



* **plague** highly contagious and often fatal disease that wiped out much of Europe's population in the mid-1300s and reappeared periodically over the next three centuries; also known as the Black Death

As government authorities took greater control of hospitals, they developed a system to direct care more efficiently and to add more medical treatment. Small hospitals came into being to serve the needs of specific groups, such as people suffering from plague* or syphilis (a sexually transmitted disease). Caretakers in these facilities had more knowledge about particular diseases and were more likely to be paid than those in earlier hospitals. Patients received a complete program of care that included food, rest, exercise, herbal remedies, and sometimes new forms of treatment.

In the 1500s nonmedical hospitals also began catering to specific groups of people. Asylums provided shelter for orphans, widows, battered women, former prostitutes, and Jews converting to Christianity. Confraternities played a large role in running them, though the clergy came to dominate the field over time. Asylums used a strict discipline of work, education, and spiritual exercises to reform troubled individuals and help prepare them to reenter society. At times this discipline became a form of punishment, and some hospitals for the poor became little more than prisons.

Hospital buildings also changed during the Renaissance. The earliest hospitals had been similar in design to monasteries, with separate quarters for men and women, a common dining room, and living areas for the staff. Hospitals of the Renaissance became larger and grander, partly as a way for towns to show off their wealth. They also included classical* design elements, such as porticoes*, which were both useful and beautiful. One of the most impressive Renaissance hospitals was the Maggiore Hospital in Milan, Italy. This large facility included a complex sanitation system; storage for food, water, ice, and drugs; and separate living areas for upper-class patients. (See also **Medicine; Poverty and Charity.**)

* **classical** in the tradition of ancient Greece and Rome

* **portico** porch or walkway supported by regularly spaced columns

Humanism

Humanism was a cultural movement that promoted the study of the humanities—the languages, literature, and history of ancient Greece and Rome. Humanist scholars used the works of ancient authors as models in writing, scholarship, and all aspects of life. The movement began in Italy in the 1300s and eventually spread throughout Europe. It had a great impact on many areas of Renaissance culture, including literature, education, law, and the arts. By the mid-1600s humanism began to fade as other intellectual movements emerged. All the same, it left a lasting impression on European culture and society.

ORIGINS OF HUMANISM

The humanist movement was born in Italy. However, its roots lay partly in the work of French scholars of the late Middle Ages. Humanism blossomed in Italy as scholars became increasingly familiar with classical* texts.

* **classical** in the tradition of ancient Greece and Rome



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* **antiquity** era of the ancient Mediterranean cultures of Greece and Rome, ending around A.D. 400

* **civic** related to a city, a community, or citizens

* **faction** party or interest group within a larger group

* **medieval** referring to the Middle Ages, a period that began around A.D. 400 and ended around 1400 in Italy and 1500 in the rest of Europe

* **papacy** office and authority of the pope

* **rhetoric** art of speaking or writing effectively

* **secular** nonreligious; connected with everyday life

Early Italian Humanists. During the 1100s, Latin grammar, literature, and history were widely studied in France. French poets produced books on these subjects as well as poetry in Latin. By comparison, Italian writers showed little interest in these subjects. However, after about 1180 Italian scholars began to read Latin works and to produce Latin poems and grammar manuals of their own.

Italians took an interest in antiquity* partly because they felt a close connection to ancient Rome. Writers of the 1200s, such as Brunetto Latini of Florence, saw Rome as a good model for the Italian city-states of their time. Latini and many other writers of his day encouraged Italians to return to the Roman values of civic* harmony and cooperation. They hoped that these values would help end the power struggles between rival factions* in the city-states. To promote the ideas of ancient Rome, many scholars in northern Italy began translating Latin works into their own language. Latini translated several texts by the Roman orator CICERO.

