GUIDED READING  Italy: Birthplace of the Renaissance

A. Determining Main Ideas  As you read about the rebirth of learning and the arts in Italy, write notes to answer the questions.

In Italy, thriving urban centers, a wealthy merchant class, and the classical heritage of Greece and Rome encouraged the development of new ideas and values.

1. How did humanism influence the growth of learning?

2. How did ideas about piety and a simple life change?

3. What role did patrons of the arts play in the development of Renaissance ideas?

Styles in art and literature changed as artists and writers emphasized the individual.

4. What effects did the emphasis on individuals have on painters and sculptors?

5. How did writers reflect Renaissance values in their work?

6. How did the writing of Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Machiavelli demonstrate the values of humanism?

B. Summarizing  On the back of this paper, define Renaissance, humanism, perspective, and vernacular.
“

To come, therefore, to the quality of the person, I say he is well if he be neither of the least nor of the greatest size. For both the one and the other hath with it a certain spiteful wonder, and such men are marveled at, almost as much as men marvel to behold monstrous things. Yet if there must needs be a default in one of the two extremities, it shall be less hurtful to be somewhat of the least than to exceed the common stature in height.

For men so shot up of body, beside that many times they are of a dull wit, they are also inapt for all exercises of nimbleness, which I much desire to have in the Courtier. And therefore will I have him to be of a good shape, and well proportioned in his limbs, and to show strength, lightness, and quickness, and to have understanding in all exercises of the body that belong to a man of war. And herein I think the chief point is to handle well all kind of weapon both for footman and horseman, and to know the vantages in it. And especially to be skilful on those weapons that are used ordinarily among gentlemen, for beside the use that he shall have of them in war, where peradventure needeth no great cunning, there happen oftentimes variances between one gentleman and another, whereupon ensueth a combat. And many times it shall stand him in stead to use the weapon which he hath at that instant by his side. . . .

“...There be also many other exercises, the which, though they depend not thoroughly upon arms, yet have they a great agreement with them, and have in them much manly activity. And of them methink hunting is one of the chiefest, for it hath a certain likeness with war, and truly a pastime for great men, and fit for one living in court. And it is found that it hath also been much used among them of old time. It is meet for him also to have the art of swimming, to leap, to run, to cast the stone; for besides the profit that he may receive of this in the

wars, it happeneth to him many times to make proof of himself in such things, whereby he getteth him a reputation, especially among the multitude, unto whom a man must sometime apply himself. Also it is a noble exercise and meet for one living in court to play at tennis, where the disposition of the body, the quickness and nimbleness of every member, is much perceived, and almost whatsoever a man can see in all other exercises. . . .

“But because we cannot always endure among these so painful doings, besides that the continuance goeth nigh to give a man his fill, and taketh away the admiration that men have of things seldom seen, we must continually alter our life with practising sundry matters. Therefore will I have our Courtier to descend many times to more easy and pleasant exercises. And to avoid envy and to keep company pleasantly with every man, let him do whatsoever other men do; so he decline not at any time from commendable deeds, but governeth himself with that good judgment that will not suffer him to enter into any folly; but let him laugh, dally, jest, and dance, yet in such wise that he may always declare himself to be witty and discreet, and everything that he doeth or speaketh, let him do it with a grace.”

from Baldassare Castiglione, The Courtier; Thomas Hoby, trans. (The National Alumni, 1907), 30–35.

Discussion Questions

Determining Main Ideas

1. According to Castiglione, what physical attributes befitted a courtier?

2. Why did a courtier need to handle different kinds of weapons skillfully?

3. Analyzing Issues Why did Castiglione feel a courtier should engage in such activities as hunting, swimming, and tennis?
How a Prince Should Conduct Himself so as to Gain Renown

Nothing makes a prince so much esteemed as great enterprises and setting a fine example. We have in our time Ferdinand of Aragon, the present King of Spain. He can almost be called a new prince, because he has risen, by fame and glory, from being an insignificant king to be the foremost king in Christendom; and if you will consider his deeds you will find them all great and some of them extraordinary. In the beginning of his reign he attacked Granada, and this enterprise was the foundation of his dominions. He did this quietly at first and without any fear of hindrance, for he held the minds of the barons of Castile occupied in thinking of the war and not anticipating any innovations; thus they did not perceive that by these means he was acquiring power and authority over them. He was able with the money of the Church and of the people to sustain his armies, and by that long war to lay the foundation for the military skill which has since distinguished him. Further, always using religion as a plea, so as to undertake greater schemes, he devoted himself with a pious cruelty to driving out and clearing his kingdom of the Moors; nor could there be a more admirable example, nor one more rare. Under this same cloak he assailed Africa, he came down on Italy, he has finally attacked France; and thus his achievements and designs have always been great, and have kept the minds of his people in suspense and admiration and occupied with the issue of them. And his actions have arisen in such a way, one out of the other, that men have never been given time to work steadily against him. . . .

