

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Renaissance in Europe, 1350–1600

Lesson 1 The Italian States

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can trade lead to economic prosperity and political power?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

dominate to influence or control

decline to change to a lower state or level

Content Vocabulary

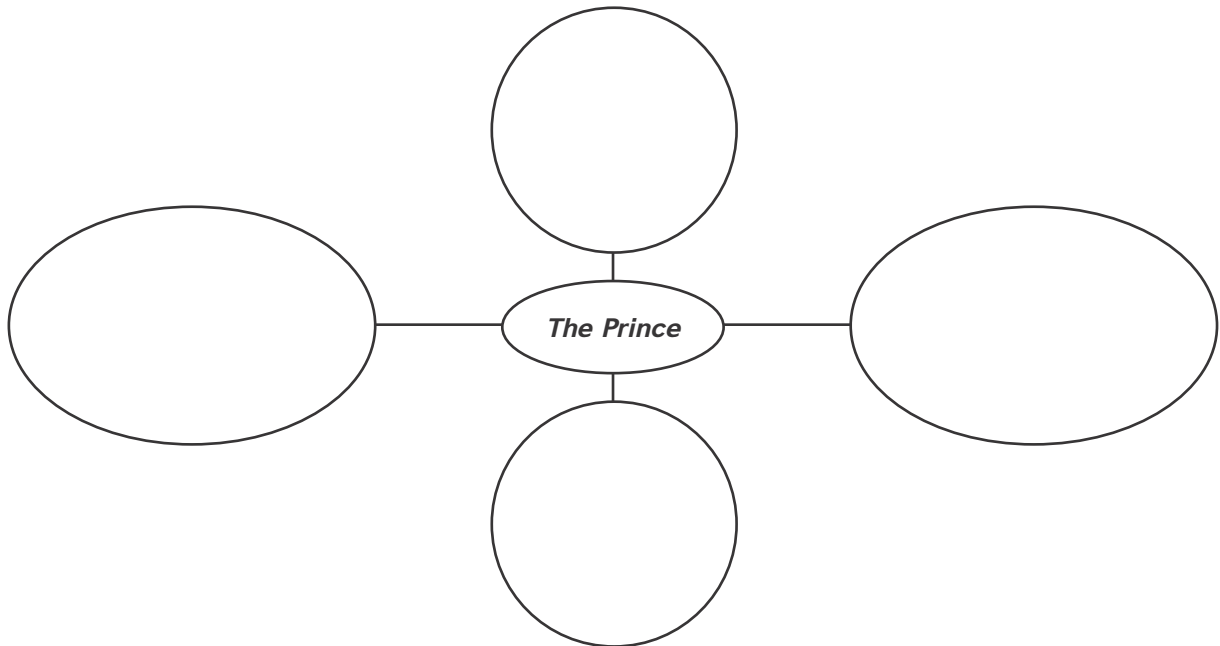
mercenary a soldier who fights primarily for pay

republic a form of government in which the leader is not a king and certain citizens have the right to vote

burgher a member of the middle class who lived in a city or town

TAKING NOTES: *Identifying*

ACTIVITY Use this graphic organizer to identify the major principles of Machiavelli's work, *The Prince*.



Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a starburst or network pattern.

The Renaissance in Europe, 1350–1600

Lesson 1 The Italian States, *continued*

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The Renaissance is the period between the Middle Ages and modern times. The Renaissance began in Italy's prosperous states. It marked the beginning of a new culture, or way of life. This new way of life was centered in cities, and it was spread by trade. People had new views, or ideas, about the world. These views centered on the human world. These new views were very different from those of the Middle Ages, which focused on religion.

The Major Italian States

Guiding Questions *What contributed (led) to the rise of the Italian states during the Renaissance? How did Machiavelli's work influence political power in the Western world?*

In the late Middle Ages, Italy had more people who lived in cities than other places in Europe did. The Italian cities were busy centers of trade. The trade helped create a new urban way of life that was full of energy and that encouraged the exchange of ideas. The ideas led to a new way of looking at the world, which is called Renaissance culture.

Italy had become rich from its successful trade that had grown during the Middle Ages. Italian cities were the leaders in starting fleets, or groups of ships that traveled together. They also led in trading with places in the eastern Mediterranean. These places included the Byzantine Empire (based in modern Turkey) and Islamic civilizations to the east. Middle Eastern goods were in high demand. This allowed Italian merchants to set up trading centers in eastern ports. There they obtained silks, sugar, and spices, which were sent back to Europe.

Italian ships also traded in the western Mediterranean and then went north to trade along the coast of the Atlantic. These ships exchanged goods with merchants in England and the Netherlands. However, goods were not the only cargo. The ideas of the Renaissance, developed in Italy, spread north along trade routes to the rest of Europe.

