

# Renaissance humanism assignment

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The Humanism movement occurred during the 14th and early 15th century in Italy, and later spread to the rest of Europe becoming known as the Renaissance. Writers, politicians, scholars and artists engaged in the movement, which was developed in response to the scholastic conventions at the time. The conventions of education emphasized a utilitarian, practical, pre-professional and scientific studies for job preparation, by men.

Humanists reacted against this utilitarian approach seeking to create a citizenry, including women, able to speak and write with eloquence and thus able to engage the civic life of their communities. The humanistic approach was accomplished through the study of humanities including grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy. Humanism aimed to revive the cultural and moral philosophy of classical antiquity. The movement was largely founded on the ideals of Italian scholar and poet, Francesco Petrarca.

These ideals centered on humanists' potential for achievement. The theory of Humanism revolves around several main principles that focus on the role of humans in their environment. For example, humanists believe there is no external divine intervention between humans and the physical environment in which they operate and that human beings are not subject to God or any divine agency. Beliefs must be founded on reason and the human experience and all human beings are entitled to inalienable human rights.

Additional principles include the belief that humans do not have a right of dominion over animals and the environment and that Civil laws should be arrived at by a collective consensual process and should promote the common good. Special privileges should not be given to any group on the basis of

religious beliefs and finally, humanists believed that there was no evidence that life after death exists and humans should focus on living this life. While humanism initially began as a predominantly literary and political movement, its influence quickly spread to the general culture of the time, reintroducing classical Greek and Roman art forms.

Humanists considered the ancient world to be the pinnacle of human achievement and thought its accomplishments should serve as the model for contemporary Europe. Humanism affected the artistic community and how artists were perceived. While medieval society viewed artists as servants and craftspeople, Renaissance artists were trained intellectuals, and their art reflected this newfound perspective. Art in the middle ages was usually anonymous, where the artist created the artworks to glorify God.

However, in the Renaissance, artists became famous for their work. Patronage of the arts became an important activity and commissions were no longer for religious themes, but were for secular themes as well. In painting, the treatment of the elements of perspective, geometry and light became of particular importance. The use of oil paint had its beginnings in the early part of the 16th century and its use continued to be explored extensively throughout the coming High Renaissance of the 16th century.

Humanism in art celebrates individuals of the middle class; there were thousands of portraits of merchants, scholars, musicians, wives, and children during the Renaissance. Humanism considers that people can solve difficulties on their own, without the help of God. Many non-Christian works created in the Renaissance support such a philosophy, especially Raphael's "

School of Athens”. Finally, humanism affected the art world through the naturalistic way of portraying the human body using full anatomical accuracy, and frequently nude characters.

Many of the works of art in that time celebrate the beauty of the human form. This was in stark contrast to the way that the Medieval artist abstracted the human body, in some cases making it seem as if their portraits and statues of saints have no body beneath their robes. I have chosen three artworks to demonstrate how humanist theory is reflected in renaissance art: David by Donatello (Figure 1), the Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli (Figure 2), and the Last Supper By Leonardo da Vinci (Figure 3).

David by Donatello is a relatively small (five foot) bronze statue that was completed in the 1430s. The method in which the statue was made represents the return to the classical art periods through the technique of lost-wax casting, using bronze, copper and tin. It was most likely commissioned by the Medici family, and was placed in their palace courtyard, in Florence. It is now found in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. The statue depicts the biblical story of David as he stands with his foot on the severed head of Goliath.

He is only wearing a pair of boots, and a hat topped with laurel, whilst holding Goliath sword in one hand and the rock he used to kill him in the other. The hat or helmet on the statue is similar to one worn by the Greek and Roman messengers of the gods, Hermes, and typifies the humanist interest in classical mythology. The humanism is also reflected through the nudity of the statue and the emotional expressions and stance of the body. The

relaxed contrasts and placement of the left hand on his hip suggest confidence, pride and movement.

