Dear AP Euro Student,

Welcome to AP Euro! I am looking forward to working with you in the upcoming school year as we explore the major changes that occur across Europe and the world from 1450-2016.

To help facilitate a successful year, we will have a summer assignment. The purpose of this assignment is to cover the necessary background information needed to provide context for our first unit, to help us get started with some of the required content for the year, and to make sure you have a solid grasp of European geography as this is necessary to understand the material this year.

Your summer assignment will focus on life in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Your assignment is as follows:

1. Watch the video clips via Edpuzzle on Medieval Europe and take notes (around 1 hour total of video). Be sure to watch the videos in order. See the attached notetaking guide. The code to enroll in Edpuzzle is **zavwaup.**
2. Read the attached readings from the two textbooks we will use this year and take notes (**notes must be handwritten**). A few clarifications:
    a. Be sure to focus on the details/characteristics that describe Renaissance Europe. This includes any characteristics and changes that describe the technological, political, social, economic, intellectual, cultural, and/or international relations.
    b. As you take notes, be sure to incorporate the key terms on the reverse side of this sheet into your notes.
    c. Please note: this amount of reading (1 & ⅓ of a chapter) would typically be spread out over the course of 1 ½ weeks.
    d. We will have an open notes test on this reading & video material the first day of school.
3. Review and learn the list of countries, cities and physical features (page 3). Please note that there are two maps to know: one for modern day Europe and one for 65th century Europe. A good way to learn the map of modern Europe is to use the online quiz generator at https://lizardpoint.com/geography/europe-quiz.php?qid=15635
4. We will have a map test (closed note multiple choice/matching) the first week of school and a closed notes map test the same day.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email me. I will be checking email periodically throughout the summer.

Once again, welcome to AP Euro!

Mrs. Vroman

Reading Directions:

Key Question for notes: To what extent did life **change** from medieval times to the Renaissance?

Pay special attention to intellectual changes, the role/power of the Catholic Church, and changes in government.

As you read, take notes on what life was like in this time period and how/why some things are changing and some things are staying the same. Some note taking tips:

1. Turn headers into questions, and focus your notes on answering that question, including key terms when appropriate.
2. Don't skip paragraphs—if I've asked you to read it, there is something in there you need to know. Many sections of the textbook contain info you need to know that are NOT key terms. That's why it is important to follow step #1.
3. Do not copy directly from the textbook—this is transcribing, not note taking. Use your own words and use phrases, not complete sentences.
4. Social history is not rife with key terms —that does not mean you should skip paragraphs about women, family life, children, etc. This is a key concept in this course, and you need to be able to talk about what life was like, and how it changed or didn't change.
5. When taking notes on wars, be sure to note the following: causes, events that determine the outcome, winner, and the significance of the event.

Key Terms: Incorporate these into your notes. Include the who, what, where, when, why, and significance for each term.

Norman Conquest	Black Death	Babylonian Captivity/ Great Schism	100 Years War
Joan of Arc	Salt Tax		Peace of Lodi
Venice	Ambassadors	Printing press	Printed illustrations
Index of Prohibited Books	Humanism, Individualism, Secularism	Civic humanism	patronage
Machiavelli's The Prince	Botticelli	Da Vinci	Michelangelo
Raphael	Bruneschelli	Renaissance Man	Humanistic Education
New monarchies	War of the Roses	Henry VII	Ferdinand & Isabella
Holy Roman Emperor	Ottoman Turks	Poland	Wycliff
Renaissance Papacy	Cannons	gunpowder	Castiglione
Petrarch	Erasmus	Hus	nepotism

AP Euro Map Inventory

To better understand the history of Europe, it is critical to know the location of major geographical features, regions, cities, and nations. Familiarize yourself with the following places and be prepared to locate them on a test. Test format will be matching and multiple choice.

Modern Day Countries:

Austria
Belgium
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Croatia
Czech Republic
United Kingdom
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
Serbia
Slovakia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Turkey
Ukraine

Physical Features:

Rivers:
Volga
Rhine
Seine
Thames

Islands
Corsica
Sicily

Bodies of Water:
Mediterranean Sea
North Sea
Baltic Sea
Dardanelles, Strait
English Channel

Mountain Ranges:
Alps
Urals

Regions
Balkans
Crimean Peninsula
Iberian Peninsula
Flanders

Cities:

Amsterdam
Berlin
Florence
Warsaw
Istanbul
London
Madrid
Moscow
Paris
Rome
St. Petersburg
Vienna

Europe in 1492:
(*see next page)*

France
Spain
England
Holy Roman Empire
Bohemia
Naples
Venice
Ottoman Empire
Papal States
Poland-Lithuania
Hungary
Scotland
Sweden
Russian States

Europe at the start of the 16th century:

Note taking guide Medieval Europe Videos (access via Edpuzzle)

1. Norman Conquest *What was the Norman conquest AND how did it change England?*	
2. Church & Crown *Why did the church have so much power, AND how did it affect the people and kings?*	

3. Medieval Manor *What were the characteristics of peasant life in medieval England?*	

4. Medieval Towns *How was life for people living in towns different from those living in the countryside?*	
5. Medieval Minds *What can we learn from archeologists about medieval life?* *What do we know about the medieval mindset, AND how do we know this?*	

6. Monastic Life *What was monastic life like?* *What important roles did the church play in society?* *How was monastic life changing as time progressed, and why was this significant?*	

Western Civilization: A Concise History - Volume 2

Original Author: Dr. Christopher Brooks

Last Updated: February 2020

The Black Death

Historians have now arrived at a consensus that the deadliest epidemic in medieval and early-modern history began in the Mongol khanates and spread west: the Black Death, or simply “the plague,” of the fourteenth century. The plague devastated the areas it affected, none more so than Europe. That devastation was in large part due to the vulnerability of the European population to disease thanks both to poor harvests and the lack of practical medical knowledge.

A series of bad harvests led to periods of famine in Europe starting in the early fourteenth century. Conditions in some regions were so desperate that peasants reportedly resorted to cannibalism on occasion. When harvests were poor, Europeans not only died outright from famine, but those who survived were left even more vulnerable to epidemics because of weakened immune systems. By the time the plague arrived in 1348, generations of people were malnourished and all the more susceptible to infection as a result.

Medicine was completely ineffective in holding the plague in check. Europeans did not understand contagion – they knew that disease spread, but they had absolutely no idea how to prevent that spread. The prevailing medical theory was that disease was spread by clouds of foul-smelling gases called "miasmas," like those produced by stagnant water and decay. Thus, people sincerely believed that if one could avoid the miasmas (which of course never actually existed), they could avoid sickness. Over the centuries, doctors advocated various techniques that were meant to dispel the miasmas by introducing other odors, including leaving piles of onions on the streets of plague-stricken neighborhoods and, starting in the seventeenth century, wearing masks that resembled the heads of birds, with the “beaks” stuffed with flower petals.

Not surprisingly, given the dearth of medical knowledge, epidemics of all kinds regularly swept across Europe. When harvests failed, the poor often went to the cities in search of some kind of respite, either work or church-based charity. In 1330, for instance, the official population of the northern Italian city of Florence was 100,000, but a full 20,000 were paupers, most of whom had come from the countryside seeking relief. The cities became incubators for epidemics that were even more intense than those that affected the countryside.

Thus, a vulnerable and, in terms of medicine, ignorant population fell victim to the virulence of the Black Death from 1348 to 1351. Historians still debate as to exactly which (identifiable with contemporary medical knowledge) disease or diseases the the Black Death consisted of, but the prevailing theory is that it was bubonic plague. Bubonic plague is transmitted by fleas, both those carried by rats and transmitted to humans, and on fleas exclusive to humans. In the

A later depiction of a doctor during the Plague.

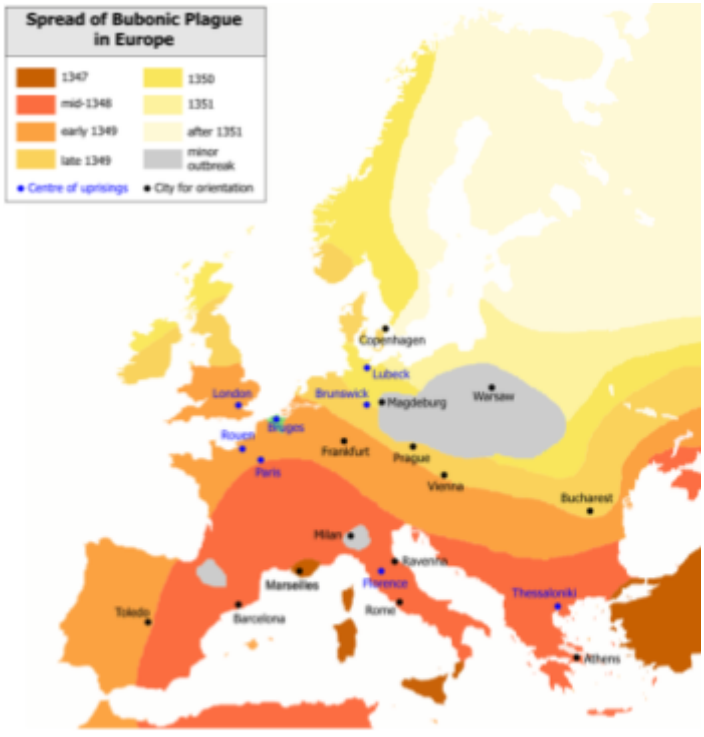
unsanitary conditions of medieval Europe, there were both rats and fleas everywhere. In turn, many victims of bubonic plague developed the "pneumonic" form of the disease, spread by coughing, which made it both incredibly virulent and lethal (about 90% of those who developed pneumonic plague died).

The theory the Black Death was the bubonic plague runs into the problem that modern outbreaks of bubonic plague do not seem to travel as quickly as did the Black Death, although that almost certainly has much to do with the vastly more effective sanitation and treatment available in the modern era as compared to the medieval setting of the Black Death. One hypothesis is that those with bubonic plague may have caught pneumonia as a secondary infection, and that pneumonia was thus another lethal component of the Black Death. Regardless of whatever disease or combination of diseases the Black Death really was, the effects were devastating.

The plague exploded across Europe starting at the end of the 1340s. All of Southern Europe was affected in 1348; it spread to Central Europe and England by 1349 and Eastern Europe and Scandinavia by 1350. It went on to spread even further and continued to fester until 1351, when it had killed so many people that the survivors had developed a resistance to it. The death toll was astonishing: in the end, the Black Death killed about one-third of the population of Europe in just three years (that is a conservative estimate - some present-day historians have calculated that it was closer to half!). Some cities lost over half of their population; there are even cases of villages where there was only a single survivor. This was an enormous demographic shift in a very short amount of time that had lasting consequences for European society, thanks mostly to the labor shortage that it introduced.

The only somewhat effective response to the Black Death was the implementation of quarantines. The more fast-acting city governments of Europe locked those who had plague symptoms in their homes, often for more than a month, and sometimes whole neighborhoods or districts were placed under quarantine. In the countryside, people refused to travel to larger cities and towns out of fear of infection. Even though quarantines slowed the spread of the plague in some cases, overall they did little but delay it.

More common than practical measures like quarantines, however, was prayer and the search for scapegoats to blame for the devastation. The spiritual reaction to the plague was, among Christian Europeans, to implore God for relief, beg for forgiveness, and to look to outsiders to blame. Building on the murderous anti-Semitism that had begun in earnest during the period of the crusades, Jews were often the victims of this phenomenon. There was a huge spike in anti-Semitic riots during plague outbreaks, as Jews were blamed for somehow bringing the plague (a frequent accusation was that Jews had poisoned wells), and thousands of Jews were massacred as a result.



The plague's spread, from south to north, over the course of just a few years. The section marked in grey is incorrectly labeled "minor outbreak": in fact, while data is difficult to come by for that region, it seems clear that the plague hit just as hard there as elsewhere in Europe.

Religious movements emerged in response to the plague as well, like the Flagellants: groups of penitents who roamed the countryside, villages, and towns whipping themselves and begging God for forgiveness. Many people sincerely believed that the Black Death was the opening salvo of the End Times, since the history of Europe in the fourteenth century so clearly involved both famine and pestilence - two of the four "horsemen" that were to accompany the end times according to the Bible (the others, war and death, were ever-present as well).

The Black Death ended in 1351, but the plague returned roughly every twenty years in some form. Some cases were as devastating, at least in limited areas, as the Black Death had been. The plague did not stop entirely until the early eighteenth century - to this day it is not clear what brought an end to large-scale plague outbreaks, although one theory is that a species of brown rat that was not as vulnerable to the plague overwhelmed the older black rats that had infested Europe.

Effects of the Plague's Aftermath

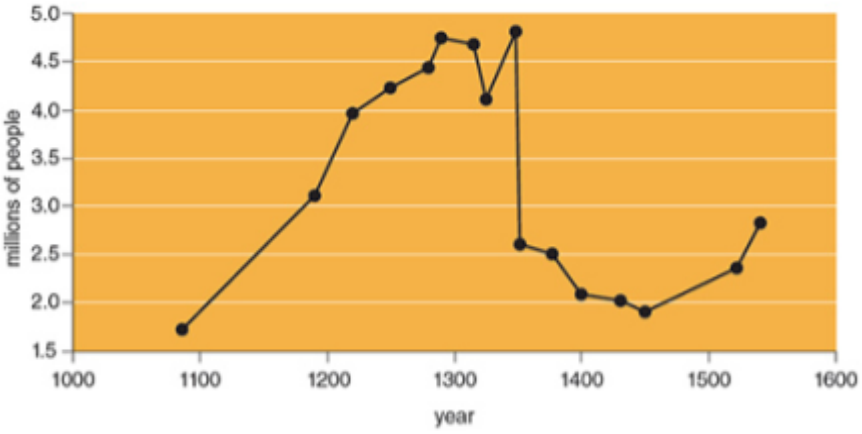
Ironically, the immediate economic effects of the plague after it ended were largely positive for many people. The demographic consequences of the Black Death, namely its enormous death toll, resulted in a labor shortage across all of Europe. The immediate effect was that lords tried to keep their peasants from fleeing the land and to keep wages at the low levels they had been at before the plague hit, sparking various peasant uprisings. Even though those uprisings were generally bloodily put down in the end, the overall trend was that laborers *had* to be paid more; their labor was simply more valuable. In the decades that followed, then, many peasants benefited from higher prices for their labor and their crops.