Never let any Government imagine that it can choose perfectly safe courses; rather let it expect to have to take very doubtful ones, because it is found in ordinary affairs that one never seeks to avoid one trouble without running into another; but prudence consists in knowing how to distinguish the character of troubles, and for choice to take the lesser evil.

A prince ought also to show himself a patron of ability, and to honour the proficient in every art. At the same time he should encourage his citizens to practise their callings peaceably, both in commerce and agriculture, and in every other following so that the one should not be deterred from improving his possessions for fear lest they be taken away from him or another from opening up trade for fear of taxes; but the prince ought to offer rewards to whoever wishes to do these things and designs in any way to honour his city or state.

Further, he ought to entertain the people with festivals and spectacles at convenient seasons of the year; and as every city is divided into guilds or into societies, he ought to hold such bodies in esteem, and associate with them sometimes, and show himself an example of courtesy and liberality; nevertheless, always maintaining the majesty of his rank, for this he must never consent to abate in anything.


**Activity Options**

1. **Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects**
   Make a cause-and-effect diagram illustrating how a prince gains renown according to Machiavelli. Then share your diagram with your classmates.

2. **Determining Main Ideas**
   Write a numbered list of tips for princes who want to gain fame and public approval. Share your list with a group of classmates and discuss which tips political leaders today might use.

American author Irving Stone’s novel The Agony and the Ecstasy traces the life of famed Renaissance sculptor and painter Michelangelo Buonarroti. In the following excerpt, Michelangelo has been commissioned by Pope Julius II to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome; however, he and his assistant Michi get off to a shaky start with this daunting project. As you read, think about the different problems Michelangelo encounters and how he solves them.

Section 1

He began with the Deluge, a large panel toward the entrance of the chapel. By March he had the cartoon blown up and ready to be transferred to the ceiling. Winter had not released its grip on Rome. The Sistine was bitterly cold. A hundred braziers could not heat its lowest areas. He wore his warm wool stockings, brache and shirt.

Rosselli, who had left for Orvieto for a profitable commission, had trained Michi in the mixing of the plaster and the method of applying it. Michelangelo helped him carry the sacks of lime, sand and pozzolana, volcanic tufa dust, up the steep wall ladders to the top of the scaffolding. Here Michi made his mix. Michelangelo was dissatisfied with the tawny color caused by the pozzolana, adding more lime and ground marble. He and Michi then climbed the series of three receding platforms that Rosselli had built so that they could plaster and paint the top of the rolling vault. Michi laid an area of intonaco, then held the cartoon. Michelangelo used the stick, charcoal bag, red ochre for connecting lines.

Michi descended, set to work grinding colors below. Michelangelo was now on his top platform, sixty feet above the floor. He had been thirteen when he stood for the first time on the scaffolding in Santa Maria Novella, alone on a peak above the chapel and the world. Now he was thirty-four, and now, as then, he suffered vertigo. The Sistine seemed so hollow from up here, with his head just one foot below the ceiling. He smelled the wet plaster, the pungence of his freshly ground paints. He turned from his view of the marble floor, picked up a brush, squeezed it between the fingers and thumb of his left hand, remembering that he would have to keep his colors liquid this early in the morning. . . .

He had watched Ghirlandaio paint enough panels to know that he should begin at the top and work his way downward on either side; but he lacked experience to paint professionally, and so he began at the dominant point, the one that interested him the most: the extreme left end, the last piece of green earth showing above the flood, the trunk of a storm-twisted tree extending toward what would later be Noah’s Ark, with the last of perishing humanity climbing the banks: a woman carrying a child in her arms, an older one clutching her leg; a husband carrying his distraught wife on his back; a vanishing trail of heads, old and young, about to be submerged in the rising waters; and above them all, a young man climbing and clutching at the tree trunk in a desperate effort to gain the highest vantage point.

