

Women in the renaissance essay sample

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



The women of the Renaissance not only experienced a great rebirth in classical humanism, but they also contributed largely in both the artistic and political aspects in the Renaissance. This is proved by the numerous female individuals that still remain as the greatest Renaissance figures in history. The birth of classical humanism in the female world was defended and acknowledged by prominent figures such as Laura Cereta and Lucretia Marinella. The artistic world of the Renaissance delivered talented artists and musicians like Lavinia Fontana and Madalena Casulana. And finally, the most notable characters of the Renaissance was the Queen of England, Elizabeth I. Queen Elizabeth not only was able to rise to a powerful position of political status, but she also had the strength to move the land of England into a period of peace and artistic prosper. Although the Renaissance is highly dominated by the male world, we shouldn't forget the importance of the few female individuals who took advantage of this time of enlightenment and shared with the world, their individuality and intelligence.

Women humanists of the Renaissance were limited to the few wealthy aristocrat families in England. According to "The Book of the Courtier," an ideal woman of the Renaissance was one who had the knowledge of classical education to entertain her husband. Although the purpose of educating a woman was solely for the man's entertainment, this idea proved to be a great stepping stone to a woman's independence. Most of the educated women in the Renaissance were from upper class families who had the incredible opportunity to give their children a humanistic education. Laura Cereta was from a Brescian Aristocratic family who was fortunate enough to study the art of humanism. She diligently studied throughout her lifetime

and was able to form an independent opinion on the views of women in the Renaissance.

She wrote a letter called the “ Defense of Liberal Instruction of Women” that intelligently defended the unfortunate, secondary status of women in the Renaissance. She states that women have had a great reputation in contributing to the outside world with their intelligence, and with this statement, she lists off the names of famous women in the past to further argue and prove her position. Cereta explains that the reason there are only a few women humanists was because the women of the Renaissance were more concerned with their outward appearances and spoiled splendors than the treasure of education, “ The explanation is clear: women have been able by nature to be exceptional, but have chosen lesser goals.” (Fiero, 35)

It seems that, although gaining a humanistic education as a women was a difficult task, even those who were fortunate enough with the opportunity to learn classical humanism were just not interested in contributing to the Renaissance. Therefore, we should form greater acknowledgement and respect for the few female individuals who took part of the Renaissance. Another noteworthy individual who gained prominence through her humanistic education was a woman by the name of Lucretia Marinella. Marinella published a series of great works but her treatise, “ The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men” was the piece that gave her recognition as a humanist and a feminist. Marinella not only

defends women of the Renaissance, but also illustrates her point further by pointing out the defects of men.

The Renaissance was not only defined by its humanistic wonders, but was also illustrated in the unique art and talented music of that time. Women contributed largely in that area by playing significant roles in professional singing groups and accomplishing musical compositions. Madalena Casulana was a prominent musician during the Renaissance because she was the first female composer to see her works get published. She used word painting to give her pieces more dramatic feeling and sensual moods. There was also a group of all female professional singers called “Concerto Delle Donne” that were famed for their technical and artistic excellence. They ultimately became the model for all other female ensembles around the world.

Women who were talented enough had the chance to train as a professional singer. This process slowly began to give women more individuality and they became independently known for their original talent. Along with the music world, the artistic world was also influenced greatly by the women’s touch. A notable artist during the Renaissance was a Bolognese painter by the name of Lavinia Fontana. She was largely known for her skillful portraits that later won her fame and recognition for her wedding pieces of the upper class. Although male artists like Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo have garnered more recognition than female artists like Fontana, the Renaissance proved to be period where creative female individuals had the chance to share their innovative talent with the world.

One of the most significant female characters of the Renaissance was a political figure, Queen Elizabeth. Her reign was known as the Elizabethan Era and under her rule there was a thriving of famous playwrights, such as William Shakespeare. She not only encouraged the artistic flourishing, but also helped bring the land of England to a time of peace and prosperity. Her reign is also widely acknowledged as the ruler of England's golden era and she is considered an ideal Renaissance ruler because she was gifted with political intelligence and had a desire for exploration and prosperity. To be a successful ruler during the Renaissance, one had to be accepting of new ideas and creativity while maintaining a strong leadership over its people. Not only was Queen Elizabeth able to successfully carry out political power, but she also used the fact that she was a woman to her advantage.

Queen Elizabeth was a devoted politique, and she never married because she wanted to keep that option open for upper class men who wanted to pursue her. That way she was able to use them to her advantage because she wasn't tied down to one man. She dedicated her lifestyle for success and is a great example of a woman who gained worldwide recognition as an extraordinary Renaissance figure. There are arguments claiming that Elizabeth was only successful because she possessed masculine personality traits such as physical bravery, strength, and stamina. Machiavelli also stated that the worst type of ruler is one who is effeminate, in other words, emotional and weak.

Queen Elizabeth proved those arguments wrong by being a great example of a woman who carried out charismatic power. Elizabeth did possess these “

masculine” traits, but she also chose to avoid marriage, something that all women were expected to do. She integrated courtships as part of an important process for foreign policies. These extended courtships provided short term diplomatic gains during a long period while marriages only yielded some strategic gains with a costly allegiance. Queen Elizabeth knew this strategy and she strengthened her rule by using her husbandless status to her advancement.

The women of the Renaissance took a secondary position to the men of the Renaissance, but that doesn't mean that they didn't have a Renaissance. Although their achievements were not as well known, the Renaissance was the beginning of a women's first steps to individuality. Even though most women during this time weren't fortunate enough to gain an education in humanism, the fact that knowledgeable women were coveted have proved that education was now highly regarded in the female world. The Renaissance was a time where women did not have to stay cooped up in the house to be considered an ideal spouse. Women with a classical education background were highly recognized, and this slowly set off a chain reaction of important, influential female figures like Fontana and Cereta. The artistic, humanistic and political aspects of the Renaissance were mainly dominated by the male world, but this shouldn't eliminate all talented women of this period as well. Women did indeed have a Renaissance that brilliantly shone in small, but influential aspects.

Works Cited

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