Another group that benefited was women. For roughly a century after the plague, women had more legal rights in terms of property ownership, the right to participate in commerce, and land ownership, than they had enjoyed before the plague's outbreak. Women were even able to join certain craft guilds for a time, something that was almost unheard of earlier. The reason for this temporary improvement in the legal and economic status of women was precisely the same as that of peasants: the labor shortage.

The plague also ushered in a cultural change that came about because of the prevalence of death in the fourteenth century. Europeans became so used to death that they often depicted it graphically and quite terribly in art. Paintings, stories, and theatrical performances emerged having to do with the "dance of death," a depiction of the futility of worldly possessions and status vis-à-vis the inevitability of death. Likewise, graves and mausoleums came to be decorated with statues of grotesque skeletons and writhing bodies. When people were dying, their families and friends were supposed to come

The dance of death, with this image produced decades after the Black Death had already run its course.

and view them, inoculating everyone present against the temptation to enjoy life too much and encouraging them to greater focus on preparing their souls for the afterlife.



English Medieval Population (Americanscientist.org)

> Scholar Anna Louise DesOrmeaux notes that a significant aspect of the change in the religious model was the Christian belief that God had caused the plague to punish people for their sins and so there was nothing one could do but "turn humbly to God, who never denies His aid" (14). And yet, to the people of the time, it seemed as though God had denied his aid and this led people to question the authority of the Church (Worldhistory.org)

The 100 Years' War

The plague happened near the beginning of the conflict between England and France remembered as the Hundred Years' War, which lasted from 1337 – 1453. That conflict was not really one war, but instead consisted of a series of battles and shorter wars between the crowns of England and France interrupted by (sometimes fairly long) periods of peace.

The war began because of simmering resentments and dynastic politics. The root of the problem was that the English kings were descendants of William the Conqueror, the Norman king who had sailed across the English Channel in 1066 and defeated the Anglo-Saxon king who then ruled England. From that point on, the royal and noble lines of England and France were intertwined, and as marriage between both nobles and royalty often took place across French - English lines, the inheritance of lands and titles in both countries was often a point of contention. The culture of nobility in both countries was so similar that the "English" nobles generally spoke French instead of English in day-to-day life.

France on the eve of the 100 Years War.

This confusion very much extended to the kings themselves. The English royal line (the Plantagenets) often enjoyed pledges of fealty from numerous "French" nobles, and "English" kings often thought of themselves as being as much French as English - the English King Richard the Lion-Hearted, for instance, spent most of his career in France battling for control of more French territory. Likewise, a large region in southwestern France, Aquitaine, was formally the property of the English royal line, with the awkward caveat that, while a given English king might be sovereign in England, his lordship of Aquitaine technically made him the vassal of whoever

the French king happened to be. Thus, hundreds of years after William's conquest, the royal and noble lines of England and France were often hard to distinguish from one another.

The war began in the aftermath of the death of the French King Charles IV in 1328. The king of England, Edward III, was next in line for succession, but powerful members of the French nobility rejected his claim and instead pledged to give the crown to a French noble of the royal line named Philip VI. When Philip began passing judgments to do with the English-controlled territory of Aquitaine, Edward went to war, sparking the Hundred Years' War itself.

The war itself consisted of a series of raids and invasions by English forces punctuated by the occasional large battle. English kings and knights kept the war going because it was a way to enrich themselves – they would arrive in France with a moderately-sized force of armed men to loot and pillage. English forces tended to be better organized than were their French counterparts, so even France's much greater wealth and size did prevent major English victories. The most famous of those victories was the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, in which a smaller English force decimated the elite French cavalry through effective use of longbows, a weapon that could transform an English peasant into more than the equal of a mounted French knight. The aftermath of Agincourt saw most of the French nobility accept the English king, Henry V, as the king of France. Henry V promptly died, however, and the conflict exploded into a series of alliances and counter-alliances between rival factions of English and French nobles (one French territory, Burgundy, even declared its independence from France and became a staunch English ally for a time).

Decades into the war, the French received an unexpected boost in their fortunes thanks to the intervention of one of the future patron saints of France itself: Joan of Arc. Joan was a peasant girl who walked into the middle of the conflict in 1429, supporting the French Dauphin (heir) Charles VII. Joan reported that she had received a vision from God commanding her to help the French achieve victory against the invading English. French forces rallied around Joan, with Joan herself leading the French forces in several battles. Remarkably, despite being a teenage peasant with no military background, she proved capable at aiming catapults, making tactical decisions, and rallying the French troops to victory. Buoyed by the sense that God was on their side, French forces prevailed. Even though she was soon captured and handed over to the English for trial and execution as a witch by the Burgundians, Joan became a martyr to the French cause and, eventually, one of the most significant French nationalist symbols. By 1453, the French forces finally ended the English threat.

The war had a devastating effect on France. Between the fighting and the plague, its population declined by half. Many French regions suffered economically as luxury trades shut down and whole regions were devastated by the fighting. The French crown introduced new taxes, such as the *Gabelle* (a tax on salt) and the *Taille* (a household tax) that further burdened commoners. On the cultural front, the English monarchy and nobility severed their ties with France and high English culture began to self-consciously reshape itself as distinctly *English* rather than French, leading among other things to the use of the English language as the language of state and the law for the first time.

The Impact of the War on the Power of the State:

The 100 Years War had a significant impact on the power of the monarchy, in both countries.

In England, the power of the king was slightly weakened. He still could not tax his people without the permission of Parliament and so this body had to be called each time a monarch required more cash for his campaigns. As a result of Parliament frequently meeting, it did not necessarily gain any new powers but it did create for itself an identity and, by being involved in diplomatic policy discussions and the ratification of peace treaties, the institution was starting to become a part of English political life

In contrast, in France, the opposite was true as the monarchy's position was strengthened because of the success of the war while that of the nobility and the Estates General (the legislative assembly) weakened. This was because the king did not need to consult anyone else regarding taxation policies which could be levied at will to pay for the war. The conflict also saw the introduction of long-lasting indirect taxes such as the salt tax (gabelle) that was not abolished until the French Revolution of the late 18th century CE. The French monarch was thus able to triple his income through taxes from the start to the end of the war. Further, such taxes required a whole new state apparatus of tax collectors, keepers of public records, and assessors for payment disputes, ensuring the sustained enrichment of the Crown. (Worldhistory.org: https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1520/the-hundred-years-war-consequences--effects/)

The Babylonian Captivity and the Great Western Schism

Even as the French and English were at each other's throats, the Catholic Church fell into a state of disunity, sometimes even chaos. The cause was one of the most peculiar episodes in late medieval European history: the "Babylonian Captivity" of the popes in the fourteenth century. The term originally referred to the Biblical story of the Jews' enslavement by the Babylonian Empire in the sixth century BCE, but the late-medieval Babylonian Captivity refers instead to the period during which the popes no longer lived in their traditional residence in Rome.

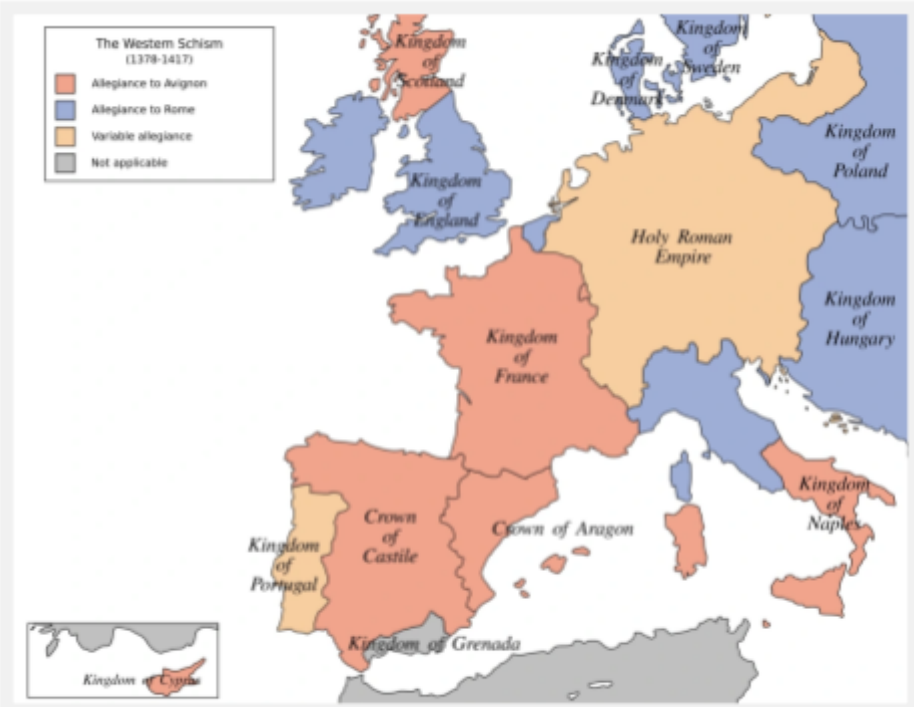
The context for this strange event was the state of the Catholic Church as of the early fourteenth century. The Church was a very diverse, and somewhat diffuse, institution. Due to the simple geographical distance between Rome and the kingdoms of Europe, the popes did not exercise much practical authority over the various national churches, and high-level churchmen in European kingdoms were often more closely associated with their respective kings than with Rome. Likewise, there were many times during the Middle Ages when individual popes were weak and ineffectual and could not even command obedience within the church hierarchy itself.

Over the centuries the papacy struggled, and often failed, to assert its control over the Church as an institution and to hold the pretensions of kings in check. Those weaknesses were reflected in a simple fact: there had been a number of times over the centuries in which there were rival popes, generally appointed by compliant church officials who answered to kings. Obviously, having rival popes undermined the central claim of the papacy to complete authority over the Church itself and over Christian doctrine in the process (let alone the occasional insistence by popes that their authority superseded that of kings - see below).

The Babylonian Captivity began when Pope Boniface VIII issued a papal bull (formal commandment) in 1303 to the effect that all kings had to acknowledge his authority over even their own kingdoms, a challenge he issued in response to the taxes kings levied on church property. Unfortunately for Boniface, he lacked both influence with the monarchs of Europe and the ability to defend himself. Infuriated, the French king, Philip IV, promptly had the pope arrested and thrown in prison; he was released months later but promptly died.

Philip supported the election of a new pope, Clement V, in 1305. Clement was a Frenchman with strong ties to the French nobility. At the time, Rome was a very dangerous city, with rival noble families literally fighting in the streets over various feuds, so Clement moved himself and the papal office to the French city of Avignon, which was much more peaceful. This created enormous concern among non-French church officials (most of them Italian), who feared that the French king, then the most powerful ruler in Europe, would have undue influence over the papacy. Their fears seemed confirmed when Clement started appointing new cardinals, a pattern that ultimately saw 113 French cardinals out of the 134 who were appointed in the following decades.

From 1305 to 1378, the popes continued to live and work in Avignon (despite the English invasions of the 100 Years' War). They were not directly controlled by the French king, as their opponents had feared, but they were definitely influenced by French politics. They also came to accept bribes and kickbacks for the appointment of priests and bishops, along with shady schemes with Church lands. This situation was soon described as a new Babylonian Captivity by clerics and laypeople alike (especially in Italy), comparing the presence of the papacy in France to the enslavement of the ancient Jews in Babylon.



Map shows division during the Western Schism

In 1378, the new pope, Urban VI, announced his intention to move the papacy back to Rome. As rival factions developed within the upper levels of the Church hierarchy, a group of French cardinals elected another, French, pope (Clement VII), and Europe thus was split between two rival popes, both of whom excommunicated each other as a heretic and impostor (the term used at the time was "antipope.") This led to the Great Western Schism, a period from 1378 to 1417 during which there were as many as *three* rival popes vying for power. For almost forty years, the church was a battlefield between both rival popes and their respective followers, and laypeople and monarchs alike were generally able to go about their business with little fear of papal intervention.

The Great Western Schism finally ended after a series of church councils, the Conciliar Movement, succeeded in establishing the authority of a single pope in 1417. The movement elected a new pope, Martin V, and made the claim that church councils could and should hold the ultimate authority over papal appointments – this concept was known as the *via consilii*, the existence of a great council with binding powers over the church's leadership. This, however, undermined the very concept of what the papacy *was*: the "Doctrine of the Keys" held that the pope's authority was passed down directly from Christ, and that even if councils could play a role in the practical maintenance of the church, the pope's authority was not based on their approval. Ultimately, a powerful pope, Eugene IV, reconfirmed the absolute power of the papacy in 1431. Thus, this attempt at reform failed in the end, inadvertently setting the stage for more radical criticisms of papal power in the future.

The most important consequence of the Babylonian Captivity and the Great Western Schism was simple: the moral and spiritual authority of the church hierarchy was seriously undermined. While no one (yet) envisioned rejecting the authority of the Church altogether, many people regarded the Church's leadership as just another political institution.

Conclusion

Some of the trends, patterns, and phenomena that were to take shape during the Renaissance era which began around 1300 began in the midst of the crises of the Middle Ages. France and England emerged from the 100 Years War to become stronger, more centralized states (although it took a civil war in England to get there, described in a subsequent chapter). The labor shortage in the aftermath of the Black Death spurred a period of modest economic growth. And, while European culture may have become more pessimistic and xenophobic as a whole, one region was rising to wealth and prominence precisely because of its long-distance trade and cultural connections: Northern Italy. It was there that the Renaissance began.

Image Citations (Creative Commons):
Mongol Empire - Spesh531
Plague Doctor - Ian Spackman
Plague Map - Bunchofgrapes
Dance of Death - Il Dottore
Joan of Arc - Public Domain

Chapter 3: The Renaissance

The Renaissance, meaning "rebirth," was a period of innovation in culture, art, and learning that took place between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, starting in Italy and then spreading to various other parts of Europe. It produced a number of artists, scientists, and thinkers who are still household names today: Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci, Donatello, Botticelli, and others. The Renaissance is justly famous for its achievements in art and learning, and even though some of its thinkers were somewhat conceited and off-base in dismissing the prior thousand years or so as being nothing but the "Dark Ages," it is still the case that the Renaissance was enormously fruitful in terms of intellectual production and creation.

