# Being Human

# Being Human

*An Introduction to Western Culture*

*JACQUI SHEHORN*

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# About the Book

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The Sun Never Says

Even

After

All this time

The sun never says to the earth,

"You owe

Me."

Look

What happens

With a love like that,

It lights the

Whole

Sky.

– Rumi

# Introduction to the humanities

## What makes us human?

What drives us as humans? As Robin Williams' character, John Keating says in the 1989 film, *The Dead Poets Society*, "poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for." How has a desire for beauty, love, discovery, conquest, and freedom informed our world, and more specifically, the West?

## What are the humanities?

The humanities are branches of study focused on culture, values, and other ways that humans express themselves, like literature, art, history, philosophy, and religion. The idea of the humanities originates in Greece with *paideia*, or general education beginning with the Sophists in the fifth century BCE. The goal of these studies was to prepare young men to be good and active citizens and Cicero's *humanitas*, which prepared young men to be orators.

## What is Western civilization?

Consider the assumption that is made about the notion of Western civilization. Our course, Humanities 1, is entitled, "Intro to Western Culture." "Western Culture" is generally used synonymously with "Western civilization." But are we assuming the existence of such a thing? Are there arguments to be made that these notions are unrealistic fabrications built on false assumptions? In the article entitled, "There is No Such Thing as Western Civilisation," author Kwame Anthony Appiah claims that, "The values of liberty, tolerance and rational inquiry are not the birthright of a single culture. In fact, the very notion of something called 'western culture' is a modern invention." To identify the West is to contrast it with the East, or the South, or stereotypically non-Christian countries, particular the Muslim world. Often South America is left out of the West. The West is almost always White. For our purposes, we will stretch some of these boundaries while staying within the academic confines of "Western civilization."

Perhaps the notion of the East versus West is not one you subscribe to, but historically, this differentiation is significant. The East traditionally includes Asia, while the West typically includes Europe and the Americas (and that leads a lot of places out of this equation). As the world evolved, people learned more about the East and West, and the divide became less significant. But the physical divide led to an ideological divide, a cultural divide, a

philosophical divide. For this course, we will focus on the evolution of the West, starting with Greece (which was undoubtedly influenced by north Africa and the Middle East), Europe, and then the Americas as they were explored, conquered, and inhabited. Western civilization is influenced by ancient Greek philosophy; Judeo-Christian values; the ideals of the Enlightenment, including democracy, individualism, and science. In contrast, the East has more diverse cultural and religious traditions that often emphasize the collective rather than the individual and spiritual pursuits rather than science. These are, of course, generalizations.

## Why should we study the humanities?

And why should we study them? In "What are the Humanities," Reverend Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch explains that, "The ancient command 'Know thyself' is a good starting motto in the humanities, because an effort at self-knowledge is the best and perhaps the only starting point for understanding the bewildering problem that is another human being." So the Humanities are an effort to better understand humanity.

In "Practicing the Humanities," Amanda Anderson explains the value of the Humanities and how studying the Humanities can transfer to job skills in all fields.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/westerncivilization/?p=4#oembed-1*

"Practicing the Humanities: Amanda Anderson" by TED is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

## Who should study the humanities?

Are the humanities just for liberal studies majors? What is the value of the Humanities for all students? In "Why Tech Needs the Humanities," Eric Berridge explains the role of the Humanities in providing context and teaching critical thinking.

"Why Tech Needs the Humanities: Eric Berridge" by TED is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

## What does it mean to be Americentric?

As you study the humanities, consider whether you have an Americentric point of view. To be Americentric means that you have a conscious or unconscious assumption that the United States is superior to other countries. Is there anything wrong with Western Civilization? Dr. Onkar Ghate and Yaron Brook explain what is distinct about Western culture, which is that it is pro-reason.

"Is There Anything Wrong with Western Civilization?" *YouTube*, uploaded by Ayn Rand Institute, 26 Mar. 2003.

Questions to Consider: Are the humanities just for liberal studies majors? What is the value of the Humanities for all students?

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# PART I
# BEAUTY

# 1. What is beauty?

"What is Beauty?" *YouTube,* uploaded by CNN, 16 Mar. 2018.

## What is beauty?

In 2018 CNN made a brief video tracing how women's beauty has been defined over time and how those perceptions of beauty "leave women in constant pursuit of the ideal." How have perceptions of beauty changed over time? How do those definitions apply to things beyond women's beauty? Rory Corbett addresses beauty from an interesting perspective in his essay, "What is Beauty?" in which he notes that, "beauty is not just a visual experience; it is a characteristic that provides a perceptual experience to the eye, the ear, the intellect, the aesthetic faculty, or the moral sense. It is the qualities that give pleasure, meaning or satisfaction to the senses, but in this talk I wish to concentrate on the eye, the intellect and the moral sense." What does the author mean by "the moral sense"? How does Corbett's essay expand your thinking of what beauty is?

# Art and the Aesthetic Experience

Beauty is something we perceive and respond to. It may be a response of awe and amazement, wonder and joy, or something else. It might resemble a "peak experience" or an epiphany. It might happen while watching a sunset or taking in the view from a mountaintop, for example. This is a kind of experience, an *aesthetic response that is a response to the thing's representational qualities*, whether it is man-made or natural (Silverman). The subfield of philosophy called aesthetics is devoted to the study and theory of this experience of the beautiful; in the field of psychology, aesthetics is studied in relation to the physiology and psychology of perception.

Aesthetic analysis is a careful investigation of the qualities which belong to objects and events that evoke an aesthetic response. The aesthetic response is the thoughts and feelings initiated because of the character of these qualities and the particular ways they are organized and experienced perceptually (Silverman).

The aesthetic experience that we get from the world at large is different than the art-based aesthetic experience. It is important to recognize that we are not saying that the natural wonder experience is bad or lesser than the art world experience; we are saying it is different. What is different is the constructed nature of the art experience. The art experience is a type of aesthetic experience that also includes aspects, content, and context of humanness. When something is made by a human, people know that there is some level of commonality and/or communal experience.

## Why aesthetics is only the beginning in analyzing an artwork

We are also aware that beyond sensory and formal properties, all artwork is informed by its specific time and place or the specific historical and cultural milieu it was created in (Silverman). For this reason people analyze artwork through not only aesthetics, but also, historical and cultural contexts. Think about what you bring to the viewing of a work of art. What has influenced the lens through which you analyze beauty?

# How we engage in aesthetic analysis

Often the feelings or thoughts evoked as a result of contemplating an artwork are initially based primarily upon what is actually seen in the work. The first aspects of the artwork we respond to are its sensory properties, its formal properties, and its technical properties (Silverman). Color is an example of a sensory property. Color is considered a kind of form and how form is arranged is a formal property. What medium (e.g., painting, animation, etc.) the artwork is made of is an example of a technical property. These will be discussed further in the next module. As Dr. Silverman, of California State University explains, the sequence of questions in an aesthetic analysis could be: what do we actually see? How is what is seen organized? And, what emotions and ideas are evoked as a result of what has been observed?

Adapted from "Reading- Art, Aesthetics, and Beauty" by LibreTexts. is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA.

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"What is Beauty?" *YouTube*, uploaded by Merav Richter, 16 Mar. 2.

Questions to consider: What has influenced the lens through which you analyze beauty?

# 2. Ancient Greece & the Golden Age of Athens

## Greek Dark Ages

The Greek Dark Ages (1100 BCE-750 BCE) were ushered in by a period of violence and characterized by the disruption of cultural progress. Despite the darkness, many things were evolving at this time that contribute to the power and influence Greece has had on Western Civilization, and, arguably, beauty. What threads can you identify as contributing to things we value today? How do those things contribute to what is beautiful?

## Age of Calamities

The Late Bronze Age collapse, or Age of Calamities (1200 BCE-1150 BCE), was a transition in the Aegean Region, Eastern Mediterranean, and Southwestern Asia that took place from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age. Historians believe this period was violent, sudden, and culturally disruptive. The palace economy of the Aegean Region that had characterized the Late Bronze Age was replaced after a hiatus by the isolated village cultures of the Greek

Dark Age, a period that lasted for more than 400 years. Cities like Athens continued to be occupied but with a more local sphere of influence, limited evidence of trade, and an impoverished culture, which took centuries to recover.

## Fall of the Mycenaeans

Many historians attribute the fall of the Mycenaeans, and overall Bronze Age collapse, to climatic or environmental catastrophe, combined with an invasion by the Dorians or Sea Peoples—a group of people who possibly originated from different parts of the Mediterranean like the Black Sea, though their origins remain obscure. Historians also point to the widespread availability of edged iron weapons as an exasperating factor. Despite this, no single explanation fits all available archaeological evidence in explaining the fall of the Mycenaean culture. Many large-scale revolts took place in several parts of the eastern Mediterranean during this time, and attempts to overthrow existing kingdoms were made as a result of economic and political instability by peoples already plagued with famine and hardship, which contributes to this period being referred to as the Greek Dark Ages.

## Society During the Greek Dark Ages

Greece was most likely divided into independent regions during the Greek Dark Ages according to kinship groups and the *oikoi,* or households. Excavations of Dark Age communities, such as Nichoria in the Peloponnese, have shown how a Bronze Age town was abandoned in 1150 BCE, but then reemerged as a small village cluster by 1075 BCE. Archaeological evidence suggests that only 40 families lived in Nichoria and that there was abundant farming and grazing land. Some remains appear to have been the living quarters of a chieftain. High status individuals did exist during the Dark Ages; however, their standards of living were not significantly higher than others in their village.

# Archaic Greece

The Archaic Period (800 BCE-480 BCE) saw the increasing urbanization of Greek communities, and the development of the concept of the *polis*. The Archaic period saw developments in Greek politics, economics, international relations, warfare, and culture. It also laid the groundwork for the classical period, both politically and culturally. During this time, the Greek alphabet developed, and the earliest surviving Greek literature was composed. The *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* are from this period. Monumental sculpture and red-figure pottery also developed in Greece, and in Athens, the earliest institutions of democracy were implemented.

Some written accounts of life exist from this time period in the form of poetry, law codes, inscriptions on votive offerings, and epigrams inscribed on tombs. However, thorough written histories, such as those that exist from the Greek classical period, are lacking. Historians do have access to rich archaeological evidence from this period, however, that informs understanding of Greek life during the Archaic period.

# The Rise of Classical Greece

Classical Greece was a 200-year period in Greek culture lasting from the 5$^{th}$ to the 4$^{th}$ centuries BCE. Classical Greece also had a powerful influence on the Roman Empire, and greatly influenced the foundations of Western civilization. Much of modern Western politics, artistic and scientific thought, literature, and philosophy derives from this period of Greek history.

