Lesson 1: The Italian Renaissance

Topic 10: The Renaissance and Reformation (1300-1650)
Based on this image of Michelangelo’s David, what do you think were some subjects and themes of Renaissance artists and writers?

What influences do you see in this sculpture?
OBJECTIVES

Describe the characteristics of the Renaissance and understand why it began in Italy

Identify how writers of the time addressed Renaissance themes

Explain the impact of the Renaissance
Concept 4: Renaissance and Reformation

**PO 1.** Analyze the results of Renaissance thoughts and theories:

A. rediscovery of Greek and Roman ideas
B. humanism and its emphasis on individual potential and achievements
C. scientific approach to the natural world
The Italian Renaissance

From the 1300s to the 1500s, Western Europe enjoyed a golden age in the arts and literature, known as the Renaissance.

The word means “rebirth”

A time of great creativity and change in many areas—economic, political, social, and above all, cultural.
The Italian Renaissance

Marked the transition between medieval and early modern times

Western Europe witnessed the growth of cities and trade, which greatly extended people’s horizons
A New Worldview

Changed the way people saw themselves and their world

Reawakened interest in the learning of ancient Greece and Rome

Creative minds transformed their own age

A time of rebirth after the disorder and disunity of the medieval world
Renaissance Europe did not really break with its medieval past

Much of the classical heritage had survived:

The Latin language

Knowledge of ancient thinkers such as Euclid and Aristotle

The Renaissance produced new attitudes toward culture and learning
A New Worldview

Renaissance thinkers explored the richness and variety of human experience in the here and now.

During the Renaissance, there was a new emphasis on individual achievement.

The Renaissance ideal was a person with talents and skills in many fields.
A Spirit of Adventure and Curiosity

Supported a spirit of adventure and curiosity

People explored new worlds or to reexamine old ones

Columbus, who sailed to the Americas in 1492, represented that spirit

Scientists looked at the universe in new ways
Renaissance Humanism

At the heart of the Italian Renaissance was an intellectual movement known as **humanism**.

Humanist scholars studied classical Greek and Roman cultures.

Use the wisdom of the ancients to increase their understanding of their own times.
Renaissance Humanism

Most were pious Christians yet focused on worldly subjects not religious issues

Believed that education should stimulate the individual’s creative powers

Emphasized the humanities

Had been taught in ancient Greek and Roman schools
Renaissance Humanism

**Francesco Petrarch** lived in Florence in the 1300s

An early Renaissance humanist

From monasteries and churches, he assembled a library of Greek and Roman manuscripts

Through his efforts (and others) the speeches of Cicero, the poems of Homer and Virgil became known to Western Europeans
Renaissance Humanism

Petrarch also wrote poetry

His *Sonnets to Laura* are love poems, inspired by a woman he knew only at a distance.

Their style greatly influenced writers of his time.

He wrote in the *vernacular* language of ordinary people, as well as in Latin.
The Renaissance Begins in Italy

The Renaissance began in Italy in the mid-1300s.

It spread north to the rest of Europe and reached its height in the 1500s.

The Renaissance emerged in Italy for several reasons.
Italy’s History and Geography

Marked by a reawakened interest in the culture of ancient Rome

Italy was the center of ancient Roman civilization, it was only natural for this reawakening to begin there

Architectural remains, antique statues, coins, and inscriptions were all daily reminders of the glory of ancient Rome
Italy’s History and Geography

Differed from the rest of Europe because the cities had thrived during the Middle Ages.

City-states like Florence, Milan, Venice, and Genoa grew into prosperous centers of trade and manufacturing.

At trading ports along the coastlines, ships brought things from the Muslim world, preserved much learning from ancient Greece and Rome.
Italy’s History and Geography

A class of wealthy and powerful merchants emerged in the city-states and promoted the cultural rebirth.

These merchants exerted both political and economic leadership, and their attitudes and interests helped to shape Renaissance Italy.

They stressed individual achievement and spent lavishly to support the arts.
Florence and the Medicis

Florence came to symbolize the Italian Renaissance

It produced a dazzling number of gifted poets, artists, architects, scholars, and scientists in a short space of time

In the 1400s, the Medici family of Florence organized a banking business
Florence and the Medicis

The family expanded into manufacturing, mining, and other ventures.

Money translated into cultural and political power.

