

Background (Can be used for intro to Renaissance essays)

The Renaissance was a period of a surge in creative and intellectual achievement that spread throughout Europe in the 15th and 16th Centuries. Renaissance means “rebirth” in French and began as a literary movement when manuscripts containing literary, historical and scientific knowledge of ancient Greeks and Romans were found by European scholars in Florence. Greek began to be taught in schools and through the study of Greek philosophy, Christians were shown a new way of thinking; humanism. This philosophy stated that humans and their achievements were to be valued and quickly spread across Europe with the help of the discovery of printing. After the plague, Europe’s population had decreased considerably weakening the power of the landlords and shifting most wealth from countryside to cities, thus allowing them to thrive as new centres for education. Florence was one such city and became known as “A city made to the measure of man”. Along with this change in intellectual thinking came a change in art and how artists were valued. In the Early Renaissance art was simply a trade and to be an individual artist with one’s own ideas was unheard of. Most relied on patrons for work and were expected to produce only what their patron asked for. By the mid-15th Century this began to change Florentine artists and their work came to be respected and held in high esteem for both intellect and craft, sometimes regarded as geniuses.