## Rise of the City-States

The term " city-state," which is English in origin, does not fully translate the Greek term for these same entities, *polis*. *Poleis* were different from ancient city-states in that they were ruled by bodies of the citizens who lived there. Many were initially established, as in Sparta, via a network of villages, with a governance center being established in a central urban center. As notions of citizenship rose to prominence among landowners, *polis* came to embody an entire body of citizens and the term could be used to describe the populace of a place, rather than the physical location itself.

Dwellers of a *polis* were typically divided into four separate social classes, with an individual's status usually being determined at birth. Free adult men born of legitimate citizens were considered citizens with full legal and political rights, including the right to vote, be elected into office, and bear arms, with the obligation to serve in the army during wartime. The female relatives and underage children of full citizens were also considered citizens, but they had no formal political rights. They were typically represented within society by their adult male relatives.

## Athenian Democracy

Athenian democracy developed around the 5$^{th}$ century BCE, in the Greek city-state of Athens. It is the first known democracy in the world. Other Greek cities set up democracies, most following the Athenian model, but none are as well documented as Athens. Athenian democracy was a system of direct democracy, in which participating citizens voted directly on legislation and executive bills. Participation was open to adult, land-owning men, which historians estimate numbered between 30,000 and 50,000 individuals, out of a total population of approximately 250,000 to 300,000.

# Athens

## The Rise of Athens (508-448 BCE)

Prior to the rise of Athens, Sparta, a city-state with a militaristic culture, considered itself the leader of the Greeks, and enforced an hegemony. In 499 BCE, Athens sent troops to aid the Ionian Greeks of Asia Minor, who were rebelling against the Persian Empire during the Ionian Revolt. This provoked two Persian invasions of Greece, both of which were repelled under the leadership of the soldier-statesmen Miltiades and Themistocles, during the Persian Wars. In the decades that followed, the Athenians, with the help of the Spartans and other allied Greek city-states, managed to rout the Persians. These victories enabled Athens to bring most of the Aegean, and many other parts of Greece, together in the Delian League, creating an Athenian-dominated alliance from which Sparta and its allies withdrew.

### *Athenian Hegemony and the Age of Pericles*

The 5$^{th}$ century BCE was a period of Athenian political hegemony (the power of one state over another), economic growth, and cultural flourishing that is sometimes referred to as the Golden Age of Athens. The latter part of this time period is often called The Age of Pericles. After peace was made with Persia in the 5$^{th}$ century BCE, what started as an alliance of independent city-states became an Athenian empire. Athens moved to abandon the pretense of parity among its allies, and relocated the Delian League treasury from Delos to Athens, where it funded the building of the Athenian Acropolis, put half its population on the public payroll, and maintained the dominant naval power in the Greek world. With the empire's funds, military dominance, and its political fortunes as guided by statesman and orator Pericles, Athens produced some of the most influential and enduring cultural artifacts of Western tradition, during what became known as the Golden Age of Athenian democracy, or the Age of Pericles. The playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides all lived and worked in Athens during this time, as did historians Herodotus and Thucydides, the physician Hippocrates, and the philosopher Socrates.

Pericles was arguably the most prominent and influential Greek statesman, orator, and general of Athens during its Golden Age. One of his most popular reforms while in power was to allow *thetes* (Athenians without wealth) to occupy public office. Another success of his administration was the creation of the *misthophoria*, a special salary for the citizens that attended the courts as jurors. As Athens' ruler, he helped the city to prosper with a resplendent culture and democratic institutions.

## *Athenian Society*

Classical Athenian society was structured as a democratic patriarchy that strived towards egalitarian ideals.

In the Assembly of the People, Athenian citizens decided matters of state. In theory, it was composed of all the citizens of Athens; however, it is estimated that the maximum number of participants it included was 6,000. Since many citizens were incapable of exercising political rights, due to their poverty or ignorance, a number of governmental resources existed to encourage inclusivity. For example, the Athenian democracy provided the following to its population:

- Concession of salaries to public functionaries
- Help finding work for the poor
- Land grants for dispossessed villagers
- Public assistance for war widows, invalids, orphans, and indigents

In order to discourage corruption and patronage, most public offices that did not require specialized expertise were appointed by lot rather than by election. Offices were also rotated so that members could serve in all capacities in turn, in order to ensure that political functions were instituted as smoothly as possible regardless of each individual official's capacity.

## *Athenians in the Age of Pericles*

The Athenian elite lived modestly and without great luxuries compared to the elites of other ancient societies. Wealth and land ownership was not typically concentrated in the hands of a few people. In fact, 71-73% of the citizen population owned 60-65% of the land. By contrast, *thetes* occupied the lowest social class of citizens in Athens. Many held crucial roles in the Athenian navy as rowers, due to the preference of many ancient navies to rely on free men to row their galleys. During the reforms of Ephialtes and Pericles around 460-450 BCE, *thetes* were granted the right to hold public office.

Boys were educated at home until the age of seven, at which time they began formal schooling. Subjects included reading, writing, mathematics, and music, as well as physical education classes that were intended to prepare students for future military service. At the age of 18, service in the army was compulsory.

Athenian women were consigned to the care and upkeep of the family home. Athenian society was a patriarchy; men held all rights and advantages, such as access to education and power. Nonetheless, some women, known as *hetaeras*, did receive an education with the specific purpose of entertaining men, similar to the Japanese geisha tradition. *Hetaeras* were considered higher in status than other women, but lower in status than men. One famous example of a *hetaera* is Pericles' mistress, Aspasia of Miletus, who is said to have debated with prominent writers and thinkers, including Socrates.

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Adapted from "Athens" by LibreTexts, which is licensed CC BY-SA 4.0.

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Questions to consider: What do you think of when you think of Greece? What do you think life was like in Greece during the Greek Dark Ages?

# 3. Greek Art

## A shared language, religion, and culture

Ancient Greece can feel strangely familiar. From the exploits of Achilles and Odysseus, to the treatises of Aristotle, from the exacting measurements of the Parthenon to the rhythmic chaos of the Laocoön (below), ancient Greek culture has shaped our world. Thanks largely to notable archaeological sites, well-known literary sources, and the impact of Hollywood (*Clash of the Titans*, for example), this civilization is embedded in our collective consciousness—prompting visions of epic battles, erudite philosophers, gleaming white temples, and limbless nudes (we now know the sculptures—even the ones that decorated temples like the Parthenon—were brightly painted, and, of course, the fact that the figures are often missing limbs is the result of the ravages of time).



*Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros of Rhodes, Laocoön and his Sons, early first century C.E., marble, 7'10 1/2" high (Vatican Museums; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)*

Dispersed around the Mediterranean and divided into self-governing units called *poleis* or city-states, the ancient Greeks were united by a shared language, religion, and culture. Strengthening these bonds further were the so-called "Panhellenic" sanctuaries and festivals that embraced "all Greeks" and encouraged interaction, competition, and exchange (for example the Olympics, which were held at the Panhellenic sanctuary at

Olympia). Although popular modern understanding of the ancient Greek world is based on the classical art of fifth century B.C.E. Athens, it is important to recognize that Greek civilization was vast and did not develop overnight.



## The Dark Ages (c. 1100–c. 800 B.C.E.) to the Orientalizing Period (c. 700–600 B.C.E.)

Following the collapse of the Mycenaean citadels of the late Bronze Age, the Greek mainland was traditionally thought to enter a "Dark Age" that lasted from c. 1100 until c. 800 B.C.E. Not only did the complex socio-cultural system of the Mycenaeans disappear, but also its numerous achievements (i.e., metalworking, large-scale construction, writing). The discovery and continuous excavation of a site known as Lefkandi, however, drastically alters this impression. Located just north of Athens, Lefkandi has yielded an immense apsidal structure (almost fifty meters long), a massive network of graves, and two heroic burials replete with gold objects and valuable horse sacrifices. One of the most interesting artifacts, ritually buried in two separate graves, is a centaur figurine (see photos below). At fourteen inches high, the terracotta creature is composed of a equine (horse) torso made on a potter's wheel and hand-formed human limbs and features. Alluding to mythology and perhaps a particular story, this centaur embodies the cultural richness of this period.

*Centaur, c. 900 B.C.E.* *(Proto-Geometric period), terracotta, 14 inches high, the head was found in tomb 1 and the body was found in tomb 3 in the cemetery of Toumba, Lefkandi, Greece (detail of head photo: Dan Diffendale CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)*

Similar in its adoption of narrative elements is a vase-painting likely from Thebes dating to c. 730 B.C.E. (see image below). Fully ensconced in the Geometric Period (c. 800–700 B.C.E.), the imagery on the vase reflects other eighth-century artifacts, such as the *Dipylon Amphora*, with its geometric patterning and silhouetted human forms. Though simplistic, the overall scene on this vase seems to record a story. A man and woman stand beside a ship outfitted with tiers of rowers. Grasping at the stern and lifting one leg into the hull, the man turns back towards the female and takes her by the wrist.



*Late Geometric Attic spouted krater (vessel for mixing water and wine), possibly from Thebes, c. 730 B.C.E., 30.5 cm high (The British Museum, London), photo: Egisto Sani CC BY-NC-SA 2.0*

In the Orientalizing Period (700–600 B.C.E.), alongside Near Eastern motifs and animal processions, craftsmen produced more nuanced figural forms and intelligible illustrations. For example, terracotta painted plaques from the Temple of Apollo at Thermon (c. 625 B.C.E.) are some of the earliest evidence for architectural decoration in Iron Age Greece. Once ornamenting the surface of this Doric temple (most likely as metopes), the extant panels have preserved various imagery. On one plaque (see image below), a male youth strides towards the right and carries a significant attribute under his right arm—the severed head of the Gorgon Medusa (her face is visible between the right hand and right hip of the striding figure, in Greek mythology a Gorgon is a monstrous feminine creature whose appearance would turn anyone who laid eyes upon it to stone).. Not only is the painter successful here in relaying a particular story, but also the figure of Perseus shows great advancement from the previous century. The limbs are fleshy, the facial features are recognizable, and the hat and winged boots appropriately equip the hero for fast travel.



*Fragment showing Perseus with the head of Medusa likely from a metope from the Temple of Apollo at Thermon, c. 630 B.C.E., painted terracotta, 87.8 cm high (National Archaeological Museum, Athens; photo: ArchaiOptix, CC BY-SA 4.0)*

# The Archaic Period (c. 600–480/479 B.C.E.)

While Greek artisans continued to develop their individual crafts, storytelling ability, and more realistic portrayals of human figures throughout the Archaic Period, the city of Athens witnessed the rise and fall of tyrants and the introduction of democracy by the statesman Kleisthenes in the years 508 and 507 B.C.E.

