

**CHAPTER**  
**13**  
**SECTION 1**

**Section Summary**  
**THE RENAISSANCE IN ITALY**

**READING CHECK**

What was significant about the discovery of perspective?

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**VOCABULARY STRATEGY**

What does *comprehend* mean in the underlined sentence? What clues can you find in the surrounding text? Circle the words in the paragraph that could help you learn what *comprehend* means.

**READING SKILL**

**Identify Main Ideas** Identify three of the main characteristics of the Renaissance.

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A new age called the Renaissance, meaning “rebirth,” marked a great change in culture, politics, society, and economics. In Italy, it began in the 1300s and reached its peak around 1500. Instead of focusing on religion, as in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance explored the human experience. At the same time, there was a new emphasis on individual achievement. At the heart of the Renaissance was an intellectual movement called **humanism**. Renaissance humanists studied the classical culture of Greece and Rome to try to comprehend their own times. They wanted to broaden their understanding. They emphasized the **humanities**—subjects such as rhetoric, poetry, and history. Poet Francesco **Petrarch** was an early Renaissance humanist. He gathered a library of Greek and Roman manuscripts. This opened the works of Cicero, Homer, and Virgil to Western Europeans.

Italy was the birthplace of the Renaissance for many reasons. It had been the center of the Roman empire; remains of that ancient culture were all around. Rome was also the seat of the Roman Catholic Church, an important **patron** of the arts. Furthermore, Italy’s location encouraged trade with markets on the Mediterranean, in Africa, and in Europe. Trade provided the wealth that fueled the Renaissance. In Italy’s city-states, powerful merchant families, such as the Medici family of **Florence**, lent political and economic leadership and supported the arts.

Renaissance art reflected humanism. Renaissance painters returned to the realism of classical times by developing improved ways to represent humans and landscapes. For example, the discovery of **perspective** allowed artists to create realistic art and to paint scenes that appeared three-dimensional. The greatest of the Renaissance artists were **Leonardo** da Vinci, **Michelangelo**, and **Raphael**.

Some Italian writers wrote guidebooks to help ambitious people who wanted to rise in the Renaissance world. The most widely read of these was *The Book of the Courtier*, by **Baldassare Castiglione**. His ideal courtier was a well-educated, well-mannered aristocrat who mastered many fields. **Niccolò Machiavelli** wrote a guide for rulers, titled *The Prince*, on how to gain and maintain power.

**Review Questions**

1. How did the focus of study change between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance?

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2. Identify two reasons why the Renaissance began in Italy.

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