Name: _____

Date: _____

THE RENAISSANCE
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Italian Renaissance Art

Around 1500, worshipers entering a church might suddenly encounter painted figures that seemed almost alive. For many believers, art like this strengthened feelings of awe and brought religious stories vividly to life. Prior to the Renaissance, art focused more on religious symbolism than realism. Backgrounds were usually flat, and artists placed less emphasis on accurate proportions.

A More Realistic Style

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, however, wealthy merchants in Florence and other Italian cities hoped to gain the prestige associated mainly with nobles by paying artists to decorate churches, palaces, and public spaces. One Florentine artist, Giotto di Bondone, painted more realistic human figures using shading and depth, helping lay the foundation for Renaissance art. In Madonna Enthroned (c.1310), Giotto's use of shading and lifelike figures was groundbreaking for his time.

Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci was one of the greatest artists of the Renaissance. His most famous painting, the Mona Lisa (c. 1504), still fascinates people more than five hundred years later. Viewers continue to debate the meaning of her mysterious expression. Leonardo also helped popularize perspective, a technique that created the illusion of depth on a flat surface and made paintings appear more realistic.

In addition to painting, Leonardo was also a scientist and inventor. He filled notebooks with sketches, scientific observations, and ideas for inventions far ahead of his time. Today, a person talented in many fields is often called a "Renaissance Man." Leonardo's many interests and talents make him one of the best examples of the term.

Michelangelo

Michelangelo Buonarroti was a sculptor, painter, and architect whose work helped define Renaissance art. His realistic sculptures showed careful attention to muscles and anatomy. Michelangelo designed the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and painted the vast ceiling of the Sistine Chapel from 1508 to 1512. The ceiling's gigantic painted figures seemed almost alive to the people standing far below. The vast paintings presented a dramatic retelling of the Book of Genesis, the first part of the Jewish and Christian holy books.

Christian and Classical Inspiration

By making people and scenes appear more realistic, Renaissance artists helped viewers imagine biblical stories as living events rather than distant symbols. The church sponsored artists and sculptors because powerful paintings, statues, and churches could inspire religious devotion and strengthen the faith of worshipers.

Not all Renaissance art was religious. Renaissance painters and sculptors also drew inspiration from the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome. In The School of Athens (1511), Raphael gathered many of the great thinkers of the ancient world into a vast hall whose arches and columns used perspective to create the illusion of depth.

A Lasting Legacy

Renaissance art helped change the way Europeans saw the world. Artists celebrated human beauty, emotion, learning, and religious faith in new ways. The creativity and ideas of the Renaissance influenced architecture, science, literature, and culture for centuries. More than five hundred years later, millions of people still travel to Italy to stand beneath these paintings and sculptures in amazement.

The artwork described on this page can be viewed at mrdowling.com/renaissance/art.html

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Fill in the Blanks

Renaissance artists created p__i__t__n__s and s__u__p__ur__s that appeared far more r__a__i__t__c than most art from the *M__d__le Ages, which focused mainly on r__l__g__o__s symbolism. Wealthy m__r__h__n__s in Florence and other Italian c__t__es paid artists to decorate c__u__c__es and public spaces. G__o__to di Bondone helped lay the foundation for Renaissance art through his use of s__a__i__g and d__p__h. L__o__a__do da V__n__i popularized p__r__p__c__i__e, a technique that created the illusion of d__p__h on a flat surface. His M_____ L_____ still fascinates viewers today. M__c__e__a__g__lo Buonarroti was a s__u__p__or, painter, and a__c__i__e__t whose realistic works showed careful attention to a__a__o__y. Renaissance artists drew inspiration from ancient G_____ and Rome whose *c__a__s__c__l art celebrated human b__a__ty, emotion, learning, and r__li__i__us faith, and still attracts millions of visitors to Italy today.

Answer in Complete Sentences

1. How was Renaissance art different from the art that preceded the era?

_____

_____

_____

2. Why were merchants motivated to hire artists to decorate churches and public places?

_____

_____

_____

*3. Giotto was a Florentine. Florentine is a demonym, or a word that describes where a person is from. What is your demonym? Your response may have only one word.

I am a _____

*4. Describe someone today who might be called a Renaissance Man or Renaissance Person based on the definition?

_____

_____

_____

5. Why were many Renaissance artists look to the classical age for inspiration?

_____

_____

*A higher-order learning question. Any reasonable answer will be accepted.

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