**Cosimo de’ Medici** gained control of the Florentine government in 1434.

The family were the uncrowned rulers of the city for many years.
The best known Medici was Lorenzo known as “the Magnificent”

Represented the Renaissance ideal as a clever politician

He was a generous patron of the arts
Art Flourishes in the Renaissance

Attained its most glorious expression in its paintings, sculpture, and architecture

Wealthy patrons played a major role in this artistic flowering

Popes, princes, and successful merchants supported the work of hundreds of artists
Art Reflects New Ideas and Attitudes

Reflected humanist concerns

Portrayed religious figures but set these figures against Greek or Roman backgrounds

Portraits of well-known figures, reflecting the humanist interest in individual achievement

Scenes from Greek and Roman mythology

Depicted historical events
Art Reflects New Ideas and Attitudes

Artists studied ancient Greek and Roman works

Revived many classical forms

The sculptor Donatello created a life-size statue of a soldier on horseback

The first such figure done since ancient times
New Techniques and Styles

New techniques for representing humans and landscapes in a realistic way

They discovered the rules of perspective, which allowed them to represent a three-dimensional world onto a two-dimensional surface

Artists gave the impression of space and depth on a flat surface
New Techniques and Styles

Shadings of light and dark to make objects look round and real

Made scenes more dramatic

Studied human anatomy and drew from live models more accurately than medieval artists had done
Renaissance Architecture

Architects rejected the Gothic style of the late Middle Ages because it was disorderly.

They adopted the columns, arches, and domes used by the ancient Greeks and Romans.

To top the cathedral in Florence, Filippo Brunelleschi created a majestic dome, modeled on the dome of the ancient Pantheon in Rome.
Endless curiosity fed invention

Sketched objects in nature and dissected corpses to learn how bones and muscles work

Most popular is the *Mona Lisa*

*The Last Supper* is a deceptively simple painting and a brilliant example of the use of perspective
Leonardo da Vinci

To create it, Leonardo used a new type of paint, which decayed over time.

Although Leonardo thought of himself as an artist, his interests extended to botany, anatomy, optics, music, architecture, and engineering.

His many notebooks filled with sketches are a testament to his genius.
Michelangelo

A sculptor, engineer, painter, architect, and poet

Born in 1475, he came under the wing of the Medicis in Florence

As a young man, he shaped marble into masterpieces like the *Pieta*, which captures the sorrow of Mary as she cradles the dead Jesus on her knees
Michelangelo

David recalls the harmony and grace of ancient Greek sculptures

In 1508, Michelangelo started painting a series of murals on the vast curved ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome

During the next four years, he worked to complete scenes from Genesis along with figures of prophets who had foretold the coming of Jesus
Later Michelangelo drew a design for the enormous dome of St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome. The dome was completed based on his exact design. Served as a model for many later structures, including the Capitol in Washington, D.C.
Raphael

Studied the works of those great masters and blended Christian and classical styles

Among his best-known works is *School of Athens*, which pictures an imaginary gathering of great thinkers and scientists, including Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, and the Arab philosopher Averroës
New Books Reflect Renaissance Themes

Poets, artists, and scholars mingled with politicians at the courts of Renaissance rulers.

A literature of “how to” books sprang up to help ambitious men and women who wanted to rise in the Renaissance world.
Castiglione’s Ideal Courtier

The most widely read handbooks was *The Book of the Courtier*, by Baldassare Castiglione

Manners, skills, learning, and virtues that a member of the court should have

The ideal man is athletic but not overactive, good at games but not a gambler, plays a musical instrument and knows literature and history but is not arrogant
The ideal woman offers a balance to men. She is graceful and kind, lively but reserved. She is beautiful, “for outer beauty,” wrote Castiglione, “is the true sign of inner goodness.”
Niccolò Machiavelli served Florence as a diplomat and had observed kings and princes in foreign courts.

In *The Prince*, published in 1513, Machiavelli offered a guide to rulers on how to gain and maintain power.

Combined his personal experience of politics with his knowledge of the past.
Machiavelli’s Advice to Princes

_The Prince_ did not discuss leadership in terms of high ideals.

It looked at real rulers in an age of ruthless power politics.

Machiavelli stressed that the end justifies the means.

He urged rulers to use whatever methods were necessary to achieve their goals.
Saw himself as an enemy of oppression and corruption, but critics attacked his cynical advice.

Later students of government, argued that Machiavelli provided a realistic look at politics.

His work continues to spark debate because it raises important ethical questions about the nature of government and the use of power.
Michelangelo painted a series of murals on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. These murals depict the biblical history of the world, from the Creation to the Flood. It took four years to complete. Michelangelo considered himself a sculptor, not a painter. But his murals symbolize the great period of cultural rebirth that transformed Europe.

**Based on the lesson text and the image of the Sistine Chapel, what ideas and themes are reflected in Renaissance art?**