Welcome to AP European History and congratulations on challenging yourself with a rigorous history course your senior year! In order to make our way through the wealth of material we have to cover by May before your AP Exam I have assigned an introductory reading (primary and secondary) on the Renaissance as well as a corresponding assignment for the FIRST DAY OF CLASS.

Please come see me in Room 502 to sign out a book before you leave for the summer. All the assigned primary source readings have been scanned and are attached to this assignment.

**Part I Readings:**

Text Reading:
- Chapter 12 (pages 356-389), European Society in the Age of the Renaissance 1350-1550 from *A History of Western Society Since 1300* by John P. McKay

Excerpts from primary and secondary sources:
- Francesco Petrarch, *A Letter to Boccaccio: Literary Humanism*
- Peter Paul Vergerio, *On the Liberal Arts*
- Christine de Pizan, *The City of Ladies*
- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*
- Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*
- Peter Burke, *The Myth of the Renaissance*
- Federico Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*
- Charles G. Nauert, *Northern Sources of the Renaissance*

**Part 2 Assignment:**
The second portion of your summer assignment is to come to class prepared to have a discussion on the following three open ended questions on the first day of school.

1. **Compare and contrast the Renaissance in Italy and in northern Europe.**
2. **To what extent was the Renaissance a secular (worldly/non-religious) movement?**
3. **Discuss how Renaissance ideas are expressed in the Italian art of the period, referring to specific works and artists.**

You will earn a *quiz grade for your participation* in the discussion so feel free to bring any notes that may help you. This is an Advanced Placement Senior elective so my expectations are high. Specific notes are necessary if you’d like to do well during our graded discussion. I advise formulating multiple arguments in response to each question as well as supporting evidence (primary and secondary) for each argument. Organizing 2-3 arguments per question should ensure that you have enough material to participate frequently in our discussion.

If you’d like advice on how to organize notes for a discussion, I’ve attached sample notes for one sample argument and corresponding evidence for Question 1 on the next page. If I were to outline this question fully, I would include 1-2 additional arguments. (*These notes are a little longer than they’d be if I were simply writing them for myself because I wanted them to be clear for you.*)

See you in September!

Mr. d’Anunciacao
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Sample notes for ONE argument corresponding to Question 1:
*Please notice that I include italicized notes to myself throughout my outline as well as "personal thoughts" at the end. This is something I’ve always done to prepare for a discussion. This is where I dump ideas/facts/counter-arguments that I feel may come up during that topic. Remember notes are for YOU. Format them in a way that makes them “user-friendly” for YOU.

**Question:**
Compare and contrast the Renaissance in Italy and in northern Europe.

**Argument:**
• Without a direct link to the Classical Age (ancient Greece and Rome) the literature of the Northern Renaissance, unlike that of the Italian Renaissance, was based more firmly on Christian beliefs and teachings on piety. *(don’t forget that their art is a more secular so don’t back yourself into a corner with this argument)*

**Primary Source Supporting Evidence:**
• Niccolo Machiavelli- *The Prince*
• Baldesar Castiglione- *The Book of the Courtier*
• Giovanni Boccaccio- *Decameron*
• Petrarch’s Sonnets
• Desiderius Erasmus- *Praise of Folly, Education of Christian Prince, Handbook of a Christian Knight, Adages*
• Thomas More- *Utopia* *(does the fact that More and Erasmus want to reform the church make them “more” or “less” Christian?)*
• Shakespeare