"The" Renaissance lasted from about 1300 – 1500. It ended in the early sixteenth century in that its northern Italian heartland declined in economic importance and the pace of change and progress in the arts and learning slowed, but in a very real sense the Renaissance never truly ended - its innovations and advances had already spread across much of Europe, and even though Italy itself lost its prominence, the patterns that began in Italy continued elsewhere. That was true not only of art, but of education, architecture, scholarship, and commercial practices.

The timing of the Renaissance coincided with some of the crises of the Middle Ages described in the last chapter. The overlap in dates is explained by the fact that most of Europe remained resolutely "medieval" during the Renaissance's heyday in Italy: the ways of life, forms of technology, and political structure of the Middle Ages did not suddenly change with the flowering of the Renaissance, not least because it took so long for the innovations of the Renaissance to spread beyond Italy. Likewise, in Italy itself, the lives of most people (especially outside of the major cities) were all but identical in 1500 to what they would have been centuries earlier.

Background

Simply put, the background of the Renaissance was the prosperity of northern Italy. Italy did not face a major, ongoing series of wars like the Hundred Years' War in France. It was hit hard by the plague, but no more so than most of the other regions of Europe. One unexpected "benefit" to Italy was actually the Babylonian Captivity and Great Western Schism: because the popes' authority was so limited, the Italian cities found it easy to operate with little papal interference, and powerful Italian families often intervened directly in the election of popes when it suited their interests. Likewise, the other powers of Europe either could not or had no interest in troubling Italy: England and France were at war, the Holy Roman Empire was weak and fragmented, and Spain was not united until the late Renaissance period. In short, the crises of the Middle Ages actually *benefited* Italy, because they were centered elsewhere.

In this relatively stable social and political environment, Italy also enjoyed an advantage over much of the rest of Europe: it was far more urbanized. Because of its location as a crossroads between east and west, Italian cities were larger and there were simply more of them as compared to other kingdoms and regions of Europe, with the concomitant economic prosperity and sophistication

associated with urban life. By 1300, northern Italy boasted twenty-three city-states with populations of 20,000 or more, each of which would have constituted an enormous metropolis by medieval standards.

Italian cities, clustered in the north, represented about 10% of Italy's overall population. While that means that 90% of the population was either rural or lived in small towns, there was still a far greater concentration of urban dwellers in Italy than anywhere else in Europe. Among those cities were also several that boasted populations of over 100,000 by the fifteenth century, including Florence and Milan, which served as centers of banking, trade, and craftsmanship. Italian cities had large numbers of very productive craft guilds and workshops producing luxury goods that were highly desirable all over Europe.

Economics

Italy lay at the center of the lucrative trade between Europe and the Middle East, a status determined both by its geography and the role Italians had played in transporting goods and people during the crusading period. Along with the trade itself, it was in Italy that key mercantile practices emerged for the first time in Europe. From the Arab world, Italian merchants learned about and ultimately adopted a number of commercial practices and techniques that helped them (Italians) stay at the forefront of the European economy as a whole. For example, Italian accountants adopted double-entry bookkeeping (accounts payable and accounts receivable) and Italian merchants invented the *commenda*, a way of spreading out the risk associated with business ventures among several partners - an early form of insurance for expensive and risky commercial projects. Italian banks had agents all over Europe and provided reliable credit and bills of exchange, allowing merchants to travel around the entire Mediterranean region to trade without having to literally cart chests full of coins to pay for new wares.

One other noteworthy innovation first employed in Europe by Italians was the use of Arabic numerals instead of Roman numerals, since the former are so much easier to work with (e.g. imagine trying to do complicated multiplication or division using Roman numerals like "CLXVIII multiplied by XXXVIII," meaning "168 multiplied by 38" in Arabic numerals...it was simply far easier to introduce errors in calculation using the former). Overall, Italian merchants, borrowing from their Arab and Turkic trading partners, pioneered efforts to rationalize and systematize business itself in order to make it more predictable and reliable.

Benefiting from the fragmentation of the Church during the era of the Babylonian Captivity and the Great Western Schism, Italian bankers also came to charge interest on loans, becoming the first Christians to defy the church's ban on "usury" in an ongoing, regular fashion. The stigma associated with usury remained, but bankers (including the Medici family that came to completely dominate Florentine politics in the fifteenth century) became so wealthy that social and religious stigma alone was not enough to prevent the spread of the practice. This actually led to *more* anti-Semitism in Europe, since the one social role played by Jews that Christians had grudgingly tolerated - money-lending - was increasingly usurped by Christians.

Much of the prosperity of northern Italy was based on the trade ties (not just mercantile practices) Italy maintained with the Middle East, which by the fourteenth century meant both the remains of the Byzantine Empire in Constantinople as well as the Ottoman Turkish empire, the rising power in the east. From the Turks, Italians (especially the great mercantile empire controlled by Venice) bought precious cargo like spices, silks, porcelain, and coffee, in return for European woolens, crafts,

and bullion. The Italians were also the go-betweens linking Asia and Europe by way of the Middle East: Italy was the European terminus of the Silk Road.

The Italian city-states were sites of manufacturing as well. Raw wool from England and Spain made its way to Italy to be processed into cloth, and Italian workshops produced luxury goods sought after everywhere else in Europe. Italian luxury goods were superior to those produced in the rest of Europe, and soon even Italian weapons were better-made. Italian farms were prosperous and, by the Renaissance period, produced a significant and ongoing surplus, feeding the growing cities.

One result of the prosperity generated by Italian mercantile success was the rise of a culture of conspicuous consumption. Both members of the nobility and rich non-nobles spent lavishly to display their wealth as well as their culture and learning. All of the famous Renaissance thinkers and artists were patronized by the rich, which was how the artists and scholars were able to concentrate on their work. In turn, patrons expected "their" artists to serve as symbols of cultural achievement that reflected well on the patron. The fluorescence of Renaissance art and learning was a consequence of that very specific use of wealth: mercantile and banking riches translated into social and political status through art, architecture, and scholarship.

Political Setting

Even though the western Roman Empire had fallen apart by 476 CE, the great cities of Italy survived in better shape than Roman cities elsewhere in the empire. Likewise, the feudal system had never taken as hold as strongly in Italy – there were lords and vassals, but especially in the cities there was a large and strong independent class of artisans and merchants who balked at subservience before lords, especially lords who did not live in the cities. Thus, by 1200, most Italian cities were politically independent of lords and came to dominate their respective hinterlands, serving as lords to "vassal" towns and villages for miles around.

Map is about 1300 A.D to 1360 A.D.

Instead of kings and vassals, power was in the hands of the *popoli grossi*, literally meaning the "fat people," but here meaning simply the rich, noble and non-noble alike. About 5% of the population in the richest cities was among them. The culture of the *popoli grossi* was rife with flattery, backstabbing, and politicking, since so much depended on personal connections. Since noble titles meant less, more depended on one's family reputation, and the most important thing to the social elite was honor. Any perceived insult had to be met with retaliation [vendettas], meaning there was a great deal of bloodshed between powerful families - Shakespeare's famous play *Romeo and Juliet* is set in Renaissance Italy, featuring rival elite families locked in a blood feud over honor. There was no such thing as a police force, after all, just the guards of the rich and powerful and, usually, a city guard that answered to

the city council. The latter was often controlled by powerful families on those councils, however, so both law enforcement and personal vendettas were generally carried out by private mercenaries.

Another aspect of the identify of the *popoli grossi* was that, despite their penchant for feuds, they required a peaceful political setting on a large scale in order for their commercial interests to prosper. Thus, they were often hesitant to embark on large-scale war in Italy itself. Likewise, the focus on education and culture that translated directly into the creation of Renaissance art and scholarship was tied to the identity of the *popoli grossi* as people of peace: elsewhere in Europe noble identity was still very much associated with war, whereas the *popoli grossi* of Italy wanted to show off both their mastery of arms *and* their mastery of thought (along with their good taste). The central irony of the prosperity of the Renaissance was that even in northern Italy, the vast majority of the population benefited only indirectly or not at all. While the lot of Italian peasants was not significantly worse than that of peasants elsewhere, poor townsfolk had to endure heavy taxes on basic foodstuffs that made it especially miserable to be poor in one of the richest places in Europe at the time. A significant percentage of the population of cities were "paupers," the indigent and homeless who tried to scrape by as laborers or sought charity from the Church. Cities were especially vulnerable to epidemics as well, adding to the misery of urban life for the poor.

Portrait of a young Cosimo de Medici, who would become the de facto *ruler of Florence in the fifteenth century. He is depicted holding a book and wearing a sword: symbols of his learning and his authority.*

The Great City-States of the Renaissance

In the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth centuries, the city-states of northern Italy were aggressive rivals; most of the formerly-independent cities were swallowed up by the most powerful among them. However, as the power of the French monarchy grew in the west and the Ottoman Turks became an active threat in the east, the most powerful cities signed a treaty, the Peace of Lodi, in 1454 which committed each city to the defense of the existing political order. For the next forty years, Italy avoided major conflicts, a period that coincided with the height of the Renaissance.

The great city-states of this period were Milan, Venice, and Florence. Milan was the archetypal despot-controlled city-state, reaching its height under the Visconti family from 1277 – 1447. Milan controlled considerable trade from Italy to the north. Its wealth was dwarfed, however, by that of Venice.

Venice

Venice was ruled by a merchant council headed by an elected official, the Doge. Its Mediterranean empire generated so much wealth that Venice minted more gold currency than did England and France combined, and its gold coins (ducats) were always exactly the same weight and purity and were accepted across the Mediterranean as a result. Its government had representation for all of the moneyed classes, but no one represented the majority of the city's population that consisted of the urban poor.

The main source of Venice's prosperity was its control of the spice trade. It is difficult to overstate the value of spices during the Middle Ages and Renaissance - Europeans had a limitless hunger for spices (as an aside, note that the theory that spices were desirable because they masked the taste of rotten meat is patently false; medieval and Renaissance-era Europeans did not eat spoiled food). Unlike other luxury goods that could be produced in Europe itself, spices could only be grown in the tropical and subtropical regions of Asia, meaning their transportation to European markets required voyages of many thousands of miles, vastly driving up costs.

The European terminus of much of that trade was Venice. In about 1300 40% of all ships bearing spices offloaded in Venice, and by 1500 it was up to 60%. The prices commanded by spices ensured that Venetian merchants could achieve incredible wealth. For example, nutmeg (grown in Indonesia, halfway around the world from Italy) was worth a full 60,000% of its original price once it reached Europe. Likewise, spices like pepper, cloves, and cinnamon could only be imported rather than grown in Europe, and Venice controlled the majority of that hugely lucrative trade. Spices were, in so many words, worth far more than their weight in gold.

Based on that wealth, Venice was the first place to create true banks (named after the desks, *banchi*, where people met to exchange or borrow money in Venice). Furthermore, innovations like the letter of credit were necessitated by Venice's remoteness from many of its trade partners; it was too risky to travel with chests full of gold, so Venetian banks were the first to work with letters of credit between branches. A letter of credit could be issued from one bank branch at a certain amount, redeemable only by the account owner. That individual could then travel to any city with a Venetian bank branch and redeem the letter of credit, which could then be spent on trade goods.

In addition, because Venice needed a peaceful trade network for its continuing prosperity, it was the first power in Europe to rely heavily on formal diplomacy in its relations with neighboring states. By the late 1400s practically every royal court in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa had a Venetian ambassador in residence. The overall result was that Venice spearheaded many of the practices and patterns that later spread across northern Italy and, ultimately, to the rest of Europe: the political power of merchants, advanced banking and mercantile practices, and a sophisticated international diplomatic network.

Florence and Rome

Florence was a republic with longstanding traditions of civic governance. Citizens voted on laws and served in official posts for set terms, with powerful families dominating the system. By 1434 the real power was in the hands of the Medici family, who controlled the city government (the *Signoria*) and patronized the arts. Rising from obscurity from a resolutely non-noble background, the Medici eventually became the official bankers to the papacy, acquiring vast wealth as a result. The Medici spent

huge sums on the city itself, funding the creation of churches, orphanages, municipal buildings, and the completion of the great dome of the city's cathedral, at the time the largest freestanding dome in Europe. They also patronized most of the most famous Renaissance artists (at the time as well as in the present), including Donatello, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo.

Florence benefited from a strong culture of education, with Florentines priding themselves not just on wealth, but knowledge and refinement. By the fifteenth century there were 8,000 children in both religious and civic schools out of a population of 100,000. Florentines boasted that even their laborers could quote the great poet, and native of Florence, Dante Alighieri (author of *The Divine Comedy*). At the height of Medici, and Florentine, power in the second half of the fifteenth century, Florence was unquestionably the leading city in all of Italy in terms of art and scholarship. That central position diminished by about 1500 as foreign invasions undermined Florentine independence.

The city of Rome, however, remained firmly in papal control despite the decline in independence of the other major Italian cities, having become a major Renaissance city after the end of the Great Western Schism. The popes re-asserted their control of the Papal States in central Italy, in some cases (like those of Julius II, r. 1503 – 1513) personally taking to the battlefield to lead troops against the armies of both foreign invaders and rival Italians. The popes usually proved effective at secular rule, but their spiritual leadership was undermined by their tendency to live like kings rather than priests; the most notorious, Alexander VI (r. 1492 – 1503), sponsored his children (the infamous Borgia family) in their attempts to seize territory all across northern Italy. Thus, even when "good popes" came along occasionally, the overall pattern was that the popes did fairly little to reinforce the spiritual authority they had already lost because of the Great Western Schism

Regardless of their moral failings, the popes restored Rome to importance as a city after it had fallen to a population of fewer than 25,000 during the Babylonian Captivity. Under the so-called "Renaissance popes," the Vatican itself became the gloriously decorated spectacle that it is today. Julius II paid Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, and many of the other famous works of Renaissance artists stud the walls and facades of Vatican buildings. In short, popes after the end of the Great Western Schism were often much more focused on behaving like members of the *popoli grossi*, fighting for power and honor and patronizing great works of art and architecture, rather than worrying about the spiritual authority of the Church to laypeople.