Visually, the period is known for large-scale marble kouros (male youth) and kore (female youth) sculptures (see below). Showing the influence of ancient Egyptian sculpture, the kouros stands rigidly with both arms extended at the side and one leg advanced. Frequently employed as grave markers, these sculptural types displayed unabashed nudity, highlighting their complicated hairstyles and abstracted musculature (below left). The kore, on the other hand, was never nude. Not only was her form draped in layers of fabric, but she was also ornamented with jewelry and adorned with a crown. Though some have been discovered in funerary contexts, like *Phrasiklea* (below right), a vast majority were found on the Acropolis in Athens. Ritualistically buried following desecration of this sanctuary by the Persians in 480 and 479 B.C.E., dozens of korai were unearthed alongside other dedicatory artifacts. While the identities of these figures have been hotly debated in recent times, most agree that they were originally intended as votive offerings to the goddess Athena.



*Left: Anavysos (Kroisos) Kouros, c. 530 B.C.E., marble, 6' 4" (National Archaeological Museum, Athens), photo: Steven Zucker Right: Aristion of Paros, Phrasikleia Kore, c. 550 – 540 B.C.E. Parian marble with traces of pigment, 211 cm high (National Archaeological Museum, Athens), photo: Asaf Braverman CC BY-NC-SA 2.0*

# The Classical Period (480/479–323 B.C.E.)

Though experimentation in realistic movement began before the end of the Archaic Period, it was not until the Classical Period that two- and three-dimensional forms achieved proportions and postures that were naturalistic. The "Early Classical Period" (480/479–450 B.C.E.) was a period of transition when some sculptural work displayed archaizing holdovers alongside the so-called "Severe Style." As can be seen in the *Kritios Boy*, c. 480 B.C.E., the "Severe Style" features realistic anatomy, serious expressions, pouty lips, and thick eyelids. For painters, the development of perspective and multiple ground lines enriched compositions, as can be seen on the Niobid Painter's vase in the Louvre (image below).



*Niobid Painter, Niobid Krater, Attic red-figure calyx-krater, c. 460–50 B.C.E., 54 x 56 cm (Musée du Louvre, Paris; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)*

During the "High Classical Period" (450–400 B.C.E.), there was great artistic success: from the innovative structures on the Acropolis to Polykleitos' visual and cerebral manifestation of idealization in his sculpture of a young man holding a spear, the *Doryphoros* or "Canon" (image below). Concurrently, however, Athens, Sparta, and their mutual allies were embroiled in the Peloponnesian War, a bitter conflict that lasted for several decades and ended in 404 B.C.E. Despite continued military activity throughout the "Late Classical Period" (400–323 B.C.E.), artistic production and development continued apace. In addition to a new figural aesthetic in the fourth century known for its longer torsos and limbs, and smaller heads (for example, the *Apoxyomenos*), the first female nude was produced. Known as the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, c. 350 B.C.E., the sculpture pivots at the shoulders and hips

into an S-Curve and stands with her right hand over her genitals in a *pudica* (or modest Venus) pose. Exhibited in a circular temple and visible from all sides, the *Aphrodite of Knidos* became one of the most celebrated sculptures in all of antiquity.



*[Polykleitos,](#) Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer) or The Canon, c. 450–40 B.C.E., ancient Roman marble copy found in Pompeii of the lost bronze original, 211 cm (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli; photo: [Steven Zucker](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)*

# The Hellenistic Period and Beyond (323 B.C.E.–31 B.C.E.)

Following the death of Alexander the Great  in 323 B.C.E., the Greeks and their influence stretched as far east as modern India. While some pieces intentionally mimicked the Classical style of the previous period such as Eutychides' *Tyche of Antioche* (Louvre), other artists were more interested in capturing motion and emotion. For example, on the Great Altar of Zeus from Pergamon (below) expressions of agony and a confused mass of limbs convey a newfound interest in drama.

*Athena defeats Alkyoneus (detail), The Pergamon Altar,* c. 200-150 B.C.E. (Hellenistic Period), 35.64 x 33.4 meters, marble (Pergamon Museum, Berlin) *CC BY-SA 2.0*.

Architecturally, the scale of structures vastly increased, as can be seen with the Temple of Apollo at Didyma, and some complexes even terraced their surrounding landscape in order to create spectacular vistas as can be seem at the Sanctuary of Asklepios on Kos. Upon the defeat of Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E., the Ptolemaic dynasty that ruled Egypt and, simultaneously, the Hellenistic Period came to a close. With the Roman admiration of and predilection for Greek art and culture, however, Classical aesthetics and teachings continued to endure from antiquity to the modern era.

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# 4. Medieval Arts

## Intellectual life

During the 11<sup>th</sup> century, developments in philosophy and theology led to increased intellectual activity. Philosophical discourse was stimulated by the rediscovery of Aristotle and his emphasis on empiricism and rationalism. Scholars such as Peter Abelard (d. 1142) and Peter Lombard (d. 1164) introduced Aristotelian logic into theology. The late 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> century also saw the rise of cathedral schools throughout western Europe, signaling the shift of learning from monasteries to cathedrals and towns. Cathedral schools were then in turn replaced in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century by the universities established in major European cities.

Besides the universities, royal and noble courts saw the development of chivalry and the ethos of courtly love. This culture was expressed in the vernacular languages rather than Latin, and comprised poems, stories, legends and popular songs spread by troubadors, or wandering minstrels.

Among the results of the Greek and Islamic influence on this period in European history was the replacement of Roman numerals with the decimal positional number system and the invention of algebra, which allowed more advanced mathematics.

## Medieval Music

How would you describe Medieval music? Does it remind you of any modern music? If so, what? And why? Is it beautiful to you? Why or why not?

You may listen to *Puis qu'en oubli* by Machaut. Medieval music is characterized by a heavy feel created by instruments that are not widely used today.

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/westerncivilization/?p=50#oembed-1*

"[Medieval music – Puis qu'en oubli by Machaut](#)." *YouTube,* uploaded by LuminaVocalEnsemble, 30 Apr. 2010.

## Instruments

Medieval music utilized instruments that are not commonly used today. Instruments used to perform medieval music still exist but in different forms. The flute was once made of wood rather than silver or other metal and could be made as a side-blown or end-blown instrument. The recorder has more or less retained its past form. The gemshorn is similar to the recorder in having finger holes on its front, though it is actually a member of the ocarina family. One of the flute's predecessors, the pan flute, was popular in medieval times, and is possibly of Hellenic origin. This instrument's pipes were made of wood, and were graduated in length to produce different pitches.



*Illustration from a Cantigas de Santa Maria manuscript*

*Gittern* made in 1450 by Hans Oth in Nürnberg, exhibited at Wartburg Castle. Image by Wikipedia is in the *Public Domain*.

Medieval music uses many plucked string instruments like the lute, mandore, gittern and psaltery. The dulcimers, similar in structure to the psaltery and zither, were originally plucked, but became struck in the fourteenth century after the arrival of the new technology that made metal strings possible.

The bowed lyra of the Byzantine Empire was the first recorded European bowed string instrument. The Persian geographer Ibn Khurradadhbih of tenth century (d. 911) cited the Byzantine lyra, in his lexicographical discussion of instruments as a bowed instrument equivalent to the Arab rabāb and typical instrument of the Byzantines along with the *urghun* (organ), *shilyani* (probably a type of harp or lyre) and the *salandj* (probably a bagpipe). The hurdy-gurdy was (and still is) a mechanical violin using a rosined wooden wheel attached to a crank to "bow" its strings. Instruments without sound boxes like the jaw harp were also popular in the time. Early versions of the organ, fiddle (or vielle), and trombone (called the sackbut) existed.

Medieval music was both sacred and secular. During the earlier medieval period, the liturgical genre, predominantly Gregorian chant, was monophonic. Polyphonic genres began to develop during the high medieval era, becoming prevalent by the later thirteenth and early fourteenth century. The development of such forms is often associated with the Ars nova.

During the Renaissance, the Italian secular genre of the madrigal also became popular. The madrigal form gave rise to canons. These were three-part secular pieces, which featured the two higher voices in canon, with an underlying instrumental long-note accompaniment.

Finally, purely instrumental music also developed during this period, both in the context of a growing theatrical tradition and for court consumption. Dance music, often improvised around familiar tropes, was the largest purely instrumental genre.

# Theory and Notation

During the Medieval period the foundation was laid for the notational (written) and theoretical practices that would shape western music into what it is today. The most obvious of these is the development of a comprehensive notational system; however the theoretical advances, particularly in regard to rhythm and polyphony, are equally important to the development of western music.
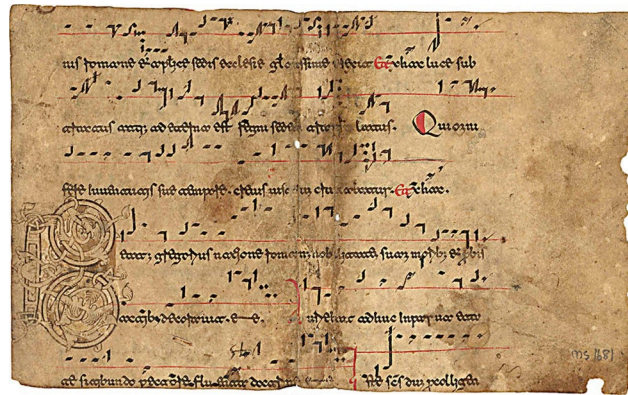


*Beneventan music notation, second half of twelfth century. Image by Wikipedia is in the Public Domain.*

## Gothic Art and Architecture

Gothic art developed after the Romanesque, so named by 19th century historians to identify the period following the Romans, during which many characteristics carried over, in the 12th century. The style continued to be used well into the 16th century in some parts of Europe, while giving way to the Renaissance style earlier in other regions. The style was developed in Northern France due to socioeconomic, political, and theological reasons.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, people fled cities as they were no longer safe. The Romanesque era saw many people living in the countryside of France while cities remained largely abandoned. During this time period, the French monarchy was weak and feudal landowners exerted a large amount of regional power. In the 12th century, the French royalty strengthened their power, their titles, and their landholdings, which led to more centralized government. Additionally, due to advancements in agriculture, population and trade increased. These changes brought people back to the cities, which is where the most iconic representation of Gothic style is evident in cathedrals.

## Gothic Architecture

Ratios became essential to French Gothic cathedrals because they expressed the perfection of the universe created by God. This is where stained glass emerges in Gothic architecture. Abbot Suger adopted the idea that light equates to God. He wrote that he placed pictures in the glass to replace wall paintings and talked about them as educational devices. A form of visual media for the uneducated masses, the windows were instructional in theology during the Gothic era, and the light itself was a metaphor for the presence of God. This practice is still evident in some churches today.



*St Denis Chorumgang by Beckstet is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

## Gothic Painting

Illuminated manuscripts provide excellent examples of Gothic painting. A prayer book, known as the book of hours, became increasingly popular during the Gothic age and was treated as a luxury item.

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Questions to Consider: How would you describe Medieval music? Does it remind you of any modern music? If so, what? And why? Is it beautiful to you? Why or why not?

