

Renaissance humanism



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Humanism and the Arts: An Analysis Essay Outline I. Introduction and Thesis
ment The dominant intellectual movement of the Renaissance was humanism, a philosophy based on the idea that people are rational beings. It emphasized the dignity and worth of the individual, an emphasis that was central to Renaissance developments in many areas. Humanism originated in the study of classical culture, and it took its name from one of the era's earliest and most crucial concerns: the promotion of a new educational curriculum that emphasized a group of subjects known collectively as the *studia humanitatis*, or the humanities (Gay, 2001; Davies, 1997).

This paper seeks to determine the nature of the humanism movement during the renaissance and how it had developed through time. In this regard, analysis of the works of humanists with special focuses on their contribution to the arts shall be conducted ascertain the movement called humanism.

II. The Nature of Humanism

A. The Humanities Discipline.

Humanities disciplines included grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and ethics. These subjects were all studied, whenever possible, in the original classical texts (Tremblay, 2010).

B. Scholasticism and Humanism: A Comparison

Scholasticism pervaded much of pre-Renaissance European society.

Humanism came to be as a response to the perceived insufficiency and limitations of scholastic teachings that relied too heavily on abstract thought rather than on practical experiences. The humanists proposed to educate the whole person and placed emphasis not only on intellectual achievement, but also on physical and moral development (Ehrstine and Schade, 2004; Proctor, 1998)

III. Art and Humanism

A. Prose and Poetry: A Classical Approach

Francesco Petrarca, known as Petrarch, is considered as the first great humanist. Petrarch believed and hoped to better the world by the study of classical literature. To promote the study of classical literature, he collected ancient texts during his travels. He studied and imitated them in Latin writings of his own, and then attempted to extend their teachings to as many other people as possible (Kreis, 2008).

Aside from Petrarch, a number of scholars in Florence collected and studied ancient works, lectured about them, imitated their style, and made the city a centre of humanistic learning. Among them were Boccaccio, the scholar Niccolò Niccoli, and above all the Florentine government leader, Coluccio Salutati. They applied classical literary standards to everyday writing, laying a foundation for later literary development (Steele, 2009).

B. Sculpture

As humanists rediscovered classical literature, subjects of sculpture were classical figures the most prominent of which is Plato. Humanists hoped to make Plato a new guide for Western thought, just as scholastic thinkers had based many of their ideas on the work of Plato's student Aristotle (Davies, 1997)

C. Paintings and Murals

Humanists saw Roman history as a glorious episode in their own national past, a past that had been interrupted when Germanic and other peoples invaded the empire beginning in the 5th century. Depictions of characters and events became the main staple of Humanist painting and murals (Ehrstine and Schade, 2004).

IV. Conclusion

Renaissance humanism is based on the belief that humanity and society could be improved through a new kind of education based on a study of the classics. As such, art during this time was heavily influenced by depictions of classical literature, people and events.

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