**Secondary Source Supporting Evidence:**
• Italian humanists sometimes seen as “un-Christian” and secular.
• Study of the "humanities" begins-focus on education (academies), use of vernacular
• Study of primary source texts over secondary sources – no more summarizing the arguments of other men
• Early Italian Renaissance deals more with Christianity than the later Italian Renaissance *(could help your overall argument that Italian is Classical and Northern is Christian)*
• Most Italian literature on worldly subjects like art, music, love, politics, “how to’s”, etc. – known as civic Humanists (applicable knowledge)
• Be wise and practice virtue (virtu)
• Notable women on education- Pisan’s *The City of Ladies*
• Revival of Platonism (Plato)- flattering view of human nature/human reason
• Italian humanists become “snobby elite” they had criticized
• North didn’t have connection to the Classical Age- created their own brand of Christian Humanism. Inspired by Italian Renaissance but background too diverse. Appealed to common people.
• North sought to unite civic ideas of humanity and virtue with Christian ideals of piety and love
• Push for Christian texts in the vernacular *(will have MAJOR repercussions later-REFORMATION)*
• Von Hutten’s calls for religious reform (indulgences)
• Push for church/clerical reform (anti-Semitic ideas/writings)

**“Personal Thoughts”:**
• Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Giovanni Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* and Lorenzo Valla’s discovery of the *Donation of Constantine* as a forgery are big exceptions to argument. How can that be maneuvered around? Can you make a blanket statement that Italian humanists were “not as Christian?” Maybe bring up the fact that all humanists are dealing with reforming society, whether they’re looking to Classical texts and/or Christian texts to do it *(same fundamental principle?)*
• Bring up women? (Christine de Pisan-doesn’t hurt/could help argument on Italian writers)
• Bring up the printing press?
• Talk about the stage being set for the Reformation? It could lead into the nature of Christian humanism.
A Letter to Boccaccio: Literary Humanism
Francesco Petrarch

Literary humanism, a movement to revive Classical literature and the values expressed in Classical writings, was central to the early Renaissance. This trend, which originated in northern Italy during the fourteenth century, represented a broadening in focus from otherworldly concerns and people as religious beings, which was typical of the Middle Ages, to include the problems of people and nature in this world. The individual most commonly associated with it and perhaps most responsible for its spread was the Florentine Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374). Best known for his love sonnets to Laura, he also collected and translated many Classical works and wrote numerous letters—often extolling the Classical authors and even writing in their style. In the following selection from a 1362 letter to his friend Boccaccio, Petrarch offered reassurance and responded to charges typically made against humanistic learning.

CONSIDER: The nature of the charges Petrarch is refuting, how Petrarch related humanism to religion; Petrarch’s perception of the benefits of literary humanism.

Neither exhortations to virtue nor the argument of approaching death should divert us from literature; for in a good mind it excites the love of virtue, and dissipates, or at least diminishes, the fear of death. To desert our stud-

ies shows want of self-confidence rather than wisdom, for letters do not hinder but aid the properly constituted mind which possesses them; they facilitate our life, they do not retard it. Just as many kinds of food which lie heavy on an enfeebled and nauseated stomach furnish excellent nourishment for one who is well but famishing, so in our studies many things which are deadly to the weak mind may prove most salutary to an acute and healthy intellect, especially if in our use of both food and learning we exercise proper discretion. If it were otherwise, surely the zeal of certain persons who persevered to the end could not have roused such admiration. Caro, I never forget, acquainted himself with Latin literature as he was growing old, and Greek when he had really become an old man. Vatello, who reached his hundredth year still reading and writing, parted from life sooner than from his love of study. Livius Drusus, although weakened by age and afflicted with blindness, did not give up his interpretation of the civil law, which he carried on to the great advantage of the state. . . .

Besides these and innumerable others like them, have not all those of our own religion whom we should wish

most to imitate devoted their whole lives to literature, and grown old and died in the same pursuit? Some, indeed, were overtaken by death while still at work reading or writing. To none of them, so far as I know, did it prove a disadvantage to be noted for secular learning. . . .