# 5. The Baroque in Spain

## The Baroque in Spain

### Spain and the Time of Discovery

It is not possible to focus on modern western civilization without considering the Americas and what contributed to their development and growth. Because geography separates Spain and Portugal from the rest of Europe, their development in terms of politics and religion, in particular, was distinct and are often described separately from the rest of Europe, though we can see common threads. As you read, consider what is familiar and what is new. What, if anything, might you consider beautiful about what is described here? How is the movement of people and the impact on cultures and beliefs both beautiful and often difficult?

### The Iberian Peninsula

A clear understanding of the Americas would be impossible without first looking at the Iberian Peninsula. The people, social customs, religious practices, laws, and cultural beliefs of the civilizations which formed on the American continent after the turn of the 16th century were based in European models. During the bicentennial of 1992 scholars suggested that the New World was not new, and that the Americas were not "discovered" at all but that "conquered" is a better word to describe the process. Rethinking the terminology that has been used to describe the merging of two dissimilar worlds. To complicate matters even more, most English-speaking children in the United States have been taught American history from an Anglo-centric point of view. Students were taught that the Spanish Inquisition was a vile and horrific period of history, though they rarely hear of Mary Tudor's measures against Protestants in England, Elizabeth's burning of dissenters, or the witch hunts of England or Germany. English history is carefully taught, while Spanish history is often ignored.

## Geographic Isolation

Geography isolated Spaniards and Portuguese from the rest of Europe. The Pyrenees interrupted the flow of men and ideas between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe. On the other hand, Africa was only twelve miles away across the Strait of Gibraltar. This encouraged easy intercourse with the south, and the Iberian Peninsula became historically and socially an African outpost on European soil. The soil and climate of Spain and Portugal were very poor. Five rivers cut the land into sections and fostered regionalism. Mountain ranges also block rain-bearing clouds with the result that the central plateau is a windswept and treeless plain blistered in the summer and icy in the winter. The well-watered and temperate mountainous areas of the north and northeast offer only meager valleys for cultivation. The Mediterranean coast has good soil and a subtropical climate which produces olives, oranges, rice and sugar. The land is poor for the farmer and required sharing the water rights.



*Map of Spain from 1212 to 1492. University of Texas Libraries, Austin*

# The Muslim Influence



*Great Mosque of Córdoba from the air, Córdoba, Spain, begun 786 and enlarged during the 9th and 10th centuries, (photo: Toni Castillo Quero, CC BY-SA 2.0)*

In the year 711 Muslims from Africa conquered and occupied most of the peninsula. These people exerted a profound influence on cultural and economic life, and maintained their hold over a gradually reduced share of the region until their final defeat in 1492. Muslim rule was tolerant in comparison to the Christians throughout the rest of Europe as well as Spain once it was unified under Ferdinand and Isabella. The Christians who had fled to the northern mountains were invited to return, promised security of person and property, and assured full freedom of worship. The Muslims were content with the special but not exorbitant tax imposed upon Christians. Many Christians returned to their homes and lived peaceably with their Muslim neighbors; they were called Mozarabs, "Arabized folk." However, many Muslims lived unmolested in Christian communities and were called Mudejares. The numerous Jews went about their business without interference. Reconquest by Christian forces occurred between 1031 and the final expulsion in 1492.

*Francisco Pradilla y Ortiz, The Capitulation of Granada. Boabdil delivers Granada to Ferdinand II and Isabella, 1882, Palace of the Senate, Spain.*

## Ferdinand and Isabella

In 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella, each powerful rulers in their own right, were united in marriage. It was from this point on that Spain became recognizable as a nation. Under the rule of these monarchs Spain entered what we call its "golden age." They lessened the power of the nobles in order to consolidate royal rule. Commerce and industry increased. Pilgrims to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela brought new ideas and skills from France. The large ports of Seville, Valencia, and Barcelona attracted the trade of the Mediterranean world. The guilds increased their power as they were given the right to appoint members to the city councils or in some cases to influence decisions made by them. The church built great cathedrals, churches, and religious houses and gathered large endowments for their support. The clergy grew powerful and their privileges were increased. The church became a major landholder, and was an example in new farming techniques.

## The Inquisition

The Inquisition was also established during this period. Religious tolerance which had been a unifying factor for centuries was eliminated. Muslims and Jews were told to leave Spain or convert to Catholicism. It is likely that Christopher Columbus shared the harbor with

shiploads of Jewish immigrants who were being expelled from the newly Christianized areas. The Inquisition was determined to inquire after the personal morals and beliefs of individuals and to keep watch over these new converts.

## Charles I

When Isabella died in 1504, her daughter Juana "the Mad" came to the throne. Her uncertain mental state made it necessary for her father, still king of Aragon, to act as regent of Castile. Juana's husband died after only a year, and Ferdinand controlled the throne until 1516 when Juana's son Charles was crowned Charles I of united Spain. He was then elected Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. By the time he was 19 he was the nominal ruler, either through direct inheritance or through his imperial title, of much of Europe. In 1506, on his father's death he inherited the Netherlands. In 1516, on Ferdinand's death he inherited Spain, Naples, Sicily, and the Spanish colonies in the Americas. In 1519, on the death of Maximillian, he inherited Austria, and South Germany. Charles retained the throne until 1556 when he abdicated and gave his throne to his son, Philip II.

## Philip II

*Titian, Philip II of Spain, ca 1549, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, oil on canvas.*

Philip ruled for 42 years (1556-1598). Under his rule Spain found national unity and consolidated her hold upon the American empire. Philip was an admirer and example of Spanish virtues of personal dignity, sobriety, frugality in daily living, and religious devotion. He had a determination that justice should be done to the poor, a love of music and books, a capacity for unremitting toil. His acceptance of the principle of the divine right of kings was equated with the duty to do everything himself. All decisions, large and small, were made by Philip. There was a huge accumulation of paperwork, and a castle was set aside to house it. He read every dispatch from the remotest part of the kingdom. His officials called him the paper king. His determination to run the government on absolute bureaucratic lines required the construction of a royal palace where the nobility could be supervised. The greater nobility were expected to build houses and live in Madrid, the lesser nobles were to be housed by the people. Elaborate court ceremonies kept nobles busy leaving no time to plot against the king.

With the Muslims and Jews expelled from Spain, Philip concentrated on the new threat, the "Protestant infection." Philip responded to the problem by intensifying the attack of the Inquisition against all who deviated from Catholic doctrine and by zealous spiritual reform within the church itself. The inquisitor general sought heresy among the Spanish nobility and the clergy. The discovery of Protestants set off waves of burning. All Spaniards were forbidden to study at foreign universities. Spanish Catholicism, in Philip's mind, had to remain pure and unsullied by even the less pure faith of other Catholic countries.

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# 6. The Renaissance

The Renaissance is a very important time period that you should become familiar with. Think about what characteristics you can connect to this time period. What is beautiful?

The Renaissance was a period in Europe, from the 14th to the 17th century (that's a span of around 300 years! Think about the last 300 years and how it might be identified and studied in the future), regarded as the cultural bridge between the Middle Ages and modern history. It started as a cultural movement in Italy, specifically in Florence, in the late medieval period and later spread to the rest of Europe, marking the beginning of the early modern age.

The intellectual basis of the Renaissance was derived from the rediscovery of classical Greek philosophy, such as that of Protagoras, who said that "Man is the measure of all things," which is a version of humanism. This new thinking became manifest in art, architecture, politics, science, and literature. Greek statuary was revived by Renaissance artists, as well. Though availability of paper and the invention of metal movable type sped the dissemination of ideas from the later 15th century, the changes of the Renaissance were not uniformly experienced across Europe.

## Cultural, Political, and Intellectual Influences

As a cultural movement, the Renaissance encompassed the innovative flowering of Latin and vernacular literatures, beginning with the 14th-century resurgence of learning based on classical sources, which contemporaries credited to Petrarch; the development of linear perspective and other techniques of rendering a more natural reality in painting; and gradual but widespread educational reform.

In politics, the Renaissance contributed the development of the conventions of diplomacy, and in science an increased reliance on observation. Although the Renaissance saw revolutions in many intellectual pursuits, as well as social and political upheaval, it is perhaps best known for its artistic developments and the contributions of such polymaths as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, who inspired the term "Renaissance man."
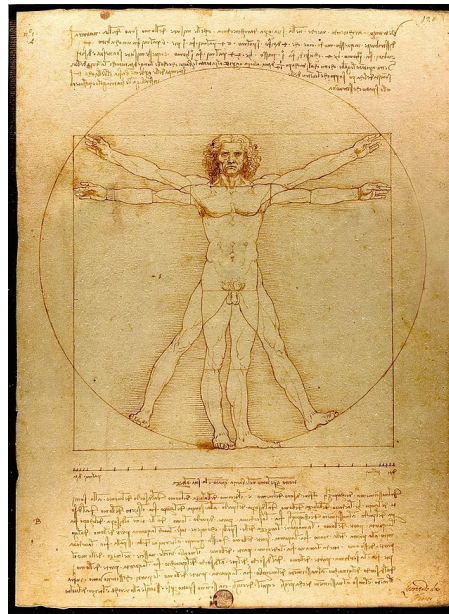
*Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man*

# Beginnings

Various theories have been proposed to account for the origins and characteristics of the Renaissance, focusing on a variety of factors, including the social and civic characteristics of Florence at the time; its political structure; the patronage of its dominant family, the Medici; and the migration of Greek scholars and texts to Italy following the Fall of Constantinople at the hands of the Ottoman Turks.

Many argue that the ideas characterizing the Renaissance had their origin in late 13th-century Florence, in particular in the writings of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) and Petrarch (1304–1374), as well as the paintings of Giotto di Bondone (1267–1337). Some writers date the Renaissance quite precisely, while others see more general competition between many artists and thinkers of the time. Yet it remains much debated why the Renaissance began in Italy.

# Historical Perspectives on the Renaissance

The Renaissance has a long and complex historiography, and there has been much debate among historians reacting to the 19th-century glorification of the Renaissance and individual culture heroes as "Renaissance men," questioning the usefulness of "Renaissance" as a term and as a historical delineation.

Some observers have called into question whether the Renaissance was a cultural advance from the Middle Ages, seeing it instead as a period of pessimism and nostalgia for classical antiquity, while social and economic historians.

The word "Renaissance," whose literal translation from French into English is "Rebirth," appears in English writing from the 1830s. The word occurs in Jules Michelet's 1855 work, *Histoire de France*. The word "Renaissance" has also been extended to other historical and cultural movements, such as the Carolingian Renaissance, the Renaissance of the 12th century, and the Harlem Renaissance.

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## Italian Trade Cities

Italian city-states trading during the late Middle Ages set the stage for the Renaissance by moving resources, culture, and knowledge from the East. Without the rapid increase in trade and thereby wealth in these cities, much of the great art of the Renaissance may not have been created.

## Prosperous City-States

During the late Middle Ages, Northern and Central Italy became far more prosperous than the south of Italy, with the city-states, such as Venice and Genoa, among the wealthiest in Europe. The Crusades had built lasting trade links to the Levant, and the Fourth Crusade had done much to destroy the Byzantine Roman Empire as a commercial rival to the Venetians and Genoese.

