

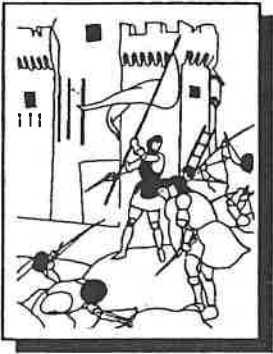
1.2A. The Black Death

What do you see? Describe the landscape. What kinds of things are people doing? What elements of the picture seem unrealistic? Realistic? What feelings does this painting evoke? What kind of story do you think the artist is trying to tell?

- In this slide we see Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting "*Triumph of Death*." This work by the Flemish master allegorically depicts the Black Death's many devastating effects on life in Europe.
- The Black Death was a catastrophic plague that spread across Europe from A.D. 1346 to 1352. The plague occurred in three forms, each caused by the bacterium *Pasteurella pestis*: pneumonic plague attacked the lungs, causing fierce coughing and sneezing fits; septicemic plague—the rarest and most deadly form—traveled in the bloodstream, causing black spots beneath the skin and eventually causing the victim to choke on his or her own blood; bubonic plague, the most common, first appeared as egg-sized swellings, called *buboes*, in the neck, armpits, and groin, before causing fever and delirium. The process that spread this deathly, painful disease started in the East and came to Europe.
- The Black Death spread to Europe through trade with the East. The plague originated in Mongolia's Gobi desert, quickly moving along the Silk Road (the Mongol Empire's trans-Asian trade route) to the shores of the Black Sea. The bacteria was carried by fleas, which lived on black rats that accompanied trade caravans across Asia. In the bustling ports of the Black Sea, Italian merchant ships took on loads of silk, porcelain, spices, and plague-infested rats, unwittingly shipping the disease to the Mediterranean. The new, broad scope of European trade facilitated the spread of the dread disease, as flea-ridden rats jumped ship in each of Europe's ports. From commercial centers, such as Marseille and Pisa, the Black Death accompanied goods to inland cities and rural towns. When the host rats died, the fleas carrying the plague found new homes on other mammals, including humans. Beginning in Sicily in A.D. 1347, the disease made a circular trip of death around Europe, reaching England in late 1348, and culminating with its arrival in Russia 6 years later. Nothing appeared to be capable of stopping its spread.
- An important factor in the spread of the Black Death was the ignorance surrounding its cause and cure. As the magnitude of the Black Death became apparent, frantic Europeans searched for its cause, falsely blaming the plague on such things as the alignment of the planets, infected clothing, God's wrath aimed at sinful humans, and Jews. To avoid the horrors of the disease, people sought out medical remedies, such as *pomanders*—oranges

stuck with cloves—or a mixture of aged molasses and chopped snake. Others thought repentance for sins would end the plague, and joined groups of religious fanatics called Flagellants, who *flagellated*, or whipped, themselves publicly with iron spikes to earn God's forgiveness. Many Flagellants and their followers massacred Jews because they believed Jews had poisoned wells in order to spread the disease. None of these actions succeeded in stemming the tide of death.

- The Black Death killed one third of Europe's population, which amounted to nearly 25 million people. Some cities, which lost more than half their citizens, were forced to bury the dead in mass graves, as Agnolo di Tura of Siena described: "Trenches were dug, very broad and deep, and into these the bodies were thrown, and covered with a little earth; and thus layer after layer until the trench was full; and then another trench begun. And I . . . with my own hands buried five of my children in a single trench; . . . And no bells rang, and nobody wept no matter what his loss, because almost everyone expected death." Fear of the disease caused people to turn against the unfortunate who became infected. In Milan, civic leaders walled up houses at the first sign of infection, enclosing sick and healthy alike. Europeans became so numb to death and hardship that the Florentine writer Boccaccio wrote: ". . . rather it was come to this, that a dead man then was of no more account than a dead goat would be today." Though the initial outbreak of the Black Death subsided after the 1350s, the plague continued to flare up in periodic waves for the next 300 years.
- The Black Death's carnage severely affected Europe's economic and social life. Initially, the massive death caused by the plague reduced demand for European goods. Farmers found no markets for wheat and other grains and were forced to diversify their crops. In place of grains, farmers produced fruit, meat, and dairy products like cheese. When Europe slowly began to recover from the plague, fewer workers were available, allowing serfs, peasants, and urban workers to demand more freedom or higher wages for their labor. When nobles and merchants attempted to return to old standards, resentment built among the working classes. In many cases the result of this rivalry was violent, culminating in peasant revolts across Europe between 1378 and 1382, in which workers rose up against the upper classes and demanded new rights. In the end, many working-class people succeeded in improving their situation. Some serfs escaped to cities, which led to the growth and importance of towns, the weakening of the manorial system, and the reduction of the power of feudal lords.



