Name: _____

Date: _____

THE RENAISSANCE
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City-states of the Italian Renaissance

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in CE 476, no single ruler controlled all of Italy. Over time, powerful cities such as Venice, Genoa, Florence, and Siena became independent city-states. Some grew wealthy through trade. Others prospered through banking, manufacturing, or military power. Cities competed for prestige through architecture, public works, and patronage of the arts. Their rivalry helped spark the cultural rebirth known as the Renaissance.

Venice: Power from the Sea

Venice was founded in the fifth century by refugees from nearby towns fleeing invasions after the fall of the Romans. They settled on a group of islands on the northeastern edge of the Italian peninsula. Venice became wealthy because its harbor connected Europe to trade routes reaching the Middle East and Asia. Merchant ships carried valuable cargo such as spices, silk, and luxury goods into the city. By the 1200s, Venice had become one of Europe's wealthiest cities. The city built massive warships to protect merchant ships from pirate raids. With the wealth from trade, many of Venice's leading families competed for prestige by building palaces or supporting talented artists.

Genoa: Venice's Rival

Like Venice, Genoa became a hub of shipping and commerce. Genoese merchants traded with ports across southern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Genoa and Venice were often at war over control of the valuable Mediterranean trade routes. In 1298, Genoa defeated Venice in a naval battle and captured the Venetian traveler Marco Polo. According to tradition, Polo described his travels through Asia while imprisoned in Genoa.

Florence: Banking and Art

Florence, the "city of flowers," prospered through the wool trade. Sheep were raised in the rocky hill country of central Italy, and businesses in Florence turned the fleece into valuable cloth sold across Europe. The profits from the wool trade helped make Florence an important banking center. Merchants and bankers competed to build grand palaces, churches, and public buildings. Their support for artists and scholars helped make Florence the cultural hub of the Renaissance. Nearby Siena was Florence's rival in banking and commerce. The two city-states were often at war for control of trade in central Italy.

Rome: Decline and Rebirth

Once the capital of an empire, Rome had declined dramatically by the beginning of the Renaissance. Its population had fallen from more than a million people to fewer than 50,000. Centuries of invasions, war, and neglect had left much of the once-great city in ruins. Yet Rome remained the home of the pope, the leader of the Christian Church. Renaissance popes hired famous artists and architects to beautify the city. Under their patronage, Rome blossomed once again into a center of faith, art, and learning.

Civic Pride

The leading families of the Italian city-states hired famous artists and architects to design magnificent churches, palaces, statues, and public buildings. Scholars in the Italian city-states rediscovered many ideas from ancient Greece and Rome, inspiring new interest in art, science, literature, and learning. Families in Florence, Venice, Rome, and other cities helped make Italy a symbol of Renaissance art, learning, and culture.

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Fill in the Blanks

After the fall of the W__s__e__n Roman E__p__re in CE 476, I__d__p__n__e__t city-states such as V__n__ce, Genoa, F__o__e__ce, and Siena rose across the I__a__i__n peninsula. Rival cities competed for prestige through a__c__i__e__t__re, trade, and support for the arts, helping spark the R__n__i__s__n__e. Venice grew powerful by controlling t__a__e between E__r__pe, the M__d__le East, and Asia. G__n__a rivaled Venice for control of Mediterranean c__m__e__ce and once c__p__u__ed Marco Polo after a n__v__l battle. F__o__e__ce prospered through the wool trade and b__n__i__g, becoming the c__l__u__al hub of the Renaissance. Nearby S__e__a competed with F__o__e__ce for control of t__a__e in central Italy. Rome had d__c__i__ed after the fall of the Roman E__p__re, but Renaissance p__p__s rebuilt the city by hiring a__t__s__s and a__c__i__e__ts. Scholars in the Italian city-states rediscovered ideas from ancient G__e__ce and R__me, inspiring new interest in a__t, science, l__t__r__t__re, and l__a__n__ng.

Answer in Complete Sentences

1. Why was Italy not a united nation during the Renaissance?

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2. Why were Venice and Genoa often at war?

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*3. Why was Rome no longer a significant city by the beginning of the Renaissance? What caused the city to grow during the Renaissance?

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*4. Explain how Italy being divided into city-states was a factor in the Renaissance?

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

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