The Renaissance Essay, Research Paper

The Renaissance During the era known as the Renaissance Europe emerged from its economic troubles of the Middle Ages and experienced a time of financial growth. Also the Renaissance was an age in which artistic, social, scientific and political thought turned in new directions however. The most important changes during the Renaissance were the changes that took place in the way how people viewed themselves and their world. The Renaissance was a rebirth that occurred throughout most of Europe but the start of the Renaissance first arose in Northern Italy, this was due to Italy s prime location as an international trading center. However the changes that were associated with the Renaissance first occurred in the Italian city of Florence and continued to be more pervasive there than anywhere else in Europe. The city s economy and its writers, painters, architects and philosophers all made Florence a model of the Renaissance culture. The reason why the Republic of Florence was such a wealthy city and why it had some of the most spectacular accomplishments of the Renaissance was due to the famous Medici family. The Medici family was one of the richest families in Florence during the fourteenth century. The best known of all the Medicis was Lorenzo. The reason why he is the most famous is because he represented the Renaissance ideal. Lorenzo was a clever politician, he held Florence together during the difficult times but the more important thing about him was that he was a very generous patron. Being a patron Lorenzo financially supported arts and architecture and that how under his rule Florence excelled and became a symbol of the Renaissance. At the heart of the Italian Renaissance was an intellectual movement known as humanism. Humanism was an educational program of study based on subjects of classical culture and a philosophical outlook that focused on the individual and his or her responsibilities to self and community. Humanism focused on the worldly subjects rather than on the religious issues that had occupied medieval thinkers in Europe. Humanists also believed that education should stimulate the individuals creative powers so they returned to study humanities, which was the subject that was taught in ancient Greek and Roman schools. In humanities the main areas of study were based on grammar, poetry and history from the Greek and Roman texts. Some of the most famous humanists of the Renaissance were Giovanni Boccaccio and the most famous humanist was Francesco Petrarch. Francesco Petrarch was an early Renaissance humanist who lived in Florence and who became known as the father of humanism . Petracrh traveled all around Europe looking for ancient Greek and Roman manuscripts and texts. Before his death in 1374 Petrarch was able to assemble a library of ancient Greek and Roman literature. Petrarch was also able to influence other writers of his time through the literature that he wrote, one of his most famous writings were Sonnets to Laura . Petracrh also believed that through the study of moral philosophy the student could learn wisdom, and that through the art of speaking and writing the student could learn to communicate his knowledge to others, his work stimulated a general interest in ancient ideas. By the time of Petrarch s death in 1374, many groups of men were meeting to spread his ideas throughout Europe, this is how the early Renaissance began to spread from Florence throughout Europe.

Giovanni Boccaccio was another early Renaissance writer. He was influenced by Petrarch s literature and his love poems, before Boccaccio s death in 1375 he wrote the first Italian prose romance Filocopo . He was also responsible for other Italian written classics like the Teseide and the Decameron . The early 16th century in Europe marks a new phase of the Renaissance when it reached its most glorious expression in its paintings, sculpture, and architecture. This was called the Golden Age in Arts and is known as the High Renaissance. The three most famous artists who shaped the High Renaissance in the first part of the sixteenth century were Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Raphael Santi. These Italian artists created paintings and sculptures that would be held up as standards of excellence for centuries to come. Leonardo da Vinci was born in Florence in 1452, he is known as the greatest Italian artist of the Renaissance. He was a painter, draftsman, sculptor, and an architect who epitomized the Renaissance humanist ideal. Leonardo da Vinci s most famous works of the Renaissance were the Last Supper and Mona Lisa . Michelangelo was another Italian Renaissance sculptor, painter, architect and a poet who was also born in Florence. He had a lot of influence on the development of Western Art. Raphael was a master painter and architect of the Italian High Renaissance. He is best known for his Madonnas and Vatican in Rome . Another famous artist of the early 16th century who represented the Northern Renaissance was Albrecht Durer who raised the status of art in the North. Durer traveled to Italy to seek instruction from Italian Renaissance masters so he could spread Italian Renaissance ideas in his homeland. Because of his wide range interests which extended far beyond art he was called the German Leonardo . Even though the northern Europe did not experience the Renaissance until 1450 it still helped bring the Renaissance to its greatest height in the 1500 s. Like Italian humanists, northern European humanists scholars also stressed education and a revival of classical learning. Desiderius Erasmus was the best known humanist of the northern Europe. He used his knowledge of classical languages to produce a new Greek edition of the New Testament. Literature of the northern Europe also changed as the Renaissance was becoming more widespread. William Shakespeare symbolized the literature of the Northern Renaissance as he created plays that are still being performed around the world. One of the greatest breakthroughs during the Renaissance was the invention of the printing press. Printing presses helped to spread different types of literatures throughout Europe helping the new ideas to expand. The importance of Renaissance and its origin is due to people s desire to learn and explore and their persistence. With their help the Renaissance marked a new beginning for humanity and would bring new changes into the world. As it progressed, Europe had to face new changes and challenges such as the Reformation and the Enlightenment.(By: Stan Shmulevich aka Spetsnaz)