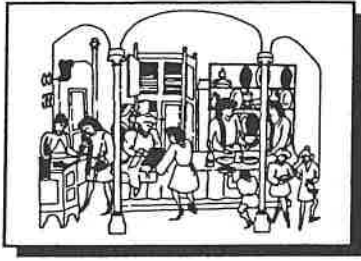
1.2B. The Hundred Years' War

What do you see here? What visual clues help you distinguish between the two armies? What is significant about the person holding the flag? What seems to be her role in the battle? Why do you think the soldiers respect this woman's leadership?

□ In this slide we see Joan of Arc leading the French forces at the seige of Orleans in 1429.

- Another development that contributed to the decline of feudalism was the Hundred Years' War (A.D. 1337–1453). This war, which actually raged off and on across the French countryside for 116 years, was the result of a dispute over the French throne between the kings of England and France. In 1328 the French monarch Charles IV died, leaving no sons behind. The throne passed to his nephew, Philip of Valois. At the same time, the king of England was Edward III, son of Charles IV's daughter Isabella. Through his mother, Edward had inherited the rich French fiefs of Poitou in the north and Aquitaine in the south, making him a vassal of the French crown. But Edward believed that as the grandson of the former French king, he had a more legitimate claim to the French throne than did Philip. In 1337 he sent a note to Philip renouncing his allegiance as a vassal to the French monarch and claiming the throne as legitimate heir to Charles IV. His act of claiming the throne began the medieval era's longest and arguably most influential war.
- For the first 90 years of the war the English armies achieved victories due to innovations in technology and strategy. French knights wore extremely heavy armor, which made them completely immobile when they were not mounted on their steeds. To counter the advantage French armor might create, the English developed a new weapon, called a *long bow*. The long bow had many advantages over the French cross bow: it had a much greater range, it could be loaded much more quickly, it fired larger arrows that could pierce thick armor, and its bow string could be removed or replaced quickly. The English also began employing cannons, which allowed them to blast holes in the heavily fortified walls of a castle or city. The English also made extensive use of foot soldiers. Armed with these new weapons, English infantrymen made French knights obsolete. The English kings took advantage of the fact that a standing army of foot soldiers recruited from the common people and paid to fight was more reliable than an army of semi-independent nobles bound only by oaths of loyalty, which in France were often broken.

