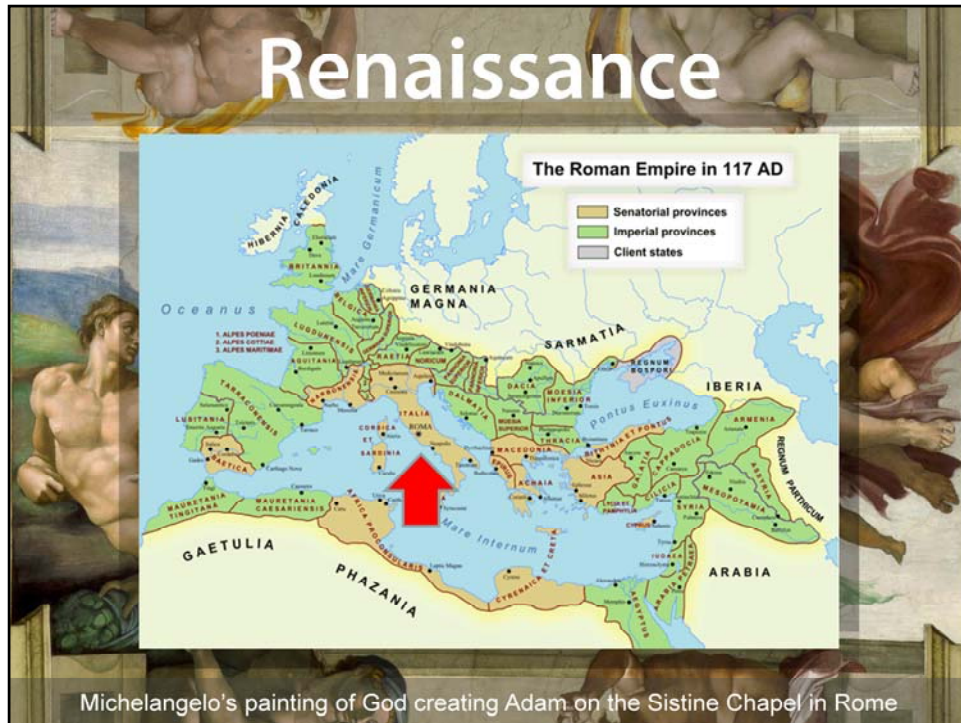


# Renaissance



Historians trace the start of the Renaissance to Italy in 1350 A.D. Over time, this artistic and intellectual movement spread to the rest of Europe. Why did the Renaissance start in Italy? There is not just one correct answer; there were a number of factors that made Italy a prime location for the birth of this movement.

As far back as the Roman Empire, Italy was the center of Western Europe and the Mediterranean Sea. Many of the Empire's greatest architectural and artistic achievements remained in Italy. These works served as influences to the early Renaissance thinkers and artists, who were inspired by the classical art of ancient Greece and Rome.

