

## The Birth of New Ideas: Birth of the Renaissance

### Key Terms and People

<b>Humanism</b> focus on human potential and achievements	<b>Renaissance</b> period of rebirth of art and learning in Europe lasting from about 1300 to 1600	<b>Secular</b> concerned with worldly rather than spiritual matters
<b>Patron</b> person who financially supported artists		

### A TIME OF CHANGE

#### What factors led to the birth of the Renaissance?

The years 1300 to 1600 saw a rebirth of learning and culture in Europe called the **1**. This rebirth involved an explosion of creativity in art, architecture, and writing. The Renaissance had its roots in an effort to bring back the culture of classical Greece and Rome. However, new ideas and values also developed and gained influence.

The Renaissance grew out of important changes in society, economics, learning, and politics. First, famine and disease caused Europe's population to become much smaller. With fewer people to feed, the general standard of living was higher. People were also becoming better educated. Second, an increase of trade led to the growth of a middle class made up of merchants, bankers, and tradespeople. People in the middle class had extra money to spend on luxuries. Third, Europeans also regained access to learning from classical times. Greek texts, which had been preserved by Byzantine and Islamic scholars, became more available. This spread of classical knowledge was helped along by the introduction of new technologies. Papermaking, for example, helped make possible the development of printing. The ability to create and store books led to the growth of libraries and the spread of knowledge. Finally, a long

period of almost constant warfare was brought to a close. Peace returned to much of the continent as various rulers strengthened their control and authority.

### THE RISE OF ITALIAN CITY-STATES

#### Why did the renaissance begin in Italy?

The rise of city-states in Italy was another major factor in the birth of the Renaissance. Unlike much of the rest of Europe, Italy was more urban and commercial. Cities were places where people exchanged ideas. This exchange of ideas helped contribute to the intellectual transformation that led to the Renaissance.

Economic factors also played a role. The economy of the Italian city-states was based on commerce rather than agriculture. Cities such as Venice, Milan, Naples, Florence, and Rome saw the development of a class of merchants and bankers who were becoming wealthy and powerful. This class strongly believed in the idea of individual achievement. Merchants and bankers also began to support the arts. Economic prosperity helped support artistic creativity and public building.

### CLASSICAL AND WORLDLY VALUES

#### What new values did people hold?

Interest in the classical past led to an important value in Renaissance culture—**2**.

This was a deep interest in what people have already achieved as well as what they could achieve in the future. Scholars did not try to connect classical writings to Christian teaching. Instead, they tried to understand them on their own terms.

In the Middle Ages, the emphases had been mostly on spiritual values. Renaissance thinkers stressed **3** ideas. These ideas centered on the things of the world. One way that powerful or wealthy people showed this interest in worldly things was by paying artists,

writers, and musicians to create beautiful works of art. Wealthy people who supported artists were known as **4**.

People tried to show that they could master many fields of study or work. Someone who succeeded in many fields was admired greatly. Men were expected to be charming, witty, well educated, well mannered, athletic, and self-controlled. Women were expected to have many accomplishments, too. But women were not to show them in public.

**5.** What role did new technologies play in the birth of the Renaissance?

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**6.** Why were cities important to the birth of the Renaissance?

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**7.** What are secular ideas?

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**Directions:** After reading about the birth of the Renaissance, complete the chart to describe the effects of the developments listed in the first column.

Developments	Effects
Famine and disease cause Europe's population to become smaller.	<b>9</b>
An increase of trade leads to the growth of a middle class made up of merchants, bankers, and tradespeople.	<b>10</b>
New technologies are introduced.	<b>11</b>
Unlike much of Europe, Italy is more urban and commercial.	<b>12</b>
Humanism develops as an important value.	<b>13</b>
Renaissance thinkers stress secular ideas.	<b>14</b>