Name: _____

Date: _____

THE RENAISSANCE
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The Dawn of a New Age

For centuries, most Europeans lived much as their ancestors had. Then, around 1450, artists began painting more realistic people, scholars rediscovered the ideas of ancient Greece and Rome, and explorers sailed into unknown waters. Europe was entering a new age called the Renaissance, a French word meaning "rebirth."

From Land to Money

For centuries, most Europeans lived in small farming villages where wealth and power came from owning land. A noble's status was measured by the amount of land he controlled and the number of people who worked it. Most people rarely traveled far from home, and few opportunities existed to become wealthy outside the feudal system.

Hundreds of years before the Renaissance, improvements in farming slowly allowed Europe to produce more food. As towns grew and trade increased, people began using money more often instead of trading labor for protection. After the Black Death killed millions of Europeans, the feudal system weakened and more people sought opportunities beyond the manor. As trade expanded, wealth increasingly flowed into towns and cities, creating a powerful merchant class whose influence would eventually rival that of the nobility.

The Patrons

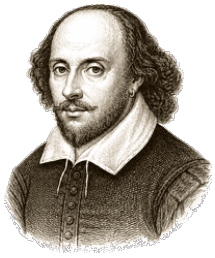
While some scholars considered secular ideas, banking, manufacturing, and trade made many Italian merchant families wealthy, particularly in Florence and Milan. These families used their money to build massive cathedrals and support art that made faith more vivid and alive to ordinary people. With the support of these patrons, artists began experimenting with new techniques that made paintings, sculptures, and buildings appear more realistic and lifelike.

New Ways of Thinking

The rediscovery of ancient Greek learning encouraged many Europeans to value evidence and reason. Scholars later known as humanists believed in the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments. Christianity remained central to life in Europe during the Renaissance, but scholars also became more interested in secular, or non-religious, ideas. Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press enabled ideas to spread quickly across Europe.

The Fall of Constantinople

During the Middle Ages, Constantinople was a center of learning and the Christian faith. After the fall of Rome, Emperor Constantine moved the Roman capital east to the city that became known as Constantinople. The later Roman Empire, also called the Byzantine Empire, fell to the Muslim Ottoman Turks in 1453. The Turks converted many Christian churches into Islamic mosques, causing many Greek-speaking Christian scholars to flee to Italy with ancient Greek texts.



A New Age of Ideas

The Renaissance began in Italy, but its new ideas about art, learning, and human potential radiated across Europe. Renaissance artists in northern Europe blended Renaissance ideas with their own local traditions. In England, the Renaissance inspired great literature and drama, including William Shakespeare's plays. European explorers traveled farther from home during the Renaissance. In 1492, a Spanish fleet led by Christopher Columbus sailed to the Americas.

The Beginning of Modern History

The Renaissance helped Europe move from a medieval world focused mainly on tradition toward a world increasingly shaped by curiosity, observation, creativity, exploration, and individual achievement. The Renaissance was a rebirth of ancient learning, but it also helped lay the foundation for the modern world.

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Fill in the Blanks

Around 1450, Europe entered a period called the Renaissance, a F__e__ch word meaning "r__b__r__h." As towns grew and trade increased, people began moving to c__t__es and using m__n__y more often. Over time, the f__u__al system weakened. During the Renaissance, Europeans rediscovered ideas from ancient G__e__c__ and R__m__. Trade between Italy and the Middle East helped spread knowledge preserved by M__s__im scholars. Wealthy p__t__o__s supported artists, architects, and scholars. Humanists valued e__i__e__ce, reason, and the a__i__i__y of the human mind to think and form j__d__m__nts. Johann G__t__n__e__g's printing press helped ideas s__r__ad quickly across Europe. After C__n__t__n__i__o__le fell to the Muslim T__r__s in 14____, many G__e__k-speaking s__h__l__rs fled to Italy with ancient texts. Renaissance ideas spread across Europe, inspiring a__t, literature, e__p__o__a__i__n, and s__i__n__i__ic thinking. The Renaissance helped lay the foundation for the m__d__rn world.

Answer in Complete Sentences

1. What does Renaissance mean? Why was the term used?

_____

_____

_____

*2. How did improvements in farming help towns and trade grow?

_____

_____

_____

*3. Why do you think many merchants became patrons?

_____

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_____

4. Why did many Greek-speaking scholars move to Italy at the beginning of the Renaissance?

_____

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_____

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

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