Print

In general, the Renaissance did not coincide with a great period of technological advances. As with all of pre-modern history, the pace of technological change during the Renaissance period was glacially slow by contemporary standards. There was one momentous exception, however: the proliferation of the movable-type printing press. Not until the invention of the typewriter in the late nineteenth century and the Internet in the late twentieth century would comparable changes to the diffusion of information come about. Print vastly increased the rate at which information could be shared, and in turn, it underwrote the rise in literacy of the early modern period. It moved the production of text in Europe away from a "scribal" tradition in which educated people hand-copied important texts toward a system of mass-production.

In the centuries leading up to the Renaissance, of course, there had been *some* major technological advances. The agricultural revolution of the high Middle Ages had been brought about by technology (heavier plows, new harnesses, crop rotation, etc.). Likewise, changes in warfare were increasingly tied to military technology: first the introduction of the stirrup, then everything associated with a "gunpowder revolution" that began in earnest in the fifteenth century (described in a subsequent chapter). Print, however, introduced a revolution in *ideas*. By making the distribution of information fast and comparatively cheap, more people had access to that information than ever before. Print was also an enormous leap forward in the long-term view of human technology as a whole, since the scribal tradition had been in place since the creation of writing itself.

A modern replica of a printing press of Gutenberg's era.

The printing press works by coating a three-dimensional impression of an image or text with ink, then pressing that ink onto paper. The concept had existed for centuries, first invented in China and used also in Korea and parts of Central Asia, but there is no evidence that the concept was transmitted from Asia to Europe (it might have, but there is simply no proof either way). In the late 1440s, a German goldsmith named Johannes Gutenberg from the city of Meinz struck on the idea of carving individual letters into small, movable blocks of wood (or casting them in metal) that could be rearranged as necessary to create words. That innovation, known as movable type, made it viable to print not just a single page of text, but to simply rearrange the letters to print subsequent pages. With movable type, an entire book could be printed with clear, readable letters, and at a fraction of the cost of hand-copying.

Gutenberg himself pioneered the European version of the printing process. After developing a working prototype, he created the first true printed book to reach a mass market, namely a copy of the Latin Vulgate (the official version of the Bible used by the Church). Later dubbed the "Gutenberg Bible," it became available for purchase in 1455 and in turn became the world's first "best-seller." One advantage it possessed over hand-written copies of the Bible that quickly became apparent to church officials was that errors in the text were far less likely to be introduced as compared to hand-copying. Likewise, once new presses were built in cities and towns outside of Meinz, it became cheaper to purchase a printed Bible than one written in the scribal tradition.

Print spread quickly. Within about twenty years there were printing presses in all of the major cities in Western and Southern Europe. Gutenberg personally trained apprentice printers, who became highly sought-after in cities everywhere once the benefits of print became apparent. By 1500, about fifty years after its invention, the printing press had already largely replaced the scribal tradition in book production (there was a notable lengthy delay in its diffusion to Eastern Europe, especially Russia, however – it took until 1552 for a press to come to Russia). Presses tended to operate in large cities and smaller independent cities, especially in the Holy Roman Empire. The free cities of the German lands and Italy were thus as likely to host a press as were larger capital cities like Paris and Rome.

Gutenberg would go on to invent printed illustration in 1461, using carved blocks that were sized to fit alongside movable type. Printed illustration became crucial to the diffusion of information because literacy rates remained low overall; even when people could not read, however, they could look at pamphlets and posters (called "broadsides") with illustrations. Mere decades after the invention of the press, cheap printed posters and pamphlets were commonplace in the major cities and towns, often shared and read aloud in public gatherings and taverns. Thus, even the illiterate enjoyed an increased access to information with print.

Printing had various, and enormous, consequences. Information could be disseminated far more quickly than ever before. Whereas with the scribal tradition, readers tended to hold books in reverence, with the reader having to seek out the book, now books could go to readers. In turn, there was a real incentive for all reasonably prosperous people to learn to read because they now had access to meaningful texts at a relatively affordable price. While religious texts dominated early print, both literary works and political commentaries followed. Overall, print led to a revolutionary increase in the sheer volume of all kinds of written material: in the first fifty years after the invention of the press, more books were printed than had been copied in Europe by hand since the fall of Rome.

Not all writing shifted to print, however. A scribal tradition continued in the production of official documents and luxury items. Likewise, personal correspondence and business transactions remained hand-written, with the legacy of good penmanship surviving well into the twentieth century (in part because it was not until the typewriter was invented in the nineteenth century that printed documents could be produced ad hoc). Nevertheless, by the late fifteenth century, whenever a text could be printed to serve a political purpose or to generate a profit, it almost certainly would be.

There were other, unanticipated, issues that arose because of print. In the past, while the Church did its best to crack down on heresies, it was not necessary to impose any kind of formal censorship. No written material could be mass-produced, so the only ideas that spread quickly did so through word of mouth. Print made censorship both much more difficult and much more *important*, since now anyone could print just about anything. As early as the 1460s, print introduced disruptive ideas in the form of the next best-seller to follow the Bible itself, a work that advocated the pursuit of salvation without reference to the Church entitled *The Imitation of Christ*. The Church would eventually (in 1571) introduce an official Index of Prohibited Books, but several works were already banned by the time the Index was created.

While there were other effects of print, one bears particular note: it began the process of standardizing language itself. The long, slow shift from a vast panoply of vernacular dialects across Europe to a set of accepted and official languages was impossible without print. Print necessitated that standardization, so that people in different parts of "France" or "England" were able to read the same works and understand their grammar and their meaning. For the first time, the very concept of proper spelling emerged, and existing ideas about grammar began the process of standardization as well.

Patronage

The most memorable, or at least iconic, effects of the Renaissance were artistic. To understand why the Renaissance brought about such a remarkable explosion of art, it is crucial to grasp the nature of *patronage*. In patronage, a member of the *popoli grossi* would pay an artist in advance for a work of art.

That work of art would be displayed publicly - most obviously in the case of architecture with the beautiful churches, orphanages, and municipal buildings that spread across Italy during the Renaissance. In turn, that art would attract political power and influence to the person or family who had paid for it because of the honor associated with funding the best artists and being associated with their work. While there was plenty of bloodshed between powerful Renaissance families, their political competition as often took the form of an ongoing battle over who could commission the best art and then "give" that art to their home city, rather than actual fighting in the streets.

Perhaps the most spectacular example of patronage in action was when Cosimo de Medici, then the leader of the Medici family and its vast banking empire, threw a city-wide party called the Council of Florence in 1439. The Council featured public lectures on Greek philosophy, displays of art, and a huge church council that brought together representatives of both the Latin Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church in a (doomed) attempt to heal the schism that divided Christianity. The Catholic hierarchy also used the occasion to establish the canonical and in a sense "final" version of the Christian Bible itself (in question were which books ought to be included in the Old Testament). The entire affair was paid by Cosimo out of his personal fortune - he even paid for the travel expenses of visiting dignitaries from places as far away as India and Ethiopia. The Council clinched the Medici as *the* family of Florence for the next generation, with Cosimo being described by a contemporary as a "king in all but name."

Art and learning benefited enormously from the wealth of northern Italy precisely because the wealthy and powerful of northern Italy competed to pay for the best art and the most innovative scholarship - without that form of cultural and political competition, it is doubtful that many of the masterpieces of Renaissance art would have ever been created.

Humanism

The starting point with studying the intellectual and artistic achievements of the Renaissance is recognizing what the word means: rebirth. But what was being reborn? The answer is the culture and ideas of classical Europe, namely ancient Greece and Rome. Renaissance thinkers and artists very consciously made the claim that they were reviving long-lost traditions from the classical world in areas as diverse as scholarship, poetry, architecture, and sculpture. The feeling among most Renaissance thinkers and artists was that the ancient Greeks and Romans had achieved truly incredible things, things that had not been, and possibly could never be, surpassed. Much of the Renaissance began as an attempt to mimic or copy Greek and Roman art and scholarship (correspondence in classical Latin, for example), but over the decades the more outstanding Renaissance thinkers struck out on new paths of their own - still inspired by the classics, but seeking to be creators in their own right as well.

Of the various themes of Renaissance thought, perhaps the most important was humanism, an ancient intellectual paradigm that emphasized both the beauty and the centrality of humankind in the universe. Humanists held that humankind was inherently rational, beautiful, and noble, rather than debased, wicked, or weak. They sought to celebrate the beauty of the human body in their art, of the human mind and human achievements in their scholarship, and of human society in the elegance of their architectural design. Humanism was, among other things, an optimistic attitude toward artistic and

intellectual possibility that cited the achievements of the ancient world as proof that humankind was the crowning achievement of God's creation.

Renaissance humanism was the root of some very modern notions of individuality, along with the idea that education ought to arrive at a well-rounded individual. The goal of education in the Renaissance was to realize as much of the human potential as possible with a robust education in diverse disciplines. This was a true, meaningful change over medieval forms of learning in that education's major purpose was no longer believed to be the clarification of religious questions or better intellectual support for religious orthodoxy; the point of education was to create a more competent and well-rounded person instead.

> Renaissance Humanism was an intellectual movement typified by a revived interest in the classical world and studies which focussed not on religion but on what it is to be human… Humanism was a term invented in the 19th century to describe the Renaissance idea that directly studying the works of antiquity was an important part of a rounded education (but not the only part). From this position came the idea that the study of humanity should be a priority as opposed to religious matters (worldhistory.org: https://www.worldhistory.org/Renaissance_Humanism/)

Along with the idea of a well-rounded individual, Renaissance thinkers championed the idea of **civic humanism**: one's moral and ethical standing was tied to devotion to one's city. This was a Greek and Roman concept that the great Renaissance thinker Petrarch championed in particular. Here, the Medici of Florence are the ultimate example: there was a tremendous effort on the part of the rich and powerful to invest in the city in the form of building projects and art. This was tied to the prestige of the family, of course, but it was also a heartfelt dedication to one's home, analogous to the present-day concept of patriotism.

Practically speaking, there was a shift in the practical business of education from medieval scholasticism, which focused on law, medicine, and theology, to disciplines related to business and politics. Princes and other elites wanted skilled bureaucrats to staff their merchant empires; they needed literate men with a knowledge of law and mathematics, even if they themselves were not merchants. City governments began educating children (girls and boys alike, at least in certain cities like Florence) directly, along with the role played by private tutors. These schools and tutors emphasized practical education: rhetoric, math, and history. Thus, one of the major effects of the Italian Renaissance was that this new form of education, usually referred to as "humanistic education" spread from Italy to the rest of Europe by the late fifteenth century. By the sixteenth century, a broad cross-section of European elites, including nobles, merchants, and priests, were educated in the humanistic tradition.

> *The focus on a liberal arts education was a byproduct of humanism. This included the study of history, moral philosophy, rhetoric, grammar, logic, poetry, mathematics, astronomy, and music. The purpose was to produce individuals who followed a path of virtue and wisdom, and possessed the rhetorical skills which which to persuade others to do so. (Spielvogel).*

A "Renaissance man" (note that there *were* important women thinkers as well, but the term "Renaissance man" was used exclusively for men) was a man who cultivated classical virtues, which were not quite the same as Christian ones: understanding, benevolence, compassion, fortitude, judgment, eloquence, and honor, among others. Drawing from the work of thinkers like Socrates, Plato,

Aristotle, Cicero, and Virgil, Renaissance thinkers came to support the idea of a virtuous life that was not the same thing as a specifically *Christian* virtuous life. And, importantly, it was possible to become a good person simply through studying the classics – all of the major figures of the Renaissance were Christians, but they insisted that one's moral status could and should be shaped by emulation of the ancient virtues, combined with Christian piety. While the Renaissance case for the debasement of medieval culture was overstated (medieval intellectual life prospered during the late Middle Ages) there was definitely a distinct kind of intellectual courage and optimism that came out of the return to classical models over medieval ones during the Renaissance.

One important caveat must be included in discussing humanistic education, however. While most male humanists supported education for girls, they insisted that it was to be very different than that offered to boys. Girls were to read specific texts drawn from the Bible, the "Church Fathers" (important theologians in the early history of the Church), and from classical Greek and Roman writers that emphasized morality, modesty, and obedience. An educated girl was trained to be an obedient, companionable wife, not an independent thinker in her own right. That theme would remain in place in the male-dominated realm of education in Europe for centuries to come, although it is clear from the number of independent, intellectually courageous women writers throughout the early modern period that girls' education did *not* always succeed in creating compliant, deferential women in the end.

Likewise, humanism contributed to an important, ongoing public debate that lasted for centuries: the *querelles des femmes* ("debates about women"). Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries various intellectuals in universities, churches, and aristocratic courts and salons wrote numerous essays and books contesting whether or not women were naturally immoral, weak, and foolish, or if instead education and environment could lead to intelligence and morality comparable with those of men. While men had dominated these debates early on, women educated in the humanist tradition joined in the *querelles* in earnest during the Renaissance, arguing both that education was key to elevating women's competence and that women shared precisely the same spiritual and moral nature as did men. Unfortunately, while a significant minority of male thinkers came to agree, most remained adamant that women were biologically and spiritually inferior, destined for their traditional roles and ill-served by advanced education.

Important Thinkers

The Renaissance is remembered primarily for its great thinkers and artists, with some exceptional individuals (like Leonardo da Vinci) being renowned as both. What Renaissance thinkers had in common was that they embraced the ideals of humanism and used humanism as their inspiration for creating innovative new approaches to philosophy, philology (the study of language), theology, history, and political theory. In other words, reading the classics inspired Renaissance thinkers to emulate the great writers and philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome, creating poetry, philosophy, and theory on par with that of an Aristotle or a Cicero. Some of the most noteworthy included the following.