While I know that many have become famous for piety without learning, at the same time I know of no one who has been prevented by literature from following the path of holiness. The apostle Paul was, to be sure, accused of having his head turned by study, but the world has long ago passed its verdict upon this accusation. If I may be allowed to speak for myself, it seems to me that, although the path to virtue by the way of ignorance may be plain, it fosters sloth. The goal of all good people is the same, but the ways of reaching it are many and various. Some advance slowly, others with more spirit; some obscurely, others again conspicuously. One takes a lower, another a higher path. Although all alike are on the road to happiness, certainly the more elevated path is the more glorious. Hence ignorance, however devout, is by no means to be put on a plane with the enlightened devoutness of one familiar with literature. Nor can you pick me out from the whole array of unlettered saints, an example so holy that I cannot match it with a still holier one from the other group.

On the Liberal Arts

Peter Paul Vergerio

Closely associated with the rise of literary humanism was a new emphasis on the more broadly defined “liberal arts.” This emphasis was manifested in a new concern with education; a change in educational curriculum constituted an institutional development that was enduring and that had wide-ranging effects. The first to express this emphasis systematically in an educational program was Peter Paul Vergerio (1370–1444). He taught in several Italian universities, and in his main treatise, On the Liberal Arts, he rejected much of the content and methods of medieval education. Vergerio presents his views on the growing importance of the liberal arts in the following selection from a letter written to Ubertinus of Carrara.

Consider: What is particularly humanistic rather than scholastic or medieval about this view; how Vergerio justifies his choice of the three subjects in this proposed curriculum; what Petrarch might think of this letter.

Your grandfather, Francesco I, a man distinguished for his capacity in affairs and for his sound judgment, was in the habit of saying that a parent owes three duties to his children. The first of these is to bestow upon them names of which they need not feel ashamed. For not seldom, out of caprice, or even indifference, or perhaps from a wish to perpetuate a family name, a father in naming his child inflicts upon him a misfortune which clings to him for life. The second obligation is this: to provide that his child be brought up in a city of distinction, for this not only concerns his future self-respect, but is closely connected with the third and most important care which is due from father to son. This is the duty of seeing that he be trained in sound learning. For no wealth, no possible security against the future, can be compared with the gift of an education in grave and liberal studies. By them a man may win distinction for the most modest name, and bring honour to the city of his birth however obscure it may be. But we must remember that whilst a man may escape from the burden of an unlucky name, or from the contempt attaching to a city of no repute, by changing the one or quitting the other, he can never remedy the neglect of early education. The foundation, therefore, of this last must be laid in the first years of life, the disposition moulded whilst it is susceptible and the mind trained whilst it is receptive.

This duty, common indeed to all parents, is specially incumbent upon such as hold high station. For the lives of men of position are passed, as it were, in public view; and are fairly expected to serve as witness to personal merit and capacity on the part of those who occupy such exceptional place amongst their fellow men. . . .

We come now to the consideration of the various subjects which may rightly be included under the name of ‘Liberal Studies.’ Amongst these I accord the first place to History, on grounds both of its attractiveness and of its utility, qualities which appeal equally to the scholar and to the statesman. Next in importance ranks Moral Philosophy, which indeed is, in a peculiar sense, a ‘Liberal Art,’ in that its purpose is to teach men the secret of true freedom. History, then, gives us the concrete examples of the precepts inculcated by philosophy. The one shews what men should do, the other what men have said and done in the past, and what practical lessons we may draw therefrom for the present day. I would indicate as the third main branch of study, Eloquence, which indeed holds a place of distinction amongst the refined Arts. By philosophy we learn the essential truth of things, which by eloquence we

so exhibit in orderly adornment as to bring conviction to differing minds. And history provides the light of experience—cumulative wisdom fit to supplement the force of reason and the persuasion of eloquence. For we allow that soundness of judgment, wisdom of speech, integrity of conduct are the marks of a truly liberal temper.