The expression is one of thoughtfulness, on a quiet and contemplative face, with downcast eyes. The face reflects the humanist value of contemplation and internal thought, instead of exterior boasting that one would expect from other religious artwork of the time. The contrasts and the large-scale bronze casting of this statue represents Tangelo's return to the humanist values of the ancient world. The stance and artistic media had not been used for 1000 years and artists in the Middle Ages focused on religious icons, God and the soul and rarely used nudity or realism.

The unman body was seen as a path to corruption in the middle ages, and therefore was not used in artwork. This statue is the first freestanding nude figure since the ancient Greek and roman classical period. From a humanistic perspective, the sensuality of the figure makes the observer forget it is a biblical story. Because he is free standing he is more human and realistic and gives the impression to being able to move freely, as compared to the architectural and grouped statues of the Middle Ages and Byzantine. The return to nudity embraces the Greek and Roman love and respect for the human form.

The feathered helmet on Goliath decapitated head, stretch up Davit's inner thigh, in an almost sexual manner. In contrast, the gruesome head of Goliath seems to conflict with the sensuality, eroticism and beauty of David. In conclusion, Denotable uses the humanist theory in his statue of David through the contrasts, the sensual and erotic nakedness, the use of bronze

casting and the and Roman Classical period, which is a key focus of the humanist movement during the Renaissance. The Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli, was painted between 1483 and 1485.

It is now found in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. It is a tempera on panel painting and is one of the most iconic images in the history of western art. The Medici commissioned the Birth of Venus, Venus is portrayed standing naked on a shell on the seashore; on her left the winds blow gently caressing her hair, on her right a handmaid (Zephyr) waits for the goddess to go closer to dress her shy body. The meadow is sprinkled with violets, which are a symbol of love. She stands radically naked in the painting, not in a Christian context, but in a classical Greek and Roman secular context.

The painting is based on an ancient Roman sculpture portraying Venus the goddess of love. Up until this point in the renaissance the only naked female portrayed in art was the biblical figure, Eve. This painting reflects the humanist theory in that it departs radically from the biblical themes of the middle ages and focuses on an ancient Greek and Roman goddess from the Classical era. Humanists believed that the ancient world was the pinnacle of human achievement and this rebirth of ancient beliefs is reflected in its secular nature. The painting focuses on the beauty and sensuality of the human form.

The Goddess's stance is relaxed but not truly contrasts. The body has a curve to it that implies she is highly flexible and she appears to be slightly floating above the seashell, the zephyrs or winds who are blowing her to shore are also floating and seem to be impossibly intertwined. Botticelli based

the painting on a Roman vase painting style, where the characters are pushed forward to the front of the painting and are presented in a single plane. The painting is very linear, with three isolated groupings, the zephyrs, the goddess and the shell, and lastly the maiden waiting with the cloak.

The linear perspective defies space, to create a sense of pattern and focus on a neo-platonic sense of beauty of the physical, sensual, erotic, and leaves one with an impression of divine beauty. In conclusion, *The Birth of Venus* mainly focuses on the humanist values of beauty, sensuality, eroticism, and pagan beliefs from the Classical Roman and Greek periods. Created in 1498. It was commissioned by Leonardo's patron Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan and can still be found in the refectory of the convent of Santa Maria della Grazie, Milan. It is a large painting measuring 4.8 by 8.8 meters, and covers an end wall of the dining hall of the convent. Many historians have studied this painting and searched for the many hidden meanings and hints in the painting. The painting portrays the last supper, and specifically the reaction given by each of the apostles when Jesus proclaimed that one of them would betray him. All twelve apostles have different reactions to the news, ranging from anger to shock. There are four groupings of apostles in the painting. Bartholomew, James, and Andrew form a group of three who are all surprised.

Judas Peter and John form another group of three, Judas looks shocked by Jesus' announcement, and he is clutching a small bag of silver coins, signifying his payment to betray Jesus. Judas is the only one in the painting with his elbow on the table and his head is lower than anyone else's. Judas is also reaching for the bread on the table at the same time as Jesus, also

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indicating his guilt. Peter on the other hand looks angry and is holding a knife pointed away from Jesus. The youngest, John, appears to swoon at the news. The next group is of Thomas, James the Greater, and Phillip.

