Context of the Renaissance: Where and Why?

Learning objective(s):

Unit 1 Learning Objective A: Explain the context in which the Renaissance and Age of Discovery developed

Key Concept 1.4 — European society and the experiences of everyday life were increasingly shaped by commercial and agricultural capitalism, notwithstanding the continued existence of medieval social and economic structures.

I. Economic change produced new social patterns, while traditions of hierarchy and status continued
   A. Innovations in banking and finance promoted the growth of urban financial centers and a money economy.
   B. The growth of commerce produced a new economic elite, which related to traditional land-holding elites in different ways in Europe’s various geographic regions.

Spielvogel (online version): p 341 (read “Meaning and Characteristics of the Italian Renaissance”)

I. What three distinguishing characteristics did Jacob Burkhardt attribute to Italy as the “birthplace of the modern world”? 
   a. What does the term “secular” mean (google and use the dictionary definition)?
   b. Why do contemporary historians disagree with Burkhardt’s assessment?
      i. How can the Renaissance still be viewed as a period of recovery?
   c. What Renaissance value is reflected in the quote from Leon Battista Alberti?

Kagan p 61

II. Where and in what political entities did the Renaissance first take root?
   a. How did these places become wealthy?
      i. What were the five major competitive states that emerged at this time?
      ii. What social group became the leaders in these societies?
      iii. Into what form did the governments of most of these societies evolve (look it up if you don’t know what this word means!)?
      iv. Spielvogel (online version): p 343. Understand who the Medici were.

Revival of Classical Learning and Humanism

Learning objective(s):

Unit 1 Learning Objective A: Explain the context in which the Renaissance and Age of Discovery developed

Key Concept 1.1 — The rediscovery of works from ancient Greece and Rome and observation of the natural world changed many Europeans’ view of their world.

I. Revival of classical texts led to new methods of scholarship and new values in both society and religion.
   A. Italian Renaissance humanists promoted a revival in classical literature and created new philological approaches to ancient texts. Some Renaissance humanists furthered the values of secularism and individualism.
   B. Humanist revival of Greek and Roman texts, spread by the printing press, challenged the institutional power of universities and the Catholic Church. This shifted education away from a focus on theological writings toward classical texts and new methods of scientific inquiry.
   C. Admiration for Greek and Roman political institutions supported a revival of civic humanist culture in the Italian city-states and produced secular models for individual and political behavior

Kagan: p 63 – 64, 66, 68

I. What was included in the program of study of the studia humanitatis?
   a. What humanist first coined the term “humanitas” for the learning that resulted from this program?

II. Who is the “father of humanism”?
   a. How does he reflect the key concept in the learning objectives above and distinguishing characteristics of the Renaissance according to Burkhardt?
   b. What type of learning did he hold in contempt?
      i. See this link for background: https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scholasticism
      1. How did Scholastics acquire knowledge? How is this different from modern science?
      2. What is the main goal of Scholasticism?
   c. What ideals inspired humanist reforms in education?
      i. Understand how humanist goals are reflected by the author, Baldassare Castiglione and his book?

III. What were learned humanist scholars critical of?
a. How does Lorenzo Valla reflect this?
   i. Understand how and what his analysis of the *Donation of Constantine* proved.
   ii. Understand how this reflects humanist criticism of Scholasticism.


IV. What idea does Pico della Mirandola reflect in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*?
   a. What does Marsilio Ficino mean by “Platonic love”?


V. What is civic humanism?
   a. How does it reflect a criticism of Scholasticism?
   b. In what city, especially, did civic humanism take hold?
      i. What ancient Roman became the model for civic humanists? Why?
         1. What Florentine humanist sparked the admiration of this ancient Roman?

Kagan p 77 ("Niccolò Machiavelli"), Spielvogel (online version) p 351 – 352.

VI. How does Machiavelli reflect an appreciation of classical culture?
   a. How did he compare his contemporary Italians to the ancient Romans?
   b. What book did he write?
      i. In this book what did he advise?
      ii. From what family did he hope such a ruler to emerge (use the Kagan as the source for this)?

VII. (not from book) How else are Machiavelli’s ideas a reflection of Renaissance humanist thinking?