The City of Ladies
Christine de Pizan

Most of the great cultural figures of the Renaissance were men. Nevertheless, some women were able to produce works, achieve recognition, and defend women against male detractors. The most famous of these was Christine de Pizan (1363?-1431?). Born in Venice, she moved with her family to Paris, where her father became a physician and astrologer at the French royal court. Unusually well educated, she wrote several poems and books, the most widely read of which was The City of Ladies (1405). In the following excerpt Christine de Pizan questions an allegorical figure representing Lady Reason about women's political and educational abilities and about men's low opinions of women.

CONSIDER: What the common assumptions and arguments about women are; how Christine de Pizan attacks those assumptions and arguments; ways in which her writing embodies traits of the Renaissance.

35. Against those who claim that women aren't intelligent enough to learn the law.

Even though God has often endowed many women with great intelligence, it would not be right for them to abandon their customary modesty and to go about bringing cases before a court, as there are already enough men to do so. Why send three men to carry a burden which two can manage quite comfortably?

'However, if there are those who maintain that women aren't intelligent enough to learn the law, I would contradict them by citing numerous examples of women of both the past and the present who were great philosophers and who excelled in many disciplines which are much more difficult than simply learning the laws and the statutes of men. I'll tell you more about these women in a moment. Moreover, in reply to those who think that women are lacking in the ability to govern wisely or to establish good customs, I'll give you examples from history of several worthy ladies who mastered these arts. To give you a better idea of what I'm saying, I'll even cite you a few women from your own time who were widowed and whose competence in organizing and managing their households after their husbands' deaths attests to the fact that an intelligent woman can succeed in any domain.'

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36. Against those men who claim it is not good for women to be educated.

After hearing these words, I, Christine, said, 'My lady, I can clearly see that much good has been brought into the world by women. Even if some wicked women have done evil things, it still seems to me that this is far outweighed by all the good that other women have done and continue to do. This is particularly true of those who are wise and well educated in either the arts or the sciences, whom we mentioned before. That's why I'm all the more amazed at the opinion of some men who state that they are completely opposed to their daughters, wives or other female relatives engaging in study, for fear that their morals will be corrupted.'

Rectitude replied, 'This should prove to you that not all men's arguments are based on reason, and that these men in particular are wrong. There are absolutely no grounds for assuming that knowledge of moral disciplines, which actually inculcate virtue, would have a morally corrupting effect. Indeed, there's no doubt whatsoever that such forms of knowledge correct one's vices and improve one's morals. How could anyone possibly think that by studying good lessons and advice one will be any the worse for it? This view is completely unthinkable and untenable. I'm not saying that it's a good idea for men or women to study sorcery or any other type of forbidden science, since the Holy Church did not ban people from practising them for nothing. However, it's just that it's not true to say that women will be corrupted by knowing what's right and proper....

Therefore, it is not all men, especially not the most intelligent, who agree with the view that it is a bad idea to educate women. However, it's true that those who are not very clever come out with this opinion because they don't want women to know more than they do. Your own father, who was a great astrologer and philosopher, did not believe that knowledge of the sciences reduced a woman's worth. Indeed, as you know, it gave him great pleasure to see you take so readily to studying the arts. Rather, it was because your mother, as a woman, held the view that you should spend your time spinning like the other girls, that you did not receive a more advanced or detailed initiation into the sciences. But, as that

proverb which we’ve already had occasion to quote says, “What is in our nature cannot be taken away.” Despite your mother’s opposition, you did manage to glean some grains of knowledge from your studies, thanks to your own natural inclination for learning. It’s obvious to me that you do not esteem yourself any less for having this knowledge: in fact, you seem to treasure it, and quite rightly so.

The Prince
Niccolo Machiavelli

The Italian Renaissance developed in an environment in which politics took on an increasingly competitive, secular tone. Within each Italian state, parties fought for power while at the same time the states fought each other for dominance or advantage. After 1492, Italy was invaded numerous times by Spain, France, and the Holy Roman Empire. These developments are reflected in the life and work of the great Renaissance political theorist Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527).