Dante (1265 - 1321)

Durante degli Alighieri, better remembered simply as Dante, was a major figure who anticipated the Renaissance rather than being alive during most of it (while there is no "official" start to the

Renaissance, the life of Petrarch, described below, lends itself to using 1300 as a convenient date). Experiencing what would later be called a mid-life crisis, Dante turned to poetry to console himself, ultimately producing the greatest written work of the late Middle Ages: *The Divine Comedy*. Written in his own native dialect, the Tuscan of the city of Florence, *The Divine Comedy* describes Dante's descent into hell, guided by the spirit of the classical Roman poet Virgil. Dante and Virgil emerge on the other side of the earth, with Dante ascending the mountain of purgatory and ultimately entering heaven, where he enters into the divine presence.

Dante's work, which soon became justly famous in Italy and then elsewhere in Europe, presaged some of the essential themes of Renaissance thought. Dante's travels through hell, purgatory, and heaven in the poem are replete with encounters with two categories of people: Italians of Dante's lifetime or the recent past, and both real and mythical figures from ancient Greece and Rome. In other words, Dante was indifferent to the entire period of the Middle Ages, concentrating instead on what he imagined the spiritual fate of the great thinkers and heroes of the classical age would have been (and gleefully relegating Italians he hated to infernal torments). Ultimately, his work became so famous that it established Tuscan as the basis of what would eventually become the language of "Italian" - all educated people in Italy would eventually come to read the *Comedy* as a matter of course and it came to serve as the founding document of the modern Italian language in the process.

Petrarch (1304 – 1374)

Francesco Petrarca, known as Petrarch in English, was in many ways the founding father of the Renaissance. Like Dante, he was a Florentine (native of the city of Florence) and single-handedly spearheaded the practice of studying and imitating the great writers and thinkers of the past. Petrarch personally rediscovered long-lost works by Cicero, widely considered the greatest writer of ancient Rome during the republican period, and set about training himself to emulate Cicero's rhetorical style. Petrarch wrote to friends and associates in a classical, grammatically spotless Latin (as opposed to the often sloppy and error-ridden Latin of the Middle Ages) and encouraged them to learn to emulate the classics in their writing, thought, and values. He went on to write many works of poetry and prose that were based on the model provided by Cicero and other ancient writers.

Petrarch was responsible for coming up with the very idea of the "Dark Ages" that had separated his own era from the greatness of the classical past. His own poetry and writings became so popular among other educated people that he deserves a great deal of personal credit for sparking the Renaissance itself; following Petrarch, the idea that the classical world might be "reborn" in northern Italy acquired a great deal of popularity and cultural force.

Christine de Pizan (1364 - 1430)

Christine de Pizan was the most famous and important woman thinker and writer of the Renaissance era. Her father, the court astrologer of the French king Charles V, was exceptional in that he felt it important that his daughter receive the same quality of education afforded to elite men at the time. She went on to become a famous poet and writer in her own right, being patronized (i.e. receiving commissions for her writing) by a wide variety of French and Italian

In the illustration above, Christine de Pizan presents a copy of The City of Ladies to a French noblewoman, Margaret of Burgundy. The illustration itself is in the pre-Renaissance "Gothic" style, without linear perspective, despite its approximate date of 1475. This is one example of the relatively slow spread of Renaissance-inspired artistic innovations.

nobles. Her best-known work was *The Book of the City of Ladies*, in which she attacked the then-universal idea that women were naturally unintelligent, sinful, and irrational; it was a key text in the *querelles des femmes* noted above. Instead, she argued, history provided a vast catalog of women who had been moral, pious, intelligent, and competent, and that it was men's pride and the refusal of men to allow women to be properly educated that held women back. In many ways, the *City of Ladies* was the first truly feminist work in European history, and it is striking that she was supported by, and listened to by, elite men due to her obvious intellectual gifts despite their own deep-seated sexism.

Desiderius Erasmus (1466 - 1536)

Erasmus was an astonishingly erudite priest who benefited from both the traditional scholastic education of the late-medieval church and the new humanistic style that emerged from the Renaissance. Of his various talents, one of the most important was his mastery of philology: the history of languages. Erasmus became completely fluent not just in classical and medieval Latin, but in the Greek of the New Testament (i.e. most of the earliest versions of the New Testament of the Bible are written in the vernacular Greek of the first century CE). He also became conversant in Hebrew, which was very uncommon among Christians at the time.

Armed with his lingual virtuosity, Erasmus undertook a vast study and re-translation of the New Testament, working from various versions of the Greek originals and correcting the Latin Vulgate that was the most widely used version at the time. In the process, Erasmus corrected the New Testament itself, catching and fixing numerous translation errors (while he did not re-translate the Old Testament from the Hebrew, he did point out errors in it as well).

In the above well-known portrait of Erasmus, he is depicted in heavy, fur-lined robes and hat, a necessity even when indoors in Northern Europe for much of the year. Realistic portraiture was another major innovation of the Renaissance period.

Erasmus was part of the Northern Renaissance movement known as **Christian Humanism**. He and others studied the classics of antiquity as well as the original writings of the Church fathers. Their critical analysis of the early church, along with their calls for reform of the Church, would contribute to the start of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.

Erasmus was criticized by some of his superiors within the Church because he was not officially authorized to carry out his studies and translations; nevertheless, he ended up producing an extensively notated re-translation of the New Testament with numerous corrections. Importantly, these corrections were not just a question of grammatical issues, but of *meaning*. The Christian message that emerged from the "correct" version of the New Testament was a deeply personal philosophy of prayer, devotion, and morality that did not correspond to many

of the structures and practices of the Latin Church. He was also an advocate of translations of the Bible into vernacular languages, although he did not produce such a translation himself.

Some of his other works other included *In Praise of Folly*, a satirical attack on corruption within the church, and *Handbook of the Christian Soldier*, which de-emphasized the importance of the sacraments. Erasmus used his abundant wit to ridicule sterile medieval-style scholastic scholars, the corruption of "Christian" rulers who were essentially glorified warlords, and even the very idea of witches, which he demonstrated relied on a faulty translation from the Hebrew of the Old Testament.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 – 1527)

Machiavelli was a "courtier," a professional politician, ambassador, and official who spent his life in the court of a ruler - in his case, as part of the city government of his native Florence. While in Florence, Machiavelli wrote various works on politics, most notably a consideration of the proper functioning of a republic like Florence itself. Unfortunately for him, Machiavelli was caught up in the whirlwind of power politics at court and ended up being exiled by the Medici.

While in exile, Machiavelli undertook a new work of political theory which he titled *The Prince*. Here, Machiavelli detailed how an effective ruler should behave: training constantly in war, forcing his subjects to fear (but not hate) him, studying the ancient past for role models like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and never wasting a moment worrying about morality when power was on the line. In the process, Machiavelli created what was arguably the first work of "political science" that abandoned the moralistic approach of how a ruler *should* behave as a good Christian and instead embraced a practical guide to holding power. He dedicated the work to the Medici in hopes that he would be allowed to return from exile (he detested the rural bumpkins he lived among in exile and longed to return to cosmopolitan Florence). Instead, *The Prince* caused a scandal when it came out for completely ignoring the role of God and Christian morality in politics, and Machiavelli died not long after. That being noted, Machiavelli is now remembered as a pioneering political thinker. It is safe to assume that far more rulers have consulted *The Prince* for ideas of how to maintain their power over the years than one of the moralistic tracts that was preferred during Machiavelli's lifetime.

Baldassarre Castiglione (1478 - 1529)

Castiglione's depiction of what it meant to be noble influenced European nobility for hundreds of years.

Castiglione was the author of *The Courtier,* published at the end of his life in 1528. Whereas Machiavelli's *The Prince* was a practical guide for rulers, *The Courtier* was a guide to the nobles, wealthy merchants, high-ranking members of the Church, and other social elites who served and schemed in the courts of princes: courtiers. The work centered on what was needed to win the prince's favor and to influence him, not just avoiding embarrassment at court. This was tied to the growing sense of what it was to be "civilized" – Italians at the time were renowned across Europe for their refinement, the quality of their dress and jewelry, their wit in conversation, and their good taste. The relatively crude tastes of the nobility of the Middle Ages were "revised" starting in Italy, with Castiglione serving as both a symptom and cause of this shift.

The effective courtier, according to Castiglione, was tasteful, educated, clever, and subtle in his actions and words, a true politician rather than merely a warrior who happened to have inherited some land. Going forward, growing numbers of political elites came to resemble a Castiglione-style courtier

instead of a thuggish medieval knight or "man-at-arms." When he died, no less a personage than the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V lamented his loss and paid tribute to his memory.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola

Humanism was an intellectual movement that shifted much of European society from the theocratic, God-centered one of the Medieval Period, to an anthropocentric or man- centered world of the Renaissance. Giovanni Pico dlle Mirandola was one humanist who helped foster this change. Pico's treatise, *The Oration on the Dignity of Man* gave impetus to the notion that man had an individual personality. It emphasized the uniqueness and worth of the individual. Pico's work began an earnest study of the process of change. People began to be interested in history. If there is change, there can be progress. The concept of progress is antithetical to Medieval thought, where scholars focused on the eternal and unchanging nature of God. Pico's nascent stirrings gave birth to scientific inquiry found in Galileo's study of the heavens. It also eventually gave birth to the Martin Luther's and John Calvin's justifications for the Protestant Reformation and their reliance on the individual conscience. Pico's reasoning inspired the attention paid to the human body and to the faces of individuals in Renaissance art. It allowed people to develop the concept of the autonomous individual. Likewise, the idea of the sovereign nation-state began to develop as a replacement for the ideal of a united Christendom.

Humanism was not an atheistic or anti-Christian movement. In fact, much of the Italian Catholic Church enthusiastically embraced the movement. Pico, himself, believed that there "is nothing more wonderful than man" because man could achieve union with God if he wills to do so. The change in perspective, not only noticed and acknowledged change, it engendered the pursuit of progress as an honorable quest.
(https://www.njitalianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/5-GiovanniPicodellaMirandola-L.pdf)

Art and Artists

Perhaps the most iconic aspect of the Renaissance as a whole is its tremendous artistic achievements - figures like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti are household names in a way that Petrarch is not, despite the fact that Petrarch should be credited for creating the very concept of the Renaissance. The fame of Renaissance art is thanks to the incredible creativity of the great Renaissance artists themselves, who both imitated classical models of art and ultimately forged entirely new artistic paths of their own.

Medieval art (called "Gothic" after one of the Germanic tribes that had conquered the Roman Empire) had been unconcerned with realistic depictions of objects or people. Medieval paintings often presented things from several angles at once to the viewer and had no sense of three-dimensional

perspective. Likewise, Gothic architecture tended to be bulky and overwhelming rather than refined and delicate; the great examples of Gothic architecture are undoubtedly the cathedrals built during the Middle Ages, often beautiful and inspiring but a far cry from the symmetrical, airy structures of ancient Greece and Rome.

Another example of Gothic art. The artist, Lorenzo Monaco, painted during the Renaissance period, but the work was created before linear perspective had replaced the "two-dimensional" style of Gothic painting.

In contrast, Renaissance artists studied and copied ancient frescoes and statues in an attempt to learn how to realistically depict people and objects. And, just as Petrarch "invented" the major themes of Renaissance thought by imitating and championing classical humanist thought, a Florentine artist, architect, and engineer named Filippo Brunelleschi "invented" Renaissance art through the imitation of the classical world.

Filippo Brunelleschi (1377 - 1446)

Brunelleschi was an astonishing artistic and engineering genius. He became a prominent client of the Medici, and with their political and financial support he undertook the construction of what would be the largest free-standing domed structure in all of Europe: the dome of the cathedral of Florence. For generations, the cathedral of Florence had stood unfinished, its main tower having been built too large and too tall for any architect to complete. Literally no one knew how to build a freestanding stone dome on top of a tower over 350 feet high. By studying ancient Roman structures and employing his own incredible intellect, Brunelleschi built the dome in such a way that it held its internal structure together during the construction process. He invented a giant, geared winch to raise huge blocks of sandstone hundreds of feet in the air and was even known to personally ascend the construction to place bricks. The dome was completed in 1413, crowning both his fame as an architect and the Medici's role as the greatest patrons of Renaissance art and architecture at the time.

Contemporary photograph of the Florence Cathedral, with Brunelleschi's dome on the right.

While the dome is usually considered Brunelleschi's greatest achievement, he was also the (re-)inventor of one of the most important artistic concepts in history: linear perspective. He was the first person in the Western world to determine how to draw objects in two dimensions, on a piece of paper or the equivalent, in such a way that they looked realistically three-dimensional (i.e. having depth, as in looking off into the distance and seeing objects that are farther away "look smaller" than those nearby). Here, Brunelleschi was unquestionably influenced by a medieval Arab thinker, Ibn al-Haytham, whose *Book of Optics* laid out theories of light and sight perception that described linear perspective. The *Book of Optics* was available to Brunelleschi in Latin translation, and, crucially, Brunelleschi applied the concept of perspective to actual art (which al-Haytham had not, focusing instead on the scientific basis of optics). In doing so, Brunelleschi introduced the ability for artists to create realistic depictions of their subjects. This innovation spread rapidly and completely revolutionized the visual arts, resulting in far more lifelike drawings and paintings.

Sandro Botticelli (1445 - 1510)

Botticelli exemplified the life of a successful Renaissance painter during the height of the most productive artistic period in Florence and Rome. Likewise, his works focused on themes central to the Renaissance as a whole: the importance of patronage, the celebration of classical figures and ideas, the beauty of the human body and mind, and Christian piety. Botticelli was patronized by various members of the Florentine *popolo grossi*, by the Medici, and by popes, producing numerous frescos (wall paintings done on plaster), portraits, and both biblical and classical scenes. Two of his most famous works capture different aspects of Renaissance art:

The Adoration of the Magi (1475), to the right, depicts members of the Medici family, Botticelli's patrons, as taking part in one of the key scenes from the birth of Christ. Botticelli even included himself in the painting; his self-portrait is the figure on the far right. Note how all of the figures are dressed as wealthy Italians of the fifteenth century, not Jews, Romans, and Persians of the first century. Despite the abundance of biblical scenes in Renaissance painting, no attempt was made to depict people as they might have appeared at the time. Instead, the paintings projected the world of the *popoli grossi* back in time, sometimes (as with this example) even including portraits of actual important Italians.