The main trade routes from the east passed through the Byzantine Empire or the Arab lands and onwards to the ports of Genoa, Pisa, and Venice. Luxury goods bought in the Levant, such as spices, dyes, and silks, were imported to Italy and then resold throughout

Europe. Moreover, the inland city-states profited from the rich agricultural land of the Po valley. The extensive trade that stretched from Egypt to the Baltic generated substantial surpluses that allowed significant investment in mining and agriculture.

Thus, while Northern Italy was not richer in resources than many other parts of Europe, the level of development, stimulated by trade, allowed it to prosper. In particular, Florence became one of the wealthiest cities in Northern Italy, due mainly to its woolen textile production, developed under the supervision of its dominant trade guild, the *Arte della Lana*. Wool was imported from Northern Europe (and in the 16th century from Spain), and together with dyes from the east was used to make high quality textiles.

## Revitalizing Trade Routes

In the 13th century, much of Europe experienced strong economic growth. The trade routes of the Italian states linked with those of established Mediterranean ports, and eventually the Hanseatic League of the Baltic and northern regions of Europe, to create a network economy in Europe for the first time since the 4th century. The city-states of Italy expanded greatly during this period, and grew in power to become de facto fully independent of the Holy Roman Empire; apart from the Kingdom of Naples, outside powers kept their armies out of Italy. During this period, the modern commercial infrastructure developed, with double-entry bookkeeping, joint stock companies, an international banking system, a systematized foreign exchange market, insurance, and government debt. Florence became the center of this financial industry, and the gold florin became the main currency of international trade.

While Roman sensibilities persisted, there were many movements and changes as a result. Italy first felt the changes in Europe from the 11th to the 13th centuries. Typically there was a rise in population; the population doubled in this period (the demographic explosion). An emergence of huge cities occurred during this period; Venice, Florence, and Milan had over 100,000 inhabitants by the 13th century, and many others, such as Genoa, Bologna, and Verona, had over 50,000). Many great cathedrals were rebuilt. Substantial migration from country to city (in Italy the rate of urbanization reached 20%, making it the most urbanized society in the world at that time) occurred with an agrarian revolution and a development of commerce. The decline of feudalism and the rise of cities influenced each other; for example, the demand for luxury goods led to an increase in trade, which led to greater numbers of tradesmen becoming wealthy, who, in turn, demanded more luxury goods.

# The Transfer of Culture and Knowledge

The Italian trade routes that covered the Mediterranean and beyond were also major conduits of culture and knowledge. The recovery of lost Greek texts, which had been preserved by Arab scholars, following the Crusader conquest of the Byzantine heartlands revitalized medieval philosophy in the Renaissance of the 12th century. Additionally, Byzantine scholars migrated to Italy during and following the Ottoman conquest of the Byzantines between the 12th and 15th centuries, and were important in sparking the new linguistic studies of the Renaissance, in newly created academies in Florence and Venice. Humanist scholars searched monastic libraries for ancient manuscripts and recovered Tacitus and other Latin authors. The rediscovery of Vitruvius meant that the architectural principles of Antiquity could be observed once more, and Renaissance artists were encouraged, in the atmosphere of humanist optimism, to excel the achievements of the Ancients, like Apelles, of whom they read. Think about how all of these influences manifested.

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# The Rise of the Merchant Class

In contrast, Northern and Central Italy had become far more prosperous, and it has been calculated that the region was among the richest in Europe. The new mercantile governing class, who gained their position through financial skill, adapted to their purposes the feudal aristocratic model that had dominated Europe in the Middle Ages. A feature of the High Middle Ages in Northern Italy was the rise of the urban communes, which had broken from the control of bishops and local counts. In much of the region, the landed nobility was poorer than the urban patriarchs in the high medieval money economy, whose inflationary rise left land-holding aristocrats impoverished. The increase in trade during the early Renaissance enhanced these characteristics.

This change also gave the merchants almost complete control of the governments of the Italian city-states, again enhancing trade. One of the most important effects of this political control was security. Those that grew extremely wealthy in a feudal state ran constant risk of running afoul of the monarchy and having their lands confiscated. The northern states also kept many medieval laws that severely hampered commerce.

The 14th century saw a series of catastrophes that caused the European economy to go into recession, including the Hundred Years' War, the Black Death, and numerous famines. It was during this period of instability that the Renaissance authors such as Dante and Petrarch lived, and the first stirrings of Renaissance art were to be seen. Paradoxically,

some of these disasters would help establish the Renaissance. The Black Death wiped out a third of Europe's population. The resulting labor shortage increased wages, and the reduced population was therefore much wealthier and better fed, and, significantly, had more surplus money to spend on luxury goods. As incidences of the plague began to decline in the early 15th century, Europe's devastated population once again began to grow. The new demand for products and services also helped create a growing class of bankers, merchants, and skilled artisans.

## The Medici Family



*Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici*

The House of Medici was an Italian banking family, political dynasty, and later royal house that first began to gather prominence under Cosimo de' Medici in the Republic of Florence during the first half of the 15th century. The family originated in the Mugello region of the Tuscan countryside, gradually rising until they were able to fund the Medici Bank. The bank was the largest in Europe during the 15th century, which helped the Medici gain political power in Florence—though officially they remained citizens rather than monarchs. The biggest accomplishments of the Medici were in the sponsorship of art and architecture, mainly early and High Renaissance art and architecture. The Medici were responsible for the majority of Florentine art during their reign.

The Medici Bank was one of the most prosperous and most respected institutions in Europe. There are some estimates that the Medici family were the wealthiest family in Europe for a time. From this base, they acquired political power initially in Florence and later in wider Italy and Europe. A notable contribution to the profession of accounting was the improvement of the general ledger system through the development of the double-entry bookkeeping system for tracking credits and debits. The Medici family were among the earliest businesses to use the system.

# The Church During the Italian Renaissance

The new Humanist ideals of the Renaissance, although more secular in many aspects, developed against a Christian backdrop, and the church patronized many works of Renaissance art.

The city of Rome, the papacy, and the Papal States were all affected by the Renaissance. On the one hand, it was a time of great artistic patronage and architectural magnificence, when the church pardoned and even sponsored such artists as Michelangelo, Brunelleschi, Bramante, Raphael, Fra Angelico, Donatello, and da Vinci. On the other hand, wealthy Italian families often secured episcopal offices, including the papacy, for their own members, some of whom were known for immorality.In the revival of neo-Platonism and other ancient philosophies, Renaissance Humanists did not reject Christianity; quite to the contrary, many of the greatest works of the Renaissance were devoted to it, and the church patronized many works of Renaissance art. The new ideals of Humanism, although more secular in some aspects, developed against a Christian backdrop, especially in the Northern Renaissance. In turn, the Renaissance had a profound effect on contemporary theology, particularly in the way people perceived the relationship between man and God.



*[Michelangelo's Pietà in St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City](#) by [Wikimedia Commons](#) is licensed [CC BY 2.5](#)*

From 1505 to 1626, St. Peter's Basilica, perhaps the most recognized Christian church, was built on the site of the old Constantinian basilica in Rome. This was a time of increased contact with Greek culture, opening up new avenues of learning, especially in the fields of philosophy, poetry, classics, rhetoric, and political science, fostering a spirit of Humanism–all of which would influence the church.

## Counter-Reformation

The Counter-Reformation, also called the Catholic Reformation or the Catholic Revival, was the period of Catholic resurgence initiated in response to the Protestant Reformation, beginning with the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and ending at the close of the Thirty Years' War (1648). The Counter-Reformation was a comprehensive effort composed of four major elements—ecclesiastical or structural reconfigurations, new religious orders (such as the Jesuits), spiritual movements, and political reform.

Such reforms included the foundation of seminaries for the proper training of priests in the spiritual life and the theological traditions of the church, the reform of religious life by returning orders to their spiritual foundations, and new spiritual movements focusing on the devotional life and a personal relationship with Christ, including the Spanish mystics and the French school of spirituality. It also involved political activities that included the Roman Inquisition. One primary emphasis of the Counter-Reformation was a mission to reach parts of the world that had been colonized as predominantly Catholic, and also try to reconvert areas, such as Sweden and England, that were at one time Catholic but had been Protestantized during the Reformation.

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*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/westerncivilization/?p=55#oembed-1*

"The Renaissance: Was It a Thing? – Crash Course World History #22." *YouTube*, uploaded by CrashCourse, 21 June 2012.

Question to Consider: Thinking about how you define beauty, consider whether the *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper* are beautiful by that definition.

# 7. Art in the Renaissance

## Art in the Renaissance

The art of the Renaissance has had a profound impact on the art that has followed. Many of the artists that people are most familiar with today, as well as much of the art, are from this time period. Focus on each artist. What was their style? What important works did they create? Is it beautiful? What inspired them? What do those works say about the society in which they were created? Who are the subjects? What is included in the background? While much of the work has religious themes, other glimpses into perceptions of humanity are apparent. What do you see?

## The Italian Renaissance

The art of the Italian Renaissance was influential throughout Europe for centuries. The Renaissance began during the 14th century and remained the dominate style in Italy, and in much of Europe, until the 16th century. The term "renaissance" was developed during the 19th century in order to describe this period of time and its accompanying artistic style. However, people who were living during the Renaissance did see themselves as different from their Medieval predecessors. Through a variety of texts that survive, we know that people living during the Renaissance saw themselves as different largely because they were deliberately trying to imitate the Ancients in art and architecture.

Greek statuary was revived by Renaissance artists. As travel increased and Grand Tours became popular, evidence of this popularity is shown in the reproduction of these statues for tourism, much like one might pick up a reproduction of the Statue of Liberty today on a trip to New York.
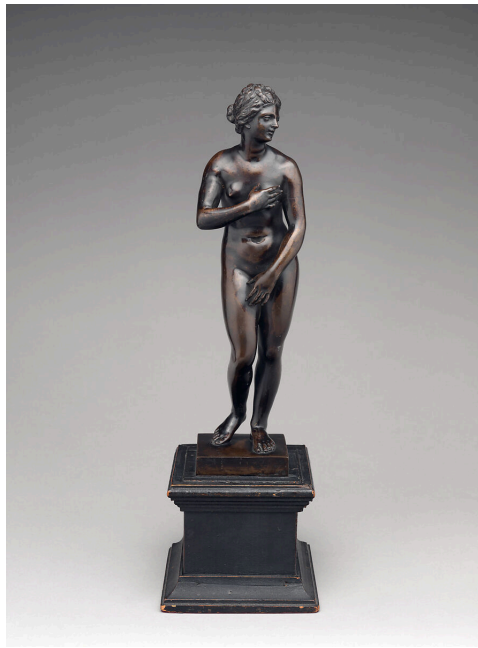
*A small bronze replication statue of Venus in the style of Massimiliano Soldani (Italian, Montevarchi 1656–1740 Montevarchi) is in The Met's collection. Such statuettes were produced for Grand Tour visitors and reflect the vogue for reductions of antique statuary and their reinterpretations by the great eighteenth-century sculptors.*

## Florence and the Renaissance

When you hear the term "Renaissance" and picture a style of art, you are probably picturing the Renaissance style that was developed in Florence, which became the dominate style of art during the Renaissance. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Italy was divided into a number of different city states. Each city state had its own government, culture, economy, and artistic style. There were many different styles of art and architecture that were developed in Italy during the Renaissance. Siena, which was a political ally of France, for example, retained a Gothic element to its art for much of the Renaissance.

