The Renaissance Reflection & Review Questions

1. What was the Renaissance?

   A turning point in history that took the world from the medieval past to the modern present in regards to ideas about life, education, art/literature, and the world in general.

2. Describe the political, economic, and social conditions which contributed to the birth of the Renaissance in Italy.

   Politically Italy was divided into numerous city-states each ruled by theoretically by its own unique system of government...although in reality most were run by rich and powerful families. Often times feuds & rivalries developed between these city-states spurring competition in regards to achievement.

   Economically Italy was very affluent due its thriving international trade with Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Business and trade created vast wealth for many who were quick to become patrons as a way of showing off their prosperity and power.

   Socially, Italy was far more urban and willing to embrace new ideas.

3. What was the main inspiration for Renaissance thought?

   Humanism or the Humanist Movement

4. Explain how Renaissance ideas about life differed from those of the Middle Ages.

   During the Middle Ages, people thought life sucked and then you die. Life on Earth was essential hell and all they had to look forward to was the possibility of heaven in the thereafter. During the Renaissance, people came to realize that life is what you make it...and that with the right attitude and education one could live a full,
rewarding and enjoyable life in the here and now. So focus on the present and just do it.

5. How did the Renaissance spread throughout Europe?

Renaissance ideas spread by a variety of means….through the printed word courtesy of the Printing Press, through oral word of mouth brought on by personal contact, and through visual means of art & architecture.

6. Describe the human qualities and personal characteristics most admired during the Renaissance.

Someone who was learned in many subjects, skilled in many talents, articulate, witty, charming, and is willing to use his powers in a reserved, responsible way for the greater good of society—not for selfish personal reasons.

7. Summarize Machiavelli’s views on politics.

Whatever it takes….do what you have to do.

8. Explain how Renaissance art & architecture reflected Renaissance ideals.

Reflected the need for knowledge, development of individual skills, the greatness of what can be accomplished in this world, an admiration for the classical past, and using one’s power not for selfish reasons.


10. List three effects brought about in total or in part by the Renaissance.

Answers are many.

11. Define:
   a. City-State
A sovereign city (land & people) whose government was recognized as a legal political unit on the world stage.

b. Patrons
Wealthy individuals who support the arts

c. Humanities
Those subjects that deal with the study of language, literature, history, philosophy, math, science, and the arts which are essential to being culturally literate

d. Vernacular
The everyday language of people

e. Utopia
A perfect place that doesn’t exist

f. Pieta
Any artistic scene that depicts a grown Mary holding the crucified body of Christ

g. Madonna
Any artistic image that portrays a younger Mary with a baby Jesus

12. Identify: (Who/What, Where, When, and most importantly WHY)
a. The Medici’s
Rulers of Florence
Most famous Patrons of the Renaissance
Quasi—Mafia like

b. Johann Guttenberg
German inventor
Printing Press

c. Petrarch
One of the first humanists
Regarded as being Father of Humanism
d. Machiavelli
   Italian political philosopher
   Wrote the “The Prince” a handbook for rulers
   The end justifies the mean
   Better to be feared than loved

e. Castigliione
   Italian writer
   “The Book of the Courtier” a guide to Renaissance manners
   Described the ideal Renaissance Man & Woman

f. Erasmus
   Dutch Scholar and a Priest
   “In Praise of Folly”
   Used humor to get people thinking…especially about the Church

g. Sir Thomas Moore
   Englishman of many talents
   “Utopia”
   Will be a martyred and made a Catholic Saint

h. Dante
   Italian Poet
   “Divine Comedy”
   9 Circles of Hell/Inferno, Purgatory, and Heaven/Paradise

i. Boccaccio
   Italian writer
   “The Decameron”
   A collection of short stories told by a group of young people
   fleeing the Black Death

j. Chaucer
   Englishman of many talents
   “The Canterbury Tales”
   Collection of tales told by pilgrims traveling to Canterbury Cathedral

k. Rabelais
   French Scholar and Monk
   “Gargantua and Pantagruel”
Used humor laced with seriousness to emphasize humanism

1. Cervantes
   Spanish writer
   “Don Quixote”
   An older gentleman’s obsession with chivalry and apparent break with reality
   The first modern novel

m. Shakespeare
   The greatest poet and playwright of all time
   Master of the English language
   Sonnets
   Dramatic plays

n. Brunelleschi
   Italian architect and engineer
   Brought back the dome
   “Dome of Florence”

o. Donatello
   Early Italian sculptor whose moment in the spotlight is shortlived
   “David”

p. Leonardo da Vinci
   The Ideal Renaissance Man
   Mona Lisa
   Last Supper
   The Vitruvian Man

q. Michelangelo
   Multi-talented Renaissance genius
   Perfectionist
   Huge ego-maniac
   “David”
   “Pieta”
   “Sistine Chapel”

r. Raphael
Rival of Michelangelo
“School of Athens”
Madonnas

s. Durer
   German
   Leonardo of the North
   Graphic Artist

t. Holbein
   German
   Great painter of portraits
   Official portrait painter for the Court of Henry VIII

u. Van Eyck
   Flemish/Dutch
   Detail & Symbolism
   Oil paints