

Louis XII of France

- 1462–1515
- Succeeded Charles VIII
- Invaded Italy in 1499, taking Milan and Genoa
- Partitioned Naples with King Ferdinand of Spain
- Treaties of Blois (1504 and 1505)

Pope Julius II

- 1503: Romagna cities annexed by Venice
- 1509: The League of Cambrai (France, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Papal States) vs. Venice
- 1510: The Holy League (the Papal States, Venice, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire) vs. France
- 1516: Peace of Noyon

Holy Roman Emperor Charles V

- Grandson of both Ferdinand of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I
- 1521: War to take Milan from France
- 1525: Battle of Pavia— France defeated
- 1527: Sack of Rome
- The Italian Wars finally ended in 1559, when France renounced all claims in Italy

Discussion Questions

1. What aspects of Renaissance Italy might have made it attractive to Spain, France, and the Holy Roman Empire as a potential field for military conquest?

2. Why do you think Ludovico Sforza of Milan thought it was a good idea to invite France to invade Italy and attack Naples? What does his plan suggest about the nature of political life in Italy during the Renaissance?

3. While Spain, France, and the Holy Roman Empire all tried to conquer various northern Italian city-states, they rarely succeeded in holding these state for very long. Why do you suppose that was so?
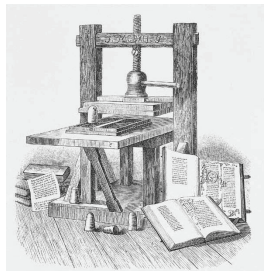
The Northern Renaissance

- More focused on Christianity than the Italian Renaissance
- Began late 15th century/early 16th century

Altarpiece for the Cathedral of St. Bavo in Ghent, created by Northern Renaissance artist Jan van Eyck

The Printing Press

- Invented by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-1400s
- Made printed works cheaper and more readily available
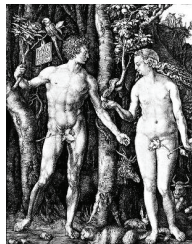- Increased literacy in Europe
- Helped spread new ideas

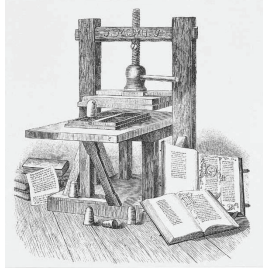A replica of Gutenberg's printing press

Christian Humanism

- Union of classical influences and Christianity
- Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536)
- Influence on northern Renaissance art

Christian humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus

A woodcut of Adam and Eve by Albrecht Dürer, a German Renaissance artist

Renaissance Politics and Economics: Legacy

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the Northern Renaissance took on a more Christian character than the Renaissance in Italy?

2. In what ways might the printing press have helped to spread the influence of the Renaissance while also perhaps changing its audiences and its central concerns?

3. What do you think Erasmus might have thought about Machiavelli's *The Prince*? In what sense can both men be seen as humanists and as upholders of the Renaissance spirit?