Born in Florence when it was under the rule of the Medici, Machiavelli initiated his career in the Florentine civil service in 1498 during the period when the Medici were out of power, replaced by a republican government. He rose to important diplomatic posts within the government, but was forced into retirement when the Medici family came back to power in 1512. He never gave up hope of returning to favor, and he wrote his most famous work, The Prince (1513), in part as an application to the Medici rulers for a job in the Florentine government. The book has since become a classic treatise in political theory, above all for the way that it divorces politics from theology and metaphysics. The following selections from The Prince illustrate its style and some of its main themes.

CONSIDER: The ways in which this work reflects values or practices typical of the Renaissance; how these same principles might be applied to twentieth-century politics.

It now remains to be seen what are the methods and rules for a prince as regards to his subjects and friends. And as I know that many have written of this, I fear that my writing about it may be deemed presumptuous, differing as I do, especially in this matter, from the opinions of others. But my intention being to write something of use to those who understand, it appears to me more proper to go to the real truth of the matter than to its imagination; and many have imagined republics and principalities which have never been seen or known to exist in reality; for how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good. Therefore it is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case.

It is not, therefore, necessary for a prince to have all the above-named qualities, but it is very necessary to seem to have them. I would even be bold to say that to possess them and always to observe them is dangerous, but to appear to possess them is useful. Thus it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, religious, and also to be so; but you must have the mind so disposed that when it is needful to be otherwise you may be able to change to the opposite qualities. And it must be understood that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things which are considered good in men, being often obliged, in order to maintain the state, to act against faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion. And, therefore, he must have a mind disposed to adapt itself according to the wind, and as the variations of fortune dictate, and, as I said before, not deviate from what is good, if possible, but be able to do evil if constrained.

A prince must take great care that nothing goes out of his mouth which is not full of the above-named five qualities, and, to see and hear him, he should seem to be all mercy, faith, integrity, humanity, and religion. And nothing is more necessary than to seem to have this last quality, for men in general judge more by the eyes than by the hands, for every one can see, but very few have to feel. Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are, and those few will not dare to oppose themselves to the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of men, and especially of princes, from which there is no appeal, the end justifies the means. Let a prince therefore aim at conquering and maintaining the state, and the means will always be judged honourable and praised by every one, for the vulgar is always taken by appearances and the issue of the event; and the world consists only of the vulgar, and the few who are not vulgar are isolated when the many have a rallying point in the prince.

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The Book of the Courtier

Baldesar Castiglione

In the Italian states, the most prestigious life took place in the courts of rulers. While Machiavelli wrote about methods and rules for the successful prince, others described the qualities necessary for men or women hoping to rise or maintain their position in court life. The most famous of these writers was the Italian diplomat Baldesar Castiglione (1478–1529), who wrote The Book of the Courtier while a member of the Duke of Urbino’s court. In the following excerpt, Castiglione describes first, the best qualities of the courtier—the ideal “Renaissance man”—and second, the virtues and actions best suited to women of the court.

Consider: Why Castiglione considers noble birth important; what talents Castiglione thinks are most important for the courtier’s success; how a woman’s path to success at court differs from a man’s.

“Thus, I would have our Courtier born of a noble and genteel family; because it is far less becoming for one of low birth to fail to do virtuous things than for one of noble birth, who, should he stray from the path of his forebears, stains the family name, and not only fails to achieve anything but loses what has been achieved already. For noble birth is like a bright lamp that makes manifest and visible deeds both good and bad, kindling and spurring on to virtue as much for fear of dishonor as for hope of praise . . .

Besides his noble birth, I would wish the Courtier favored in this other respect, and endowed by nature not only with talent and with beauty of countenance and person, but with that certain grace which we call an ‘air,’ which shall make him at first sight pleasing and lovable to all who see him; and let this be an adornment informing and attending all his actions, giving the promise outwardly that such a one is worthy of the company and the favor of every great lord.” . . .

