

# Renaissance and Exploration

## Purpose

Students will recognize the diverse perspectives, ideas, interests, and personalities that brought about the Renaissance in Europe; and analyze the interconnections of people, places, and events in the economic, scientific, and cultural exchanges that led to the European Renaissance and voyages of discovery.

## Materials

*For the teacher:* chalk, chalkboard

*For each student:* copy of Black Line Master (BLM) *Who's Who in the Renaissance*, access to a variety of information resources

## Activity

### A. Pre-Activity Discussion

1. Ask students to volunteer any information that they already know about the Renaissance. Write students' suggestions on the chalkboard.
2. Explain to students that after the Black Death and the dark times of the medieval period, Europe underwent what we refer to as the Renaissance. Say that *renaissance* is a French word that means rebirth, and that this period is called a rebirth because people at this time sought to rediscover the Greek and Roman interest in culture, science, and the arts.
3. Tell students that the Renaissance encouraged intellectual growth through various art forms and science and that it grew out of a desire to depend on reason and science. Suggest that the *scientific method* was devised during this time and ask students to describe the scientific method.
4. Explain that a wealthy merchant class emerged due to expanded trade and was able to fund artists, writers, and scientists in their projects. Guide students to make the connection between economic and cultural development and discuss the term *humanism*.
5. Explain to students that we still value the artistic work accomplished during the Renaissance, such as the writings of Shakespeare or the paintings of Michelangelo.
6. Tell students that many of the significant intellectual achievements that took place during the Renaissance, such as Copernicus suggesting that Earth revolved around the sun, led to other achievements, such as Galileo's development of the telescope to prove Copernicus' theory.

(continued)



INCORPORATING

### TECHNOLOGY

Have students create a Web site on which they post their written biographies and provide links to other Renaissance individuals or events who influenced, or were influenced by, their individuals.



connecting  
across the  
curriculum

### Science

Have students compare and contrast the different ways that Renaissance scientists investigated natural phenomena and discuss the relative success of each method.

**Standards Links**  
**6.1.19, 6.4.1,**  
**6.5.3, 6.5.5**

## Activity (continued)

---

7. Review several Renaissance scientific inventions (e.g., the astrolabe, the printing press). Tell students that many of these radical inventions made the age of exploration possible by improving navigation and the spread of ideas and research.
8. Review briefly the major voyages of exploration during this time. Ask students: “Would it have been possible to conduct all of these voyages of exploration during the Middle Ages? Why not?”
9. Explain that there were some parts of the Renaissance that were not as progressive, including the Inquisition and the beginning of the importation of slaves from Africa in Portugal around 1434. Ask students to consider how these events may also have influenced voyages of exploration.

### B. Who’s Who in the Renaissance







1. Give each student a copy of the BLM *Who’s Who in the Renaissance* and explain that each will design a presentation that describes the contributions of his or her chosen individual to the Renaissance, as well as how these contributions may have influenced the exploration of the New World.
2. Explain that students must consult a variety of information resources in order to complete this project and should include visual aids if appropriate (e.g., photographs of artwork, pictures of the individuals, maps, etc.).
3. Have students present their information to the class.
4. After students have delivered their presentations, discuss the interconnection of these individuals and the ways in which the discoveries and spirit of the Renaissance made voyages of exploration possible.

## Questions for Review

---

### Basic Concepts and Processes

After students have completed their presentations, ask them:

-  Why was the Renaissance possible at this specific time in history?
-  Could the Renaissance have taken place in the Middle Ages?
-  What types of individuals contributed to the Renaissance?
-  What interests and beliefs did the scientists and artists have in common?
-  Could the age of discovery have taken place without the Renaissance?
-  Explain your answer.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Who's Who in the Renaissance

**Directions: Choose one of the influential Renaissance people listed below and design a presentation about that person that answers the following questions:**

- Where was this person born? Where did this person travel?
- What were this person's ideas, achievements, and/or inventions?
- How did these ideas, achievements, and/or inventions draw from Greek and Roman culture?
- Which other Renaissance individuals influenced this person?
- Which Renaissance individuals did this person influence?
- How might this person's ideas, achievements, or inventions have contributed to the voyages of exploration?
- How would the voyages of exploration have been different if this person had not existed?

**Include any additional information that you feel is important or interesting and be sure to include visual aids (photographs, drawings, maps, etc.).**

François Rabelais  
Leonardo da Vinci  
Michelangelo Buonarroti  
Raphael  
Niccolò Machiavelli  
Sir Thomas More  
William Shakespeare  
Johannes Gutenberg  
Nicholaus Copernicus  
Galileo Galilei  
Lorenzo de' Medici  
Johannes Kepler  
Queen Elizabeth I  
Desiderius Erasmus

John Calvin  
Martin Luther  
Christopher Columbus  
El Greco  
Isabella I  
Henry the Navigator  
Henry VIII  
Erasmus  
Francis Bacon  
Cervantes  
Petrarch  
Ferdinand Magellan  
Pieter Bruegel  
Miguel de Cervantes

# Who's Who in the Renaissance

## Teacher Directions

---

Give each student a copy of the BLM *Who's Who in the Renaissance* and explain that each will design a presentation that describes the contributions of his or her chosen individual to the Renaissance, as well as how these contributions may have influenced the exploration of the New World. Explain that students must consult a variety of information resources in order to complete this project and should include visual aids if appropriate (e.g., photographs of artwork, pictures of the individuals, maps, etc.).

Have students present their information to the class. After students have delivered their presentations, discuss the interconnection of these individuals and the ways in which the discoveries and spirit of the Renaissance made voyages of exploration possible.

## Answer Key

---

Not applicable.