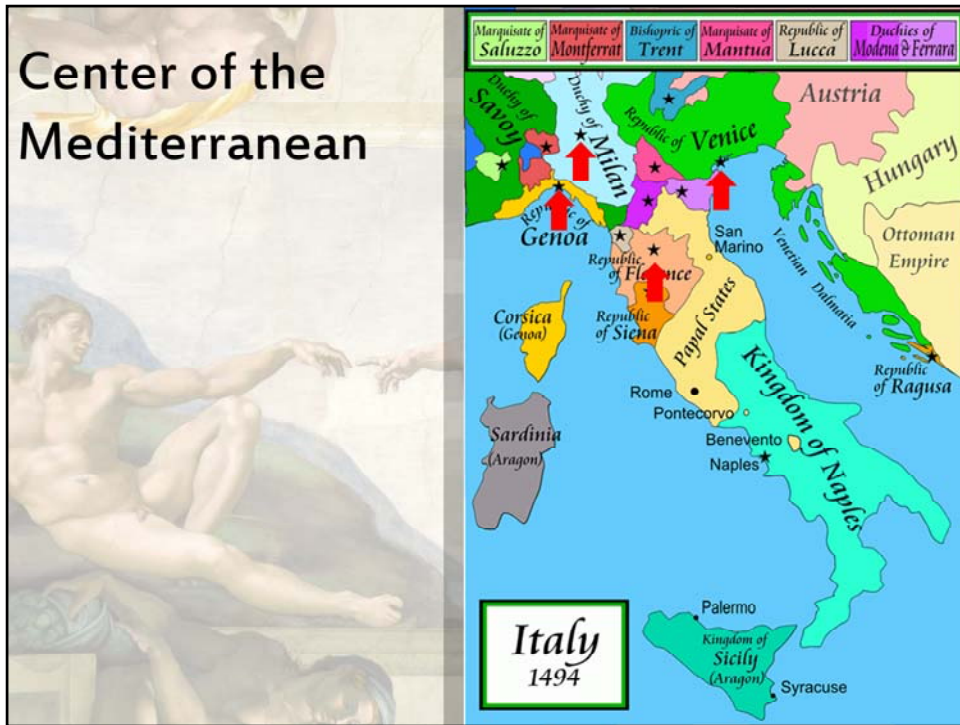
## Wealth and Patronage



Italy's central location on the Mediterranean Sea allowed it to flourish economically. Many of Italy's cities survived the Middle Ages as prosperous centers of trade and banking, linking Europe to the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. As a result, these cities had a number of wealthy merchants who promoted education, valued individual achievement, and had the financial resources to support artists.

This wealthy Italian merchant class became patrons of the arts, which means that they paid artists to create works of art. The Medici family was one of the most influential patrons of the arts at the time. They lived in Florence, Italy. The Medici family made their money from banking and they owned one of the largest banks in Europe during the fifteenth century. They also used their wealth to gain political power and to control the Florentine government.

The Medici are best known as art patrons in Florence, a city which gave birth to the Renaissance. They supported many of the best known artists of the period, including Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.



## Center of the Mediterranean

Italy's central location enabled the northern city-states of Florence, Milan, Venice and Genoa to grow into prosperous centers of trade, banking, and manufacturing. Since these cities were the center of trade between Europe and the rest of the world, the Italian population encountered goods and ideas from far away lands that came through the Italian peninsula, and then eventually spread to Northern Europe.

[Map courtesy Map Master.]

## Humanism

An intellectual movement that focused on worldly subjects, rather than religious issues.

Humanism promoted the study of grammar, rhetoric (art of speaking and writing effectively), poetry, and history (based on Greek and Roman texts).

Francesco Petrarch was one of the first humanists. A writer and poet, his sonnets were imitated by writers throughout Europe.



While the Middle Ages focused on religious issues, the artists and thinkers of the Renaissance concentrated on worldly subjects. Humanism was the dominant intellectual movement of the Renaissance. Humanists promoted the study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry and history, which were all based on Greek and Roman texts.



