

# The middle ages vs. renaissance

[History](#), [Middle Ages](#)



·Writers and thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries introduced the idea that they were part of a distinct era—the Renaissance. They looked at ancient Greek and Roman civilizations for models. They found the ideals of the ancient Greeks and Romans to be superior to those found in the feudal and religious literature of the Middle Ages.

·Burchhardt identified a difference between the medieval man, who was controlled by faith throughout his life, and the Renaissance man, who strove for the highest individual development. The medieval man is not an individual, but rather one in a group. The Renaissance man wanted to be unique, to stand out, to be different and to make an impression on others. This man was aware of the real world and was talented in many fields.

·In contrast, W. T. Waugh found little evidence of a distinct period. Rather, he saw continual intellectual activity throughout medieval Europe. If there was a renaissance, it began in 1000, during the Middle Ages, not with the humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Medieval scholars read the Greek and Roman classics. Therefore the humanists have exaggerated their importance. The “renaissance” was no more than the high point of the Middle Ages.

·Petrarch was a humanist who was concerned with things of this world—not heaven. He was a man of the Renaissance.

·Erasmus was critical both of the religious orders and the Church, who, he believed, were interested only in money and drink. In contrast, Erasmus viewed the secular rulers as knowledgeable leaders. He admired the English court and King Henry VIII, who, he hoped, would provide leadership.

·DaVinci, a complex man of the Renaissance, was interested in anatomy and the realistic portrayal of the human body. He was the ideal man of the Renaissance due to his many talents and interests.

·Kepler, an astronomer, used observation and mathematics to prove his thesis. He did not accept what he was told by the Church or the ancients. Instead, he proved his theories.

·There were many universities founded in the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, leading to the conclusion that there were centers of learning established and thriving in Italy, France, and Great Britain throughout the Middle Ages.