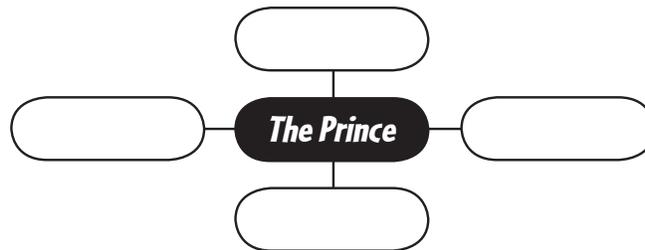


The Renaissance

Big Idea

Between 1350 and 1550, Italian intellectuals believed they had entered a new age of human achievement. As you read, use a web diagram like the one below to identify the major principles of Machiavelli's work *The Prince*.



Read to Learn

The Italian Renaissance (page 398)

Analyzing Information

What was reborn during the Renaissance?

The Italian Renaissance lasted from about 1350 to 1550. *Renaissance* means “rebirth.” It had three main characteristics. First, Italy was largely an **urban society**. In this urban society, a **secular**, or worldly, viewpoint grew. Second, the Renaissance was an age of recovery from the disasters of the plague, political instability, and the decline of Church power. There was a rebirth of interest in ancient Roman culture that affected both politics and art. Third, people in the Renaissance emphasized individual ability. The Renaissance affected the wealthy more than ordinary people, but even they could see the art that decorated the churches and public buildings.

Italy had not developed a centralized monarchical state. Instead, independent city-states played important roles in politics. Milan, Florence, and Venice had all prospered from trade. The Visconti family and then Francesco Sforza ruled Milan. Sforza conquered the city with **mercenaries**—soldiers who sold their services. Venice was a republic, but in name only. The Medici family ruled Florence except for a time when a Dominican preacher named Girolamo Savonarola took power.

Both the French and the Spanish tried to conquer Italy, fighting each other in Italy for 30 years. The Spanish under Charles I sacked Rome and left the Spanish a dominant force in Italy.



Read to Learn

Machiavelli on Power (page 401)

Comparing and Contrasting

How were Machiavelli's principles different from those stressed in the Middle Ages?

One of the most influential works on political power in the Western world was *The Prince*, written by Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli's work concerned how to get and keep political power. During the Middle Ages, many writers had stressed how a ruler should behave based on Christian principles. Machiavelli, in contrast, believed that morality had little to do with politics. He believed that human nature was basically self-centered and that since a prince acted on behalf of the state, he should not be restricted to moral principles. Machiavelli believed that a leader must do good when possible, but evil when necessary, and that the end result justifies the means of achieving it.

Renaissance Society (page 402)

Comparing and Contrasting

What were the differences in the Renaissance classes?

Renaissance society was still divided into classes, or estates. Nobles dominated society even though they made up only 2 to 3 percent of the population. The ideal noble was described in *The Book of the Courtier*, written by Baldassare Castiglione. The book said that nobles had to be born, not made. They were to have a classical education and serve their prince effectively and honestly. Castiglione's principles guided European social and political life for hundreds of years. Peasants still made up 85 to 90 percent of the total European population. Most peasants were no longer serfs. Townspeople during the Renaissance included patricians, who had wealth. Beneath them were the burghers—the shopkeepers, artisans, and guild members. Below the burghers were the workers, who earned pitiful wages, and the unemployed. Both groups lived miserable lives.

Family bonds were a source of security. Parents arranged marriages for children, paying a **dowry** to the husbands of their daughters. The father-husband was the center of the family and had absolute authority over his children until he died or formally freed them. Children became adults when their fathers went before a judge to free them. This could happen when the children were in their early teens to their late twenties.