Around the same time, Italian poets began producing Latin verses in the style of the ancients. Lovato dei Lovati (ca. 1240–1309) was one of the first Italian writers to capture the style and rhythm of classical poetry. An expert on ancient literature, he considered the Roman style to be the highest form of verse. By the early 1300s, the interest in classical style had spread to prose writing. In 1315 Alberto Mussato published a work of history and a tragic drama based on ancient examples. Gradually, authors abandoned medieval* styles and adopted classical models for other forms of writing, such as letters and speeches.

Petrarch. Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374), known as PETRARCH, was one of the most influential Italian humanists. Born in central Italy, he grew up in the French city of Avignon, home to the papacy* at the time. Petrarch trained as a lawyer, but later abandoned the field to study classical literature. Impressed by the historical sites in Rome, he held ancient Roman culture in high regard. In Petrarch's view, Roman culture had fallen into a decline after the death of the emperor Constantine in the 300s. Europe had then entered a long "dark age," from which it was just beginning to emerge. In this way, Petrarch divided history into ancient, medieval, and modern eras.

Petrarch stressed the importance of rhetoric* as a form of argument. In his view, rhetoric had the power to convince people to make positive changes in their lives. Although scholars of the Middle Ages had placed more emphasis on logic in argument, Petrarch argued that simply knowing what goodness is would not make a person better. The stirring words of a skilled orator, however, could inspire people to become good.

Petrarch was also one of the first humanists to introduce religious ideas to the movement. Early humanists had been mainly secular* in their outlook and interests. Perhaps inspired by his years in the papal seat of Avignon, Petrarch added various Christian elements to humanism. This spiritual approach held particular appeal for religious scholars in northern Europe.

The Growth of Italian Humanism. Humanism first took hold in Florence and spread from there to the rest of Italy. Coluccio SALUTATI



(1331–1406), the chancellor of the city, promoted the movement. He invited other humanists, including Poggio Bracciolini and the Greek scholar Manuel Chrysoloras, to live in Florence. This generation of intellectuals unearthed a large number of ancient texts, including works on rhetoric that became the basis of humanist education.

The growth of humanism in Florence was closely tied to the artistic Renaissance of the 1400s. Artists such as DONATELLO studied classical principles of art and imitated ancient models. Leon Battista ALBERTI wrote a landmark book, *On Painting* (1436), in which he argued that painters should study history and poetry and associate with poets and orators. Alberti's book played a key role in elevating painting from a craft to one of the liberal arts.

Humanist ideas spread rapidly throughout Italy. In the early 1400s Manuel Chrysoloras traveled to the northern province of Lombardy to teach Greek. Other scholars brought humanism to Milan, Venice, Padua, and Verona. By the mid-1400s the movement had reached Rome, where Pope NICHOLAS V actively supported humanism by hiring humanist scholars to translate Greek texts into Latin. Alfonso I, the king of Naples, also encouraged the growth of humanism. The prominent humanist Lorenzo VALLA and the poet Jacopo SANNAZARO did their most important work in Naples.

Humanist Literature and Education. Humanists wrote in a variety of literary forms, including poetry, dialogue, letters, history, and biography. One of the more popular genres* was the personal letter, an idea revived by Petrarch. Later humanists, such as Salutati, used this form frequently. Some writers produced lengthy letters in which they explored and debated ideas in detail. Others kept their letters brief and examined more complex issues in dialogues. Humanist dialogues usually featured two characters arguing different sides of an issue, such as the nature of nobility or the relative merits of pleasure and virtue.

Humanists explored many of their ideas about culture and society in works of history. Humanists broke with the medieval view of history as a steady decline from a glorious past to the present. Instead, they saw their own era as a time of revival after the long dark age that had begun with the fall of Rome. They also believed that the lives of historical figures could serve as valuable examples of virtuous behavior. As a result, they became interested in biography, a form of writing unknown during the Middle Ages.

Humanists also introduced major changes to the educational system. They rejected the medieval curriculum, which had emphasized logic, religion, and writing according to strict rules. Instead, they favored a system based on five subjects—grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy—all based on the classics of ancient Greece and Rome. They argued that all civilized people needed this kind of education because it would teach them to speak and write well and to make sound moral decisions. This view came to dominate Italian, and later European, education for hundreds of years.

