

Final Exam

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History 312

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February 28th, 2015

1. Why did the Renaissance develop in Italy? What factors—historical, geographical, economic, social, political, etc.—contributed to its development in Italy, rather than elsewhere in Europe?

While the Renaissance eventually grew to influence all early modern Western society, the movement initially took hold in the wealthy and diverse Italian city-states of southern Europe. Although debated among historians and academics, the fledgling acts of the Renaissance most likely occurred during the mid-to-late 1300s, on the heels of an “age of disasters,” which dramatically affected economic, social, and political life.¹ Examined in a historical context, it is relatively easy to attribute the birth of the Renaissance to these aforementioned factors. Geography, for instance, had an immense influence on Renaissance scholars and artists in that their close proximity to the Classical works of the Greco-Roman world facilitated their studies of such artifacts.² Additionally, a robust Italian economy provided wealthy aristocrats and nobles with the disposable income necessary to sponsor the fine arts with their financial graces.³ Finally, the tragic calamities and constant warfare which befell Europe resulted in a series of social and political developments which eventually laid the groundwork for humanists and Renaissance philosophies of the period.⁴

According to Thomas Nickles, “A major effort of the humanist movement was [the] recovery of classical Latin and Greek literature and art...”⁵ The humanist movement was intimately intertwined with the course of the Renaissance. Humanist philosophies favored the classical studies of the past (such as the examination of individualism, rhetoric, literature, and art) and each benefitted greatly from the rediscovered lost works of antiquity.⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio, for instance, is one of the best known literary humanists of the period and was highly influenced by many Greco-Roman topics.⁷ He was fluent in the language of the old

Mediterranean civilizations (Latin and Greek) and looked to Roman poets, such as Ovid and Tacitus, for inspiration and direction in the creation of his works.⁸

Perhaps no other population, during the period, was economically better off than that of the Italian Peninsula. Other regions, like France and England, gradually pursued paths that eventually led to the creation of powerful centralized monarchies.⁹ The Italian city-states, however, boasted a number of wealthy educated patrons which were more than willing to invest in the artistic and literary adventures of their time. For example, Florence's Cosimo de' Medici commissioned major architectural works such as churches, monasteries, and palaces.¹⁰ The papacy of Rome renovated and expanded their ecclesiastical grounds, which gave rise to great Renaissance works like Saint Peter's Basilica.¹¹ Duke Frederico, according to Zophy, "attempted to create in Urbino the greatest library since antiquity."¹²

The Renaissance was also a secular movement which had immense cultural ramifications.¹³ While this polar societal shift was undoubtedly influenced by the rise of humanism; Italians were also impacted and shaken by unceasing political and social strife. Foreign invasions from north of the Alps, along with constant infighting among the city-states, led many to seek more civilized and educated lifestyles.¹⁴ Additionally, the onset of great calamities (like the Black Death), along with a politically corrupted Roman Catholic Church, prompted others to seek out more tangible forms of inspiration other than long-held religious doctrines.¹⁵

While other regions of the continent embraced the Renaissance in due time, it was the great creators and patrons of the southern city-states who initiated the entire movement. A unique concentration of factors sculpted art, influenced thought, and inspired many. Chief

among these considerations were the geographical, economic, political, and social elements of the Italian Peninsula.

2. Compare and contrast the motives and actions of Martin Luther in the German states and King Henry VIII in England in bringing about religious change during the Reformation. How were they different? Did they share any similarities?

Doctor Martin Luther, a German scholar and theologian, and King Henry VIII, a controversial English sovereign, were two very dissimilar men. Each came from dramatically different backgrounds than that of the other and their motivations were as varied as their stations in life. Martin Luther started from relatively common roots but eventually became one of the most respected (and despised) religious figures in European history.¹⁶ Henry VIII was born into the noble Tudor Dynasty and guided his country to socioeconomic recovery while gaining the unsavory reputation of a brutal monarch.¹⁷ However, both men had in common an appetite for theological change. In continental Europe, Luther's religious dissent sparked the Protestant Reformation. In the case of the rebellious Henry Tudor, a politically motivated break with the Roman Catholic Church likewise initiated spiritual reform across Britain.