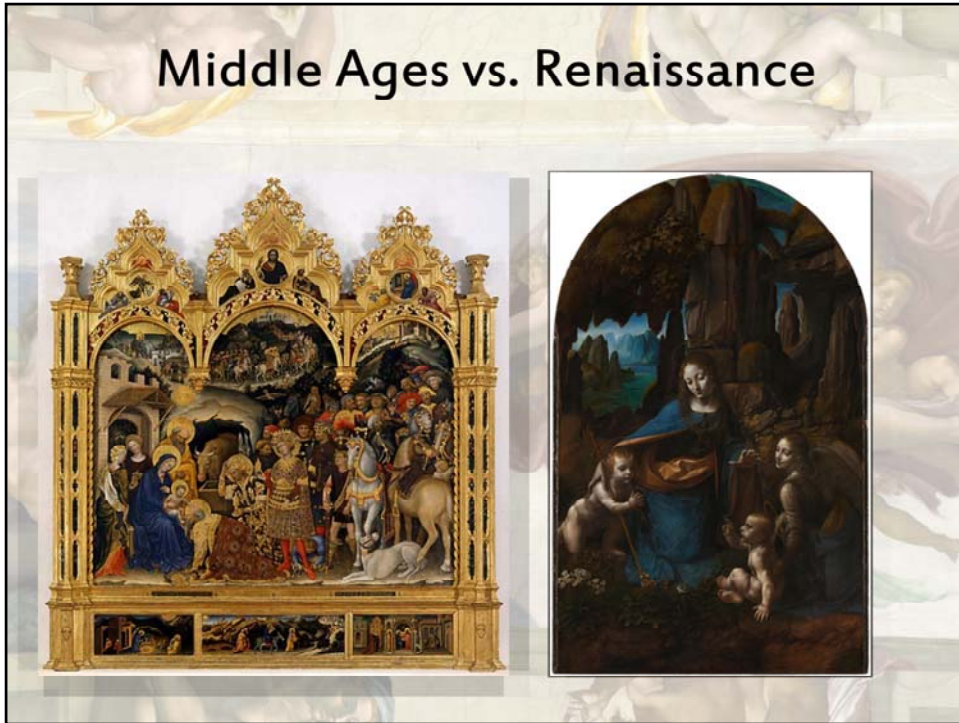


This new focus on worldly issues spread to Renaissance artists who used the classical techniques of the Greeks and Romans alongside new techniques, such as perspective. Renaissance painters used these new techniques to represent both humans and landscapes in a more realistic way. Using perspective, artists could paint scenes that appeared three dimensional. Objects in the distance would appear smaller than those images that were closer to the viewer. Renaissance architects rejected the Gothic styles of the late Middle Ages as too cluttered and disorderly. Instead, they adopted the columns, arches, and domes that were used by the ancient Greeks and Romans.

Also, artists began to focus on the world around them, rather than only religious subjects. Religion was still important to humanists and Renaissance artists, but the new focus on the world around them changed peoples' attitudes about what was important.

Here is an example of how perspective is shown using columns. Renaissance artists used perspective to create the illusion of depth in a two-dimensional painting by having the subjects get smaller and smaller toward the vanishing point. In his painting *The School of Athens*, the artist, Raphael, used perspective to create the illusion of depth.

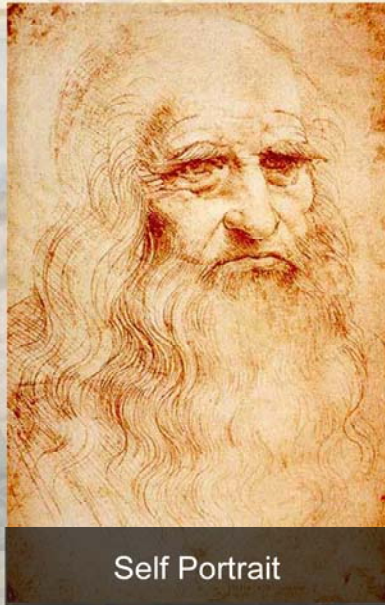
## Middle Ages vs. Renaissance



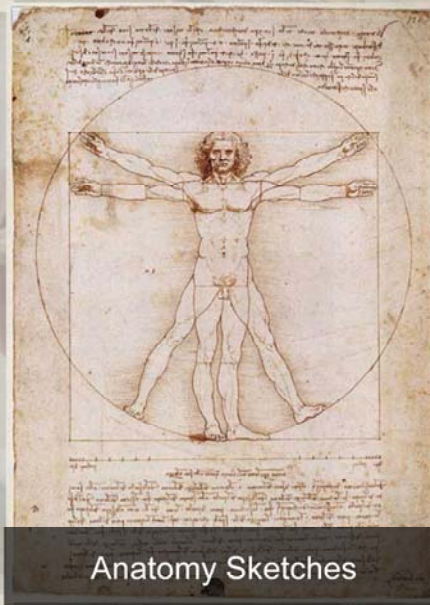
The two paintings shown here demonstrate many of the characteristic differences between the art of the Middle Ages, shown on the left, and the art of the Renaissance, shown on the right. On the left, Fabiano's *Adoration of the Magi*, depicts ornate gold work, bright colors, and rigid subjects.

On the right, Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks* portrays a similar scene, but uses muted colors and depicts much more realistic features and poses. Realism was an important goal of Renaissance painters.