* **genre** literary form



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The humanist movement began in Italy in the late Middle Ages. This detail from a painting by Domenico Ghirlandaio, painted in the late 1480s, features several famous humanists, including Marsilio Ficino and Angelo Poliziano.



SPREAD OF HUMANISM

During the 1400s humanism spread throughout Europe. Scholars in many nations learned to read Latin and Greek, and classical learning became a basic part of education. As translations of ancient works became more widely available, writers continued to apply classical ideas to the important issues of their own day.

Humanism in France. In the mid-1300s, Italian scholars at the papal court in Avignon brought humanism to France. When the papacy returned to Rome in the early 1400s, the center of French humanism shifted to the College of Navarre in Paris. Known as the “cradle of French humanism,” the school attracted scholars such as Jean de Gerson, Jean de Montreuil, and Nicolas de Clamanges. In the 1450s Guillaume Fichet introduced Italian humanism to the University of Paris. He also founded the first French printing press, which produced editions of classical works and books by Italian humanists.

French humanism reached its peak in the 1500s under Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (ca. 1460–1536) and Guillaume Budé (1467–1540). Lefèvre first gained fame through his translations and commentaries on the works of the Greek philosopher ARISTOTLE. He later became a leader among Christian humanists with his translations of the Bible. Budé wrote books on literature, Roman law and coinage, and Greek grammar. At the same time, he served as a diplomat, secretary, and cultural adviser to the French king FRANCIS I. In 1530 Budé founded the Royal College, which provided free public instruction in Greek and Hebrew. The College gradually expanded its program to cover a wide range of academic subjects.

In the late 1500s a series of civil wars broke out in France over the issue of religious rights for Protestants. Prominent French humanists spoke out on various sides of the debate over religious reform.



Meanwhile, other humanists, such as Henri Estienne, continued to focus their efforts on the critical study of classical works. Through their influence, the works of the Roman authors Seneca and Tacitus came to public attention. These authors' writings eventually replaced those of Cicero as models for European writers. French scholars also exposed many forgeries, modern works created to resemble ancient ones.

Humanism in Spain. Humanist ideas reached Spain in the early 1400s. Spanish translations of classical texts and Italian humanist works spread throughout the country. By the mid-1400s educated Spaniards began to express an interest in the country's Roman heritage. They explored historical sites in Spain and studied the works of Spanish-born classical authors.

In the 1490s, Spanish humanism began to take on a more international flavor. The leading Spanish humanist of this period was Antonio de Nebrija (1444–1522). Nebrija promoted education reforms that emphasized classical studies. He also produced Latin and Spanish grammar texts. His Spanish grammar was the first such text in a modern language.

In 1516 the throne of Spain went to Charles I, who later went on to become Holy Roman Emperor* as CHARLES V. Leading Spanish humanists, such as Juan Luis VIVES and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, helped promote the new king's political goals. In their writing they expressed support for eliminating abuses within the Roman Catholic Church, uniting the Christian world under the leadership of Spain, and converting the Turks and Moors* to Christianity. In Charles's court the ideas of the Dutch humanist Desiderius ERASMUS gained wide popularity. However, during the 1520s and 1530s some Catholic leaders came to see Erasmus as a supporter of Protestant ideas. Many of his supporters were jailed and his works were banned.

Humanism in Portugal. Humanism grew slowly in Portugal. Humanist ideas first began to have an impact there in the mid-1400s. Over the next 100 years, Portuguese monarchs such as Alfonso V, João II, Manuel I, and João III welcomed groups of humanists at the court. At the same time, Portuguese scholars studied abroad in Paris, Padua, Bologna, Louvain, and Salamanca, where they encountered humanist ideas. The Portuguese diplomat and historian Damião de Góis (1502–1574) worked closely with Erasmus and met the religious reformers Martin LUTHER and Philipp MELANCHTHON.

