

HUMANISM

Humanism was a way of thinking about people and their place in the world. As a movement, Humanism first became popular in the 14th century in Italy. Humanists, unlike people of the Middle Ages, focused their writing, art, and thinking on people and their achievements. While in the Middle Ages everything in people’s lives centered on the Church, religion, and the “hereafter,” humanists were far more concerned with the “here and now” as they strived to achieve all they could during their time on earth.

Humanist thought was at the heart of a period of history called the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a time of rebirth of learning, particularly the ideas of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, which had been lost to Europeans in the chaos of the early Middle Ages. Humanists saw the Greeks and Romans as role models of accomplishment and tried to style their thinking, art, architecture, and literature after the ancient scholars and artists. Throughout the Renaissance humanists read and studied all they could find about the Greeks and Romans and went on to expand on the ancients’ ideas.

Both Humanism and the Renaissance began in Italy. Because of its location on the Mediterranean Sea, Italy’s cities became important centers for trade during the Middle Ages. Along with the many goods that arrived in Italy from foreign lands were many new and some old ideas, including those of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. Many of the ancient writings were in Latin, the language of Rome. Since Latin had never been completely lost among the people of its homeland, some Italians were able to read the original works.

There was fierce competition among Italy’s cities for foreign trade and the great wealth it brought. While all sought to make their cities beautiful, the city of Florence in particular understood that new ideas, great artwork, and learning would attract many people, including traders. Florence’s government and business leaders, therefore, worked hard to encourage humanist thought and the talents of the city’s people.

Summarize Humanism in **ONE** sentence. _____

Summarize the Renaissance in **ONE** sentence. _____

Write at least **THREE** sentences to explain how you think the Renaissance may have been different from the Middle Ages. _____

Underline **THREE** sentences in the passage that best explain why Humanism and the Renaissance began in Florence, Italy.