The earliest formative features of the Protestant Reformation may be traced back to the intellectual and social innovations of the Renaissance.¹⁸ It was Martin Luther, however, who capitalized on the anticlerical and rebellious sediments of many sixteenth century Europeans by publically proclaiming his dissatisfaction with the corrupt papacy of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁹ Motivated by a lightning strike, which he interpreted as a sign from God, Luther published and promulgated his indictments of the Church throughout the Holy Roman Empire.²⁰

The English Reformation, on the other hand, was initially a more secular movement-

primarily motivated by Henry VIII's desire to divorce his then wife, Queen Catherine of Aragon.²¹ Endorsed by his archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, but rejected by Pope Clement VII, Henry and Catherine eventually parted ways. This major theological break, over the practice of divorce, resulted in the king being appointed as the "supreme head of the Church in England."²²

Each reform movement, much like the men that initiated them, displayed several similarities. Common lynchpins of both reformations, for example, were the dramatic insubordination and general malcontent in which each was carried out. Luther's publication of his inflammatory *Ninety-Five Theses* sent the Roman Catholic Church reeling.²³ Likewise, Henry VIII's dramatic split with the papacy forever changed the political relationship of England with many of her European neighbors.²⁴ Additionally, both men relied upon rhetoric and theology to validate their claims. Luther was a well-educated theologian that interpreted scripture to back his assertions.²⁵ Henry VIII, a "talented lay theologian," also quoted the Bible in order to galvanize his argument for annulment.²⁶

On the other hand, Luther and Henry also advanced their respective agendas in different capacities. While both men were considered leaders of their respective reformations, Henry VIII took a much more autocratic and authoritative approach to reforming England's religious policies. Endorsed by government officials, through the 1534 Act of Supremacy, the King of England routinely utilized his state-sponsored divinity to satisfy many his personal needs and desires.²⁷ For instance, Henry went on to marry five more women, execute two, and divorce another. He also crushed religious opposition in England by affirming the Act of Dissolution, a series of laws that effectively shut-down hundreds of monasteries for financial gain.²⁸ Meanwhile, in the Holy Roman Empire, Luther promoted his brand of Christianity while operating on the opposite side of the law. Arguably an outlaw after attacking the Catholic

Church, Luther relied upon his political and social environment to evade capture and suppression at the hands of those who opposed him. For example, converting to Lutheranism offered salvation without financial investments (indulgences) and many prominent German nobles opposed the rule of their Spanish Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.²⁹ Additionally, thousands of commoners identified with Luther in that his spiritual views offered individual decorum and graces that could not otherwise be obtained through the financially-dependent Catholic clergy.³⁰

Both the Protestant and English movements shaped the cultural landscape of Europe during the Reformation period. Each had an identifiable patriarch which carried out their causes in two different manners. However, each reformer also displayed several similarities. King Henry the VIII, unlike Martin Luther, utilized his power to manipulate common law and state-sponsored worship. Luther rallied his allies through audacious debate and inspiring rhetoric. Ultimately, both set in motion two major reforms which dramatically altered the path of Western Christianity.

3. Analyze the aims, methods, and degree of success of the Catholic Reformation (Counter-Reformation) in the sixteenth century. What did the Catholic Church do to reform itself and respond to the spread of Protestantism? In what ways did it both succeed and fail in achieving its goals?

During the sixteenth century, the Church of Rome launched a massive series of reforms designed to both eliminate internal dissent and address the rapid rise of Protestantism across Europe.³¹ Often referred to as the Catholic Reformation, or Counter-Reformation, the aim of the papacy was to validate and exemplify the Roman Catholic faith. In doing so, the Catholic clergy strived to maintain spiritual dominance and superiority throughout the continent. Although

debated even today, the Catholic Reformation can generally be considered a success in that it resulted in the conservation and proliferation of Catholicism not only in Europe but also across the globe.

According to Trueman, “The Catholic Reformation was the intellectual counter-force to Protestantism. The desire for reform within the Catholic Church had started before the spread of Luther.”³² This reform involved many methods, across varied areas, during different time periods. Some of these actions were discharged favorably and well received, while others were poorly conceived and fell short of their intended and respective marks. The major aspects of the movement consisted of the implementation of the Inquisition, the rise of reformatory orders, and internal papal reform.³³

The Inquisition had roots in both the Iberian and Italian Peninsulas, but is commonly more closely associated with its Spanish founders, Queen Isabella of Castile and Cardinal Francisco Jiménez.³⁴ During the late fifteenth century, Jiménez pursued many goals but ultimately achieved his objectives through brutal means.³⁵ On one hand, the cardinal was credited with unselfishly founding schools to further religious studies.³⁶ On the other hand, Jiménez supervised numerous executions and torturing sessions designed to discourage any spiritual opposition to his ideal view of Catholicism.³⁷ The Italian Inquisition was not nearly as horrid, but nonetheless persecuted many “heretics.” Roman officials, for example, forced Galileo to publically discontinue his celestial research in the early seventeenth century.³⁸