## Leonardo da Vinci

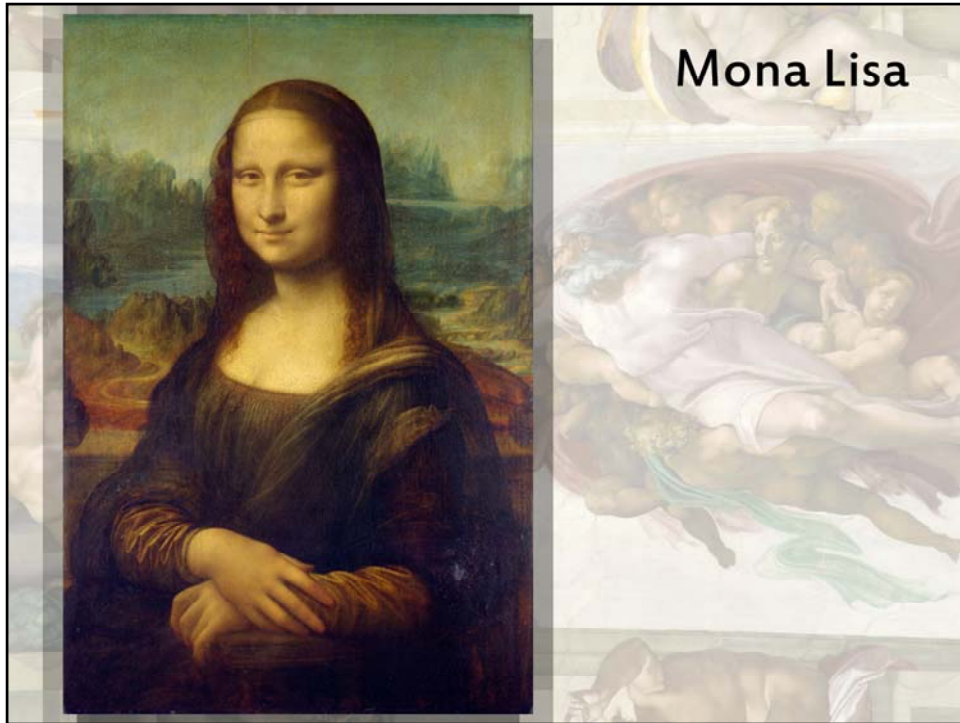


Self Portrait



Anatomy Sketches

In addition to being a Renaissance painter, Leonardo da Vinci was a pioneer in many other areas. Considered by many to be the model Renaissance man, da Vinci had a wide range of interests and was an expert in many different fields of study. His sketches included the themes of botany, anatomy, architecture, and engineering. Today, he is also considered an inventor, as he sketched ideas for flying machines and undersea boats well before they were actually built.



The *Mona Lisa* is perhaps da Vinci's most famous painting. This is a powerful portrait of a woman whose mysterious smile has baffled viewers for centuries.



## Last Supper



Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* shows Christ and his disciples on the night before the crucifixion. This moving painting shows da Vinci's mastery of perspective. In recent years, this painting has been associated with mystery and has been featured in several modern books and movies.

# Michelangelo

Most famous sculpture pieces include:

- Pieta (Mary and Jesus)
- The David of Florence.

Became a patron of Pope Julius II who had him decorate a huge mural of religious themes on the ceiling of the *Sistine Chapel* and *The Last Judgment*.



Michelangelo designed the dome of St. Peter's Basilica, although it was unfinished when he died.

Like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo excelled in many different fields such as sculpting, engineering, painting, architecture, and poetry. First and foremost, he considered himself a sculptor. Michelangelo's most famous sculptures are the *Pieta* and *David*. Eventually Michelangelo came under the patronage of Pope Julius II, who had him decorate a huge mural of religious themes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.



The Pietà shows the sorrow of Mary as she cradles the dead Christ on her knees. The sculpture is very detailed and lifelike.

[Image courtesy Stanislav Traykov.]



