

Wright, William- Period 7

Date: 12/6/2022

The Renaissance was one of the most critical turning points in history. It affected art, the way of thinking, politics, and the way we live today.

The Renaissance roughly began in the 14th century and ended around the 17th century in Florence, Italy. During the late Middle Ages, Europe suffered from war and plague, resulting in famine and a much smaller population. With the smaller population the general standards of living were higher, causing people to become better educated and increased trade. All these events would set the stage for a rebirth of thinking and individualism.

This period brought about innovative technologies such as papermaking which led to the growth of libraries and later helped make the development of printing possible. Innovation flourished and with this brought more thought and question. This period also brought about the need for exploration. As people started studying Greek writers it led to humanism which popularized the study of subjects called humanities.¹

Art

The first shift in art style started with a change in perspective. Compared to the flat point of view the art in the Middle Ages gave us, the renaissance brought about a more three-dimensional aspect to the art. Another change that happened was a change in the paint itself.

¹ HMH SOCIAL STUDIES – FLORIDA MODERN WORLD HISTORY pg. 313

They started using oil-based paints which were first developed in Flanders. The artistic style shifted as artists incorporated humanistic ideas into their work. Medieval artists had used religious subjects to convey a spiritual idea, portraying the figures in stiff groups. Renaissance artists portrayed religious subjects, but used a realistic style copied from classical models. The combination of these things allowed the artists to create more realistic forms of painting. This created a new emphasis on individuals. The renaissance not only affected painting, but every form of art. It affected painting, poetry, architecture and even science resulting in extraordinary achievements in each form. Art fell further into a realism style. Artists incorporated anatomy into their paintings so they could recreate the human anatomy with excellent precision. The renaissance also brought an emphasis on the artist instead of anonymous craftsmen allow the first “celebrity artists.” People such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Anguissola, Gentileschi, and especially Raphael Sanzio who learned from them and perfected their style.

Thought

The main change in thought was a re-emphasis of classical texts and philosophies. One form this came in was “Humanism.” Humanism taught the idea that humans are the center of their own universe and should embrace achievements in education, classical arts, literature, and science.² The idea of humanism was spread easily with Gutenberg’s invention, the printing press causing ideas and news to spread faster and further than ever before. Ideas were also portrayed through the paintings themselves. An example of this is the value of humanism being shown through Raphael’s *School of Athens*, a depiction of the greatest Greek philosophers.

² <https://www.history.com/topics/renaissance/renaissance>.

The change in art and thought during the renaissance were very much inter-linked. It was one of the rare times in history where these fields of study fused seamlessly. The change in quality, such as the type of paint they used and creating more anatomically correct paintings, reflects the improved education and the innovation that was occurring during this time and how the art portrayed humanistic ideas.

Many cultural, political, economic, traditions for modern society were laid down during the Renaissance as the basic values. The law was reformed to separate church and state. The socio-economic dynamic changed to focus more on the individual. Who knows how society would be today without this renaissance.

1 HMH SOCIAL STUDIES – FLORIDA MODERN WORLD HISTORY pg. 313

2 <https://www.history.com/topics/renaissance/renaissance>.