Thomas is upset, James looks stunned and Phillip seems to be asking for some explanation. Finally Mathew, Jude and Simon make up the last group of three. Jude and Matthew face Simon as if seeking an answer to their questions. The angles, light and perspective of the painting all demonstrate the humanist theory. The figures appear real, and portray real emotion, real humans, and a realistic sense of proportion and size. This painting demonstrates the humanist art typical of the renaissance where the treatment of the elements of perspective and light became important.

Leonardo simplified the architecture in the painting, compared to earlier artists renditions of the same scene by eliminating unnecessary and distracting details so that the architecture could emphasis the sense of spirituality. By crowding all of the figures together, dad Vinci used the table as a barrier to separate the spiritual realm from the viewer's earthly world. Dad Vine's emphasis on spirituality results in a painting that is more naturalistic Dad Vinci depicts a love of nature that is typical of the humanist movement.

In the interpret the landscape as paradise, it has been suggested that this heavenly sanctuary can only be reached through Christ. Finally, the balanced composition of the Last Supper is anchored by an equilateral triangle formed by Chrism's body. He sits below an arching pediment that if completed, traces a circle that would perfectly enclose the triangle. Dad Vine's use of



ideal geometric forms shows his interest in Neo-Platonism. Geometry, used by the Greeks to express Heavenly perfection, has been used by dad Vinci to celebrate Christ as the embodiment of heaven on earth.

Neo-Platonism is an element of the humanist revival that reconciles aspects of Greek philosophy with Christian theology. In conclusion, dad Vine's painting of the last supper reflects the humanist movement in Renaissance art through the use of perspective, light, spirituality, naturalism and Neo-Platonism. His use of geometry suggests heavenly perfection and was used extensively in classical Greek paintings and shows dad Vine's ability to reconcile Greek TASK THREE In this task I compare the three works of art (Figure 4) that reflect several aspects of the humanist theory found in Renaissance art.

All artist used differing media and unique styles to portray their humanistic beliefs. Figure 4: Venn diagram showing the three paintings that I will compare and contrast in this task. A) Compare and contrast David by Denotable with The Birth of Venus by Sandra Poetical Denotable portrays the humanist theory in his statue of David wrought the use of contrasts, the sensual and erotic nakedness, the use of bronze casting and the freestanding form.

By using these techniques, he showed a return to the art of the Greek and Roman Classical period, which was a key focus of the humanist movement during the Renaissance. On the other hand, The Birth of Venus mainly focused on the humanist values of realism, beauty, sensuality, eroticism, and pagan Neo-platonic beliefs from the Classical roman and Greek periods.

These artworks are similar in that they are both of naked iconic figures and they focused on beauty, eroticism and neo-platonic beliefs from the classical Greek and

Roman times. They differ in the material they were constructed from, with David cast in Bronze and The Birth of Venus, a tempera on panel painting. In addition, David depicts on a biblical character and the birth of Venus on a pagan goddess from Roman mythology. However, both characters are youthful, sensual and in the case of David, slightly feminine. Their bodies are both in a relaxed pose: David is in true contrasts; whereas Venus is twisted in an almost contrasts stance as if she is floating.

David is freestanding and the statue embraces the humanist realism so that the observer feels he could freely move about. David's beauty is contrasted with the gruesomeness of Goliath severed head. Venus, on the other hand, is painted and painting. The linear perspective, beautiful surroundings, the groupings of zephyrs and her maid all draw the viewer to the centre of the painting and the beauty reflected in Venus and her environment. The use of beauty, perspective through natural surroundings reflects the humanist belief that we are all connected to our natural environment. ) Compare and contrast The Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli with the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci The Birth of Venus portrays the humanist aloes of beauty, sensuality, eroticism, and neo-platonic pagan beliefs from the Classical roman and Greek periods. On the other hand, da Vinci's painting of The Last Supper reflects the humanist movement in Renaissance art through the use of perspective, light, spirituality and naturalism. His use of geometry suggests heavenly perfection and was used extensively in classical <https://assignbuster.com/renaissance-humanism-assignment/>

Greek paintings and shows Dad Vine's ability to reconcile Greek philosophy with Christian theology.