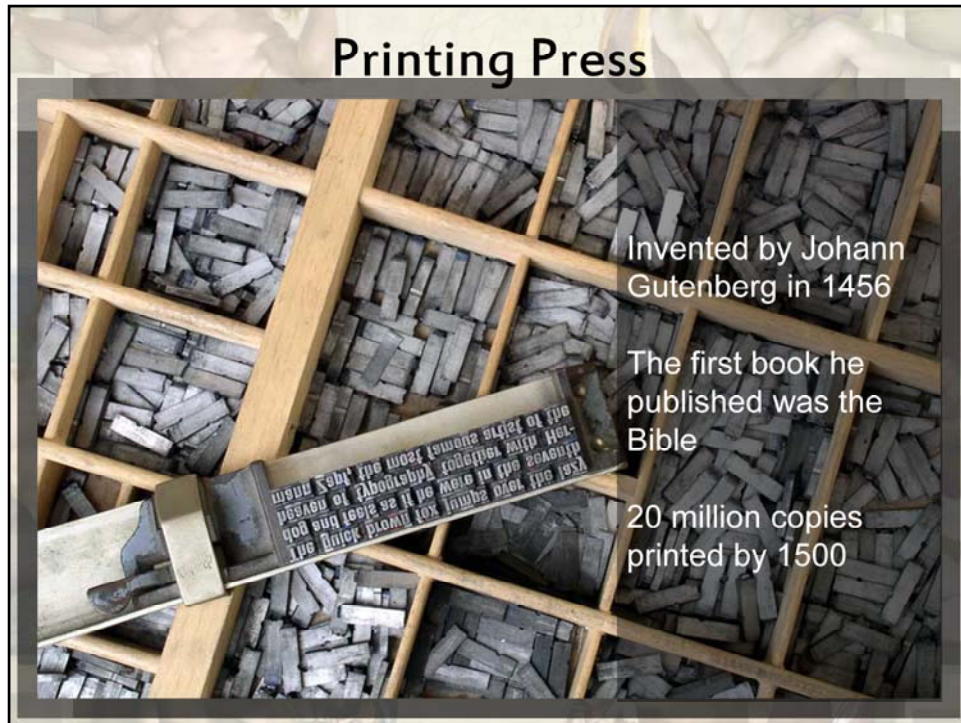
Michelangelo's sculpture of *David* reinvented the sculptures of classical Greece and Rome in a more lifelike way.





Michelangelo's greatest project was decorating the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. It was an enormous undertaking that depicted the Biblical history of the world, from the creation of man to the great flood of Noah's Ark. For four years, Michelangelo laid on his back while painting all of the images.

Here, we see just one half of the ceiling. Note the famous image of God creating Adam on the right.



The Renaissance was not limited to painting, sculpture, and architecture. Literature was an important part of this period. One of the most important technological advances that helped spread literature and other ideas was the printing press with moveable type, invented by Johann Gutenberg of Mainz, in 1456.

The first book Gutenberg published wasn't a novel – it was the Bible. This resulted in a religious upheaval in northern Europe, which would lead to the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation began when people started questioning some of the beliefs of the Catholic Church.

The demand for the Bible was phenomenal. Less than fifty years after it was first published, there were already 20 million Bibles in print. As literacy increased throughout Europe, the ideas of the Renaissance also spread to new regions.

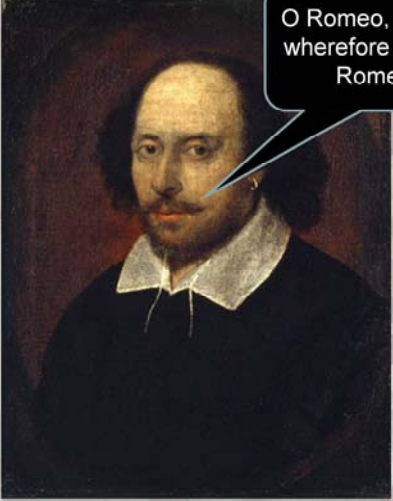
## William Shakespeare

Elizabethan Age (1564-1616)

Wrote Sonnets and Plays

- Julius Caesar  
"Et tu Brutae" (historic)
- Romeo and Juliet (tragedy)
- Midsummer Night's Dream (comedy)

Created over 1,700 words



O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

The image is a presentation slide about William Shakespeare. It features a central portrait of Shakespeare with a speech bubble containing a quote from Romeo. To the left of the portrait is a list of his works and a note about the number of words he created. The background of the slide is a faint, artistic rendering of figures in a classical style.