The Catholic Reformation also gave rise to number of religious organizations during the period. Several orders were founded under various circumstances, endorsed by the papacy, and charged with the responsibility of propagating the finer aspects of Catholicism across the

continent. The Ursulines, Somaschi, and Barnabites were three Italian orders that performed such works as caring for disenfranchised women and children.³⁹ The Jesuits, founded by Ignatius Loyola, were one of the most recognizable and vital orders of the period and routinely spread the Catholic gospel across various parts of the world.⁴⁰

Papal reform was crucial to the Counter-Reformation, involved several members of the Catholic leadership, spanned a variety of topics, and met mixed success. Pope Paul III did a great deal to support reformatory societies and additionally implemented the Roman Inquisition.⁴¹ Later, Pope Pius IV published a papal Index, which limited the circulation of anticlerical and “heretical” materials and implemented many of the findings brought forth at the conclusion of the Council of Trent in 1563.⁴² Finally, Sixtus V balanced the books by instituting several economic and organizational reforms within the Church.⁴³

Catholicism emerged from the Counter-Reformation as a rejuvenated and well-respected denomination of Western Christianity. Efforts such as the Inquisition may have cast dark shadows across otherwise bright intensions, but the overall effect of the Catholic Reformation was a positive one. Monastic orders cared for the needy and sick, while offering salvation through sacrifice, and a series of practical popes brought relative order and stability back to the Church. Although not entirely successful, the Catholic Reformation galvanized its followers and solidified their faith in some very challenging times.

4. While women were often not allowed public roles during the Renaissance and Reformation periods, there were some examples of powerful or influential women in prominent public and leadership roles. Choose three of the following and discuss the roles these women played in shaping the society and culture of their age: Queen Elizabeth I, Catherine de' Medici, St. Teresa of Avila, Christine de Pizan, Artemisia Gentileschi.

Although women were typically under represented and suppressed throughout Renaissance and Reformation society, several female figures nonetheless managed to make amazing contributions during the period. Most notable amongst these ladies were the prolific writer Christine de Pizan, Queen Elizabeth I of England, and the Roman Catholic Saint Teresa of Avila. Pizan produced a great number of affluent literary works, Elizabeth I heralded an unprecedented age of cultural and social development in Britain, and St. Teresa was a vital component of the Church's Counter-Reformation.⁴⁴

"Many writers contributed to the rise of French as a literary language," according to Zophy, "but few have had such a significant impact on the modern world as Christine de Pizan."⁴⁵ Daughter to a fourteenth century Venetian scholar, Pizan's interest in letters and academics was fostered from a very young age.⁴⁶ According to her own annals, Pizan's career choices were quite literally a matter of survival.⁴⁷ She lost her father at a relatively young age, married in her teens, widowed in her twenties, and was left with a family to financially support in very uncertain times.⁴⁸ Uncharacteristically for a woman of her era, Pizan elected to rely on her scholarly background and literary talents as a poet, philosopher, and chronicler.⁴⁹ Writing in the style of other popular humanist figures of the time, Pizan's rhetoric and poetry gained her enough recognition to eventually secure a seat in the court of Charles V.⁵⁰ Some of her most

influential works include *The Body of Policy*, the *Book of Peace*, and *The Book of the City of Ladies*.⁵¹

Queen Elizabeth I was the daughter of King Henry the VIII and ascended to the throne of England in 1533.⁵² Elizabeth was a savvy and educated politician which successfully guided her country through a dynamic era of warfare, exploration, and religious reforms. Refusing to take a husband, the regal “Gloriana” navigated across the international arena by capitalizing on her status as a bachelorette and monarch.⁵³ Her court facilitated the growth and spread of the English Renaissance by endorsing revolutionary playwrights and poets like William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser. Elizabeth I is perhaps best remembered as a Queen which brought relative religious stability to England by taking a more moderate approach to spiritual policies than her predecessors. Her “religious settlement” solidified the Church of England and settled a number of theological debates.⁵⁴

St. Teresa of Avila was a Spanish nun which did a great deal to promote the Catholic Counter-Reformatory policy of the period. Initially raised in a monastery, Teresa eventually joined the Carmelite order and was influenced by important religious figures, such as Domingo Banes and Juan de la Cruz.⁵⁵ “After a series of visions that reprimanded her for her worldly concerns,” observes Zophy, “Teresa decided to return to a life of austerity.”⁵⁶ This path led the Catholic reformer to great spiritual and success and recognition amongst her peers. Like Pizan, Teresa penned an autobiography and several other important works.⁵⁷ While her visions were the subject of some theological and political debate, Teresa earned a very pious reputation for promoting the agenda of the Church and helping those less fortunate than herself.⁵⁸

Pizan, Elizabeth, and Teresa made significant cultural, political, and religious contributions during their lifetimes. This distinguished them from other women of the period in

that they matched and, in some cases surpassed, the achievements of their male counterparts. Pizan excelled in promoting classically-inspired literature, Elizabeth became one of the most cherished monarchs in English history, and St. Teresa of Avila facilitated the efforts of the Roman Catholic Reformation through her personal sacrifice and commentary on the world around her.

