

The RENAISSANCE is generally considered to have started in Florence, Italy around the years 1350 to 1400. The start of the Renaissance also was the end of the [Middle Ages](#).

Humanism

One of the big changes in the Renaissance was in the basic way people thought about things. In the Middle Ages people thought that life was supposed to be hard. They grew up thinking that life was nothing but hard work and war.

However, around the 1300s, the people in Florence, Italy began to think differently about life. They studied the writings and works of the Greeks and the Romans and realized that earlier civilizations had lived differently.

This new way of thinking was called Humanism. Now people thought that life could be enjoyable and they could have comforts. They started to think that people should be educated and that things like art, music, and science could make life better for everyone. This was a real change in the way people thought.

Florence, Italy

At the start of the Renaissance, [Italy](#) was divided up into a number of powerful city-states. These were areas of land that were ruled by a large city. Each city-state had its own government. One of the major city-states was Florence. The government that ran Florence was a republic, like [ancient Rome](#). This meant that the citizens elected their own leaders.

In the late 1300s, Florence had become a rich city. Wealthy merchants and businessmen had the money to hire artisans and craftspeople. This inspired competitions among artists and thinkers. Art began to flourish and new thoughts began to emerge.

In the 1400's the Medici family came into power in Florence. They were wealthy bankers and helped the arts along by sponsoring many artists and using their personal funds to further the humanist movement.

Petrarch and Humanism

Francesco Petrarch is often called the "Father of Humanism". He was a scholar and a poet who lived in Florence in the 1300s. He studied poets and philosophers from Ancient Rome such as Cicero and Virgil. His ideas and poetry became an inspiration to many writers and poets throughout all of Europe as the Renaissance spread.

Giotto di Bondone - First Renaissance Painter

Giotto was a painter in Florence, Italy. He was the first painter to break away from the standard Byzantine style painting of the Middle Ages and try something new. He painted objects and people as they actually looked in nature. Previously, artists had all painted more abstract paintings that didn't look real at all. Giotto is said to have started the Renaissance in art with his new style of realistic painting.

Dante

Another major contributor to the start of the Renaissance was Dante Alighieri. He lived in Florence and wrote the Divine Comedy in the early 1300s. This book is considered to be the greatest literary work ever written in the Italian language.

New Ideas Spread

This new way of thinking and style of art quickly spread to other wealthy Italian city-states such as Rome, Venice, and Milan. This early part of the Renaissance is often called the Italian Renaissance. Italy would become wealthy through trade and their new ideas soon spread throughout all of Europe.

- 1) What was the period of time in Europe called that happened before the Renaissance?**
 - a. The Golden Ages
 - b. The Age of Glory
 - c. The Middle Ages
 - d. The Grey Years
 - e. The Feudal Ages
- 2) How was humanism different from the way most people thought before the Renaissance?**
 - a. It thought that life could be nice
 - b. It said that life did not have to be all work
 - c. It said that humans could enjoy comforts
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
- 3) From what ancient civilizations did the people in Italy get the idea for humanism?**
 - a. The Romans and Greeks
 - b. The Greeks and Egyptians
 - c. The Egyptians the Chinese
 - d. The Chinese and the Persians
 - e. The Persians and the Romans
- 4) How was Italy divided up during the start of the Renaissance?**
 - a. Counties
 - b. Provinces
 - c. Kingdoms
 - d. Fiefs
 - e. City-states
- 5) In what wealthy and powerful Italian city did the Renaissance get its start?**
 - a. Rome
 - b. Milan
 - c. Venice
 - d. Florence
 - e. Naples
- 6) What was Francesco Petrarch famous for?**
 - a. Many famous paintings such as the Mona Lisa
 - b. Writing the book Divine Comedy
 - c. Architecting huge and beautiful cathedrals
 - d. Inventing the philosophy of humanism
 - e. Being ruler of the city of Florence at the start of the Renaissance
- 7) What artist is considered the first Renaissance painter?**
 - a. Giotto
 - b. Da Vinci
 - c. Botticelli
 - d. Michelangelo
 - e. Raphael
- 8) What made Renaissance painting different from the previous period of art?**
 - a. It was very abstract
 - b. Subjects were painted as they appeared in nature
 - c. Emphasis was on symbolism, not realism
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
- 9) Around what year did the Renaissance begin?**
 - a. 1066
 - b. 1253
 - c. 1400
 - d. 1550
 - e. 1630
- 10) True or False: The Italian Renaissance stayed in Italy and never touched the rest of Europe.**
 - a. TRUE
 - b. FALSE