

The Renaissance (approx. 1300 – 1525)

POLITICAL

- City States (No national government): **Florence**, Genoa, Venice
- Some were rule by despots (e.g., Milan) Others were controlled by *condottieri*, or military men who were independent war lords. Florence was a republic
- In the later years of the Renaissance, these states warred with each other and left them prone to outside attack. This happened when Charles V's troops attacked in 1527, thereby ending the Renaissance in Italy.
- The **Hapsburgs** (Holy Roman Empire) faced many enemies during this time. They fought with the **Valois** dynasty in France, and had to contend with the Muslims. In 1453, the Muslims finally captured **Constantinople**.

ECONOMIC

- The **Medici** were the merchant family based in Florence. They and their northern counterparts, the **Fugger**, loaned money to various kings in other parts of Europe.
- The basic institutions of Europe, banking, law, government and economic production were established in the Middle Ages. However, much was refined during the Renaissance. Florence's golden florin became standard European currency.
- Florentine merchants traded and loaned money. **Venice** and **Genoa** were the major merchant cities. Merchant capitalism began to weaken the power of the nobility. Merchant families begin to climb the social ladder.
- Two Medici women eventually married and became queens of France.
- The Northern Renaissance was more technically inventive: printing (1450), mining, mathematics, cartography (maps), lenses, telescopes.

RELIGIOUS

- Religion and the Northern Renaissance **Mysticism**: The belief that the individual could commune with God – not openly rebellious against Catholicism, but the roots of the Reformation can be found in northern Mysticism.
- Christian humanists also studied Hebrew besides Latin and Greek. The North was more religious, a blend of old and new. Many mystics who believed that the individual could commune with God without priests or sacraments. Mystics offered a deeper religion. Many laymen (not part of the hierarchy) show interest in religious life. There was more concentration on the conscientious devotion to duty.
- In Germany and Northern Europe the seeds were planted for the Reformation.

SOCIAL

- The outlook on life changes dramatically. Religion remains a force, but the view is no longer the hereafter, but rather the powers of man to affect his world. The Popes use art to reinforce their power and majesty during the **High Renaissance** (1450-1527) Humans were no longer frail creatures, but possess a vast range of human powers. Involve vs. Monasticism Proper enjoyment of wealth vs. poverty Civic humanism: Build hospitals, fountains, squares, sculpture, parks, instead of cathedrals.
- Renaissance Man emphasizes the individual and his achievements, capable of war, poetry, knowledge of Latin and Greek, music, architecture, etc. **Castiglione's** book *The Courtier* (a best seller) described manners and decorum for the Renaissance man.
- Manners also establish a clear class division between the nobility and the rising middle class The Renaissance launched the idea of putting students together by classes.
- Gender divisions remain. Some Women were educated and learn to rule while their husbands were away. Others were sent to convents when they also studied. In Florence, marriages were arranged between the wealthy merchant families.

INTELLECTUAL

- Humanists believed they were reviving the glory of the classical age. Italian humanists believed especially that Italy had a special culture inherited from the Romans. Ancient manuscripts, copied by monks hundreds of years earlier, were first discovered to help solve legal problems – more manuscripts were hunted down, copied, and read. Printing aids the spread of knowledge. Dante and later Petrarch also write in the **vernacular**, the language of the people.

ARTISTIC

- **Petrarch** (1304-1374) was called the first man of letters. His letters, poems and writings make him the chief Renaissance writer. Architecture and Sculpture were influence by ancient Greece and Roman. Sculpture is no longer attached the cathedrals but became independent and free-standing. Portrait busts, nudes, equestrian (on horseback) reflect the Greco-Roman tradition.
- Painting also undergoes changes. Oil painting use spreads from Northern Europe, though fresco survives because of Italy's dryer climate. Perspective, chiaroscuro and other techniques were invented and developed. Figures were presented in a realistic way, with dimension and depth. Main artists:
Michelangelo (1475-1564) the Sistine Chapel, the David;
Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) Mona Lisa, Last Supper;
High Renaissance (1450-1527): Popes and church authorities were patrons in order to reflect their power and prestige.