

Part III – Rebirth and Reform  
Unit VIII – The Italian Renaissance

*As the feudal system weakened in the 1300s and 1400s, a prosperous middle class began to question the structures of a medieval society that denied them any advancement. Educated people began to rediscover the learning of the classical era, which would eventually give birth to an entire cultural movement known as the Renaissance. Widespread changes in literature, art, science, education, politics, and technology all were part of this movement, and with it some of the best known minds of world history: Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci, Raphael and Donatello, Machiavelli and Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Montaigne. Historians often describe the Renaissance as the bridge between the medieval world and the modern world that we now live in.*

**Fundamental Themes**

1. The Renaissance's origins in Italy (and not France, England, or elsewhere)
2. The transformation in thinking intellectually, socially, and religiously

**Topics of Study**

**I. Origins of the Renaissance** – Why did the Renaissance start in Italy? What factors contributed to the rebirth of classical learning?

Humanism

Causes of the Renaissance

Petrarch and Pico della Mirandola

**II. Medici Florence** – How did the Medici rise to power in Florence? Why did they spend so much money to support the arts?

Cosimo de Medici

Savonarola and Reform

Lorenzo de Medici

Machiavelli and Politics

**III. The Italian Renaissance** – What made Renaissance art and thinking so different from medieval art and thinking? How did Renaissance art change European society? Why are some Renaissance artists remembered and others forgotten?

Medieval v. Renaissance Art

Leonardo

Effect of Renaissance Art on Society

Michelangelo

Giotto

Vasari

Brunelleschi

Galileo

**Further Reading**

*Patterns*, Chapter 17, “European Renaissance and Reformation, 1300-1600” pp. 468-477

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Below is a [tentatively] [in]complete list of ideas, concepts, and terms helpful to understand.

*The Origins of the Renaissance*

Etymology of the word “Renaissance”  
Causes of the Renaissance  
Humanism  
Petrarch and Pico della Mirandola

*Medici Florence*

Cosimo de Medici  
Lorenzo de Medici  
Savonarola  
Bonfire of the Vanities  
Machiavelli  
Banking, Guilds, and Money  
Patronage

*The Italian Renaissance*

Characteristics of the Renaissance  
Aristotelian and Neoplatonic Art  
The Mona Lisa  
The Sistine Chapel  
The Florence Cathedral (Il Duomo)  
Pazzi Conspiracy  
Florence  
Medieval Art v. Renaissance Art  
Michelangelo  
Vasari  
Leonardo  
Brunelleschi  
Giotto