- In 1429, when French fortunes had sunk to their lowest point, Joan of Arc, a young peasant woman, rose to put France on the path to victory. Joan of Arc was born in A.D. 1412, and spent the first 17 years of her life as a shepherd tending her father's flocks in the Lorraine region of eastern France. At 17, she later claimed, Joan began hearing the voices of Saints Michael, Catherine, and Marguerite, each of whom urged her to save France by defeating the English and retaking important cities like Rheims and Paris. In 1429 she traveled to deliver her message to the uncrowned king of France, Prince Charles. Doubting the veracity of her divine mission, the Prince planned to play a trick on Joan. When she appeared at court, Charles put another man on the throne, while he stood among his nobles. But Joan went directly to the Prince, knelt at his feet, and said, "I tell thee, on behalf of the Great Lord, that thou art the true heir of France and the son of the king." From that point on, Charles supported Joan. In command of an army of 4,000, Joan won her first battle at Orleans, lifting a lengthy English siege by defeating a larger enemy force. After French forces, with Joan in a suit of armor at their head, liberated Rheims, the Prince was crowned Charles VII, king of France, in that city's famous cathedral, with Joan at his side. The French fortunes had completely changed after just two years of leadership by Joan of Arc.
- Despite the fact that Joan's career ended tragically, her leadership changed the course of the war completely. In early 1431 she was captured by citizens of Burgundy, an independent region of eastern France allied with the English. The Burgundians sold her to the English, who accused her of being a witch. After a five-month trial, in which she ably defended the orthodoxy and sincerity of her faith, Joan was nonetheless found guilty of heresy. On May 30, 1431, she was burned at the stake in the main square of Rouen. Throughout her captivity, the weak Charles VII did nothing to help Joan's plight. Ironically, it was the charisma of the 19-year-old peasant woman that had not only put Charles on the throne, but had delivered France to the brink of victory. With Joan in armor and riding a war horse at the head of the troops, the French army had pushed the British out of central France and bottled them up on the Atlantic coast. By 1453, 22 years after Joan's death, France had defeated England. Joan's faith was finally vindicated centuries later when the Catholic Church made her a saint in 1922.
- Developments during the Hundred Years' War contributed to the downfall of feudalism in France and England. Because of the heroic victories won by Joan of Arc, many French people found themselves at the end of the war with a new sense of patriotism towards their king and country. Prior to the war, many French commoners had more allegiance to their local lord, and many high-ranking nobles acted practically independently of the king. Before his death in 1483, the French king Louis XI established the absolute rule that had previously eluded the French monarchs. He cemented his right to collect taxes, a practice that had expanded during the war because of the need to finance the army. He reduced the military power of the nobles by enlarging a new standing army that answered only to him. He also implemented an efficient bureaucracy, which implemented new laws regarding taxes, tolls, and commerce, all of which supported the economic prosperity of the middle class and reduced the traditional power of nobles. In England, both the crown and Parliament used the war to gain power. Losing all their French possessions allowed the English monarchs to concentrate more on the running of their country, which in turn increased their influence and prestige in domestic affairs.



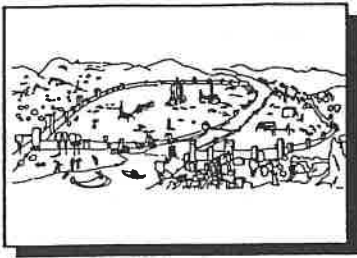
1.2C. Trade and Commerce Change Town Life

What do you see? What kinds of objects do you see in the room? What are the people doing? Who are the merchants? Who are the customers? How are the customers paying for their purchases? Why would these merchants prefer to receive coins instead of trade goods from their customers?

- **In this slide we see a fifteenth-century French manuscript depicting the exchange of goods and money in a town.**
- **Despite plagues and wars, medieval trade and manufacturing flourished as Europe renewed contact with the eastern world. Once the initial outbreak of the Black Death had subsided, the thriving commercial life based in Europe's cities and towns bounced back and resumed steady growth. The Crusades had first brought urban European merchants, especially Italian maritime traders, into contact with Asians and Africans who marketed lucrative luxury goods such as silk, spices, ivory, and porcelain.**
- **As trade expanded from Europe to the east, towns became even more important as centers for shipping and banking. Bustling ports such as Venice, Pisa, and Genoa in Italy provided the vital link between Europe's trade centers and the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, where Asian trade caravans deposited their goods. Towns situated along routes connecting southern European ports with inland cities became important commercial centers, providing services for traveling merchants. These towns also developed their own industries so as to have goods to sell to business people who passed through their region, and to sell abroad. In this way, much of western Europe underwent the initial steps to change from an agriculturally based rural society to a more commercially based urban society. The demand for luxury goods in Europe created a need for coined money, because European merchants needed precious metals such as gold and silver to trade with the East. Each kingdom, trade association, and city-state minted its own currency, using, in part, precious metals from newly discovered European mines.**
- **The proliferation of European currencies gave rise to the most lucrative of all business activities: banking. Bankers exchanged coins from one region for the currency of another at tables set up in commercial districts. The modern word bank comes from the Italian *banchi*, the name for the counter or table where early Italian money changers set up shop. The standard against which all currencies were based was the Florentine florin, which weighed "72 grains of gold." Medieval wars helped transform banking from simple coin exchange into high finance. Monarchs, nobles, popes, and city officials came to bankers for loans to finance their military needs. In turn, the destruction and cost of wars limited the power of the feudal nobles who waged them, and wealthy merchants moved into the ensuing social vacuum as a new and powerful class in medieval European society. These**

merchants made up a new class, called the *middle* class, because they were more important than the commoners but still considered less powerful than the nobles.

