Text 1: The Italian Renaissance

Topic 10: The Renaissance and Reformation (1300-1650)
Lesson 1: The Italian Renaissance
OBJECTIVES
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 literally means “rebirth”.

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

The Renaissance 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.

They felt the era was 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
Medieval scholars debated the nature of life after death.

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

The Renaissance supported a spirit of adventure and curiosity that led people to explore new worlds or to reexamine old ones.

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

So, too, did the scientists who 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, hoping to use the wisdom of the ancients to increase their understanding of their own times.
Most humanists were pious Christians but they focused on worldly subjects rather than on the religious issues that had occupied medieval thinkers.

Believed that education should stimulate the individual’s creative powers.

They emphasized the humanities—subjects such as grammar, rhetoric (the study of using language effectively), poetry, and history—that had been taught in ancient Greek and Roman schools.
Francesco Petrarch lived in Florence, a city in north Italy 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.
Petrarch also wrote poetry

His *Sonnets to Laura* are love poems, inspired by a woman he knew only at a distance, but their style greatly influenced writers of his time

Petrarch wrote in the vernacular, or everyday language of ordinary people, as well as in Latin