

Station #2 – Renaissance in Italy: People & Timeline of the 15th & 16th Centuries

Italy & Europe:

15th Century: The Italian City-States

Italy was divided into a large number of city states but dominated by 5 powers with considerable territorial possessions: **Florence, Venice, Milan, Naples & the Papacy** (lands controlled by the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church)

1429: Cosimo de Medici Takes Over his Father's Business

Cosimo de Medici becomes head of the bank after his father dies, using his economic power to consolidate political power. Within five years he runs the city without question.

1453: Constantinople Falls

The center of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople falls to the Ottoman Turks, provoking an exodus of Greek people and works of art and literature into the Italian city-states.

1464: Lorenzo de Medici Ascends to Power in Florence

After Cosimo's death in 1464, his son Piero rules until his death in 1469, when power falls into the hands of Lorenzo, who rules until 1491, raising Florence to its greatest heights of the Renaissance. Lorenzo is named “Lorenzo the Magnificent” for his bold leadership, as a patron of the arts, and for making Florence the envy of the Renaissance and the Western World.

1492: Rodrigo Borgia becomes Pope Alexander VI

Alexander VI is widely known as a corrupt and manipulative pope, scheming for his family's benefit. Many claim that the Papacy reaches its greatest moral decline of the Renaissance during his pontificate (rule as Pope). His illegitimate sons (Cesar Borgia, Giovanni Borgia, and Geoffre Borgia) and daughter (Lucrezia Borgia) and are infamous political and social characters in Renaissance Italy.

1494: The Medici are Ousted from Florence by Girolamo Savonarola

Savonarola (a monk), preaching a return to simple faith, leads a popular uprising against the Medici, who are forced to flee. Savonarola's rule is short-lived, and he is burned as a heretic in 1495.

1494, Charles VIII of Spain Invades Italy

Charles VIII of Spain led his army unopposed into Italy (the 1st Italian War) to assert his claim to the throne of Naples. His successor, Louis XII, brought the power of Spain into Italy by bargaining for the partition of Naples with Ferdinand of Aragon. Within a few years, the Spaniards had mastered southern Italy. During the 1st quarter of 16th Century, the Italian states tried to play off one invader against another but never succeeding in maintaining a compact alliance among themselves.

1503: Pope Julius II Assumes the Papal Throne

The ascension of Pope Julius II begins the Roman Golden Age, during which the city and Papacy both prosper. Julius II reverses the trend of moral degradation in the Papacy and takes great steps in the rebuilding of Rome. Pope Julius II was responsible for having Michelangelo paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel among other artwork from various artists of whom Julius II was a patron.

1506: Machiavelli creates an Italian Army

Machiavelli creates Florentine militia, 1st national army in Italy.

1508-11: Pope Julius II becomes the Warrior Pope

Pope Julius II forms the League of Cambrai, an anti-Venetian alliance which included Louis XII of France, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I and Ferdinand I of Spain to curb Venice's influence in northern Italy. Pope Julius II falls out with France & forms the Holy League with Venice & Aragon to drive out the French from Italy.

1512: Machiavelli fails, but succeeds in literature and political thought.

Machiavelli's soldiers fail dismally against the Spaniards; Machiavelli was removed from politics & began to vent his frustrations by writing. Shamed by the incompetence of the Italian leaders of the time, watching his proud 1st rate city state of Florence become a 2nd-rate power under domination of Spain, Machiavelli writes his infamous book "The Prince" in 1513. Often considered the most influential political book of all time, *The Prince* outlines the argument that it is better for a ruler to be feared than loved. The book is said to be about Cesar Borgia the illegitimate son of Pope Alexander VI and Machiavelli's service to him as a political and military advisor

1513: Pope Leo X Succeeds Julius II

Pope Leo X, the son of Lorenzo de Medici, continues the trend of the Golden Age, proving himself a gifted administrator and intelligent patron of the arts. Rome prospers.

1524-1535: Rome is caught in a web of alliances.

French driven out of Italy; Sack of Rome: Charles V's (Holy Roman Emperor of the German City-States) and Swiss imperial troops pillage the city, killing 4,000 inhabitants & looting art treasures, Pope Clement VII imprisoned; "the end of golden age of the Renaissance"; A new Roman Catholic leader, Pope Clement VII crowns Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor) & King of Italy - the last imperial coronation by a pope; Milan becomes a Spanish province when Charles V occupied the city & duchy on the death without issue of Francesco Sforza, gradually transforming the independent state into a vassal state in which they listen to the Holy Roman Emperor.

1570-1573: Venice fights off the invading Ottomans

Ottoman Empire attacks the important Venetian colony of Cyprus. Venetian alliance defeat the Ottoman attacks. Impoverished Venice signs peace agreement and gives Cyprus to Turkey. Plague hits Venice killing 25%

1585-1590: Rome is rebuilt

Pope Sixtus V (1585-90) institutes the reconstruction of Rome and imposed on artists a homogeneous style of figuration that reinforced the work's overall moral purpose.