- Commercial activity was centered in towns because the new middle class established itself in Europe's thriving urban centers. Most towns in northern Europe were located on land originally ruled by a feudal lord. Townspeople attempted to limit the power of the feudal lord by forcing him—often with the help of the monarch—to grant them a charter. A charter outlined the rights of the townspeople, including their right to govern the town and to pay one yearly tax as opposed to many separate fees to the lord. Many town charters also gave people the right to form guilds.
- Guilds were associations of merchants, and later artisans, that governed towns by establishing wages and prices, maintaining standards of quality on goods they produced, and settling conflicts within the town. In time artisans sought greater freedom from merchants and established craft guilds. Unless an artisan was in a craft guild he or she could not produce or sell craft goods. Becoming a guild member involved a lengthy process of training, which culminated in submitting a “masterpiece” to the guild board. If the artisan's craftsmanship and character were deemed worthy, he or she was admitted into the guild. Guilds dominated the social and civic life of the towns. When guild members became sick or encountered financial difficulties, their guilds protected them. Guilds reflected the importance of Christianity in Europe during this time. Each guild adopted a patron saint for protection, and on its particular patron's feast day, the guild hosted parades and fairs in the saint's honor. Guilds also contributed money toward the building of cathedrals and city walls.
- The hierarchy of the new, urban merchant class was based on values that reflected the change in European society. In feudal times, status was based solely on one's birthright. Now, invigorated trade and bustling towns gave many people an opportunity to earn a new place in society. In the hierarchy of the middle class, one's place in society was determined by ability and wealth. These changes reflected a new belief in the worth of the individual. The opportunity to move up in society because of one's work or talent showed that Europe was entering a new age that would stress an individual's freedom over the class or role he or she was born into.



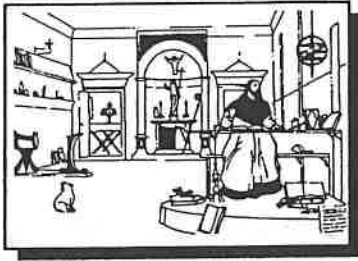
1.2D. The Growth of Italian City-States

What do you see here? Describe the geographic features that surround the city. How is the city protected? What visual clues indicate that this is a prosperous city? Why might this city be an exciting and interesting place to live?

- In this slide we see a late fifteenth-century map showing the city of Florence. The artist has depicted himself on a hill in the bottom right-hand corner of the work.
- Changing ideals brought Europe to the brink of a new era, called the *Renaissance*, a French word meaning “rebirth” that referred to the revival of contemporary arts and letters that took place in the cities of northern Italy in the 1300s. Several factors made this region the cradle of the Renaissance. Italian cities were independent from feudal monarchs and lords because of a long struggle between the popes and the Holy Roman Emperors. Both popes and emperors exhausted funds and soldiers by battling unsuccessfully for control in northern Italy. As unceasing wars drained strength from these traditional feudal powers, cities like Florence, Siena, and Venice established supremacy over the countryside surrounding their municipalities. These cities that ruled their surrounding region became known as *city-states*.
- City-states were governed by guild members. All guild members had a say in selecting the citizens elected to run city government, though a term on the governing board usually lasted only two months. In Florence, in the early 1300s, 6,000 of the estimated 50,000 people in the city were guild members. The panel of citizens selected by their peers—called the *Signoria*, in Florence—made decisions about security, trade, foreign policy, and city planning. Positions on city councils were supposed to rotate often, but in all Italian city-states, leading merchant families vied for control of the city government. Selection of civic leaders was often shrouded in intrigue and death, as exile and assassination became a regular part of Italian politics.
- The Italian city-states capitalized on the proximity of Italy to the eastern Mediterranean world to establish strong commercial ties with Byzantine and Muslim merchants. Each Italian city-state carved out a niche in the world of trade to become prosperous centers of European commerce. Some cities manufactured a product that was sought after in Europe and the East. For example, Milan concentrated on the production of metal goods and armor. Others, such as Florence, raised capital through a flourishing cloth industry and became important banking centers, in turn using their profits to buy goods in the east to market in the rest of Europe. Still others, like Venice—which was a transit port at the mouth of the transalpine passage that linked Europe and the Byzantine world—established themselves as trade centers, attracting merchants from around Europe to their markets and warehouses, which stocked Asian goods. Italian city-states converted this wealth into political power by expanding their rule to far-flung trade empires. European monarchs and nobles, who needed money to finance wars and programs of expansion, became indebted to Italian merchants from whom they sought loans.

