

Source Text #2

The Italian Renaissance

Main Idea The wealthy urban society of the Italian city-states brought a rebirth of learning and art to Europe.

Reading Focus Hollywood makes many of the world's movies. Why is it the center of the movie industry? Read to learn why the city-states of Italy became the center of art during the Renaissance.

Renaissance (REH•nuh•SAHNS) means "rebirth." The years from about 1350 to 1550 in European history are called the Renaissance because there was a rebirth of interest in art and learning.

In some ways the Renaissance was a rebirth of interest in the same subjects the

Greeks and Romans had studied. After the horrible years of the Black Death, Europeans began looking to the past when times seemed better. They wanted to learn how to make their own society better.

During the Renaissance, Europeans also began to stress the importance of the individual. They began to believe that people could make a difference and change the world for the better.

People were still very religious during the Renaissance, but they also began to celebrate human achievements. People became more secular (SEH•kyuh•luhr). This means they were more interested in this world than in religion and getting to heaven.

Why did the Renaissance begin in Italy? First of all, Italy had been the center of the Roman Empire. Ruins and art surrounded the Italians and reminded them of their past. It was only natural that they became interested in Greek and Roman art and tried to make their own art as good.

Another reason the Renaissance began in Italy was because by the 1300s, Italy's cities had become very wealthy. They could afford to pay painters, sculptors, architects, and other artists to produce new works.

A third reason was because the region was still divided into many small city-states. Florence (FLAWR•uhns), Venice (VEH•nuhs), Genoa, Milan, and Rome were some of the most important cities of the Renaissance.

The Italian city-states competed with each other. This helped bring about the

Renaissance. Wealthy nobles and merchants wanted artists to produce works that increased the fame of their cities.

In most of Europe, the vast majority of people lived in the country, including the knights and nobles who owned estates. In Italy's city-states, the population was becoming more urban. That means more people were living in the city, rather than in the country. So many people living together in a city meant more customers for artists and more money for art.

The large number of people living in cities also led to more discussion and sharing of ideas about art. Just as the city-states of ancient Greece had produced many great works of art and literature, so too did urban society in Italy.

Reading Check Explain Why did the Renaissance start in Italy?

Text-Dependent Questions for use with Source Texts #1 and #2:

1. During the Renaissance in Europe, where did a majority of people live according to Source Text #2? Does this match with what you determined about populations in Europe at this time, and why?
2. Using context clues, write your own definition of "city-state".
3. From what you've already read, discussed, graphed; and mapped, why might Europe need to be reborn? Provide evidence for your answer(s).
4. Using Source Text #1 and Source Text #2, what feelings that people held about the Church led them to become more secular? Provide evidence for your answer(s).
5. Using Source Text #1 and Source Text #2 as a guide, why does Source Text #2 say Europeans began to, "stress the importance of the individual"?