Humanist educational reforms, however, were slow to take root in Portugal. Not until the late 1530s did the university at Coimbra update its curriculum to place more emphasis on classical grammar and rhetoric. An independent school, known as the College of the Arts, opened in Coimbra in 1547. More than 800 students enrolled in the first year.

Beginning in the 1540s, religious forces in Portugal gradually suppressed the humanist works of Erasmus. Authorities banned his writings because they feared they would promote Protestant ideas. Eventually they banned all books in English, Flemish*, and German (the languages of Protestant Europe). Several humanists were jailed as heretics*. Under

* **Holy Roman Emperor** ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, a political body in central Europe composed of several states that existed until 1806

* **Moor** Muslim from North Africa; Moorish invaders conquered much of Spain during the Middle Ages

* **Flemish** relating to Flanders, a region along the coasts of present-day Belgium, France, and the Netherlands

* **heretic** person who rejects the doctrine of an established church



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* **Jesuit** refers to a Roman Catholic religious order founded by St. Ignatius Loyola and approved in 1540

the influence of the Jesuits*, Portuguese education became solidly Catholic.

Humanism in Germany and the Netherlands. In northern Europe, humanism developed a distinct character that emphasized scholarship, religion, and national culture. Trade with Italy first brought humanist ideas to northern Europe. In addition, the major church councils held at Constance (in Germany) and Basel (in Switzerland) brought many well-known humanists to the region in the early 1400s. These humanists included Poggio Bracciolini and Pier Paolo VERGERIO, who later returned to northern Europe as visitors.

Debates arose about the merits of humanism as schools in northern Europe considered whether to adopt it. Humanist scholars spoke out in favor of the new learning and prepared the way for its acceptance. Writers such as Erasmus, Melanchthon, and Rudolf AGRICOLA produced textbooks that eventually replaced older texts from the Middle Ages. By the mid-1550s universities in Germany and the Netherlands had firmly embraced humanist ideas.

Humanism developed a strong religious element in northern Europe. Erasmus promoted the idea of learned piety, in which the goal of studying was “to become better no less than wiser.” Both Erasmus and Melanchthon believed that a decline in learning had led to corruption in the church. In their view, a revival of sound learning would bring about a renewal of religious faith. Some people believed that humanist ideas, such as the importance of studying Scripture in its original languages, had played a role in starting the Protestant Reformation*.

* **Protestant Reformation** religious movement that began in the 1500s as a protest against certain practices of the Roman Catholic Church and eventually led to the establishment of a variety of Protestant churches

The outbreak of the THIRTY YEARS’ WAR in 1618 interrupted academic life in Germany and the Netherlands. By the time peace returned in 1648, humanism had lost much of its momentum. In the late 1600s the rise of modern science and the Baroque* movement in the arts replaced humanism as the main intellectual influences in northern Europe.

* **Baroque** artistic style of the 1600s characterized by movement, drama, and grandness of scale

Humanism in Britain. In Britain, an interest in classical ideas blossomed in the late 1400s. Several British scholars traveled to Italy to study classical languages. The arrival of printing in Britain in 1475, which made books in Latin and Greek more available, contributed to the rise of classical learning.

Sir Thomas MORE (1478–1535), who served as chancellor to the English king HENRY VIII, was the greatest early British humanist. His home became a gathering place for humanist scholars such as Erasmus, who stayed there during his first visit to England. Two prominent medical scholars—Thomas Linacre and Thomas Elyot—were also members of More’s circle. Linacre translated the works of the Greek physician GALEN into Latin (but not into English, since he did not want patients trying to diagnose themselves). Elyot, on the other hand, translated ancient medical texts into English. He also wrote on politics and education and compiled the first English dictionary of classical Latin.

English humanism reached its peak during the early 1500s under Henry VIII. After England broke away from the Roman Catholic Church in the 1530s, scholars began focusing more attention on religious ideas.