“But to come to some particulars: I hold that the principal and true profession of the Courtier must be that of arms . . . which I wish him to exercise with vigor; and let him be known among the others as bold, energetic, and faithful to whomever he serves. . . . The more our Courtier excels in this art, the more will he merit praise; although I do not deem it necessary that he have the perfect knowledge of things and other qualities that befit a commander, for since this would launch us on too great a sea, we shall be satisfied, as we have said, if he have complete loyalty and an undaunted spirit, and be always seen to have them . . .

Therefore, let the man we are seeking be exceedingly fierce, harsh, and always among the first, wherever the enemy is; and in every other place, humane, modest, reserved, avoiding ostentation above all things as well as that impudent praise of himself by which a man always arouses hatred and disgust in all who hear him.”

“I would have him more than passably learned in letters, at least in those studies which we call the humanities. Let him be conversant not only with the Latin language, but with Greek as well, because of the abundance and variety of things that are so divinely written therein. Let him be versed in the poets, as well as in the orators and historians, and let him be practiced also in writing verse and prose, especially in our own vernacular; for, besides the personal satisfaction he will take in this, in this way he will never want for pleasant entertainment with the ladies, who are usually fond of such things . . . These studies, moreover, will make him fluent, and (as Aristippus said to the tyrant) bold and self-confident in speaking with everyone. However, I would have our Courtier keep one precept firmly in mind, namely, in this as in everything else, to be cautious and reserved rather than forward, and take care not to get the mistaken notion that he knows something he does not know.”

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I think that in her ways, manners, words, gestures, and bearing, a woman ought to be very unlike a man; for just as he must show a certain solid and sturdy manliness, so it is seemly for a woman to have a soft and delicate tenderness, with an air of womanly sweetness in her every movement, which, in her going and staying, and in whatever she says, shall always make her appear the woman without any resemblance to a man.

“Now, if this precept be added to the rules which these gentlemen have taught the Courtier, then I think she ought to be able to follow many such and adorn herself with the best accomplishments, as signor Gasparo says. For I hold that many virtues of the mind are as necessary to a woman as to a man; also, gentle birth; to avoid affectation, to be naturally graceful in all her actions, to be mannerly, clever, prudent; not arrogant, not envious, not slandering, not vain, not contentious, not inquiet, to know how to gain and hold the favor of her mistress and of all others, to perform well and gracefully the exercises that are suitable for women. And I do think that beauty is more necessary to her than to the Courtier, for truly that woman lacks much who lacks beauty. Also she must be more circumspect, and more careful not to give occasion for evil being said of her, and conduct herself so that she may not only escape being sullied by guilt but even by the suspicion of it, for a woman has not so many ways of defending herself against false calumnies as a man has.”
The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy

Jacob Burckhardt

Modern interpretations of the Renaissance almost uniformly start with the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt's The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, first published in 1860. Burckhardt rejected a chronological approach and pictured the Italian Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a whole, strikingly distinct from the preceding Middle Ages and clearly a superior civilization. Until the 1920s, historians almost unanimously accepted his interpretation. After that time various aspects of his thesis were attacked, particularly by medievalists. In recent decades, however, Burckhardt's work has gained new respectability, at least as an idealized cultural history of the Italian Renaissance. In any case, all historians who approach this topic must deal with Burckhardt's argument, some of the central points of which appear in the following excerpt.

CONSIDER: What most distinguishes the Italian Renaissance from the preceding Middle Ages according to Burckhardt; any support the primary documents might provide for this argument; how a proud medievalist might respond to this argument.

In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness—that which was turned within as that which was turned without—lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession, through which the world and history were seen clad in strange hues. Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air; an objective treatment and consideration of the state and of all the things of this world became possible. The subjective side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis; man became a spiritual individual, and recognised himself as such. In the same way the Greek had once distinguished himself from the barbarian, and the Arabian had felt himself an individual at a time when other Asians knew themselves only as members of a race. . . .