The Birth of Venus (1485), to the right, celebrates a key moment in Greek mythology when the goddess of love, sexuality, and beauty is

born from the sea. Here Botticelli pushed the boundaries of Renaissance art (and what was culturally acceptable his contemporaries) by glorifying not just the beauty of the human body, but by openly celebrating Venus's sexuality. The painting thus completely rejected the asceticism associated with Christian piety during the Middle Ages, suggesting instead a kind of joyful sensuality.

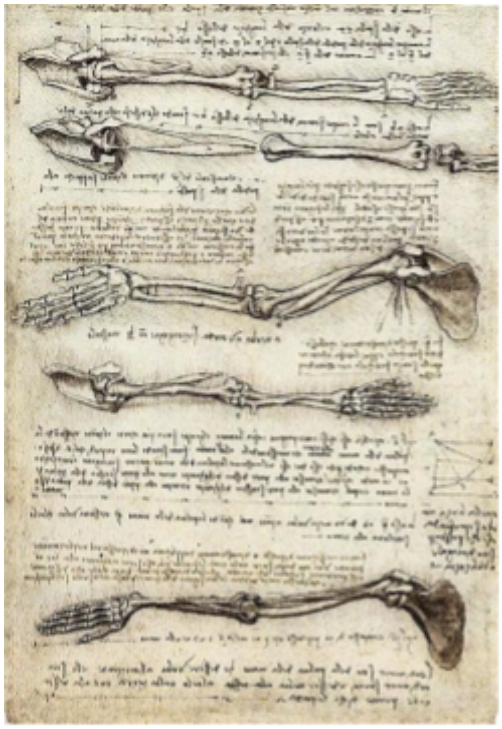
Despite paintings like *The Birth of Venus*, however, Botticelli remained a pious Christian throughout his life. In 1490 Botticelli fell under the influence of Girolamo Savonarola, a fiery preacher who came to Florence to denounce its "vanities" (art, rich dress, and general worldliness) and call for a strict, even fanatical form of Christian behavior. While there is no tangible evidence to support the claim, some stories had it that Botticelli even destroyed some of his own paintings under Savonarola's influence. While Savonarola was executed in 1493, Botticelli did not go on to produce art at the same pace he had before the 1490s. By then, of course, he had already clinched his place in art history as one of the major figures of Renaissance painting.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 - 1519)

Da Vinci was famous in his own time as both one of the greatest painters of his age and as what we would now call a scientist – at the time, he was sought after for his skill at engineering, overseeing the construction of the naval defenses of Venice and swamp drainage projects in Rome at different points. He was hired by a whole swath of the rich and powerful in Italy and France; in his old age he was the official chief painter and engineer of the French king, living in a private chateau provided for him and receiving admiring visits from the king.

Leonardo Da Vinci's The Last Supper. *Note how the walls and ceiling tiles appear to slant downwards toward a point at the horizon behind Jesus (in the center). That imaginary point - the "vanishing point" - was one of the major artistic breakthroughs associated with linear perspective pioneered by Brunelleschi.*

Leonardo's scientific work was often closely related to his artistic skills. While the practice of autopsy for medical knowledge was nothing new - doctors in the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe



One of Da Vinci's anatomical sketches, in this case examining the skeletal structure of the arm.

alike had used autopsies to further medical knowledge for centuries - Leonardo was able to document his findings in meticulous detail thanks to his artistic virtuosity. He undertook dozens of dissections of bodies (most of them executed criminals) and drew precise diagrams of the parts of the body. He also created speculative diagrams of various machines, from practical designs like hydraulic engines and weapons to fantastical ones like flying machines based on the anatomy of birds.

Da Vinci is remembered today thanks as much to his diagrams of things like flying machines as for his art. Ironically, while he was well known as a practical engineer at the time, no one had a clue that he was an inventor in the technological sense: he never built physical models of his ideas, and he never published his concepts, so they remained unknown until well after his death. Likewise, while his anatomical work anticipated important developments in medicine, they were unknown during his own lifetime.

Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475 - 1564)

Michelangelo was the most celebrated artist of the Renaissance during his own lifetime, patronized by the city council of Florence (run by the Medici) and the pope alike. He created numerous works, most famously the statue of the David and the paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The latter work took him four years of work, during which he argued constantly with the Pope, Julius II, who treated him like an artisan servant rather than the true artistic genius Michelangelo knew himself to be. Michelangelo was already the most famous artist in Europe thanks to his sculptures. By the time he completed the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he had to be accepted as one of the greatest painters of his age as well, not just the single most famous sculptor of the time.

In the end, a biography of Michelangelo written by a friend helped cement the idea that there was an important distinction between mere artisans and true artists, the latter of whom were temperamental and mercurial but possessed of genius. Thus, the whole idea of the artist as an ingenious social outsider derives in part from Michelangelo's life.

Michelangelo's David, *completed in 1504 (it took three years to complete). The statue was meant to celebrate an ideal of masculine beauty, inspired by the example of Greek sculpture and by the work of an earlier Renaissance artist, Donatello.*

Conclusion

Renaissance art and scholarship was enormously influential. While the process took many decades, both humanist scholarship and education on the one hand and classically-inspired art and architecture on the other spread beyond Italy over the course of the fifteenth century. By the sixteenth century, the study of the classics became entrenched as an essential part of elite education itself, joining with (or rendering obsolete) medieval scholastic traditions in schools and universities. The beautiful and realistic styles of sculpture and painting spread as well, completely surpassing Gothic artistic forms, just as Renaissance architecture replaced the Gothic style of building. Along with the political and technological innovations described in the following chapters, Renaissance learning and art helped bring about the definitive end of the Middle Ages.

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Chapter 4: Politics in the Renaissance Era

The Renaissance was originally an Italian phenomenon, due to the concentration of wealth and the relative power of the city-states of northern Italy. Renaissance thought spread, however, thanks to interactions between the kings and nobility of the rest of Europe and the elites of the Italian city-states, especially after a series of wars at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century saw the larger monarchies of Europe exert direct political control in Italy.

The End of the Italian Renaissance

Detailed below, a new regional power arose in the Middle East and spread to Europe starting in the fourteenth century: the Ottoman Turks. In 1453, the ancient Roman city of Constantinople fell to the Turks, by which time the Turks had already seized control of the entire Balkan region (i.e. the region north of Greece including present-day Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Albania, and Macedonia). The rise in Turkish power in the east spelled trouble for the east-to-west trade routes the Italian cities had benefited from so much since the era of the crusades, and despite deals worked out between Venice and the Ottomans, the profits to be had from the spice and luxury trade diminished (at least for the Italians) over time.

By the mid-fifteenth century, northern manufacturing began to compete with Italian production as well. Particularly in England and the Netherlands, northern European crafts were produced that rivaled Italian products and undermined the demand for the latter. Thus, the relative degree of prosperity in Italy vs. the rest of Europe declined going into the sixteenth century.

The real killing stroke to the Italian Renaissance was the collapse of the balance of power inaugurated by the Peace of Lodi. The threat to Italian independence arose from the growing power of the Kingdom of France and of the Holy Roman Empire, already engaged in intermittent warfare to the north. The French king, Charles VIII, decided to seize control of Milan, citing a dubious claim tied up in the web of dynastic marriage, and a Milanese pretender invited in the French to help him seize control of the despotism in 1494. All of the northern Italian city-states were caught in the crossfire of alliances and counter-alliances that ensued; the Medici were exiled from Florence the same year for offering territory to the French in an attempt to get them to leave Florence alone.

The result was the Italian Wars that ended the Renaissance. The three great powers of the time, France, the Holy Roman Empire, and Spain, jockeyed with one another and with the papacy (which behaved like just another warlike state) to seize Italian territory. Italy became a battleground and, over the next few decades, the independence of the Italian cities was either compromised or completely extinguished. Between 1503 – 1533, one by one, the cities became territories or puppets of one or the other of the great powers, and in the process the Italian countryside was devastated and the financial resources of the cities were drained. In the aftermath of the Italian Wars, only the Papal States of central Italy remained truly politically independent, and the Italian peninsula would not emerge from under the shadow of the greater powers to its north and west until the nineteenth century.

That being noted, the Renaissance did not *really* end. What "ended" with the Italian Wars was Italian financial and commercial dominance and the glory days of scholarship and artistic production that had gone with it. By the time the Italian Wars started, all of the patterns and innovations first developed in Italy had already spread north and west. In other words, "The Renaissance" was already a European phenomenon by the late fifteenth century, so even the end of Italian independence did not jeopardize the intellectual, commercial, and artistic gains that had originally blossomed in Italy.

The greatest achievement of the Italian Renaissance, despite the higher profile given to Renaissance art, was probably humanistic education. The study of the classics, a high level of literary sophistication, and a solid grounding in practical commercial knowledge (most obviously mathematics and accounting) were all combined in humanistic education. Royal governments across Europe sought out men with humanistic education to serve as bureaucrats and officials, even as merchants everywhere adopted Italian mercantile practices for their obvious benefits (e.g. the superiority of Arabic numerals over Roman ones, the crucial importance of accurate bookkeeping, etc.). Thus, while not as glamorous as beautiful paintings or soaring buildings, the practical effects of humanistic education led to its widespread adoption almost everywhere in Europe.

Even the Church, which continued to educate its priests in the older scholastic tradition, welcomed the addition of humanistic forms of education in some ways. Many of the most outstanding scholars in Europe remained members of the Church, benefiting from both their scholastic and their humanistic educational backgrounds. Erasmus, discussed in the last chapter, was one such priest, as was the most important figure in the Protestant Reformation that began in 1517, the German monk Martin Luther.

Likewise, the clear superiority of Italian artists and architects during the heyday of the Renaissance led artists from elsewhere in Europe to flock to Italy. Those artists tended to study under Italian masters, then return to their countries of origin to do their own work. By the middle of the fifteenth century, a "Northern Renaissance" of painters was flourishing in parts of northern Europe, particularly the Low Countries (i.e. the areas that would later become Belgium and the Netherlands). By the sixteenth century, "Renaissance art" was universal in Western Europe, with artists everywhere benefiting from the use of linear perspective, evocative and realistic portraiture, and the other artistic techniques first developed in Italy.

War and the Gunpowder Revolution

Monarchs had always tied their identity to war. The European monarchies were originally the product of the Germanic conquests at the end of the Roman period, and it was a point of great pride among noble families to be able to trace their family lines back to the warlords of old. Political loyalty was to the king one served, *not* the territory in which one lived. Likewise, territories were won through war or marriage, so they did not necessarily make sense on a map; many kings ruled over a patchwork of different regions that were not necessarily adjacent (i.e. they did not physically abut one another; a present-day example is the fact that Alaska is part of the United States but is not contiguous with the "lower 48" states). Kings not only fought wars to glorify their line and to seize territory, but they had nobles who egged them on since war was also fought for booty. Kings and nobles alike trained in war constantly, organized and fought in tournaments, and were absolute fanatics about hunting. Henry VIII of England spent about two-thirds of his "free" time hunting, for instance.

By about 1450, military technology had changed significantly. The basis of this change can be summed up in a single word: gunpowder. First developed in China, but first used militarily in the Middle East, gunpowder arrived in Europe in the fourteenth century. By the fifteenth century it was increasingly widespread in war. Early gunpowder weapons were ridiculously inaccurate and dangerous (to the user) by later standards - they frequently exploded, they were grossly inaccurate, and they took a long time to reload. They were also, however, both lethal and relatively easy to use. It was easy to train men to use gunpowder weapons, and those weapons could easily kill a knight who had spent his entire life training to fight.

Thus, by the later part of the fifteenth century, wars were simply fought differently than they had been in the Middle Ages. There was still the symbolic core of the king and his elite noble knights on horseback, but the actual tactical utility of cavalry charges started to fade. Instead, squares of pikemen (i.e. soldiers who fought with long spears called pikes) supplemented by soldiers using primitive muskets neutralized the effectiveness of knights. In turn, these new units tended to be made up of professional soldiers for hire, mercenaries, who fought for pay instead of honor or territory.

Illustration of a siege during the 100 Years' War. Cannons were introduced by the second half of the war, but note the fact that most of the soldiers remain armed with bows and pikes - the gunpowder "revolution" took the better part of a century.

Another change in military technology was the emergence of cannons, which completely undermined the efficacy of castles. The ability to build, maintain, and operate cannons required advanced metallurgy and engineering, which in turn required highly skilled technicians (either royal ones or mercenaries for hire). The most famous case of the superiority of

cannons to walls was the Turkish siege of Constantinople in 1453, which finally spelled the end of the Byzantine Empire. The result of the artillery revolution was that fortresses and walls had to be redesigned and rebuilt quite literally from the ground up, a hugely expensive undertaking that forced monarchs and nobles to seek new sources of revenue.

As the use of the cannon increased, star forts were built as these walls could more readily withstand cannon fire. However, they were expensive to build and only kings could really afford to build them or have the ability to take out a loan. The power of the nobility further declined with the gunpowder revolution.

The Resulting Financial Revolution

To sum up, gunpowder inaugurated a long-term change in how wars were fought. In the process, states found themselves forced to come up with enormous amounts of revenue to cover the costs of guns, mercenaries, and new fortifications. This undertaking was extremely expensive. Even the larger kingdoms like France were constantly in need of additional sources of wealth, leading to new taxes to keep revenue flowing in. Royal governments also turned to officials drawn from the towns and cities, men whose education came to resemble that of the humanist schools and tutors of Italy. Humanism thus arrived from Italy via the staffing of royal offices, ultimately in service of war. It is also worth noting that most of these new royal officials were not of noble birth; they were often from mercantile families.

The practical nature of humanistic education ensured that this new generation of bureaucrats was more efficient and effective than ever before. Likewise, whereas members of the nobility believed that they *owned* their titles and authority, royal officials did not – they were dependent on their respective kings. Kings could not fire their nobles, but they could fire their officials. Thus, this new breed of educated bureaucrat had to be good at their jobs, as they had no titles to fall back on.