He painted with his head and shoulders pulled sharply back, his eyes staring straight up. Paint dripped onto his face, the moisture of the wet plaster oozed out and dripped in his eyes. His arms and back tired quickly from the strain of the unnatural position. During the first week he allowed Michi to lay only modest areas of intonaco each day, proceeding cautiously, experimenting not only with the contortions of the figures but with a wide variety of flesh tones and the colors of the blue, green and rose robes of those who still retained their clothing. He knew that these small areas caused too many seams, that at this rate Granacci’s estimate of forty years would prove more accurate than his own resolution of four. Yet he learned as he went along; this panel of life and death in violent action bore little relation to the Ghirlandaio still lifes. He was content to feel his way slowly until he had mastered his medium.

At the end of the first week a biting north wind arose. Its whistling kept him awake most of the night. In the morning he walked to the Sistine with his scarf wound around his mouth, not sure, even as he climbed the ladder, whether he could get his hands warm enough to hold a brush. But when he reached the top of Rosselli’s highest platform he
saw that there was no need to do so: his panel was ruined. His plaster and paints were not drying. Instead, there was a moist dripping at the edges of his stormy tree, the man mounting the bank, a bundle of clothes on his shoulder. The oozing moisture was creating a mold which was creeping over the paint, slowly absorbing it. Behind him he heard Michi ask in a choked voice:

“I made the plaster bad?”

It was a long time before he could reply; he felt too sick.

“It was me. I don’t know how to mix paints for fresco. It’s been too many years since Ghirlandaio’s. Granacci and the others did the work on my first prophet; all I did was apply the paint.”

He stumbled down the ladder, tears in his eyes, made his way blindly to the Papal palace, waited for an interminable time in a cold anteroom. When he was admitted he stood forlornly before Julius.

“What is it, my son? You look ill.”

“I have failed.”

“In what way?”

“What I have done is spoiled.”

“So quickly?”

“I told Your Holiness it was not my art.”

“Lift up your head, Buonarroti. I have never seen you . . . crushed. I prefer you storming at me.”

“The ceiling has begun to drip. The moisture is causing spots of mold.”

“Can’t you dry them?”

“I know not how, Holiness. My colors are disappearing into the mold. They are being consumed by the salty edges.”

“I can’t believe that you would fail . . .” He turned to a groom. “Go to Sangallo’s house, tell him to inspect the Sistine ceiling at once, and bring me his report.”

Michelangelo retreated to the cold outer room and the hard waiting bench. This was the worst defeat he had ever suffered. Much as he hated giving his years to fresco, he had nonetheless evolved a masterly conception. He was not accustomed to failure; it was the only thing in his lexicon that was worse than being forced to work in alien mediums. That the Pope would be through with him there could be no doubt, even though his collapse as a fresco painter had nothing to do with his qualities as a marble sculptor. He would certainly not be allowed to carve the tomb. When an artist failed this abjectly, he was finished. The news of his failure would be all over Italy in a matter of days. Instead of returning to Florence in triumph he would creep home like a beaten dog, the tail of his pride between his legs. Florence would not like that. They would consider that he had undermined their position in the art world. Gonfaloniere Soderini would feel let down; he would have been a liability at the Vatican instead of an asset. Again he would have wasted a full year of his productive life.

He was buried so deep in his gloom that he did not see Sangallo come in. He was hustled into the throne room before he had a chance to collect himself.

“Sangallo, what have you found?” the Pope demanded.

“Nothing serious, Holiness. Michelangelo applied the lime in too watery a state, and the north wind caused it to exude.”

“But it’s the same composition Ghirlandaio used in Florence.”

“Roman lime is made of travertine. It does not dry as readily. The pozzolana Rosselli taught you to mix with it stays soft, and often breaks into an efflorescence while drying. Substitute marble dust for pozzolana, use less water with this lime. All will be well.”

“What about my colors? Must I tear out that part of the ceiling?”

“No. In time the air will consume the mold. Your colors won’t be hurt.”

Had Sangallo come back and reported that the ceiling was ruined, he would have been on the road to Florence by noon. Now he could return to his vault, though the events of the morning had given him an excruciating headache. . . .

