

The history of italian renaissance

[Art & Culture](#), [Renaissance](#)



The Italian Renaissance was driven by a force of great strides in humanity. This was a time for a re-awakening of educated thinking, great artistic endeavors, and an empowering factor of humanism to use free will to govern one's future rather than allowing the church to dictate the correct path in life. The city of Florence became the center for much of this activity, where artists and scholars were sponsored royally by like-minded families of great wealth and social power. More emphasis was put onto education as a means of freedom from ignorance instead of a reason to serve God.

There was a shift in power from the church to a general secularization in all areas of life, with the main focus being on the enhancement in the studies of the arts. The arts were looked at in a new way, using humanism as the new religion and the new way to achieve the greatest possible virtue. The actual term Renaissance means "re-birth", which is essentially what was taking place overall, in Florence and other Italian states. "For Burckhardt this period consisted, broadly speaking, of the 15th century in Italy, a time and place in which "medieval" man became "modern" man. -Italy-History of, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2000. (1)

This was a re-birth of ideas, learning, communication, artistry and beliefs. All of these factors were culminating together to prepare the world for the dawning of a new age, and a new direction for man to move in. The Italian Renaissance began finding its niche among the elite in Florence in 1360, however, this was just the beginning. The Renaissance proved to be more established by the early fifteenth century among the rest of Italy, and eventually the rest of Europe. . The world was changing and ready for a new way of thinking.

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No longer were individuals prepared to accept the teachings of the church as their guidelines in life. Society wanted more from life than what the church had to offer. Italian culture, most notably in Florence, was growing wealthier. With this increase of wealth came a need to pursue personal limits in achievement, education, and ability. " In their society, successful individuals, usually men, clearly were capable of doing more in this world than traditional religious views allowed. " - Modern European History I, 1992.

(2) The humanists came forth from this need to learn.

They were the intellect behind the Renaissance and brought to light a new view of what should be taught and studied. They embraced the classics; translating many from the ancient Greek and Roman script they were originally created in, and redefining how these works were originally interpreted. They looked upon studies in grammar, rhetorics, poetry, history and moral philosophy as a means of elevating their self-worth, and discovered that man can create his own destiny rather than follow a pre-ordained fate determined by the church.

By using education to further themselves in society, the free-willed humanists were setting the standards for educated thinking, that current modern day life adheres to. " Humanism was the most important single intellectual movement of the Renaissance. " - Eugene F. Rice Jr, 1970. (3) Humanism was not only focused on education; this way of thinking also held power over other aspects of the Renaissance. 2 As much of the educational aspect centered in Florence, so did the growing desire for beauty and culture to be represented in art; another strong factor of humanism.

With its economic and social standing becoming rapidly elevated, and due to the strong tradition of democracy it held, Florence would prove to have the ideal surroundings for the birth of artistry in the Italian Renaissance movement. At the beginning of the Renaissance, Florence was a well-established, commercial city primarily controlled by the rich merchant class and some of the very wealthy and powerful families that resided there.

Families such as the de Medicifamily, would commission artists to design and build enormous churches, palaces and other monuments to cement the families' position in Florence. Using this type of backing sponsorship, the growing artistic community was able to flourish and thrive, and produce a multitude of glorious works, focusing on a new embodiment of their skill. The human body was looked upon and studied with more detail and realism than ever before. This led to more accurate and life-like art work, both in painting and sculpture.

Much of the art moved away from the old themes of portraying the world and humanity as perfectly as possible, and concentrated instead on capturing the actual likeness of the subject matter, no matter how unappealing or distressing it may have been. With enormous financial sponsorship behind them, artists were able to concentrate solely on their craft and expand it into the new, Renaissance style. They met great opposition from the church but were able to continue moving forward with the ongoing support of their benefactors.

The infallible teachings of the church combined with the power of the Pope, were constantly challenged by the humanists and those that followed this

new style of thought. Citizens were more and more frequently pledging allegiance to the crown rather than to the Vatican, creating a steady decline of power from religion. " The Christian truth that had been acknowledged as comprehending all phenomena, earthly or heavenly, now had to co-exist with a classical attitude that was overwhelmingly directed toward earthly life. - Humanism, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2000. (4)

Knowledge began to undermine the position of the church. An ever-increasing amount of followers of humanism reaffirmed the fact that humans are individuals and not just souls passing through earth on their way to eternity in heaven or hell. As individuals, every human had the right to discovering his own destiny and potential. These beliefs and views were strongly frowned upon by the church, who tried in vain to reassert their influence on society.

Much of the great wealth of the era was also looked at as un-Christian, but the humanists argued that wealth was only a means to achieve greater virtue. Money was needed to fund and support the arts, which provided the tools to further enlightenment in these areas. The church however, could only accept this wealth if it was used for the greater good of society. This was an argument to prevail throughout the Renaissance. From the re-evaluation of education and art, society has derived an opportunity to determine their own destiny, based on the knowledge they choose to empower themselves with.

Humanists may have opposed the church and its teachings in order to move forward with free will and choice, but without that opposition, life

would not hold the amount of wonderment and variation that exists today. The humanistic efforts that began during the Italian Renaissance paved the way for society to become more independent in their thinking, more realistic in their arts, and more educated in subject matter that had been too long denied. The Italian Renaissance shaped and altered the " modern" world, bringing society out of the " medieval" times and onto the path that stretched toward the optimistic future.