The major effort of the new royal officials (despised by the old nobility as "new men") was expanding the crown's reach. They targeted both the nobles and, especially, the Church, which was the largest and richest institution in Europe. One iconic example was the fact that the French crown almost completely controlled the French Church (despite battles with the papacy over this control), and directly appointed French bishops. In turn, those bishops often served the state as much as they did the church.

The very idea of the right of a government, in this case that of the king, to levy taxes that were applicable to the entire territory under its control dates from this period. Starting in the fourteenth century, the kingdoms of Europe started levying taxes on both commodities, like salt, that were needed by everyone, and on people just for being there (a head tax or a hearth tax). The medieval idea had been that the king was supposed to live on the revenues from his own estates; it was the new monarchies of the Renaissance period that successfully promoted the view that kings had the right to levy taxes across the board.

The European State in the Renaissance

The High Middle Ages had witnessed the emergence of territorial states that began to develop the administrative machinery of centralized government. Professional bureaucracies, royal courts, and parliamentary assemblies were all products of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Strong monarchy had provided the organizing power for the development of these states, but in the fourteenth century, the internal stability of European governments had been threatened by financial and dynastic problems as well as challenges from their nobilities. By the fifteenth century, rulers began to rebuild their states by checking the violent activities of their nobles and maintaining internal order. Some territorial units, such as the Holy Roman Empire and Italy, failed to develop strong national monarchies, but even in these areas, strong princes and city councils managed to centralize their authority within their smaller territorial states. In Italy, Milan, Venice, and Florence managed to become fairly well centralized territorial states. Some historians believe that the Italian Renaissance states, with their preoccupation with political power, were the first true examples of the modern secular state.

The "New Monarchies"

In the first half of the fifteenth century, European states continued the disintegrative patterns of the previous century. In the second half of the fifteenth century, however, recovery set in, and attempts were made to reestablish the centralized power of monarchical governments. To characterize the results, some historians have used the label "Renaissance states"; others have spoken of the "new monarchies," especially those of France, England, and Spain at the end of the fifteenth century. Although appropriate, the term "new monarch" can also be misleading. These Renaissance monarchs were new in their concentration of royal authority, their attempts to suppress the nobility, their efforts to control the church in their lands, and their insistence upon having the loyalty of people living within definite territorial boundaries. Like the rulers of fifteenth-century Italian states, the "new monarchs" were often crafty men obsessed with the acquisition and expansion of political power. Of course, none of these characteristics was entirely new in that a number of medieval monarchs, especially in the thirteenth century, had also exhibited them. Nevertheless, the Renaissance period does mark the further extension of centralized royal authority. Of course, the degree to which monarchs were successful in extending their political authority varied from area to area. In central and eastern Europe, decentralization rather than centralization of political authority remained a fact of life.

CHRONOLOGY

The "New Monarchies"

France	
Charles VII	1422–1461
Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges	1438
Louis XI the Spider	1461–1483
Charles VIII	1483–1498
Louis XII	1498–1515
England	
War of the Roses	1450s–1485
Richard III	1483–1485
Henry VII	1485–1509
Spain	
Isabella of Castile	1474–1504
Ferdinand of Aragon	1479–1516
Marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella	1469
Introduction of Inquisition	1478
Expulsion of the Jews	1492
Expulsion of the Muslims	1502
Holy Roman Empire	
Frederick III	1440–1493
Maximilian I	1493–1519
Eastern Europe	
Creation of Lithuanian-Polish state	1386
Hungary: Matthias Corvinus	1458–1490
Russia: Ivan III	1462–1505
Fall of Constantinople and Byzantine Empire	1453

THE GROWTH OF THE FRENCH MONARCHY

The Hundred Years' War had left France prostrate. Depopulation, desolate farmlands, ruined commerce, and independent and unruly nobles had made it difficult for the kings to assert their authority. But the war had also developed a strong degree of French national feeling toward a common enemy that the kings could use to reestablish monarchical power. The need to prosecute the war provided an excuse to strengthen the authority of the king, already evident in the policies of Charles VII (1422–1461) after he was crowned king at Reims. With the consent of the Estates-General, Charles established a royal army composed of cavalry and archers. He received from the Estates-General the right to levy the *taille,* an annual direct tax usually on land or property, without any need for further approval from the Estates-General. Losing control of the purse meant less power for this parliamentary body. Charles VII also secured the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438), an agreement with the papacy that strengthened the liberties of the French church administratively at the expense of the papacy and

enabled the king to begin to assume control over the church in France.

The process of developing a French territorial state was greatly advanced by King Louis XI (1461–1483), known as the Spider because of his wily and devious ways. Some historians have called this "new monarch" the founder of the French national state. By retaining the *taille* as a permanent tax imposed by royal authority, Louis secured a sound, regular source of income. Louis was not, however, completely successful in repressing the French nobility whose independence posed a threat to his own state building. A major problem was his supposed vassal, Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy (1467–1477). Charles attempted to create a middle kingdom between France and Germany, stretching from the Low Countries in the north to Switzerland. Louis opposed his action, and when Charles was killed in 1477 fighting the Swiss, Louis added part of Charles's possessions, the duchy of Burgundy, to his own lands. Three years later, the provinces of Anjou, Maine, Bar, and Provence were brought under royal control. Louis the Spider also encouraged the growth of industry and commerce in an attempt to bolster the French economy. For example, he introduced new industries, such as the silk industry to Lyons.

Many historians believe that Louis created a base for the later development of a strong French monarchy. In any case, the monarchy was at least well enough established to weather the policies of the next two monarchs, Charles VIII (1483–1498) and Louis XII (1498–1515), whose attempts to subdue parts of Italy initiated a series of Italian wars. Internally, France survived these wars without too much difficulty.

ENGLAND: CIVIL WAR AND A NEW MONARCHY

The Hundred Years' War had also strongly affected the other protagonist in that conflict. The cost of the war in its final years and the losses in manpower strained the English economy. Moreover, the end of the war brought even greater domestic turmoil to England when the War of the Roses broke out in the 1450s. This civil war pitted the ducal house of Lancaster, whose symbol was a red rose, against the ducal house of York, whose symbol was a white rose. Many aristocratic families of England were drawn into the conflict. Finally, in 1485, Henry Tudor, duke of Richmond, defeated the last Yorkist king, Richard III (1483–1485), at Bosworth Field and established the new Tudor dynasty.

As the first Tudor king, Henry VII (1485–1509) worked to reduce internal dissension and establish a strong monarchical government. The English aristocracy had been much weakened by the War of the Roses because many nobles had been killed. Henry eliminated the private wars of the nobility by abolishing "livery and maintenance," the practice by which wealthy aristocrats maintained private armies of followers dedicated to the service of their lord. Since England, unlike France and Spain, did not possess a standing army, the king relied on special commissions to trusted nobles to raise troops for a specific campaign, after which the troops were disbanded. Henry also controlled the irresponsible activity of the nobles by establishing the Court of Star Chamber, which did not use juries and allowed torture to be used to extract confessions.

Henry VII was particularly successful in extracting income from the traditional financial resources of the English monarch, such as the crown lands, judicial fees and fines, and customs duties. By using diplomacy to avoid wars, which are always expensive, the king avoided having to call Parliament on any regular basis to grant him funds. By not overburdening the landed gentry and middle class with taxes, Henry won their favor, and they provided much support for his monarchy.

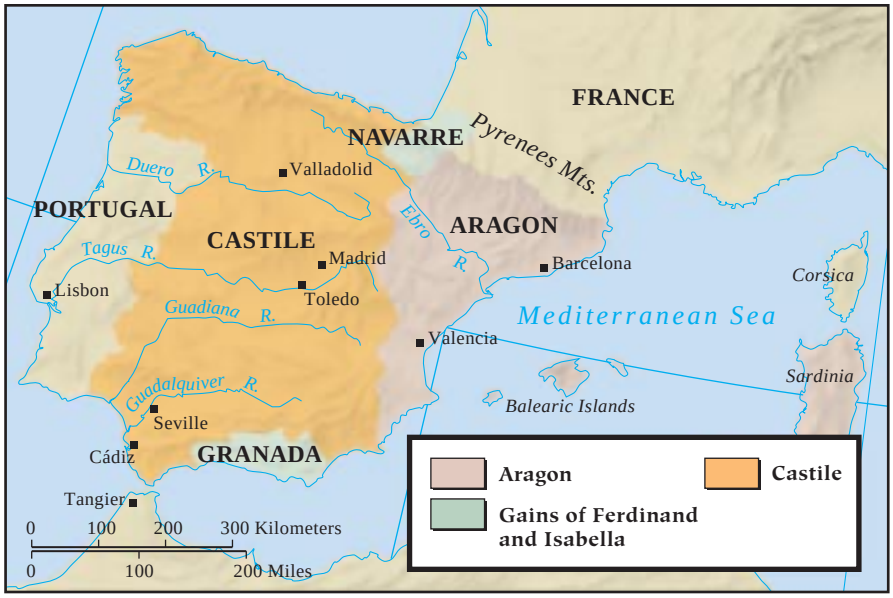
Henry also encouraged commercial activity. By increasing wool exports, royal export taxes on wool rose. Henry's thriftiness as well as his domestic and foreign policies enabled him to leave England with a stable and prosperous government and an enhanced status for the monarchy itself.

THE UNIFICATION OF SPAIN

During the Middle Ages, several independent Christian kingdoms had emerged in the course of the long reconquest of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslims. Aragon and Castile were the strongest Spanish kingdoms; in the west was the independent monarchy of Portugal; in the north, the small kingdom of Navarre, oriented toward France; and in the south, the Muslim kingdom of Granada. Few people at the beginning of the fifteenth century could have predicted the unification of the Iberian kingdoms.

A major step in that direction was taken with the marriage of Isabella of Castile (1474–1504) and Ferdinand of Aragon (1479–1516) in 1469. This marriage was a dynastic union of two rulers, not a political union. Both kingdoms maintained their own parliaments (Cortes), courts, laws, coinage, speech, customs, and political organs. Nevertheless, the two rulers worked to strengthen royal control of government, especially in Castile. The royal council, which was supposed to supervise local administration and oversee the implementation of government policies, was stripped of aristocrats and filled primarily with middle-class lawyers. Trained in the principles of Roman law, these officials operated on the belief that the monarchy embodied the power of the state.

The towns were also enlisted in the policy of state building. Medieval town organizations known as *hermandades* ("brotherhoods"), which had been organized to maintain law and order, were revived. Ferdinand and Isabella transformed them into a kind of national militia whose primary goal was to stop the wealthy landed aristocrats from disturbing the peace, a goal also favored by the middle class. The *hermandades* were disbanded by 1498 when the royal administration became strong enough to deal with lawlessness. The appointment of *corregidores* by the crown to replace corrupt municipal officials enabled the monarchs to extend the central authority of royal government into the towns.



MAP 12.3 The Iberian Peninsula.

Seeking to replace the undisciplined feudal levies they had inherited with a more professional royal army, Ferdinand and Isabella reorganized the military forces of Spain. The development of a strong infantry force as the heart of the new Spanish army made it the best in Europe by the sixteenth century.

Ferdinand and Isabella recognized the importance of controlling the Catholic church with its vast power and wealth. They secured from the pope the right to select the most important church officials in Spain, virtually guaranteeing the foundation of a Spanish Catholic church in which the clergy became an instrument for the extension of royal power. The monarchs, who were sincere Catholics, also used their authority over the church to institute reform. Isabella's chief minister, the able and astute Cardinal Ximenes, restored discipline and eliminated immorality among the monks and secular clergy.

The religious zeal exhibited in Cardinal Ximenes's reform program was also evident in the policy of strict religious uniformity pursued by Ferdinand and Isabella. Of course, it served a political purpose as well: to create unity and further bolster royal power. Spain possessed two large religious minorities, the Jews and Muslims, both of whom had been largely tolerated in medieval Spain. In some areas of Spain, Jews exercised much influence in economic and intellectual affairs. Increased persecution in the fourteenth century, however, led the majority of Spanish Jews to convert to Christianity. Although many of these *conversos* came to play important roles in Spanish society, complaints that they were secretly reverting to Judaism prompted Ferdinand and Isabella to ask the pope to introduce the Inquisition into Spain in 1478. Under royal control, the Inquisition worked with cruel efficiency to guarantee the orthodoxy of the *conversos,* but had no authority over practicing Jews. Consequently, in 1492, flush with the success of the conquest of Muslim Granada, Ferdinand and Isabella took the drastic step of expelling all professed Jews from Spain. It is estimated that 150,000 out of possibly 200,000 Jews fled.

Muslims, too, were "encouraged" to convert to Christianity after the conquest of Granada. In 1502, Isabella issued a decree expelling all professed Muslims from her kingdom. To a very large degree, the "Most Catholic" monarchs had achieved their goal of absolute religious orthodoxy as a basic ingredient of the Spanish state. To be Spanish was to be Catholic, a policy of uniformity enforced by the Inquisition.

During the reigns of Ferdinand and Isabella, Spain (or the union of Castile and Aragon) began to emerge as an important power in European affairs. Both Granada and Navarre had been conquered and incorporated into the royal realms. Nevertheless, Spain remained divided in many ways. Only the royal dynasty provided the centralizing force, and when a single individual, the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, succeeded both rulers as Charles I in 1516, he inherited lands that made him the most powerful monarch of his age.

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE: THE SUCCESS OF THE HABSBURGS

Unlike France, England, and Spain, the Holy Roman Empire failed to develop a strong monarchical authority. After 1438, the position of Holy Roman Emperor remained in the hands of the Habsburg dynasty. Having gradually acquired a number of possessions along the Danube, known collectively as Austria, the house of Habsburg had become one of the wealthiest landholders in the empire and by the mid-fifteenth century began to play an important role in European affairs.