For thirty days he painted from light to darkness, completing the Sacrifice of Noah, the four titanic male nudes surrounding it, the Erythraean Sibyl on her throne, and the Prophet Isaiah in the pendente opposite, returning home at night to enlarge the cartoon of the Garden of Eden. For thirty days he slept in his clothes, without taking off even his boots; and when at the completion of the
section, utterly spent, he had Michi pull his boots off for him, the skin came away with them.

He fed off himself. When he grew dizzy from standing and painting with his head and shoulders thrown back, his neck arched so that he could peer straight upward, his arms aching in every joint from the vertical effort, his eyes blurred from the dripping paint even though he had learned to paint through slits and to blink them shut with each brush stroke as he did against flying marble chips, he had Rosselli make him a still higher platform, the fourth on top of the scaffolding. He painted sitting down, his thighs drawn up tight against his belly for balance, his eyes a few inches from the ceiling, until the unpadded bones of his buttocks became so bruised and sore he could no longer endure the agony. Then he lay flat on his back, his knees in the air, doubled over as tightly as possible against his chest to steady his painting arm. Since he no longer bothered to shave, his beard became an excellent catchall for the constant drip of paint and water. No matter which way he leaned, crouched, lay or knelt, on his feet, knees or back, it was always in strain.

Then he thought he was going blind. A letter arrived from Buonarroto, and when he tried to read it he could see nothing but a blur. He put the letter down, washed his face, ate a few forkfuls of the overcooked pasta Michi had made for him, went back to the letter. He could not decipher a word.

He threw himself on his bed, sorely beset. What was he doing to himself? He had refused to paint the simple commission the Pope had requested, and now he would come out of this chapel a gnarled, twisted, ugly, blind dwarf, deformed and aged by his own colossal stupidity. What Torrigiani had done to his face, the vault would do to his body. He would carry its scars to his dying day. Why couldn’t he have let well enough alone? He would have made his peace with the Pope, been back in Florence long since, enjoying dinner with the Company of the Cauldron, living in his comfortable house, carving the Hercules.

Sleepless, racked with pain, homesick, lonely, he rose in the inky blackness, lit a candle, and on the back of an old sketch tried to lighten his mood by pouring out his woes:

I’ve grown a goitre by dwelling in this den—as cats from stagnant streams in Lombardy, or in what other land they hap to be—which drives the belly close beneath the chin:

My beard turns up to heaven; my nape falls in, fixed on my spine: my breast-bone visibly grows like a harp: a rich embroidery bedews my face from brush-drops thick and thin.

My loins into my paunch like levers grind: my buttock like a crupper bears my weight; my feet unguided wander to and fro.

In front my skin grows loose and long; behind by bending it becomes more taut and strait; crosswise I strain me like a Syrian bow: . . .

Come then, try to succor my dead pictures and my fame; since foul I fare and painting is my shame.

Research Options
1. Using Research in Writing Find out more about Michelangelo. Then work with classmates to plan and arrange a bulletin board display about his life. Include a brief biographical sketch and pictures of his works of art. Use captions to identify each work of art you use in the display.

2. Writing Expository Paragraphs Research how frescoes are created. Write a brief step-by-step explanation of the process, including definitions of such terms as pozzolana and intonaco, and share it with a small group of classmates.

3. Perceiving Relationships Find pictures of the Sistine Chapel frescoes. Match the images you see with descriptions in this passage from The Agony and the Ecstasy. For example, find depictions of the Deluge, the Sacrifice of Noah, the Garden of Eden, the Prophet Isaiah, and so forth.
Niccolò Machiavelli, an intellectual and sometime government official, nearly lived an anonymous life. He was an educated man who had written plays but remained an unknown citizen of Florence, Italy, well into middle age. It was not until the age of 44 that he single-handedly revolutionized the study of governments and politics.

Machiavelli was born in 1469 to a noble family in Florence, one of the intellectual centers of the Italian Renaissance. He received a solid education. During his twenties, he worked in Rome on behalf of a Florentine banker. Florence was experiencing political upheaval at the time. Lorenzo de’ Medici, the great banker and patron of the arts, had ruled the city until his death in 1492. His son proved to be an incompetent heir and was banished from the city. A few years later, the people of Florence decided to form a republic.

Machiavelli became an official in the new government. He served the city-state on several diplomatic missions that allowed him close observation of some of the leading political figures of his time. He grew to respect those who knew how to gain and use power. He also took the role of organizing a citizen-army for Florence, which he modeled after the army of the ancient Roman Republic.