Certain conditions aided the development of the Renaissance style in Florence during this time period. In the 15th century, Florence became a major mercantile center. The production of cloth drove their economy and a merchant class emerged. Humanism, which had developed during the 14th century, remained an important intellectual movement that impacted art production as well.

# Early Renaissance

During the Early Renaissance, artists began to reject the Byzantine style of religious painting and strove to create realism in their depiction of the human form and space. This aim toward realism began with Cimabue and Giotto, and reached its peak in the art of the "Perfect" artists, such as Andrea Mantegna and Paolo Uccello, who created works that employed one point perspective and played with perspective for their educated, art knowledgeable viewer.

During the Early Renaissance we also see important developments in subject matter, in addition to style. While religion was an important element in the daily life of people living during the Renaissance, and remained a driving factor behind artistic production, we also see a new avenue open to panting—mythological subject matter. Many scholars point to Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* as the very first panel painting of a mythological scene. While the tradition itself likely arose from cassone painting, which typically featured scenes from mythology and romantic texts, the development of mythological panel painting would open a world for artistic patronage, production, and themes.
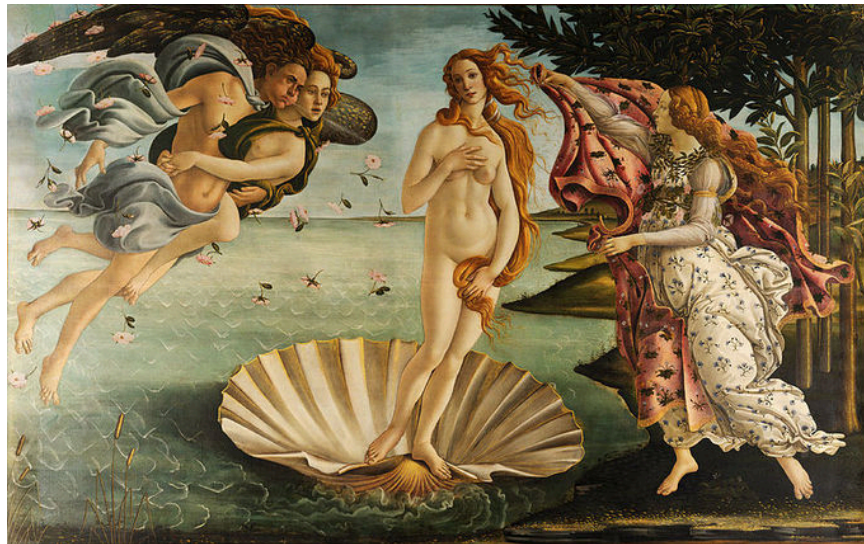


*Birth of Venus: Botticelli's Birth of Venus was among the most important works of the early Renaissance.*

# High Renaissance

The period known as the High Renaissance represents the culmination of the goals of the Early Renaissance, namely the realistic representation of figures in space rendered with credible motion and in an appropriately decorous style. The most well known artists

from this phase are Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Titian, and Michelangelo. Their paintings and frescoes are among the most widely known works of art in the world. Da Vinci's *Last Supper*, Raphael's *The School of Athens* and Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel Ceiling paintings are the masterpieces of this period and embody the elements of the High Renaissance.



*Marriage of the Virgin by Raphael. The painting depicts a marriage ceremony between Mary and Joseph.*

## Mannerism

High Renaissance painting evolved into Mannerism in Florence. Mannerist artists, who consciously rebelled against the principles of High Renaissance, tended to represent elongated figures in illogical spaces. Modern scholarship has recognized the capacity of Mannerist art to convey strong, often religious, emotion where the High Renaissance failed to do so. Some of the main artists of this period are Pontormo, Bronzino, Rosso Fiorentino, Parmigianino and Raphael's pupil, Giulio Romano.

# Art and Patronage

The Medici family used their vast fortune to control the Florentine political system and sponsor a series of artistic accomplishments. It has long been a matter of debate why the Renaissance began in Florence, and not elsewhere in Italy. Scholars have noted several features unique to Florentine cultural life that may have caused such a cultural movement. Many have emphasized the role played by the Medici, a banking family and later ducal ruling house, in patronizing and stimulating the arts. Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492) was the catalyst for an enormous amount of arts patronage, encouraging his countrymen to commission works from the leading artists of Florence, including Leonardo da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, and Michelangelo Buonarroti. Works by Neri di Bicci, Botticelli, da Vinci, and Filippino Lippi had been commissioned additionally by the convent di San Donato agli Scopeti of the Augustinians order in Florence.

## The Medici House Patronage

The House of Medici was an Italian banking family, political dynasty, and later royal house that first began to gather prominence under Cosimo de' Medici in the Republic of Florence during the first half of the 15th century. Their wealth and influence initially derived from the textile trade guided by the guild of the Arte della Lana. Like other signore families, they dominated their city's government, they were able to bring Florence under their family's power, and they created an environment where art and Humanism could flourish. They, along with other families of Italy, such as the Visconti and Sforza of Milan, the Este of Ferrara, and the Gonzaga of Mantua, fostered and inspired the birth of the Italian Renaissance.

The biggest accomplishments of the Medici were in the sponsorship of art and architecture, mainly early and High Renaissance art and architecture. The Medici were responsible for the majority of Florentine art during their reign. Their money was significant because during this period, artists generally only made their works when they received commissions in advance. Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, the first patron of the arts in the family, aided Masaccio and commissioned Brunelleschi for the reconstruction of the Basilica of San Lorenzo, Florence, in 1419. Cosimo the Elder's notable artistic associates were Donatello and Fra Angelico. The most significant addition to the list over the years was Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), who produced work for a number of Medici, beginning with Lorenzo the Magnificent, who was said to be extremely fond of the young Michelangelo, inviting him to study the family collection of antique sculpture. Lorenzo also

served as patron of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) for seven years. Indeed, Lorenzo was an artist in his own right, and an author of poetry and song; his support of the arts and letters is seen as a high point in Medici patronage.



*The Medici House. Medici family members placed allegorically in the entourage of a king from the Three Wise Men in the Tuscan countryside in a Benozzo Gozzoli fresco, c. 1459*

In architecture, the Medici are responsible for some notable features of Florence, including the Uffizi Gallery, the Boboli Gardens, the Belvedere, the Medici Chapel, and the Palazzo Medici. Later, in Rome, the Medici Popes continued in the family tradition by patronizing artists in Rome. Pope Leo X would chiefly commission works from Raphael. Pope Clement VII commissioned Michelangelo to paint the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel just before the pontiff's death in 1534. Eleanor of Toledo, princess of Spain and wife of Cosimo I the Great, purchased the Pitti Palace from Buonaccorso Pitti in 1550. Cosimo in turn patronized Vasari, who erected the Uffizi Gallery in 1560 and founded the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno ("Academy of the Arts of Drawing") in 1563. Marie de' Medici, widow of Henry IV of France and mother of Louis XIII, is the subject of a commissioned cycle of paintings known as the Marie de' Medici cycle, painted for the Luxembourg Palace by court painter Peter Paul Rubens in 1622–1623.

Although none of the Medici themselves were scientists, the family is well known to have been the patrons of the famous Galileo Galilei, who tutored multiple generations of Medici children and was an important figurehead for his patron's quest for power. Galileo's patronage was eventually abandoned by Ferdinando II when the Inquisition accused

Galileo of heresy. However, the Medici family did afford the scientist a safe haven for many years. Galileo named the four largest moons of Jupiter after four Medici children he tutored, although the names Galileo used are not the names currently used.

# Leonardo da Vinci

While Leonardo da Vinci is admired as a scientist, an academic, and an inventor, he is most famous for his achievements as the painter of several Renaissance masterpieces.

While Leonardo da Vinci is greatly admired as a scientist, an academic, and an inventor, he is most famous for his achievements as the painter of several Renaissance masterpieces. His paintings were groundbreaking for a variety of reasons and his works have been imitated by students and discussed at great length by connoisseurs and critics.

Among the qualities that make da Vinci's work unique are the innovative techniques that he used in laying on the paint, his detailed knowledge of anatomy, his use of the human form in figurative composition, and his use of sfumato. All of these qualities are present in his most celebrated works, the *Mona Lisa*, *The Last Supper*, and the *Virgin of the Rocks*.



*The Marriage of the Virgin by Leonardo da Vinci*

## The Last Supper

Da Vinci's most celebrated painting of the 1490s is *The Last Supper*, which was painted for the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria della Grazie in Milan. The painting depicts the last meal shared by Jesus and the 12 Apostles where he announces that one of the them will betray him. When finished, the painting was acclaimed as a masterpiece of design. This work demonstrates something that da Vinci did very well: taking a very traditional subject matter, such as the Last Supper, and completely re-inventing it.

Prior to this moment in art history, every representation of the Last Supper followed the same visual tradition: Jesus and the Apostles seated at a table. Judas is placed on the opposite side of the table of everyone else and is effortlessly identified by the viewer. When da Vinci painted The Last Supper he placed Judas on the same side of the table as Christ and the Apostles, who are shown reacting to Jesus as he announces that one of them will betray him. They are depicted as alarmed, upset, and trying to determine who will commit the act. The viewer also has to determine which figure is Judas, who will betray Christ. By depicting the scene in this manner, da Vinci has infused psychology into the work.

Unfortunately, this masterpiece of the Renaissance began to deteriorate immediately after da Vinci finished painting, due largely to the painting technique that he had chosen. Instead of using the technique of fresco, da Vinci had used tempera over a ground that was mainly gesso in an attempt to bring the subtle effects of oil paint to fresco. His new technique was not successful, and resulted in a surface that was subject to mold and flaking.
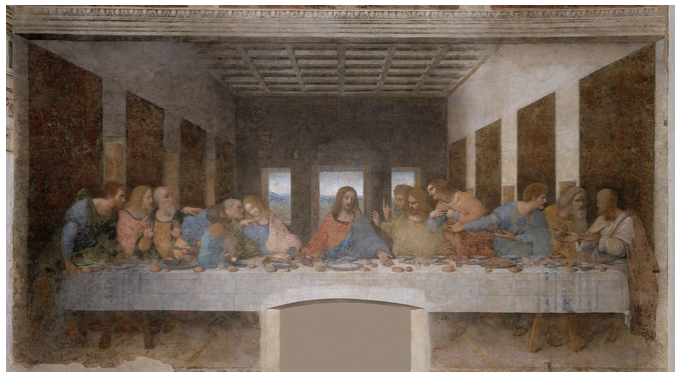


*The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci, although much deteriorated, demonstrates the painter's mastery of the human form in figurative composition*

# Mona Lisa

Among the works created by da Vinci in the 16th century is the small portrait known as the *Mona Lisa,* or *La Gioconda*, "the laughing one." In the present era it is arguably the most famous painting in the world. Its fame rests, in particular, on the elusive smile on the woman's face—its mysterious quality brought about perhaps by the fact that the artist has subtly shadowed the corners of the mouth and eyes so that the exact nature of the smile cannot be determined.