Both used classical Greek and Roman artistic conventions that were frequently used in the renaissance humanist movement. For example, Poetical focused on the beauty of a pagan goddess from Roman mythology and Dad Vinci use of geometry and realism, perspective and light, showed his interest in Classical Greek techniques. Dad Vinci, as a typical humanist, experimented with new media in his painting of the Last Supper in the use of tempera and oil on dry plaster, whereas Poetical used the more traditional, using tempera on panel.

Both artists used perspective to bring a greater sense of humanity and realism to the paintings, however, Botulism's painting was more linear in nature and Dad Vine's was more geometrical. The two artists also used groupings within their paintings to help bring a sense of realism and perspective to the paintings as was commonly found in humanist paintings. For example, Poetical used three groups, the zephyrs, the goddess and her maid. These three groups emphasized movement in the painting, as well as beauty and perspective.

Dad Vinci used four groups of three apostles to depict a range of human emotions in their reactions to the news Jesus has told them. The groupings also made the scene more realistic and emphasized the central figure in Jesus. Both paintings depicted the humanist love of nature. Botulism's painting shows Venus in a natural setting that celebrates the beauty in the main characters and surrounding scene. Botulism's natural setting is seen as

true paradise, which typifies beauty and harmony. Dad Vinci shows his love of nature through the windows in the scene.

The natural environment as seen outside of the windows is true paradise. C) compare and contrast The Last Supper by Leonardo Dad Vinci with David by Denotable Dad Vine's painting of the last supper reflects the humanist movement in Renaissance art through the use of perspective, light, spirituality, geometry and naturalism. On he contrasts, the sensual and erotic nakedness, the use of bronze casting and the freestanding form. Both artists used techniques that showed a return to the art of the Greek and Roman Classical period, which was a key focus of the humanist movement during the Renaissance.

Both Denotable and Dad Vinci used the humanist artistic values of portraying the human body with the correct dimensions in a realistic perspective with real human emotions. The characters seem to come to life in both art works, despite the fact that they used two completely different media, Denotable used a nude, freestanding bronze casting and Dad Vinci experimented with ampere and oil on dry plaster. Both artworks were of religious characters, Denotable depicted the moment of victory of David over Goliath and Dad Vinci illustrated the moment in the Last Supper where Jesus tells his apostles that one of them will betray him.

These are both highly emotive moments and both artists use the humanist approach of portraying the powerful raw emotions held by all of the characters. Both artists departed from the styles and forms middle ages, by bringing raw humanity, realism, sensuality, and emotion into religious

events. Task 4: Significance of these artworks and how they relate to humanist theory The three paintings used in this project, David by Donatello, The Birth of Venus by Botticelli and The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci, all reflect aspects of humanist theory from the Renaissance.

They were contemporaries, worked in Florence and were commissioned by patrons of the arts. They all were strongly influenced by the humanist theory that they portrayed in their art work according to their individual skills and interests. Donatello and Botticelli's love of the human form is portrayed in their nude characters in these works of art. This nudity embraces the humanist return to the Greek and Roman love and respect for the human form. This is a bold departure from the Middle Ages where the naked body was seen as a pathway to corruption and was not used in mainstream art.

All three artists used perspective, realism, neo-Platonism, emotion and movement to bring humanist values into their artworks. Leonardo da Vinci, in particular used geometry to draw attention to Jesus, the main character of the painting. His use of geometry suggests heavenly perfection and was used extensively in classical Greek paintings and shows Leonardo's ability to reconcile Greek philosophy with Christian theology. The use of geometry and light became popular during the intellectual rebirth of the Renaissance.

Donatello, on the other hand, used contrasts, and a freestanding statue to suggest freedom and movement of the human form, whereas, Botticelli used an almost surreal floating movement to idealize the beauty of the Venus. Botticelli further outwardly embraced the humanist pagan beliefs from the Greek and

Roman mythology by focusing on the goddess Venus in his painting.

Denotable was subtler in his interest in Greek mythology, and the helmet with laurel on David suggests the character might be the god Hermes instead of the Biblical character, David.