Sir Thomas More, shown here in a portrait by Hans Holbein the Younger, was a leading English humanist of the Renaissance. In addition to his scholarly work, More served as chancellor to the English king Henry VIII.



However, humanist ideas continued to influence Renaissance culture in England. During the 1600s, writers such as John MILTON and William SHAKESPEARE drew heavily on Greek and Roman history and literature in their works. British architects such as Inigo JONES used classical styles in their building designs.

Humanist ideas began to affect Scotland during the reign of James IV (1488–1513). King James, a well-educated man who spoke several languages, encouraged the founding of new universities in Scotland. He also passed a law in 1496 providing for the eldest sons of all major landowners to study Latin, law, and the arts. Throughout the 1500s and early 1600s, Renaissance humanism had an impact on Scottish education, law, religion, philosophy, literature, medicine, and astronomy.

The political turmoil of the English Civil War (1642–1648) brought an end to the British Renaissance. Even so, humanism and classical culture

**Equal Opportunity Humanism**

Although men dominated Renaissance culture, a few women became noted humanist scholars. The most famous was Isotta Nogarola of Verona, a student of Latin and Greek, who was perhaps the most learned woman of the 1400s. Another outstanding female humanist was Cassandra Fedele of Venice. In the late 1480s Queen Isabella of Spain invited the 22-year-old Fedele to join her court. However, the Venetian senate prevented Fedele from accepting the offer, claiming that the state could not afford to lose her.

remained a powerful influence in Britain. During the 1700s and 1800s architects designed new buildings in the classical style, and education focused on Latin and Greek languages and literature.

Legal Humanism. At the beginning of the Renaissance, European law was based on the ancient Roman civil law, known as the *Corpus iuris civilis*. The Roman emperor Justinian had put together this code in the 500s. The work contained many contradictions and linguistic problems that medieval legal scholars had tried to resolve through logical analysis. These scholars believed that the *Corpus* presented a set of unchanging, universal laws that were as valid for their own time as they had been for the ancient Romans. They attempted to make the laws of the *Corpus* fit the circumstances of medieval Europe.

In the 1400s humanist scholars began to challenge this approach. Italian writer Lorenzo Valla criticized the use of logical analysis in addressing the problems of the *Corpus*. Valla pointed out that judges had used many of the Latin legal terms in the work in several different ways. He claimed that inconsistencies of this sort were impossible to avoid. He also argued that the law is not a fixed set of truths, but something that changes over time. Inspired by Valla's work, the French humanist Guillaume Budé set out to interpret the difficult passages in the *Corpus*. Drawing on his knowledge of Roman history and literature, he clarified the meanings of many contradictory terms in the text.

The work of Valla, Budé, François Hotman, and others weakened the authority of Roman law in northern Europe. These writers argued that legal scholars should study the laws of many lands, not just those of ancient Rome, and select the best legal traditions as a foundation for their nations' laws. They moved away from the heavy emphasis on classical thought found in early humanism and introduced a more sophisticated method of reading and criticizing sources. (See also **Biography and Autobiography; Catholic Reformation and Counter-Reformation; Classical Antiquity; Classical Scholarship; Councils; Education; Forgeries; History, Writing of; Ideas, Spread of; Individualism; Latin Language and Literature; Man, Dignity of; Popes and Papacy; Protestant Reformation; Translation; Wars of Religion.**)

Humor

It is difficult to make generalizations about humor during the Renaissance because the kinds of things that provoked laughter varied by country, language, and social class. In all parts of Europe, however, laughter was considered an important—even essential—part of life. Scholars often quoted the words of the ancient Greek philosopher ARISTOTLE, who described man as a being capable of laughter. Scholars of drama, medicine, and rhetoric* discussed the nature of humor and laughter. In the fields of drama and fiction, the Renaissance produced some of the greatest comic writers ever.

* **rhetoric** art of speaking or writing effectively

Humor on the Stage. Comedy played a major role in both formal