The shadowy quality for which the work is renowned came to be called sfumato, the application of subtle layers of translucent paint so that there is no visible transition between colors, tones, and often objects. Other characteristics found in this work are the unadorned dress, in which the eyes and hands have no competition from other details; the dramatic landscape background, in which the world seems to be in a state of flux; the subdued coloring; and the extremely smooth nature of the painterly technique, employing oils, but applied much like tempera and blended on the surface so that the brushstrokes are indistinguishable. And again, da Vinci is innovating upon a type of painting here. Portraits were very common in the Renaissance. However, portraits of women were always in profile, which was seen as proper and modest. Here, da Vinci present a portrait of a woman who not only faces the viewer but follows them with her eyes.



*In the Mona Lisa, da Vinci incorporates his sfumato technique to create a shadowy quality.*

# Michelangelo

Michelangelo was a 16th century Florentine artist renowned for his masterpieces in sculpture, painting, and architectural design. His most well known works are the *David*, the *Last Judgment*, and the *Basilica of Saint Peter's* in the Vatican.

## Sculpture: *David*



*The David by Michelangelo, 1504. The sculpture was intended to be placed on the exterior of the Duomo, and has become one of the most recognized works of Renaissance sculpture.*

In 1504, Michelangelo was commissioned to create a colossal marble statue portraying David as a symbol of Florentine freedom. The subsequent masterpiece, *David*, established the artist's prominence as a sculptor of extraordinary technical skill and strength of symbolic imagination. *David* was created out of a single marble block, and stands larger than life, as it was originally intended to adorn the Florence Cathedral. The work differs from previous representations in that the Biblical hero is not depicted with the head of the slain Goliath, as he is in Donatello's and Verrocchio's statues; both had represented the hero standing victorious over the head of Goliath. No earlier Florentine artist had omitted the giant altogether. Instead of appearing victorious over a foe, David's face looks tense and ready for combat. The tendons in his neck stand out tautly, his brow is furrowed, and his eyes seem to focus intently on something in the distance. Veins bulge out of his lowered right hand, but his body is in a relaxed *contrapposto* pose, and he carries his sling casually thrown over his left shoulder. In the Renaissance, *contrapposto* poses were thought of as a distinctive feature of antique sculpture.

## Painting: *The Last Judgement*

In painting, Michelangelo is renowned for his work in the Sistine Chapel. He was originally commissioned to paint tromp-l'oeil coffers after the original ceiling developed a crack. Michelangelo lobbied for a different and more complex scheme, representing Creation, the

Downfall of Man, the Promise of Salvation through the prophets, and the Genealogy of Christ. The work is part of a larger scheme of decoration within the chapel that represents much of the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

The composition eventually contained over 300 figures, and had at its center nine episodes from the Book of Genesis, divided into three groups: God's Creation of the Earth, God's Creation of Humankind, and their fall from God's grace, and lastly, the state of Humanity as represented by Noah and his family. Twelve men and women who prophesied the coming of the Jesus are painted on the pendentives supporting the ceiling. Among the most famous paintings on the ceiling are The Creation of Adam, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the Great Flood, the Prophet Isaiah and the Cumaean Sibyl. The ancestors of Christ are painted around the windows.

The fresco of *The Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel was commissioned by Pope Clement VII, and Michelangelo labored on the project from 1536–1541. The work is located on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, which is not a traditional placement for the subject. Typically, last judgement scenes were placed on the exit wall of churches as a way to remind the viewer of eternal punishments as they left worship. *The Last Judgment* is a depiction of the second coming of Christ and the apocalypse; where the souls of humanity rise and are assigned to their various fates, as judged by Christ, surrounded by the Saints. In contrast to the earlier figures Michelangelo painted on the ceiling, the figures in *The Last Judgement* are heavily muscled and are in much more artificial poses, demonstrating how this work is in the Mannerist style.

In this work Michelangelo has rejected the orderly depiction of the last judgement as established by Medieval tradition in favor of a swirling scene of chaos as each soul is judged. When the painting was revealed it was heavily criticized for its inclusion of classical imagery as well as for the amount of nude figures in somewhat suggestive poses. The ill reception that the work received may be tied to the Counter Reformation and the Council of Trent, which lead to a preference for more conservative religious art devoid of classical references. Although a number of figures were made more modest with the addition of drapery, the changes were not made until after the death of Michelangelo, demonstrating the respect and admiration that was afforded to him during his lifetime.

*The fresco of The Last Judgment on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel was commissioned by Pope Clement VII. Michelangelo worked on the project from 1534–1541*

## Architecture: St. Peter's Basilica

Finally, although other architects were involved, Michelangelo is given credit for designing St. Peter's Basilica. Michelangelo's chief contribution was the use of a symmetrical plan of a Greek Cross form and an external masonry of massive proportions, with every corner filled in by a stairwell or small vestry. The effect is of a continuous wall surface that is folded or fractured at different angles, lacking the right angles that usually define change of direction at the corners of a building. This exterior is surrounded by a giant order of Corinthian pilasters all set at slightly different angles to each other, in keeping with the ever-changing angles of the wall's surface. Above them the huge cornice ripples in a continuous band, giving the appearance of keeping the whole building in a state of compression.

*St. Peter's Basillica. Michelangelo designed the dome of St. Peter's Basilica on or before 1564, although it was unfinished when he died*

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> 📊 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/westerncivilization/?p=58#oembed-1*

"Beyond the Madonna: an early image of enslaved people in Renaissance Florence." *YouTube*, uploaded by Smart History, 1 Dec. 2006.

# 8. Renaissance Music

## Renaissance Music

Renaissance music is music written in Europe during the Renaissance. Consensus among music historians–with notable dissent–has been to start the era around 1400, with the end of the medieval era, and to close it around 1600, with the beginning of the baroque period, therefore commencing the musical Renaissance about a hundred years after the beginning of the Renaissance as understood in other disciplines. As in the other arts, the music of the period was significantly influenced by the developments which define the early modern period: the rise of humanistic thought; the recovery of the literary and artistic heritage of ancient Greece and Rome; increased innovation and discovery; the growth of commercial enterprise; the rise of a bourgeois class; and the Protestant Reformation. From this changing society emerged a common, unifying musical language, in particular the polyphonic style of the Franco-Flemish school.



*Concert in the Egg, Hieronymus Bosch, c. 1561*

# The Increasing Demand for Music

The invention of the Gutenberg press made distribution of music and musical theory possible on a wide scale. Demand for music as entertainment and as an activity for educated amateurs increased with the emergence of a bourgeois class. Dissemination of chansons, motets, and masses throughout Europe coincided with the unification of polyphonic practice into the fluid style which culminated in the second half of the sixteenth century in the work of composers such as Palestrina, Lassus, Victoria and William Byrd. Relative political stability and prosperity in the Low Countries, along with a flourishing system of music education in the area's many churches and cathedrals, allowed the training of hundreds of singers and composers. These musicians were highly sought throughout Europe, particularly in Italy, where churches and aristocratic courts hired them as composers and teachers. By the end of the sixteenth century, Italy had absorbed the northern influences, with Venice, Rome, and other cities being centers of musical activity, reversing the situation from a hundred years earlier. Opera arose at this time in Florence as a deliberate attempt to resurrect the music of ancient Greece.



*Chansonnier by Heinrich Isaac, 1484*

# Features of Renaissance Music

From the Renaissance era both secular and sacred music survives in quantity, and both vocal and instrumental. An enormous diversity of musical styles and genres flourished during the Renaissance, and can be heard on commercial recordings in the twenty-first century, including masses, motets, madrigals, chansons, accompanied songs,

instrumental dances, and many others. Numerous early music ensembles specializing in music of the period give concert tours and make recordings, using a wide range of interpretive styles.



*Motets of Cyprien de Rore illustrated by Hans Mielich*

One of the most pronounced features of early Renaissance European music was the increasing reliance on the interval of the third (in the Middle Ages, thirds had been considered dissonances). Polyphony became increasingly elaborate throughout the fourteenth century, with highly independent voices: the beginning of the fifteenth century showed simplification, with the voices often striving for smoothness. This was possible because of a greatly increased vocal range in music–in the Middle Ages, the narrow range made necessary frequent crossing of parts, thus requiring a greater contrast between them.

The modal (as opposed to tonal) characteristics of Renaissance music began to break down towards the end of the period with the increased use of root motions of fifths. This later developed into one of the defining characteristics of tonality.

The main characteristics of Renaissance music are music based on modes, richer texture in four or more parts, blending rather than contrasting strands in the musical texture, and harmony with a greater concern with the flow and progression of chords.

Polyphony is one of the notable changes that mark the Renaissance from the Middle Ages musically. Its use encouraged the use of larger ensembles and demanded sets of instruments that would blend together across the whole vocal range.

Principal liturgical forms which endured throughout the entire Renaissance period were masses and motets, with some other developments towards the end, especially as composers of sacred music began to adopt secular forms (such as the madrigal) for their own designs.

During the period, secular music had an increasing distribution, with a wide variety of forms, but one must be cautious about assuming an explosion in variety: since printing made music more widely available, much more has survived from this era than from the preceding medieval era, and probably a rich store of popular music of the late Middle Ages is irretrievably lost.

Secular music was music that was independent of churches. The main types were the German Lied, Italian frottola, the French chanson, the Italian madrigal, and the Spanish villancico. Other secular vocal genres included the caccia, rondeau, virelai, bergerette, ballade, musique mesurée, canzonetta, villanella, villotta, and the lute song. Mixed forms such as the motet-chanson and the secular motet also appeared.

