

# The Renaissance

“You Need a Renaissance”

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1.



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Burial of those who died from the bubonic plague

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The Renaissance took place in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries. Historians consider it a renaissance, or rebirth, because it was a time period of unprecedented growth in the arts and

sciences. Part of the impetus for the Renaissance was the Black Death, or bubonic plague, which killed millions of Europeans. This had one positive effect: It left more in terms of food, resources and wealth for those who survived. This bounty helped usher in an economic boom. Trade rebounded, a large middle class grew, governments reorganized and life was generally more stable and prosperous. All of this activity encouraged artists and thinkers to create and learn.

These new thinkers loved Greek and Roman writing. They read it, copied and translated it and wrote responses. Most of them wrote with pens, which they had to dip into ink every few seconds. But in Germany, a man named Johann Gutenberg (1398-1468) soon changed the world with his invention—a movable-type printing press. With this invention, letters could be rearranged so that books could be printed quickly. This forever changed the world of literature, creating an explosion of books.

Notes

2.



b'

Michelangelo's frescoes

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In the 1300s, no single monarchy ruled Italy, so powerful families were able to control regions called city-states.

Places like Milan, Venice and Florence were important centers of trade and commerce. Florence was ruled by the de Medici family. The Medicis encouraged artists and thinkers, and they became great patrons of the arts. Florence became known as a center of intellectual activity and attracted many great minds. For this reason, it is sometimes called the "cradle of the Renaissance."

One of the beneficiaries of the Medicis was a sculptor named Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564). Michelangelo was friendly with Lorenzo de Medici and studied sculpture at his home. The young artist would take what he learned and turn it into masterworks like "David" and "The Pieta," pieces that remain among the most famous sculptures of all time. Not long after completing them, Michelangelo was hired to paint frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

Notes

3.



b'

Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa?

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When we use the term "Renaissance man," we're describing someone like Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). Not only did he live during the Renaissance, but he was great at many things. Most famous as the artist who painted the "Mona Lisa," da Vinci was also a scientist and inventor. He painted and

worked in all kinds of disciplines, from geometry to flying machines to architecture. And he was still able to come up with some of the world's most famous paintings.

One of the most impressive innovations of Renaissance painters was painting in three dimensions. To make their paintings more lifelike, artists like da Vinci studied how things in the background look smaller. This is called perspective. The effect was incredible: Giant canvases or murals showed Greek gods moving among crumbling ruins with ships in the distance; vivid portraits depicted children playing in the background. These little touches are part of what separated Renaissance art from the art of the Middle Ages.

4.



b'

Francis Bacon

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An amazing revolution occurred alongside the artistic changes of the Renaissance, called the Scientific Revolution. Scientists began to question the reason for everything. The sky is blue. Why? Some stars don't move straight across the sky; they

make circles. Why?

To help people explore scientific phenomena, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) came up with what is known as the scientific method. In this process, a scientific project begins by observation. Then the scientist comes up with their own idea about how or why something works—called a hypothesis. After that, they test the hypothesis with an experiment and then analyze the results to come to a conclusion. This is still the way scientists approach their work today.

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5.



b'

Galileo studied space through his telescope.

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Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) was a real troublemaker according to the

Catholic Church, at least. The great Polish astronomer had the idea that the Earth moved around the sun. Before that time, everyone believed that the Earth was the center of the universe and the sun revolved around it. Copernicus's ideas got him in a lot of trouble, and the Church banned his landmark book, *The Revolution of the Holy Spheres*.

Another hugely important scientist, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), was one of the few people who thought Copernicus had the right idea. To prove it, Galileo invented a telescope and looked into space in a way that no one had before. He was able to see what was orbiting what. His contributions to physics were extraordinary. One of them, still taught in classrooms everywhere, was that the weight of an object doesn't determine how fast it falls. If you drop a heavy item—such as a stone—and a lighter item—like a pin—at the same time, they'll hit the ground simultaneously. This is called the Law of Falling Bodies. Galileo's discoveries would change science. At the time, however, the Catholic Church put Galileo under house arrest and made him publicly deny his findings.

Notes

6.



b'

Martin Luther

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It was time for the Catholic Church, a powerful force in the Middle Ages, to change. One of the most unpopular practices of the Church was the selling of indulgences. Priests said that the more money you gave them for these

“indulgences,” the faster you’d get into heaven when you died.

A German monk named Martin Luther was outraged by this; he didn’t think indulgences should be sold to take advantage of believers. So, Luther scribbled 95 things he hated about the Church on a piece of paper one night in 1517, marched down to his church and tacked them to the door. They were soon known as the 95 Theses.

Luther also thought that church services should be conducted in the native tongue of the people, not in Latin, a language many people didn’t understand. His push for change gave birth to the Reformation. His followers felt the same way; they wanted to protest against the Church, so they became known as Protestants.

Pope Leo X had allowed priests to sell indulgences to raise money for building churches in Rome, including St. Peter’s Basilica. In 1521, Leo threw Martin Luther out of the church, an act known as excommunication.

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7.



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Henry VIII

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When King Henry VIII took the throne of England, people everywhere hailed the new king. He was a scholar, musician and athlete, and his subjects liked him. Henry was opposed to Luther and his reforms, and for that Pope Leo X gave him the title "Defender of the Faith." But Henry's good relationship with the

Catholic Church didn't last.

It all began when Henry was married to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. They had a daughter, but no sons. That bothered Henry; he really wanted a son to be the next king. So he asked Pope Clement for a divorce. The Catholic Church did not allow divorce. Henry decided if the Catholic Church wouldn't grant his divorce, he'd start his own church and get divorced that way. He did exactly that, and the church he founded is known as the Anglican Church or the Church of England. Henry went on to marry six wives in all, and got two divorces (two of his wives he had beheaded for adultery). He only had one legitimate son, Edward VI, who died six years after his father's death. Henry was succeeded by his daughters after all.

Notes

8.



b'

William Shakespeare

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After Edward's death, Henry's first daughter Mary took the throne. She had been raised a Catholic, and vowed to return England to Catholicism. She has gone down in history as "Bloody Mary" because of the number of Protestants she had killed during her brief

reign.

Next on the English throne was Mary's half-sister, Elizabeth I. Many consider Elizabeth one of the greatest monarchs in English history. When she took the throne in 1559, Elizabeth set about undoing much of Mary's work. She established the Church of England once and for all. During her reign, the English defeated the Spanish Armada and became a major power player in European politics. During the Elizabethan Age, the arts flourished in England. One of the most important writers in history was Elizabethan poet and playwright William Shakespeare (1564-1616). Shakespeare's work has been read and his plays performed almost constantly since his day. He wrote 37 plays—including Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Othello and Macbeth. Along with Spain and Portugal, England sponsored an Age of Exploration, sending sailors farther than they'd ever been before to colonize new lands, including the Americas.

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