Machiavelli’s militia did not have the fighting ability of Rome’s famed legions, though. In 1512, the Spanish army defeated the Florentine troops, and the Medici family once again took power. Machiavelli was dismissed from the government and retired to his country estate to write.

Among Machiavelli’s creations was The Prince. A devoted supporter of republican government, he nevertheless dedicated the work to the new Medici ruler of Florence. Machiavelli hoped The Prince would prove his intelligence so he could win a job in the new regime. He also hoped to spur the Medici family to unite northern Italy and insulate it from foreign interference.

Previous writers of political philosophy tried to describe perfect governments. Machiavelli had a different idea in mind. He wanted to understand how political leaders could best obtain and hold power. He thought that trickery was more effective in achieving these goals than honesty. He also thought that acquiring and maintaining power was more important to rulers than being a “good” leader. The chapter title “On Cruelty and [compassion], and Whether It Is Better To Be Loved or Feared” reveals the core of his view of government, which is based on his view of human nature:

It will naturally be answered that it would be desirable to be both [loved] and [feared], but as it is difficult to be both at the same time, it is much more safe to be feared than to be loved, when you have to choose between the two. For it may be said of men in general that they are ungrateful and fickle, dissemblers, avoiders of danger, and greedy of gain.

His name became an adjective—“Machiavellian” came to describe any leader who used deceit to impose his or her will.

Ironically, Machiavelli was ruined by his own ambitions. The Medici gave him diplomatic work. However, when they were overthrown and the republic restored again, Machiavelli was tainted by his association with the Medici. He was turned down for employment and died shortly thereafter.

Questions
1. **Drawing Conclusions** How did Machiavelli’s ideas and actions reflect his respect for ancient Rome?
2. **Analyzing Issues** Why is it appropriate to call Machiavelli’s work political science?
3. **Making Inferences** What was Machiavelli’s view of human nature?
CONNECTIONS ACROSS TIME AND CULTURES

A Flowering of Creativity and Knowledge

In this chapter you read about the explosion of creativity historians call the Renaissance. In Chapter 10, you read how arts and learning flourished in Muslim society during the time of the Abbasids’ rule. How did Muslim achievements in the arts and sciences resemble the achievements of the Renaissance that began in Italy in the 1300s? Use information in Chapters 10 and 17 to answer the questions that follow.

1. As Muslim rule expanded, prosperous urban centers developed in Baghdad, Damascus, Córdoba, and Cairo.
   a. What led to the growth of cities in northern Italy? ____________________________________________
   b. How might sophisticated urban centers contribute to learning and the arts? ______________________

2. Leaders of the Umayyads and the Abbasids encouraged scholars to translate ancient texts. Who were patrons of artists and scientists in the Renaissance? ______________________________

3. Islam forbade making pictures of living beings, so Muslim artists developed high skills in areas such as calligraphy and the decorative arts. How did Christianity affect the art of the Renaissance?____________________________________________________________

4. A ninth-century Muslim philosophical society visualised the ideal man in terms of faith, education, astuteness, good conduct, piety, knowledge of sciences, ability to interpret mysteries, and spiritual life.
   a. What values did the Renaissance look for in a “universal man”?________________________________
   b. How are these ideals alike? How are they different? ____________________________________________

5. A major contribution of Abbasid artists and scholars was to preserve and develop ideas from many earlier cultures—Greek, Roman, Indian, and Arabic. In your opinion, what was the major contribution of the Renaissance? ____________________________________________
RETEACHING ACTIVITY

Italy: Birthplace of the Renaissance

Clarifying Write T in the blank if the statement is true. If the statement is false, write F in the blank and then write the corrected statement on the line below it.

1. During the Renaissance, patrons of the arts were people who frequented many art festivals.  

2. The technique of perspective was used by Renaissance painters to show three dimensions on a flat surface.  

3. The Renaissance, a movement that started in Germany and lasted 300 years, brought about a growth of creativity in art, writing, and thought.  

4. The general emphasis of the Renaissance movement was religious.  

5. *The Prince*, by Niccolò Machiavelli, stated that people are selfish and corrupt, and that a prince should be feared more than loved.  

6. Some Renaissance writers wrote in the vernacular, or in the author’s native language.  

7. An intellectual movement called humanism focused on scientific information about the human body.  

8. “Renaissance men” were men who mastered many fields of endeavor.