William Shakespeare was a towering figure in Renaissance literature, as well as English literature. He was a poet and playwright who lived in England from 1564 to 1616, during the Elizabethan Age. Although Shakespeare only lived to be fifty-two years old, he wrote 37 plays, many of which are still performed around the world today. Some of his more famous works include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Shakespeare was also a master of the English language, creating more than seventeen hundred words, many of which are still in use today. His plays fall into one of three categories: historic plays, tragedies, or comedies.



## The Northern Renaissance

*The Descent from the Cross*  
Rogier van der Weyden (1400-1464)



1400s - Northern France, Belgium, and the Netherlands

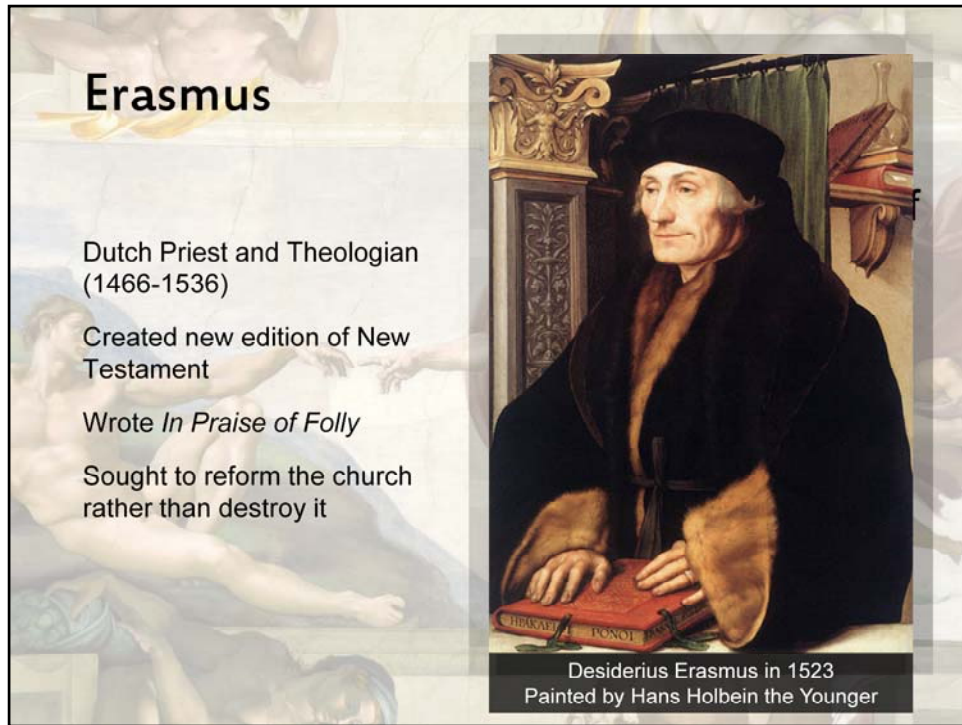
1500s - Spain, France, Germany, and England

Northern Renaissance artists emphasized religious themes

Artists and thinkers sought to bring about religious and moral reform

Over time, the ideas of the Italian Renaissance spread to other regions of Europe. While many Italian artists focused on individual and secular, or non-religious, themes, Northern Renaissance painters emphasized religious themes within their art. Many artists and thinkers in Northern Europe believed that the revival of ancient learning should be focused on bringing about religious and moral reforms within society.





One of these Northern Renaissance thinkers was Erasmus, a Dutch Catholic priest and humanist. Often called the “Prince of the Humanists,” Erasmus was a classical scholar who wrote many important texts from the period.

Erasmus made a new Greek and Latin translation of the New Testament using historical sources. His translation differed from the version of the Bible that the Catholic Church had been using since the fourth century. This newer version of the Bible raised questions that would inspire religious figures to challenge the Catholic Church.

In his book *In Praise of Folly*, Erasmus used humor to expose the corrupt and the immoral behaviors of the Catholic Church clergy. Erasmus’ goal, however, was not to break from the church, but rather to reform the church and eliminate corruption. His criticisms caused people in Northern Europe to be cynical about the Catholic Church. These attitudes eventually led to a new movement, the Protestant Reformation.