

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Renaissance

After encountering the horrific plagues and wars of the Medieval era (450s-1450s CE), many Europeans longed for new forms of artistic expression and a revitalized society. From 1300 to 1600, during and after the end of the Medieval Era, a new development of artistic expression came about that would later be dubbed by historians as the era of the Renaissance, which means rebirth. Italy became the first nation to experience this cultural movement that eventually swept many areas of Europe and forever changed the world. Christianity was also a main inspiration for the artistic expressions of this era.

Many of the artists of the Renaissance idolized the cultures of Greece and Rome (1,200 BCE – 600 CE). They saw the Medieval Era as plagued with problems and the Greco-Roman societies of the past as idealistic. Roman architecture, which was impacted by Greek culture, was often utilized in Renaissance art. European scholars also began studying the Greek language and Greek texts. Eastern Europeans fled their region when the Muslim Turks gained the area in of Constantinople 1453. They brought Greek manuscripts of portions the Bible and other manuscripts with them.

**Question #1: The Medieval Era (450s-1450s CE), included the Bubonic Plague and much conflict. Why would these circumstances encourage the Renaissance artists to look back in history to the Greco-Roman Era (1,200 BCE – 600 CE) for their artistic and intellectual inspiration?**

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This is a sculpture of the Biblical character David, a King of Israel, by Donatello. Notice the realism. In addition, notice the focus on Christianity by making a sculpture of a Biblical character. Cosimo de Medici paid Donatello to make this work that was completed around 1440.



The Last Supper was painted by Leonardo di Vinci around 1498. Notice the use of perspective, making objects look 3D in the back and front. Once again, there is a focus on Christianity with Jesus being the center of the image.

This is a sculpture of Moses that Michelangelo created for the tomb of Pope Julius II in 1515. The figure is from the Biblical book of Exodus. Notice the realism and detail. Like other Renaissance artists, Christianity inspired this work as well.



*The Wedding of a Virgin.*  
By Raphael in 1520

Notice the Greek columns in the background. The Renaissance artists idolized the culture of ancient Greece and communicated this respect often in their paintings.



The Bubonic Plague was a bacterial infection that spread through the fleas on rats. The Black Plague peaked in the mid 1300s and killed millions in Europe. Pictured above is a rat flea, the carrier that spread the disease to humans.

ideas could spread rapidly and evolved quickly. The Black Death of the bubonic plague killed over half the population, peaking in the mid-1300s. Those left as survivors demanded higher wages for their work and pursued artistic interests.

During this epoch, many traders gained wealth and power in society. Prior to this age, many had rank and power in society through being born in the family lineage of nobility. Merchants did not inherit their power, they earned it through trade and commerce. The Medici family rose to become one of the most powerful merchant families of Europe. They established banks throughout Italy and other areas. Cosimo de Medici used his wealth and influence to control Florence's government leaders until he died in 1464. The Medici family also used their wealth to as patrons to fund the arts.

Wealthy merchants hired artists to devote their time to creating art in this era. Those who hired artists were called patrons. Artists such as Donatello (1386-1466) Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Raphael (1483-1520), and Michelangelo (1475-1564) created art in this era and were funded by patrons. Renaissance artists utilized techniques such as perspective, making a two dimensional object appear three dimensional. Artists also created realistic sculptures, a process called realism, and wrote literature in the vernacular, the common languages of the people. City-states appeared in great number in Northern Italy, partially due to the trade that came about during the Crusades (1095-1291 CE). These urban clusters became areas where new

**The Medici family gained immense wealth and maintained massive power throughout the Renaissance. Pictured to the right is Chapel of the Princes Mausoleum of the Medici Family where many of the family are buried.**



**Question #2: Who were the patrons? How did they impact the massive expansion of artistic expression during the Renaissance?**

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Prior to the Renaissance, many Catholic Christians practiced extreme asceticism, denying oneself worldly pleasure and living as simply as possible. Humanists challenged asceticism and taught one could be virtuous and enjoy material possessions. Humanists also encouraged the study of philosophy, history, poetry, prose, and other subjects. Secularism, the focus on the here and now instead of religiously focused on an afterlife, became a dominant worldview in the Renaissance culture as asceticism faded for most Europeans.

**Question #3: What techniques, such as perspective, did the Renaissance artists include in their artwork?**

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**Answers**

**Question #1: *The Medieval Era (450s-1450s CE), included the Bubonic Plague and much conflict. Why would these circumstances encourage the Renaissance artists to look back in history to the Greco-Roman Era (1,200 BCE – 600 CE) for their artistic and intellectual inspiration?***

The artists were trying to utilize what they saw as a golden era in history. They presented the Greco-Roman era as more optimistic than the Medieval era. It was an attempt to glorify a time that seemed better off than the Medieval Era.

**Question #2: *Who were the patrons? How did they impact the massive expansion of artistic expression during the Renaissance?***

The patrons were wealthy merchants. They hired artists during the Renaissance. Without the patrons, the artists would have no source of income and could not devote themselves to artistic work.

**Question #3: *What techniques, such as perspective, did the Renaissance artists include in their artwork?***

The artists of this era utilized perspective and realism. This made their pictures look very life like. They also included architecture and images that reflected the Greco-Roman era and Christianity.