Florence was the most important of all Italian city-states. Florentine merchants created a thriving industry in the wool and textile trade by importing wool from England and Flanders. In some 200 workshops located on the banks of the Arno river, artisans dyed and worked the fabric into rich, beautiful woolen cloth. Approximately one third of Florence's citizens worked in the cloth industry, producing close to 70,000 bolts of cloth per year in the mid-fourteenth century. Florentine merchants used profits from the wool trade to purchase luxury items like silk, linen, spices, ivory, and porcelain, which in turn were sold across Europe for high profits. Some Florentine merchants sold insurance to sea traders to protect their overseas investments. Many Florentine merchants used their profits to begin banks. Banking became the most lucrative aspect of Florentine business because of the low costs involved and because the Florentine coin, the florin, became the most respected currency in Europe.

- The most famous Florentine merchant family was the Medici. The Medici grew wealthy after the early thirteenth century, making their money buying and selling cloth and other goods. Eventually, the family rose to prominence through banking, and by the 1300s became the chief bankers for the pope. By 1430, the Medici had branches of their bank in Milan, Venice, Pisa, Rome, Avignon, Geneva, Bruges, and London. In one 5-year period, the Medici banking network profited 290,791 florins, worth more than 4 million dollars by contemporary standards. Because of the Medici clan's vast wealth, family members ruled Florence behind the scenes for three generations, starting with Cosimo de Medici I, in 1434. Even though other wealthy families, such as the Pazzi, constantly vied for power, the Medici's shrewd political tactics helped them maintain control. Despite sitting on the city's governing board for only 6 months during the 30 years he reigned, Cosimo always had great sway over the council. When he passed away, his son Piero and later his son Lorenzo would fill the same role as unnamed ruler of the city-state.
- The Medici ruled Florence during the height of the Italian Renaissance in large part because of their interest in the civic and cultural life of the city. Under their guidance, Florence maintained peace by forging treaties with Milan, Naples, and Venice. Often times, peace or war was achieved by a decision by one of the Medici; both Venice and Naples suffered military defeats after Cosimo denied them loans from the Medici bank. Lorenzo, called "The Magnificent," was an energetic, talented man—the ideal of a well-educated, cultured Renaissance gentleman. Lorenzo was a scholar, poet, composer, banker, philanthropist, patron of many arts, and a politician who was proud of Florence's republican form of government. Lorenzo gave money to the church and threw lavish festivals to which rich and poor alike were invited. Like his grandfather, Cosimo, he raised money to help finance civic projects such as the building of the enormous, beautifully domed Cathedral of St. John.
- Each Medici leader encouraged the development of the arts, becoming important patrons of painters, sculptors (such as Michelangelo), architects, and scholars. The Medici set up artists' workshops, supported young artists, and collected some of the finest works for their palaces. Under the patronage of powerful families like the Medici, the Renaissance became a time of renewed interest in the scholarship, art, and architecture of classical Greece and Rome, and a revival of public life with the participation of citizen bodies. The financial support of Italian city-states and their important families inspired a mighty upsurge in optimism, experimentation, and creativity.



1.2E. The Spirit of the Renaissance

What do you see? Describe the different objects in the room. What do you think this man does for a living? In what ways does this room show influences of ancient Greek and Roman culture? Why do you think the room is decorated the way that it is?