Much of the Habsburg success in the fifteenth century was due not to military success, but to a well-executed

EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN I. Although the Holy Roman Emperor possessed little power in Germany, the Habsburg dynasty, which held the position of emperor after 1438, steadily increased its wealth and landholdings through dynastic marriages. This portrait of Emperor Maximilian I reflects well the description by a Venetian ambassador: "He is not very fair of face, but well proportioned, exceedingly robust, of sanguine and choleric complexion and very healthy for his age."

policy of dynastic marriages. As the old Habsburg motto said: "Leave the waging of wars to others! But you, happy Austria, marry; for the realms which Mars [god of war] awards to others, Venus [goddess of love] transfers to you." Although Frederick III (1440–1493) lost the traditional Habsburg possessions of Bohemia and Hungary, he gained Franche-Comté in east-central France, Luxembourg, and a large part of the Low Countries by marrying his son Maximilian to Mary, the daughter of Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy. The addition of these territories made the Habsburg dynasty an international power and brought them the undying opposition of the French monarchy because the rulers of France feared they would be surrounded by the Habsburgs.

Much was expected of the flamboyant Maximilian I (1493–1519) when he became emperor. Through the Reichstag, the imperial diet or parliament, Maximilian attempted to centralize the administration by creating new institutions common to the entire empire. Opposition from the German princes doomed these efforts, however. Maximilian's only real success lay in his marriage alliances. Philip of Burgundy, the son of Maximilian's marriage to Mary, was married to Joanna, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. Philip and Joanna produced a son, Charles, who, through a series of unexpected deaths, became heir to all three lines, the Habsburg, Burgundian, and Spanish, making him the leading monarch of his age (see Chapter 13).

Although the Holy Roman Empire did not develop along the lines of a centralized monarchical state, within the empire the power of the independent princes and electors increased steadily. In numerous German states, such as Bavaria, Hesse, Brandenburg, and the Palatinate, princes built up bureaucracies, developed standing armies, created fiscal systems, and introduced Roman law, just like the national monarchs of France, England, and Spain. They posed a real threat to the church, the emperor, and other smaller independent bodies in the Holy Roman Empire, especially the free imperial cities.

THE STRUGGLE FOR STRONG MONARCHY IN EASTERN EUROPE

In eastern Europe, rulers struggled to achieve the centralization of their territorial states but faced serious obstacles. Although the population was mostly Slavic, there were islands of other ethnic groups that caused untold difficulties. Religious differences also troubled the area, as Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox Christians, and pagans confronted each other.

Much of Polish history revolved around the bitter struggle between the crown and the landed nobility. The dynastic union of Jagiello, grand prince of Lithuania, with the Polish queen Jadwiga resulted in a large Lithuanian-Polish state in 1386. Jagiello and his immediate successors were able to control the landed magnates, but by the end of the fifteenth century, the preoccupation of Poland's rulers with problems in Bohemia and Hungary as well as war with the Russians and Turks enabled the aristocrats to reestablish their power. Through their control of the *Sejm* or national diet, the magnates reduced the peasantry to serfdom by 1511 and established the right to elect their kings. The Polish kings proved unable to establish a strong royal authority.

Bohemia, Poland's neighbor, was part of the Holy Roman Empire, but distrust of the Germans and close ethnic ties to the Poles and Slovaks encouraged the Czechs to associate with their northeastern Slavic neighbors. The Hussite wars (see The Problems of Heresy and Reform later in this chapter) led to further dissension and civil war. Because of a weak monarchy, the Bohemian nobles increased their authority and wealth at the expense of both crown and church.

The history of Hungary had been closely tied to that of central and western Europe by its conversion to Roman Catholicism by German missionaries. The church became a large and prosperous institution. Wealthy bishops, along with the great territorial lords, became powerful, independent political figures. For a brief while, Hungary developed into an important European state, the dominant power in eastern Europe. King Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) broke the power of the wealthy lords and created a well-organized bureaucracy. Like a typical Renais-

MAP 12.4 **Southeastern Europe.**

sance prince, he patronized the new humanist culture, brought Italian scholars and artists to his capital at Buda, and made his court one of the most brilliant outside Italy. After his death, Hungary returned to weak rule, and the work of Corvinus was largely undone.

Since the thirteenth century, Russia had been under the domination of the Mongols. Gradually, the princes of Moscow rose to prominence by using their close relationship to the Mongol khans to increase their wealth and expand their possessions. In the reign of the great prince Ivan III (1462–1505), a new Russian state was born. Ivan III annexed other Russian principalities and took advantage of dissension among the Mongols to throw off their yoke by 1480. He invaded the lands of the Lithuanian-Polish dynasty and added the territories around Kiev, Smolensk, and Chernigov to his new Muscovite state.

THE OTTOMAN TURKS AND THE END OF BYZANTIUM

Eastern Europe was increasingly threatened by the steadily advancing Ottoman Turks. The Byzantine Empire had, of course, served as a buffer between the Muslim Middle East and the Latin West for centuries. It was severely weakened by the sack of Constantinople in 1204 and its occupation by the west. Although the Palaeologus dynasty (1260–1453) had tried to reestablish Byzantine power in the Balkans after the overthrow of the Latin Empire, the threat from the Turks finally doomed the long-lasting empire.

Beginning in northeastern Asia Minor in the thirteenth century, the Ottoman Turks spread rapidly, seizing the lands of the Seljuk Turks and the Byzantine Empire. In 1345, they bypassed Constantinople and moved into the Balkans, which they conquered by the end of the century. Finally, in 1453, the great city of Constantinople fell to the Turks after a siege of several months. After consolidating their power, the Turks prepared to exert renewed pressure on the west, both in the Mediterranean and up the Danube valley toward Vienna. By the end of the fifteenth century, they were threatening Hungary, Austria, Bohemia, and Poland. The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, became their bitter enemy in the sixteenth century.

Our survey of European political developments makes it clear that, although individual German or especially Italian princes had developed culturally brilliant states, the future belonged to territorial states organized by national monarchies. They possessed superior resources and were developing institutions that represented the interests of much of the population. Nevertheless, the Renaissance states were still only dynastic states, not nation-states. The interests of a state were the interests

of its ruling dynasty. Loyalty was owed to the ruler, not the state. Residents of France considered themselves subjects of the French king, not citizens of France. Moreover, although Renaissance monarchs were strong rulers centralizing their authority, they were by no means absolute monarchs. Some chance of representative government still remained in the form of Parliament, Estates-General, Cortes, or Reichstag. Monarchs were strongest in the west and, with the exception of the Russian rulers, weakest in the east.

◆ The Church in the Renaissance

As a result of the efforts of the Council of Constance, the Great Schism had finally been brought to an end in 1417 (see Chapter 11). The council had had three major objectives: to end the schism, to eradicate heresy, and to reform the church in "head and members." The ending of the schism proved to be the council's easiest task; it was much less successful in dealing with the problems of heresy and reform.

❋ *The Problems of Heresy and Reform*

Heresy was, of course, not a new problem, and in the thirteenth century, the church had developed inquisitorial machinery to deal with it. But two widespread movements in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries—Lollardy and Hussitism—posed new threats to the church.

English Lollardy was a product of the Oxford theologian John Wyclif (c. 1328–1384), whose disgust with clerical corruption led him to a far-ranging attack on papal authority and medieval Christian beliefs and practices. Wyclif alleged that there was no basis in Scripture for papal claims of temporal authority and advocated that the popes be stripped of both their authority and property. At one point, he even denounced the pope as the Antichrist. Believing that the Bible should be a Christian's sole authority, Wyclif urged that it be made available in the vernacular languages so that every Christian could read it. Rejecting all practices not mentioned in Scripture, Wyclif condemned pilgrimages, the veneration of saints, and a whole series of rituals and rites that had developed in the medieval church.

Wyclif has sometimes been viewed as a forerunner of the Reformation of the sixteenth century because his arguments attacked the foundations of the medieval Catholic church's organization and practices. His attacks on church property were especially popular, and he attracted a number of followers who came to be known as Lollards. Persecution by royal and church authorities who feared the socioeconomic consequences of Wyclif's ideas forced the Lollards to go underground after 1400.

A marriage between the royal families of England and Bohemia enabled Lollard ideas to spread to Bohemia, where they reinforced the ideas of a group of Czech reformers led by the chancellor of the university at Prague, John Hus (1374–1415). In his call for reform, Hus urged the elimination of the worldliness and corruption of the clergy and attacked the excessive power of the papacy within the Catholic church. Hus's objections fell on receptive ears, since the Catholic church as one of the largest landowners in Bohemia was already widely criticized. Moreover, many clergymen were German, and the native Czechs' strong resentment of the Germans who dominated Bohemia also contributed to Hus's movement.

The Council of Constance attempted to deal with the growing problem of heresy by summoning John Hus to the council. Granted a safe conduct by Emperor Sigismund, Hus went in the hope of a free hearing of his ideas. Instead he was arrested, condemned as a heretic (by a narrow vote), and burned at the stake in 1415. This action turned the unrest in Bohemia into revolutionary upheaval. The resulting Hussite wars combined religious, social, and national issues and wracked the Holy Roman Empire until a truce was arranged in 1436.

The reform of the church in "head and members" was even less successful than the attempt to eradicate heresy. Two reform decrees were passed by the Council of Constance. *Sacrosancta* stated that a general council of the church received its authority from God; hence, every Christian, including the pope, was subject to its authority. The decree *Frequens* provided for the regular holding of general councils to ensure that church reform would continue. Taken together, *Sacrosancta* and *Frequens* provided for an ecclesiastical legislative system within the church superior to the popes.

Decrees alone, however, proved insufficient to reform the church. Councils could issue decrees, but popes had to execute them and popes would not cooperate with councils that diminished their authority. Beginning as early as Martin V in 1417, successive popes worked steadfastly for the next thirty years to defeat the conciliar movement. The victory of the popes and the final blow to the conciliar movement came in 1460, when Pope Pius II issued the papal bull *Execrabilis*, condemning appeals to a council over the head of a pope as heretical.

By the mid-fifteenth century, the popes had reasserted their supremacy over the Catholic church. No

CHRONOLOGY

The Church in the Renaissance

Council of Constance	1414–1418
Burning of John Hus	1415
End of the Great Schism	1417
Pius II issues the papal bull *Execrabilis*	1460
The Renaissance papacy	
Sixtus IV	1471–1484
Alexander VI	1492–1503
Julius II	1503–1513
Leo X	1513–1521

longer, however, did they have any possibility of asserting supremacy over temporal governments as the medieval papacy had. Although the papal monarchy had been maintained, it had lost much moral prestige. In the fifteenth century, the Renaissance papacy contributed to an even further decline in the moral leadership of the popes.

The Renaissance Papacy

Historians use the phrase "Renaissance papacy" to refer to the line of popes from the end of the Great Schism (1417) to the beginnings of the Reformation in the early sixteenth century. The primary concern of the papacy is governing the Catholic church as its spiritual leader. But as heads of the church, popes had temporal preoccupations as well, and the story of the Renaissance papacy is really an account of how the latter came to overshadow the popes' spiritual functions. In the process, the Renaissance papacy and the Catholic church became noticeably secularized.

The preoccupation of the popes with the territory of the Papal States and Italian politics was not new to the Renaissance. Popes had been temporal as well as spiritual rulers for centuries. The manner in which Renaissance popes pursued their temporal interests, however, especially their use of intrigue, deceit, and open bloodshed, was shocking. Of all the Renaissance popes, Julius II (1503–1513) was most involved in war and politics. The fiery "warrior-pope" personally led armies against his enemies, much to the disgust of pious Christians who viewed the pope as a spiritual leader. The great humanist Erasmus (see Chapter 13) witnessed the triumphant entry of Julius II into Bologna at the head of his troops and later wrote scathing indictments of the papal proclivity for warfare. With Julius II in mind, he proclaimed in *The Complaint of Peace:* "How, O bishop standing in the room of the Apostles, dare you teach the people the things that pertain to war?"

To further their territorial aims in the Papal States, the popes needed financial resources and loyal servants. Preoccupation with finances was not new, but its grossness received considerable comment: "Whenever I entered the chambers of the ecclesiastics of the Papal court, I found brokers and clergy engaged and reckoning money which lay in heaps before them."[25] Since they were not hereditary monarchs, popes could not build dynasties over several generations and came to rely on the practice of nepotism to promote their families' interests. Pope Sixtus IV (1471–1484), for example, made five of his nephews cardinals and gave them an abundance of church offices to build up their finances (the word *nepotism* is, in fact, derived from *nepos,* meaning nephew). Alexander VI (1492–1503), a member of the Borgia family who was known for his debauchery and sensuality, raised one son, one nephew, and the brother of one mistress to the cardinalate. A Venetian envoy stated that Alexander, "joyous by nature, thought of nothing but the aggrandizement of his children." Alexander scandalized the church by encouraging his son Cesare to carve a territorial state in central Italy out of the territories of the Papal States.

A RENAISSANCE POPE: SIXTUS IV. The Renaissance popes allowed secular concerns to overshadow their spiritual duties. They became concerned with territorial expansion, finances, and Renaissance culture. Pope Sixtus IV built the Sistine Chapel and later had it decorated by some of the leading artists of his day. This fresco by Melozzo da Forlì shows the pope on his throne receiving the humanist Platina (kneeling), who was keeper of the Vatican Library.

The Renaissance popes were great patrons of Renaissance culture, and their efforts made Rome the focal point of the High Renaissance at the beginning of the sixteenth century. For the warrior-pope Julius II, the patronage of Renaissance culture was mostly a matter of policy as he endeavored to add to the splendor of his pontificate by tearing down the Basilica of Saint Peter, which had been built by the emperor Constantine, and beginning construction of the greatest building in Christendom, the present Saint Peter's Basilica. Julius's successor, Leo X (1513–1521), was also a patron of Renaissance culture, not as a matter of policy, but as a deeply involved participant. Such might be expected of the son of Lorenzo de' Medici. Made an archbishop at the age of eight and a cardinal at thirteen, he acquired a refined taste in art, manners, and social life among the Florentine Renaissance elite. He became pope at the age of thirty-seven, supposedly remarking to the Venetian ambassador, "Let us enjoy the papacy, since God has given it to us." Humanists were made papal secretaries, Raphael was commissioned to do paintings, and the construction of Saint Peter's was accelerated as Rome became the literary and artistic center of the Renaissance.