In far earlier times we can here and there detect a development of free personality which in Northern Europe either did not occur at all, or could not display itself in the same manner. . . . But at the close of the thirteenth century Italy began to swarm with individuality; the charm laid upon human personality was dissolved; and a thousand figures meet us each in its own special shape and dress. Dante's great poem would have been impossible in any other country of Europe, if only for the reason that they all still lay under the spell of race. For Italy the August poet, through the wealth of individuality which he set forth, was the most national herald of his time. But this unfolding of the treasures of human nature in literature and art—this many-sided representation and criticism—will be discussed in separate chapters; here we have to deal only with the psychological fact itself. This fact appears in the most decisive and unmistakable form. The Italians of the fourteenth century knew little of false modesty or of hypocrisy in any shape; not one of them was afraid of singularity, of being and seeming unlike his neighbours.

The Myth of the Renaissance

Peter Burke

Many historians attacked Burckhardt's interpretation and the legacy built up around it. These historians argued that Burckhardt overemphasized how modern the Renaissance was; they stressed how much the Renaissance, even in Italy, was still part of the medieval world. Other historians have responded that criticisms of Burckhardt go too far. In the following selection Peter Burke criticizes Burckhardt's idea of the Renaissance as a myth and describes the main objections to it.

CONSIDER: Why, according to Burke, Burckhardt's idea of the Renaissance is a myth; how a supporter of Burckhardt might respond; whether the sources give greater support to Burckhardt's or Burke's interpretation.

Jacob Burckhardt defined the period in terms of two concepts, 'individualism' and 'modernity'. 'In the Middle Ages', according to Burckhardt, 'human consciousness. . . lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. . . . Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category.' In Renaissance Italy, however, 'this veil first melted into air. . . man became a spiritual individual, and recognised himself as such'. Renaissance meant modernity. The Italian was, Burckhardt wrote, 'the first-born among the sons of modern Europe'. The fourteenth-century poet Petrarch was 'one of the first truly modern men'. The great renewal of art and ideas began in Italy, and at a later stage the new attitudes and the new artistic forms spread to the rest of Europe.

This idea of the Renaissance is a myth. . . .

Burckhardt's mistake was to accept the scholars and artists of the period at their own valuation, to take this story of rebirth at its face value and to elaborate it into a book. To the old formulae of the restoration of the arts and the revival of classical antiquity, he added new ones such as individualism, realism, and modernity. . . .

This nineteenth-century myth of the Renaissance is still taken seriously by many people. Television companies and organisers of package tours still make money out of it. However, professional historians have become dissatisfied with this version of the Renaissance, even if they continue to find the period and the movement attractive. The point is that the grand edifice erected by Burckhardt and his contemporaries has not stood the test of time. More exactly, it has been undermined by the researches of the medievalists in particular. Their arguments depend on innumerable points of detail, but they are of two main kinds.

In the first place, there are arguments to the effect that so-called 'Renaissance men' were really rather medieval. They were more traditional in their behaviour, assumptions and ideals than we tend to think—and

also more traditional than they saw themselves. Hindsight suggests that even Petrarch, 'one of the first truly modern men', according to Burckhardt, had many attitudes in common with the centuries he described as 'dark'.

In the second place, the medievalists have accumulated arguments to the effect that the Renaissance was not such a singular event as Burckhardt and his contemporaries once thought and that the term should really be used in the plural. There were various 'renascences' in the Middle Ages, notably in the twelfth century and in the age of Charlemagne. In both cases there was a combination of literary and artistic achievements with a revival of interest in classical learning, and in both cases contemporaries described their age as one of restoration, rebirth or 'renovation'.