- **In this slide** we see a painting of a humanist in his study, probably the Cardinal Bessarion, a man who was dedicated to both scholarship and public service and was considered by people of the Renaissance to be a model humanist.
- The inspiration that fueled the Renaissance came from a rediscovery of the classical world of ancient Rome and Greece. After the crusades, Greek scholars and monks began visiting Italy to maintain ties that had been developed after crusading Europeans had renewed contact with the eastern Mediterranean world. For some time before the fourteenth century, Greek scholars had been migrating to Italy, often to escape the expansion of the Muslim world into the Hellenic world. The result of this cultural exchange was a reintroduction of classical Christian and pre-Christian thought to Italy.
- The impact of this “new” knowledge on European thought was tremendous. In the fifteenth century, Italian scholars eagerly studied Greek to be able to access information that for centuries had been “lost” from the Western perspective. Perhaps the most important document translated in the early Renaissance was a first-century treatise on education written by a Roman scholar named Quintilian. Quintilian argued that the goal of education was not simply learning or specialization, but the creation of a well-rounded, moral citizen who would use education to make society a just and better place. His view of a moral education emphasized the potential of an individual. This view became the dominant educational philosophy of the Renaissance.
- This spirit of renewal, and the presence of the knowledge and tenets of the ancients, combined to produce a new type of scholar called a *humanist*. Humanists studied the humanities—subjects concerned with humankind and culture, as opposed to science—as Quintilian had outlined them: grammar (meaning Latin and often Greek), history, rhetoric, poetry, and moral philosophy. Traditional medieval scholarship consisted of reading commentaries on ancient writers, oftentimes without ever reading any of the ancient author’s works or studying the context in which they were written. Instead, humanists wanted to study the historical works themselves to discover the contextual meaning of the author. Humanists believed this course of study would make them well-rounded individuals, better able to participate in civic government and the new urban society.

- The first great humanist was Petrarch, who was born in Florence in 1304. Petrarch's great love was the discovery of ancient texts, works forgotten during the Middle Ages. He especially prized the works of the Roman statesman Cicero—who wrote about Roman history—and the early Christian writer St. Augustine. Petrarch wrote lengthy letters to the ancient thinkers in which he copied their style and subject matter while presenting his own modern views about their ancient ideas. Petrarch's works, as well as the texts he discovered and translated, became masterpieces of the new spirit of the renaissance.
- Petrarch's work led many other scholars to study the past, which led to an outburst of cultural achievement that lasted to the seventeenth century. Architects and artists traveled to the sites of ancient Roman and Greek ruins to study their style and engineering. In the early 1400s, the Florentine sculptor Donatello began creating statues that copied the Roman ideal of the human body. Likewise, the Florentine architect Brunelleschi designed buildings, like Florence's cathedral, after studying ruins in Rome. As artists, like scholars, looked to ancient Rome and Greece for themes and ideas, and used ancient art as models for paintings and sculptures of many subjects—stories of Greek mythology, scenes from the Bible, and Church history—innovations developed, within the framework of Christianity, that stepped away from medieval styles and revolutionized painting and sculpture. Artists, scholars, and architects were attracted to the growing workshops and libraries of northern Italy, sites supported by the new wealthy merchant class of expanding city-states. With a renewed confidence and creativity, they challenged traditional thought and style, leading to innovations—such as the discovery of how to achieve perspective and the technique of oil painting—that spread across Europe in the following centuries.
- In following the example of classical Greece and Rome, the people of the Renaissance gained an intense appreciation of the individual, believing that each person could achieve great things. Like the ancients, Renaissance Italians valued public service and believed that a liberal arts education liberated human beings to lead a rewarding life. They began to view Greece and Rome as models for the kinds of activities that merchants and citizens based in urban environments were engaged in, such as political decision making. As a result, humanists, artists, and members of the upper class developed their talents to the fullest as they strove to reach the Renaissance ideal of a well-rounded person: educated, witty, artistically creative, and skilled in many fields. Becoming wealthy, famous, or learned gained new appeal. The underpinnings of the Renaissance—what some Florentines dubbed “The Age of Gold”—was the modern belief in the importance of individual achievement and ability and an emphasis on human beings in the world in which they lived, rather than the medieval focus on the afterlife.