

Renaissance history

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" Renaissance is a term with a variety of meanings, but is used widely in discussion of European history. Renaissance originates from the Latin word " Rinascere" and refers to the act of being reborn. It is believed that during the time from about 1400AD to around 1600AD, Europe was reborn. Originally the term Renaissance only referred to the time when man rediscovered the knowledge of the ancient Greeks and Romans. However, modern historians have realized these rediscoveries were also crucial to the formation of modern culture.

The term Renaissance is now used to indicate all the historical developments that have inspired the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern history. Thus, the term Renaissance has now taken on a more significant meaning: not only does the Renaissance mean the rebirth of knowledge, but also represents a step from the past and a leap towards the future. The Renaissance overlapped the end of a period in European history called the Middle Ages. During this time, the great accomplishments of the ancient Greeks and Romans had been largely, though not entirely forgotten.

With the ending of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance great cultural movement arose. Beginning in Italy, the new Renaissance spirit spread to England, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Spain and other countries. In Italy during the 14th and 15th centuries certain scholars and historians began to display a remarkable new historical self-consciousness. They believed their own time was a new age, at once sharply different from the barbaric darkness which was imagined had occurred in the centuries before. They grew to believe that there was more to be discovered about mankind and the world, than medieval people had known.

The Italians are very eager to rediscover what clever Greeks and Romans had known in ancient times, as well as making their own intelligent attempts to understand the world. This renewed interest in the world and in mankind is called Humanism. Humanism was the most significant intellectual movement of the Renaissance. Humanism during the Renaissance received its name from one of the earliest concerns of the humanists: the need of a new education curriculum that would empathize a group of subjects known collectively as the 'Studia Humanitatis' involving grammar, history, poetry, ethics, and rhetoric.

However, this new education curriculum conflicted directly with the traditional education, which involved logic, science and physics, and often sharp clashes occurred between the two educators. However, more was at stake than the content of education. The traditional education was intended chiefly to prepare students for careers in medicine, law, and above all theology. To Renaissance humanists this seemed too narrow, too abstract and too exclusively intellectual. They proposed a system of education that centred on the general responsibilities of citizenship and social leadership.

Humanities essential contribution to the modern world is not found in its concern with ancient knowledge, but in its new attitude of flexibility and openness to all the possibilities in life. With people receiving education-involving leadership, they began to gain more confidence. More people began to reject ideas about science put forward by the ancient Greeks and began to search for the truth. They realized that the Greeks' ideas were often intelligent, but also often wrong.

Many people still did not want the old ideas disapproved, and threatened scientists to stop having new ideas. However, this did not stop many brilliant scientific inventions being produced at this time. A great scientist of the Renaissance was the Polish student Nicolaus Copernicus who developed the theory that the earth was a moving planet. He is considered the founder of modern astronomy. In Copernicus' time, most astronomers accepted the theory the Greek astronomer Ptolemy had formulated nearly 1400 years earlier.

Ptolemy stated that the Earth was the centre of the universe and motionless. He also stated that all the observed motions of the heavenly bodies were real and that those bodies moved in complicated patterns around the Earth. As the church supported Ptolemy theory no one dared to challenge it until Copernicus. Copernicus believed Ptolemy's theory was too complicated. He decided that the simplest and most systematic explanation was that every planet, including the Earth, revolved around the sun.

The Earth also had to spin around its axis once every day. Copernicus couldn't prove his theory, but his explanation of heavenly motion was mathematically strong and was less complicated than Ptolemy's theory. The later work of later scientists such as Galileo Galilei helped to prove that Copernicus' theory was correct. Galileo was a Florentine physicist, philosopher, and inventor, whose name became the chief emblem of Renaissance science and of ensuing technological revolution.

In 1609, he heard that the rulers of Florence and Venice were searching for someone who could invent an instrument that made distant objects appear

closer. Galileo set to work to construct one, and within a few days he had finished, naming it a telescope. During the winter, he turned his telescope to the sky with startling results. He announced that the moon surface was quite similar to earth's – irregular and mountainous; the Milky Way was made up of a host of stars; and the planet Jupiter is accompanied by at least four satellites.

The electrifying effects of these discoveries were amazing. They showed the human senses could be aided artificially to discover new truths about nature, something that neither philosophy nor theology had previously contended with. However, most importantly Ptolemy's astronomical theory was impossible. Galileo had proven Copernicus theory correct. Galileo had great importance upon the history of ideas. The Renaissance produced many important people who invented or theorized very important advances in history.

They all became strong symbols of revolt against the forces of authority, whilst the Renaissance flourished with the power of question. The Renaissance period provided modern culture with a variety of advances in technology, art, science and most importantly it gave mankind confidence. The ancient civilizations, in particular the Greeks and Romans, laid the foundations for civilizations and the Renaissance added the most important ingredient; the ability to ask why. It is appropriate to use the label 'Rebirth' to describe European history in the 15th and 16th centuries.