During the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, Italy had failed to develop a centralized monarchical state. The lack of a single strong ruler made it possible for a number of city-states in northern and central Italy to remain independent. There were many states in Italy. However, by early in the fifteenth century, five major territorial states **dominated** most of Italy. These were the city-states of Milan, Venice, and Florence, the Papal States centered on Rome, and the Kingdom of Naples. Because of their economic power, these states played important roles in Italian politics and culture.

Economics and Politics in the Major Italian States

Each of the five major states dominated the economic, political, and cultural life of its region. Milan, Venice, and Florence were located in northern Italy. Milan was one of the richest city-states in Italy. It was located at the crossroads, or meeting point, of the main trade routes from Italy north through the Alps. In the fourteenth century, members of the Visconti family made themselves the dukes of Milan. They extended their power over all of Lombardy, which is the area around Milan. The last Visconti ruler of Milan died in 1447. Then Francesco Sforza (SFAWRT-sah) conquered the city and became its duke. Sforza led a band of **mercenaries**, or soldiers who were paid to fight. The Visconti and the Sforzas built a strong central state. The Sforzas also created an efficient tax system. This system collected high revenues, or large amounts of money, for the government.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a starburst or web-like pattern.

The Renaissance in Europe, 1350–1600

Lesson 1 The Italian States, *continued*

Another major northern Italian city-state was Venice. Venice was an important commercial center. It linked Asia and Western Europe, and traders from all over the world came to Venice. Venice was a **republic**, or a government in which people chose their rulers. It had an elected leader called a *doge* (DOHJ). However, a small group of wealthy merchant-aristocrats really ran the government of Venice for their own benefit, or interests. Venice's trade empire was very profitable, and the city-state became an international power.

The republic of Florence dominated the northern Italian region of Tuscany. During the fourteenth century, a small wealthy group of merchants gained control of the Florentine government. They fought and won wars against their neighbors and established Florence as a major city-state.

In 1434, Cosimo de' Medici (MEH-duh-chee) took control of the city. Cosimo and his grandson Lorenzo de' Medici used their wealth and personal influence to dominate the city. Under the control of the Medici family, Florence became the cultural center of Italy.

As the Italian states grew wealthier, the power of the Church over them began to **decline**. Some Church doctrines were openly ignored. For example, lending money and getting more money back was considered sinful, but many Italian leaders borrowed and lent money without fear of getting in trouble.

Then in the late 1400s, Florence experienced an economic decline. Most of its economy was based on manufacturing, or making, cloth. More and more competition started to come from English and Flemish cloth makers. As a result, profits decreased, or went down.

At the same time, a Dominican preacher named Girolamo Savonarola began speaking out against the greed of the Medici family. The people of Florence were frustrated by economic events and rejected Medici rule. The people of Florence turned to Savonarola. His attacks weakened the power of the Medici. A French invasion of Italy in 1494 resulted in their exile from Florence.

Eventually the Florentines tired of Savonarola's strict regulation of gambling, horse racing, swearing, painting, music, and books. He also attacked the corruption of the Church, which angered the pope. In 1498 Savonarola was accused of heresy and sentenced to death. The Medici family returned to power in Florence.

Another major city in Renaissance Italy was Rome. Rome was located in central Italy. It was the capital of the territories known as the Papal States. The popes had gained large areas of land around Rome as early as the fourth century. The size of the Papal States and the amount of papal control over them changed many times over the centuries. These territories were officially under the control of the Catholic Church during the Renaissance, but often they had a great deal of independent power. Another major Italian city was Naples. It was the center of the Kingdom of Naples, which dominated southern Italy. It was the only one of the five major states ruled by a hereditary monarch.

The growth of monarchial states in the rest of Europe led to trouble for the Italian states. The riches of Italy attracted the French king, Charles VIII. He led an army of 30,000 men into Italy in 1494. The French occupied the Kingdom of Naples. Northern Italian states turned to the Spanish for help. The Spanish gladly agreed to send soldiers to Italy. The French and the Spanish fought in Italy for the next 30 years. They both wanted to control the region.

A turning point in this struggle came on May 5, 1527. An army that belonged to Charles I, king of Spain and ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, arrived at the gates of Rome. It included mercenaries from different countries. They had not been paid for months. Their leader encouraged the mercenary troops to attack the city.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Renaissance in Europe, 1350–1600

Lesson 1 The Italian States, *continued*

The next day the troops smashed the gates and pushed into the city. They stole everything they could and killed many people. This terrible sack of Rome in 1527 by the armies of Charles I left the Spanish a dominant force in Italy. The Italian Wars would continue for another quarter century. They did not end until 1559.