5. Within the context of the Italian Renaissance, what was humanism, and what role did humanism and humanists play in Renaissance society and culture? In what ways did Italian Renaissance humanism differ from the humanism of Northern Europe?

Humanism, in regards to the Italian Renaissance, was the fourteenth-to-sixteenth century revival of Classical studies formally pursued by the scholars, artists, and philosophers of ancient Greco-Roman society. Specifically, it focused on the reclamation and examination of “liberal arts... grammar, rhetoric, poetry, literature, and moral philosophy (ethics)...”⁵⁹ Humanists played a number of vital roles in Renaissance society; some made civic contributions to their respective communities as statesmen and politicians, others promoted important social theories as philosophers, and affluent writers created revolutionary contributions spanning a wide spectrum of literary works.⁶⁰ The Italian humanist differed from those of the Northern Europe in that southern studies focused on the exploration of Classical languages and somatic works. Northern humanists, however, were more interested in refining the vernacular languages of their respective regions while hotly debating matters of religiosity and theology.⁶¹

According to Nickles, “The Renaissance movement arose in Italy, in urban centers... such as Venice, Milan, Bologna, and Rome.”⁶² Humanism was the vehicle by which a number of great innovations, discoveries and, revelations came about during the movement. One of the most noted (and versatile) humanist thinkers of the period, Leonardo da Vinci, illustrates this point. Leonardo’s talents and preoccupations covered a variety of topics. As an artist, his

sophisticated paintings achieved unprecedented levels of realism. His foray into more scientifically-oriented studies resulted in a number of impressive engineering achievements. Leonardo even delved into the martial sciences and architecturally proposed several designs for fortresses and maritime fortifications.⁶³ Other noted humanists innovations, such as Francesco Petrarch's poetry, the Florentine chancellorship of Leonardo Bruni, and Niccolò Machiavelli's political commentary, were hallmarks of the Renaissance Italian city-states.⁶⁴

Northern European humanists, ascending to enlightenment slightly after their Italian counterparts, also dramatically shaped the cultural, religious, and social aspects of the period. However, many of these individuals took slightly different approaches while addressing a variety of different topics. In continental Europe, for instance, Martin Luther challenged papal authority by publishing a number of works which relied upon a standardized form of the German vernacular.⁶⁵ In England, statesmen and philosophers, such as Sir Thomas More and Desiderius Erasmus, relied upon their Classically-inspired backgrounds to discharge political offices and create social commentary.⁶⁶ The "Low Countries" also saw the rise of talented oil painters, such as Albrecht Dürer and Jan van Eyck.⁶⁷ Dürer is widely considered the "greatest painter and graphic artist of the Northern Renaissance" while Eyck earned a considerable reputation for himself by utilizing "vivid detail and great symbolism" in the creation of his works.⁶⁸

Humanist could be found across all of Europe during the apex of the Renaissance. Their contributions were nearly countless and vitally important to the evolution of the Western World. Whether in the form of keen statesmanship, significant literary works, graceful architecture, intricate engravings, or exquisite sculptures, exceptional humanist individually expressed unfathomable creativity and insight over the course of approximately two centuries. Although

these achievements varied in composition and context, between Northern and Southern Europe, each work propelled all of European society to greater heights and aspirations.

Notes

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11. Ibid., pp. 58-9.
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16. Zophy, pp. 164-5.
17. Ibid., 229-230.
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31. Chris Trueman. "The Counter-Reformation." *History Learning Cite*. 2014.
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38. Ibid., p. 306.
39. Trueman.
40. Ibid.
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42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

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46. Sarah Ross. "An Educated Lady: In the 15th Century, Men Read Christine de Pizan."

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47. Ibid.

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51. Zophy, pp. 142-3.

52. Ibid., p. 243.

53. Ibid., p. 245.

54. Ibid., p. 244.

55. Ibid., p. 261.

56. Ibid., p. 261.

57. Ibid., p. 261.

58. Ibid., p. 262.

59. Ibid, p.71.

60. Ibid., pp.71-2.

61. Ibid., pp. 71-2.

62. Nickles.

63. Zophy., p. 92.

64. Ibid. 72-80.

65. Ibid., pp. 164-5.

66. Ibid., pp. 145-9.

67. Ibid., insert.

68. Ibid., insert.

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