

The Medici family ruled the city of Florence throughout the Renaissance. They had a major influence on the growth of the Italian Renaissance through their patronage of the arts and humanism.

Rulers of Florence

The Medici family were wool merchants and bankers. Both businesses were very profitable and the family became extremely wealthy. Giovanni de Medici first brought the family to prominence in Florence by starting the Medici bank. He also was the leader of the Florence merchants. His son, Cosimo de Medici became the Gran maestro (leader) of the Florence city-state in 1434. The Medici family ruled Florence for the next 200 years until 1737.

Leaders of the Renaissance

The Medici are most famous for their patronage of the arts. Patronage is where a wealthy person or family sponsors artists. They would pay artists commissions for major works of art. The Medici patronage had a huge impact on the Renaissance, allowing artists to focus on their work without having to worry about money.

A significant amount of the art and architecture that was produced in Florence at the beginning of the Renaissance was due to the Medici. Early on they supported the painter Masaccio and helped pay the architect Brunelleschi to rebuild the Basilica of San Lorenzo. Other famous artists that the Medici supported include Michelangelo, Raphael, Donatello, and Leonardo da Vinci.

The Medici didn't just support the arts and architecture. They also supported science. They supported the famous scientist Galileo Galilei in his scientific efforts. Galileo also worked as a tutor for the Medici children.

Bankers

The Medici owed much of their wealth and power to the Medici Bank. It made them one of the richest families in all of Europe. It was the largest bank in Europe at its peak and was very well respected. The bank made notable improvements in accounting procedures including the development of the double-entry bookkeeping system.

Important Members

- Giovanni de Medici (1360 - 1429): Giovanni was the founder of the Medici Bank, which would make the family wealthy and allow them to support the arts.
- Cosimo de Medici (1389 - 1464): Cosimo began the Medici dynasty as the first Medici to become leader of the city of Florence. He supported the famous sculptor Donatello and the architect Brunelleschi.
- Lorenzo de Medici (1449 - 1492): Also known as Lorenzo the Magnificent, Lorenzo de Medici ruled Florence through much of the peak of the Italian Renaissance. He supported such artists as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Sandro Botticelli.
- Pope Leo X (1475 - 1521): The first of four Medici to become Pope, Leo commissioned many works from the artist Raphael.
- Catherine de Medici (1529 - 1589): Catherine married King Henry II of France and became Queen of France in 1547. She later served as regent for her son King Charles IX and played a major role in the reign of her third son Henry III. Catherine supported the arts and brought ballet to the French court.
- Marie de Medici (1575 - 1642): Marie became Queen of France when she married King Henry IV of France. She also acted as regent for her young son Louis XIII of France before he became king. Her court painter was the famous Peter Paul Rubens.

Interesting Facts about the Medici Family

- Although the names were later changed, Galileo initially named four of the moons of Jupiter he discovered after children of the Medici family.
- The Medici Family produced four popes in total including Pope Leo X, Pope Clement VII, Pope Pius IV, and Pope Leo XI.
- The Medici Family is sometimes called the Godfathers of the Renaissance.
- In 1478 Giuliano Medici was assassinated by the Pazzi family in front of 10,000 people at the Easter church service.
- Ferdinando de Medici was a patron of music. He helped to fund the invention of the [piano](#).

- 1) How did the Medici family become wealthy?
 - a. Selling weapons
 - b. Farming land
 - c. Banking and wool
 - d. Selling art
 - e. Real estate
- 2) What city did the Medici family rule?
 - a. Florence
 - b. Rome
 - c. Milan
 - d. Naples
 - e. Venice
- 3) What famous scientist did the Medici family support?
 - a. Copernicus
 - b. Gutenberg
 - c. Raphael
 - d. Newton
 - e. Galileo
- 4) Why was the Medici family important to the growth of the Renaissance?
 - a. Because they were talented artists
 - b. Because they invented humanist philosophy
 - c. Because they helped to invent the printing press
 - d. Because they supported the arts and artists
 - e. Because they made it legal to paint in Italy
- 5) Which word below is used to describe people who support artists?
 - a. Banking
 - b. Merchandiser
 - c. Patronage
 - d. Marketing
 - e. Noble
- 6) Which member of the Medici was the founder of the Medici dynasty?
 - a. Giovanni
 - b. Cosimo
 - c. Lorenzo
 - d. Catherine
 - e. Leo
- 7) How many popes came from the Medici family?
 - a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 4
 - e. 7
- 8) What country did both Catherine de Medici and Marie de Medici become queen of?
 - a. France
 - b. Italy
 - c. Spain
 - d. England
 - e. Austria
- 9) Besides painting, what other subjects did the Medici support?
 - a. Music
 - b. Science
 - c. Architecture
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
- 10) Which member of the Medici family ruled during the height of the Renaissance and supported such artists as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo?
 - a. Giovanni
 - b. Marie
 - c. Lorenzo
 - d. Cosimo
 - e. Catherine