

World History One DBQ: Renaissance– Writers & Literature



The Following task is based on the accompanying documents 1-6. Some documents have been edited for this exercise. The task is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the sources of the documents and the purpose of the document and the author’s point of view.

Directions:

1. Read the Historical Context & Answer the corresponding worksheet questions
2. Read the Documents & Answer the corresponding worksheet questions
3. Create a Thesis to answer the question presented in the “Task”
4. Write an Essay to answer the question (**The essay requires an outline, Introduction paragraph, 3 supporting body paragraphs and a Conclusion**)

-or-

Create a project which will present an answer to the question – (**The Project must still integrate a thesis & three items supporting the thesis & a Conclusion**)

Task: Analyze how the ideas of the Renaissance were reflected in the literature produced by Renaissance writers.

Historical Context *The Rise of Modernity*

From the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, medieval attitudes and institutions broke down, and modern cultural, economic, and political forms emerged. For many historians, the Renaissance, which originated in Italy, marks the starting point of the modern Era.

The Renaissance was characterized by a rebirth of interest in the humanist culture and outlook of ancient Greece and Rome. Renaissance individuals valued worldly activities and interests more than the people of the Middle Ages. Renaissance individuals were fascinated by this world and by life's possibilities; they wanted to live a rich and creative life on earth and to fulfill themselves through artistic and literary activity.

A distinguishing feature of the Renaissance period was the humanist movement, an educational and cultural program based on the study of ancient Greek and Latin literature. By studying the humanities - history, literature, rhetoric, moral and political philosophy - humanists aimed to revive the worldly spirit of the ancient Greeks and Romans, which they believed had been lost in the Middle Ages.

Humanists were thus fascinated by the writings of the ancients. From the works of ancient authors, humanists sought guidelines for living life well in this world and looked for stylistic models for their own literary efforts.

To the humanists, the ancients had written brilliantly, in an incomparable literary style, on friendship, citizenship, love, bravery, statesmanship, beauty, excellence, and every other topic devoted to the enrichment of human life.

Perry, Peden and Von Laue. *Sources of the Western Tradition*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1999

Document #1: John R. Hale, *Great Ages of Man: Renaissance* (1965)

In the Middle Ages to praise man was to praise God, for man was a creation of God. But Renaissance writers praised man himself as a creator. They emphasized his ability to think and act for himself. They celebrated man's ability to produce works of art, to guide the destiny of others. They freed man and allowed him to roam at will, through all the levels of being, sometimes identifying himself with the beasts, sometimes with the angels.

This new vision of man sprang from a heightened awareness of self. Medieval men had been preoccupied with searching their souls, but Renaissance men were much more intrigued with exploring, and indeed parading, their own personalities.

Source: John R. Hale, *Great Ages of Man: A History of the World's Cultures: Renaissance, Time-Life*, 1965

Document #2 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet Act II, Scene II*. (approx. 1600)

What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!

Document #3 Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1515

In their moral philosophy, they argue much as we do. They consider what things are truly good, both for the body and the mind, and whether it is proper to call material things good or only the gifts of the mind. They inquire into the nature of virtue and pleasure. But their chief concern is about human happiness, whether it consists of one thing or of many.

They seem much inclined to view that all or most of human happiness lies in pleasure.

Document #4 Petrus Paulus Vergerius: The New Education (c. 1400)

Education is worthy of a free man; we attain and practice virtue and wisdom; we develop those highest gifts of body and of mind which ennoble men. Only virtue is more important than education. It is, then, of the highest importance that even from infancy education, should constantly be kept alive in growing minds.

We cannot deny that there is still a horde-as I must call them-of people who, denounce learning and the Arts as a danger to the State and hateful in themselves. In reality the very opposite is the truth. To a man of virtuous instincts knowledge is a help and an adornment.

Document #5 *Culture & Values, Volume II: A Survey of the Humanities with Resources*

The basic theme of *The Prince* is the pragmatic use of power for state management. Previously the tradition of political theory had always invoked the transcendent authority of God to ensure the stability and legitimacy of the state. For Machiavelli it was power, not the moral law of God, that provided the state with its ultimate sanction. The final test of the successful ruler was the willingness to exercise power judiciously and freedom from the constraints of moral suasion. "A prince must not keep faith when by doing so it would be against his self-interest." This bold pragmatism explains why the Catholic Church put *The Prince* on its *Index of Prohibited books*

Cunningham and Reich 2010

Document #6 Machiavelli, "The Prince" 1513

Here the question arises: whether it is better to be loved than feared or feared than loved. The answer is that it would be desirable to be both but, since that is difficult, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved, if one must choose. For on men in general this observation may be made: they are ungrateful, fickle, and deceitful, eager to avoid dangers and avid for gain and while you are useful to them they are all with you, offering you their blood, their property, their lives, and their sons so long as danger is remote, as we noted above, but when it approaches they turn on you. Any prince, trusting only in their words and having no other preparations made, will fall to his ruin.