Machiavelli and the Renaissance

Federico Chabod

Reactions to and appreciations of Machiavelli's thought in The Prince form an apparently contradictory history in themselves. On the one hand, few thinkers in the history of political theory rank more highly than Machiavelli; he is recognized as being the first modern political theorist. On the other hand, there is a more popular tradition of rejecting his ideas as immoral; the term Machiavellian is pejorative, referring to political opportunism and ruthlessness. In the following selection Federico Chabod, an Italian historian who has written extensively on Machiavelli, analyses Machiavelli and the significance of his ideas.

CONSIDER: Why Machiavelli's ideas are so appropriate to the historical realities of his time; how the selections from The Prince support this interpretation of Machiavelli.

The leitmotif of Machiavelli's posthumous life was his great assertion as a thinker, representing his true and essential contribution to the history of human thought, namely, the clear recognition of the autonomy and the necessity of politics, 'which lies outside the realm of what is morally good or evil.' Machiavelli thereby rejected the medieval concept of 'unity' and became one of the pioneers of modern spirit.

For Machiavelli accepted the political challenge in its entirety; he swept aside every criterion of action not suggested by the concept of raison d'état, i.e., by the exact evaluation of the historical moment and the construc-

Northern Sources of the Renaissance

Charles G. Nauert

Most modern scholars argue that there were some differences between the Italian and Northern European Renaissances. Perhaps most obviously, the Northern Renaissance came later. More importantly, while heavily influenced by Italian humanism, humanism in Northern Europe was more tied to Christian culture and concerns. In the following selection, Charles Nauert explains differences between the Italian and Northern Renaissance and argues that the North accepted Renaissance culture only when that culture came to suit the particular historical needs of the North.

Consider: The ways the Northern Renaissance differed from the Italian Renaissance; how Nauert explains these differences.

The North itself would never have accepted Renaissance culture if that culture had not suited its needs. The reorganized, powerful monarchies of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries needed a new ideal for their servants and courtiers, and the emphasis on public service, on personal merit, and on learning provided an attractive substitute for the traditional manners of the unlettered, unruly, and discredited feudal classes. The new ideal contained enough emphasis on social class and military prowess to make it credible to a society where the hereditary nobility still counted for much. For the kings, it offered the added advantage of servants who were refined and cultivated, and who would wield the pen as well as the sword for their master.

In addition to the monarchs and their courts, other important groups in the North also found humanistic culture attractive. The powerful, self-confident merchant oligarchies that governed the important towns, especially the prospering towns of the Rhine Valley and of south Germany, found in humanism a cultural ideal far more suited to the needs and prejudices of urban magistrates than were the chivalric and scholastic traditions of the Middle Ages. The large group of would-be Church reformers found the characteristic Renaissance repudiation of the recent past and the desire to return to the original sources quite attractive, for the Roman past included the apostolic and early patristic age, when the Church was still pure and uncorrupted.

The humanism that grew up in the North was not a mere copy of the Italian culture, but a grafting of Italian elements into a cultural tradition that varied from country to country. Obviously, for example, Germans or even Frenchmen could not revere the ancient Romans as their ancestors in quite the same sense that Italians could.

What did develop everywhere was a rebellion against the heritage of the immediate past (often more open and violent than in Italy because scholastic traditions and a clerical spirit had much greater strength in the North), and the conscious adoption of an idealized Greek and Roman Antiquity as the model for reforming literature, education, and the whole ideal of the educated man. Even more than in Italy, Northern humanists enthusiastically looked to the apostolic and patristic age of the Church as a valuable part of the ancient heritage they sought to restore. This emphasis on ancient Christianity, combined with the widespread movements of lay piety that flourished in the lower Rhine Valley and other parts of Northern Europe, explains why humanism north of the Alps directed much of its reformist activity toward reform of the Church and deepening of personal religious experience.

Chapter Questions

1. In what ways was the Renaissance a new development, strikingly different from the preceding Middle Ages? How might the "newness" of these developments be minimized or reinterpreted as an evolutionary continuation of the Middle Ages?

2. According to the sources in this chapter, what was particularly humanistic about the cultural productions and the attitudes of the Renaissance?