

# The Renaissance

The word “renaissance” literally means “rebirth”. The Renaissance refers to a time of rebirth and reinvention of learning and thinking that began in Italy in the 14th century. The Renaissance spread through the north including England in the 16th century. It ended in the 17th century. This was a time of awakening of intellectual awareness. Renaissance men and women believed that human life was both interesting and extremely valuable, and tried to develop all their talents.

The Renaissance was a time of new thinking and new discoveries. Renaissance thinkers associated themselves with classical values. They began to steer away from the beliefs of the Middle Ages.

## Art

Many of the most influential artists that we know today were a part of the Renaissance.

**Leonardo da Vinci:** Leonardo has often been described as the perfect example of the Renaissance Man. Da Vinci was a man of many talents but is best known for his paintings such as the Mona Lisa and the Last Supper.

**Michelangelo:** Michelangelo is said to have greatly influenced the development of Western art. He is best known as a painter and a sculptor. His most famous works include The David and the Sistine Chapel.

**Raphael:** Raphael’s work is admired for its clarity of form and ease of composition and for its visual achievement of the Neoplatonic ideal of human grandeur. He is best known for his Madonnas.



Madonna and Child by Raphael



The Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo

## Humanism

**Humanism:** Humanism is the belief that people are rational beings. This philosophy emphasized the dignity and worth of the individual. This movement originated with the study of classical culture and a group of subjects known collectively as the “studia humanitatis”, or the humanities.

## Questions

1. Name one of the influential painters of the Renaissance. What were they best known for?
2. Describe Humanism.
3. What does the word “renaissance” mean?
4. Where did the Renaissance start?