Machiavelli on Power

Political power interested the people of the Italian Renaissance a great deal. The best example of this interest is Niccolò Machiavelli (MA•keeuh•VEH•lee). His book *The Prince* is one of the most influential works on political power in the Western world.

Machiavelli's central topic in *The Prince* is how to get and how to keep political power. He dedicated his study of politics in the real world to the grandson of the great Lorenzo de' Medici. Machiavelli offered him rules on how to govern. In the Middle Ages, many people who wrote about politics had said that the duty of rulers was to follow Christian moral principles. Machiavelli disagreed with this popular idea. He believed that results, not morality, should control political decisions.

Machiavelli's point of view was that a prince must base his ideas about power on an understanding of human nature. Machiavelli believed human beings acted because of self-interest. He did not have a good opinion of human behavior. He thought that people were not thankful to others, changed their minds often, lied, avoided dangers and trouble, and wanted money above all.

For Machiavelli, moral principles should not control a prince's political activity. A prince has to do what is best for the state. A leader must do what is correct or right when this is possible but be ready to do evil when necessary. Machiavelli argued that the ends justify the means. His views have had a major influence on many political leaders. His influence on politics has continued to the present day.



Reading Progress Check

Explaining Why might Machiavelli have argued that political activity should not be restricted by moral principles?

Renaissance Society

Guiding Question *How was society characterized during the Renaissance?*

In the Middle Ages, society was divided into three social classes, or groups. The three classes were the clergy, the nobility, and the peasants and townspeople. This social order continued into the Renaissance, but over time, it began to change.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The Renaissance in Europe, 1350–1600

Lesson 1 The Italian States, *continued*

The Nobility

During the Renaissance, nobles still dominated society. They were only a small part of the population in most countries, but nobles held important political positions. For example, they often served as advisers to kings.

Nobles were expected to meet certain ideals. The characteristics, or qualities, of a perfect Renaissance noble were described in *The Book of the Courtier*. It was written by the Italian diplomat Baldassare Castiglione (kahs•teel•YOH•nay) and was published in 1528. One of the key ideals of the Renaissance was the well-developed individual. In Castiglione's thinking, this ideal was the goal of nobles, or the aristocracy. What was Castiglione's idea of a perfect noble? First, a noble must come from a noble family and must have character, grace, and talent. Second, the noble had to be a warrior as in the past, but a true noble of the Renaissance also needed a classical education and interest in the arts. Third, the noble had to follow a certain standard of conduct, or behavior.

What was the purpose of these standards, or rules? The aim of the perfect noble was to serve his prince in an effective and honest way. Castiglione wrote that a noble should earn the trust of the prince he serves. Then the noble can tell the prince when he disagrees with him or thinks that something the prince plans to do is evil or wrong. This advice from the noble will help the prince behave in an honest way. Nobles tried to follow Castiglione's principles for hundreds of years afterward, during the time that nobles still dominated European social and political life.

Peasants and Townspeople

In the Renaissance, peasants made up most of the European population. Serfdom continued to decrease with the decline of the manorial system. By 1500, more and more peasants became legally free in Western Europe.

A growing number of Europeans lived in towns and cities, particularly in Italy. The urban upper class dominated their communities. They became wealthy from trade, industry, and banking. Below them were the burghers, members of the middle class. These included shopkeepers and artisans. They also included members and masters in guilds. Below the burghers were the workers, who earned low wages, and the unemployed. Both the workers and the unemployed lived miserable lives. These two groups made up a large part of the urban population. During the late 1300s and the 1400s, urban poverty greatly increased throughout Europe. One rich merchant, who did not have sympathy for the poor, wrote that people who could not or would not work should be taken out of the city. Then the city would no longer face any problems from them.

Family and Marriage

The family bond, or link, was a source of security. Parents carefully arranged marriages (chose future spouses for their children). They used these marriages to strengthen business or family ties. In upper-class families, parents often planned the details for their children's marriages when the children were only two or three years old. The marriage contract, or agreement, included a dowry. This was an amount of money that the wife's family gave to the husband at the time of marriage.

The father-husband was at the center of the Italian family. He managed all finances. His wife had no share in his wealth. He made the decisions that determined his children's lives. The mother's chief role was to supervise the household. She was to raise her children which might include their moral education.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Renaissance in Europe, 1350–1600

Lesson 1 The Italian States, *continued*

A father had total authority over the children living under his roof. Males became adults when they left home, reached a certain age—which was different in different places—or were emancipated, freed under the law, by their fathers. A female child only became a legal adult if and when her father emancipated her.



Reading Progress Check

Contrasting How does Castiglione’s view of the responsibilities of a ruling class differ from Machiavelli’s?
