

Introduction to the Renaissance – A Work of discovery (Solo Work).



This is due by the end of the period (You are your own timekeeper, glance at the questions, and put times you should be done with each of them -you will turn in whatever you have at the end of the period) – remember to look up every once in a while to see the Renaissance Paintings being projected – it may help with your “inspiration” (the slide show is available on Google Classroom).

On page 211 of your texts, there is a quote in the second paragraph that beings “Of course the Renaissance did not end in 1660...” Read the rest of the paragraph. What surprises me the most about this quote are the two words “Of course.” Think about it.

When we think of history – we do think of time periods & ages having a beginning and an end (and a place and participants). We like to think of history like math equations or biological classifications rather than real life events that happened, affected the world, and continued to affect the world. Remember these two quotes?

“The ancients did not know they were the ancients” - VOLTAIRE

“It’s damned hard keeping my concepts familiar to a creature of the Dark Ages. Not that one age is darker than another.” - DRAGON

Sometime we are lucky enough in our lives to have an epiphany (sometimes helped along by literature or another work of art). I remember watching Ken Burns’ *The Civil War* (an award winning documentary on PBS) and towards the end of the show the narrator showed a film clip of the last living Civil War veteran marching in a parade – and it was actually recent enough that the clip had sound – but what really amazed me (changed me) was what the narrator then said: “We are still living the Civil War.” More recently, Ken Burns’s documentary, *The Vietnam War*, proposed a similar argument – the two sides that fought over the continuation, and “justness” of that war – are still continuing that fight (most recently in the 2018 election), and that polarization (from that conflict) has never healed.



When you look at the arguments about race and reparations (giving some kind of payment back to those whose ancestors were affected by slavery) and even how we live as a society and as a nation (Red states & Blue states, and recent elections) – it becomes even clearer that those words on page 211 are far-reaching and insightful. After having read about the Renaissance, doesn’t this hold true for our own history as well?



1. What does “Renaissance” mean, literally? Find every example that you can from your introduction that shows how this definition describes what happened in England during this time period. Be specific. Include literature, music, art, society, etc. Also talk about the changes that occurred in people’s “values, beliefs, and behavior.”

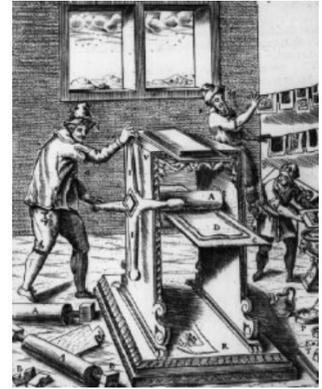
2a. Take a look at Pico della Mirandola’s *On the Dignity of Humanity* (look in your text, in the Renaissance intro). How do you believe this excerpt displays a different attitude towards man’s place in the universe from that of general middle-age philosophies concerning man and the universe? Hint: consider the title and its emphasis on **Humanity**. From your readings of *Beowulf*, your introduction to the Middle Ages, and other readings – where did most men (and women) believe that their destiny came from (sheesh – what was the name of the excerpt from *La Morte D’Arthur*)? Back up your answer with specifics from this reading, other parts of the introduction, and evidence from earlier time periods (found in your text and handouts).

2b. Now consider these lines (in the text box to the right). They were written by William Shakespeare (from *Hamlet*) during the height of the English Renaissance (also known – in England – as the Elizabeth age). How do they (specifically) echo Mirandola’s words? How do they echo the sentiments of

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!
 how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how
 express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
 in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the
 world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me,
 what is this quintessence of dust?

the Renaissance? Use at least 2 quotes from both Shakespeare and your Renaissance reading to answer the question.

3. I now want you to make a huge leap in critical thinking: how exactly did the printing press contribute to this idea of “rebirth”? Even more subtle (but no less important), what does the wide availability of printing have to do with free will? Does information itself give us knowledge – make us smarter – there is currently more information available (the internet, twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc) than ever – does that in itself make us smarter – comment specifically and insightfully. In the past few years, since the advent of the smart phone, there has been a measurable decline in the amount of time that people read as opposed to *click and skim*. Do you see this as a New Renaissance, a step backward, or somewhere in between?



4. Does the Renaissance continue (a seemingly vague, open-ended question, that in reality asks you to put together what you’ve learned on your journey through questions 1-6). Make sure you’ve read and understood the intro to this group work.

The music that you’ve been listening to (in its many forms) was written (at least the lyrics that go with the tune) by Henry VIII (whom you read about in your history, and who was also classified as a Renaissance man).

When I was a student at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. we were given an opportunity to come in close contact with some very special, very rare books. These included copies of Shakespeare’s *First Folio* (each worth 10’s of millions of dollars), original paintings of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* painted by William Blake (the Romantic poet who wrote the epigraph to *Grendel* -- we’ll be studying him later). But the book that truly grabbed (and held onto) my imagination was a small leather bound history of England from the 16th century. What made the book so remarkable was that it was inscribed (in a very childish hand) by its 12 year old owner. It said, “*No One Shall Touch this Book; For it is Mine.*” The owner was a very young prince who later became Henry VIII.

5. Your textbook gives 1660 as then end point of the Renaissance (and then explains, as we’ve talked about in the intro to this group work, that “of course [it] did not end in 1660. And yet, we have been looking at the introduction of slavery to America in 1619 – which puts it either in or close to being in the period we consider the Renaissance. How does the horror of slavery fit within this focus on the “glory of man”? Think of both *Mirandola’s* & *Shakespeare’s* words on the wonder of man and his place in our universe.

6. William Faulkner wrote that “[t]he past is never dead. It’s not even past.” Relate this quote as specifically and as thoughtfully as you can to your entire solo work. Feel free to bring in an original but pertinent example – including from recent events, of how you see this as being true (or not).

HOMEWORK:

Friday: Wyatt and Howard (132-135) Women’s Tales Extra Credit

Monday (11/25) : “*Canterbury Tales*” Animated Movie – Movie questions due.

Tuesday: - Christopher Marlowe & Raleigh (text book) 232-235 and Raleigh Handout (138-140)

Wednesday (let me know if you’re not going to be here – I will give you what we’re doing in advance). Elizabeth (handout 136-137) .

Monday (12/02) Intro to Shakespeare’s sonnets and Sonnets 29, 73, 116, 130 in your textbook – pg 223-229)

Make sure you’ve ordered and have your copies of *Macbeth*. You need the **Folger Edition**. Only get this edition – it is around 5.00 at Amazon. If there is any reason you cannot get a copy, please come see me.