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# LOVE

# 9. What is love?



*"[Straw sombrero hat associated with Civil Rights campaign, Camden, Alabama](#)". by Unidentified is marked with [CC0 1.0.](#)*

## What is love?

Merriam-Webster defines love as:

1a(1)**:** strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties//maternal love for a child
  (2)**:** attraction based on sexual desire **:** affection and tenderness felt by lovers//After all these years, they are still very much in love.
  (3)**:** affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests//love for his old schoolmates
b**:** an assurance of affection//give her my love
     2**:** warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion//love of the sea
     3a**:** the object of attachment, devotion, or admiration//baseball was his first love
        b(1)**:** a beloved person **:** DARLING —often used as a term of endearment
          (2)British —used as an informal term of address
        4a**:** unselfish loyal and benevolent (see BENEVOLENT sense 1a) concern for the good of another: such as
          (1)**:** the fatherly concern of God for humankind
          (2)**:** brotherly concern for others
     b**:** a person's adoration of God

**5:** a god (such as Cupid or Eros) or personification of love

**6:** an amorous episode **:** LOVE AFFAIR

**7:** the sexual embrace **:** COPULATION

**8:** a score of zero (as in tennis)

**9:** capitalized, Christian Science **:** GOD

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# Love has been expressed almost endlessly through art. Why?

Can you think of pieces of art, images, or videos that remind you of love? Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker discuss the French Enlightenment artist's "Fragonard," or "The Meeting." It is part of a series of paintings illustrating the evolution of love. Harris and Zucker over interesting context as to how these paintings we now experience through media or museums were once a part of people's (albeit exceptionally wealthy people and those who worked for them) everyday lives.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/westerncivilization/?p=66#oembed-1*

"Fragonard, The Meeting." *YouTube*, uploaded by SmartHistory, 2 Apr. 2012.

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Questions to Consider: Which definition aligns best with how you think about love? What came to your mind when you thought about it?

# 10. Philosophy and Religion in the Western Tradition

## Philosophy and Religion

Philosophers have gotten something of a bad reputation for widespread and perhaps closed-minded atheism. The reality, however, is quite otherwise. For most of their history, philosophy and religion have almost always been intertwined in one way or another, and the vast majority of philosophers have had *some* kind of religious beliefs, often central to their philosophy, whether or not they have made the links explicit. And this is not without good reason. Though their methods (sometimes) differ, philosophy and religion have always shared a number of similar goals in terms of seeking answers to life's "Big Questions," questions about the ultimate nature of reality, human's purpose or place in the world, the meaning of life and how it should be lived. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates famously says, "It is no small matter we are discussing, but the very question of how we are to live our lives." Many religious believers would say the same thing when discussing their religious beliefs.

In reading about the Enlightenment, you will get more detail how and why the Enlightenment may have contributed to this sharp division between philosophy and religion in the West. But even in the Western tradition, the division between philosophy and religion was not always so sharp prior to the Enlightenment.

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## Ancient Greek Philosophy

Ancient Platonists, if asked to summarize the essence of the philosophy of Plato (c. 429-347 BCE), would answer that it was a way of life directed towards *homoiosis theou, or* becoming like God. At various points in Plato's dialogues, his descriptions of philosophy and of wisdom sound much more like descriptions of out-of-body experiences than like today's notion of "thinking deeply about important questions." For example, in *Phaedo*, Socrates says, "I am afraid that other people do not realize that the one aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death…" and then defines death as "the separation of the soul from the body." He goes on to discuss how the true philosopher is not concerned with things connected to the body (including sense perception), but with the soul, and trying to get the soul to be "by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it [the body] in its search for reality… the soul of the philosopher most disdains the body, flees from it and seeks to be by itself." Later Socrates continues, "if we are ever to have pure knowledge, we must escape from the body and observe things in themselves with the soul by itself." While there are other ways to interpret such passages, there is a long tradition of reading Plato as talking about something like an out-of-body experience that opens up some sort of mystical knowledge about reality, and even God.

What is today called the "metaphysics" of Aristotle (382-322 BCE), he himself famously called "theology." Prior to Plato and Aristotle, the writings of the pre-Socratics (Greek philosophers prior to roughly 400 BCE) were filled with speculations about the nature of God, or the gods. There is very little known about Pythagoras (570-490 BCE); it's doubtful he actually discovered the theorem named after him. But one thing that is known about him is that he taught his followers to believe in reincarnation and engage in various mystical practices.

The Stoics believed the universe was guided by a divine *Logos*. While "*Logos*" in Greek Philosophy often just means human reason or an argument, the word is also the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "*Davar*" or Aramaic "*Memra*," (the divine "Word" of God) which, in the later parts of the Hebrew Bible, began taking on many of the characteristics associated

with God. And although the Stoics are considered a school of Greek Philosophy, the first Stoics happened to be Semitic immigrants from the East, so their view that the world is governed by a divine "Word" is especially noteworthy for its connection to Jewish thought.

Numerous individual passages in the New Testament, as well as the entire epistle to the Hebrews, also show influence on a number of points either directly from Philo, or else some common source from which Philo and the New Testament authors must both have been drawing. For example, the author of Hebrews famously downplays the importance of the earthly temple in Jerusalem in favor of a heavenly temple, of which the earthly temple is merely a "copy and shadow":

> [They] serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (Hebrews 8:5)

The talk about "copy and shadow" recalls Plato's famous Analogy of the Cave in Book VII of the *Republic*, where prisoners are chained up, facing a wall, unable to see anything except "the shadows of copies of things," which they mistake for the truth. The talk about making all things "according to the pattern" recalls Plato's discussion of the "craftsman" or "demiurge" (creator of the universe) in *Timaeus*.

Does all this mean Plato was the *source* of these ideas in the New Testament? It would be difficult to deny that several New Testament authors *make use* (apparently intentionally) both of Plato's thought and his vocabulary. As to whether Plato was the source of any of the New Testament authors' thoughts, however, it's hard to say, and scholarly debate continues. Of course, there are also deep differences that must be acknowledged as well. But while questions about *sources* and *directions* of influence may be debated, one thing is for certain: there was no *separation* into two distinct compartments of "philosophy" versus "religion" at this point in history. Thinkers at this time did not see two categories here, but one.

Questions to Consider

Brainstorm definitions of "philosophy" and "religion." To what extent do those definitions overlap, or differ? Consider a belief system like Buddhism or Confucianism. How do the definitions you came up with categorize that belief system? Do you think your definitions get the right result? What does this say about the relation between philosophy and religion?

# Medieval Philosophy

After the rise of Christianity, the neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinus (c. 203-270 CE) asks, "What can it be that has brought the souls to forget the father, God, and, though members of the Divine and entirely of that world, to ignore at once themselves and It?." Here Plotinus refers to his interpretation of Plato's highest principle—The One, or The Good—with the particularly Christian-sounding terms, "Father," and "God." Plotinus' greatest influence, the middle-Platonist Numenius of Apamea (c. 150-200 CE), created a new school of Platonism with the explicit purpose of demonstrating the overlap between Platonism and ancient near-Eastern religions, like Judaism (which he mentions by name). Indeed, he was the author of the much-quoted saying, "What else is Plato than a Moses who speaks Greek?" And Plotinus, probably the most famous neo-Platonist in antiquity, saw Platonism not as a merely theoretical study, but as a *spiritual path*. He describes his own mystical experiences, inspired by Plato's teachings:

> Many times it has happened: lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self-encentred; beholding a marvelous beauty; then, more-than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine.... (*Ennead* IV.8.1)

In this light, it makes much more sense that early Christians were often critical of "philosophy" (by which they meant Platonism), even when they were themselves engaged in something that in today's terms could be called "philosophy." They were opposed to it, not because they were opposed to critical thinking, but because Christianity and "philosophy" (i.e., Platonism) essentially constituted rival schools of spirituality, with teachings about the spiritual path that, while frequently overlapping, were often at odds.

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# Modern Philosophy

After the armies of the Fourth Crusade sacked the Eastern Christian city of New Rome/ Constantinople in the 1200s, and brought back precious ancient manuscripts, Western Europe saw the Renaissance blossom in the following century (1300s). After the eventual fall of Constantinople in 1453 (which led many Greek scholars to flee west and bring more knowledge and manuscripts with them), the arrival of Europeans in the Americas in 1492, the rise of Protestantism beginning in 1517, and the Scientific Revolution, comes the Modern Period. The rapid pace of discovery of new knowledge and the overturning or questioning of previously-held beliefs from the mid-1400s to mid-1500s led to a period in

which Classical learning began to be questioned, doubted, and interrogated to a growing degree. Not surprisingly, and despite being in many ways revolutionary compared to Ancient and Medieval thought, Early Modern Philosophy was still deeply concerned with religious questions.

Turning from the Rationalists to the British Empiricists, John Locke (1632-1704) was a deeply religious man and authored arguments for God's existence. Even his political philosophy begins from the premise that people are all God's property, for example, in the *Second Treatise on Government* 2.6. George Berkeley (1685-1753) was actually a bishop in the Church of England, and a key aspect of his philosophy of "idealism" was the idea that, since matter doesn't really *exist*, only minds and ideas do, there has to be one very powerful mind (God) that constantly perceives all things and holds them in existence. Last among the three great British Empiricists, only David Hume (1711-1776) could reasonably be called an atheist, though this label was more of an accusation by his opponents. His views on religion have been more accurately described as "attenuated deism." In other words, he seems to have held something like the belief that there is *some* kind of Creator, who may possibly be something like a Great Mind, but who is not likely to be directly concerned about anything that happens in the world, at least as far as anyone would have any way of knowing.

Finally, although there had been atheist philosophers before, it is only really in the 1800s, with Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), that atheistic philosophies begin to gain what will turn out to be a more solid and lasting foothold in the intellectual history of the West. But of course, it would be completely wrong to say that Marx or Nietzsche were *not concerned* with religious questions. Rather, they were both *deeply* concerned with questions about religion. They simply came down on a negative side of those questions.

Questions to Consider

Nearly every philosopher in the Western tradition during the medieval period was either Jewish, Christian or Muslim. If philosophy and religion are sharply distinct pursuits, what could explain the long-standing connection between the two? If they are similar or overlapping pursuits, what could explain why philosophers would begin abandoning religion in the 1800s?

Nietzsche described Christianity as "Platonism for the masses." Consider your definitions of "philosophy" and "religion." Assuming that Christianity counts as "religion," and Platonism counts as "philosophy," could Christianity *possibly be* "Platonism for the masses"? That is, would it even be possible, on your definitions, for a religion to count as a philosophy? What does this say about Nietzsche's claim, or about your definitions?

# Is Contemporary Western Philosophy Dogmatically Atheist?

Philosophical speculation can easily lead to beliefs that aren't the same as the surrounding cultural mainstream. So, it's easy to see why people would associate philosophy with heresy (beginning with Socrates himself). But it is probably with philosophers of the early 1900s, such as Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) and the Logical Positivists of the so-called "Vienna Circle" (who met from 1924 to 1936) that the source of philosophers' current-day reputations as people who narrow-mindedly refuse even to consider the possibility of the existence of God or anything spiritual can be found. This reputation of narrow-mindedness is rather unfair in context, however. It's true that the Logical Positivists held religious talk to be, not merely false, but *meaningless* (which of course is a bit of a conversation stopper). But this was not, or at least not simply, a matter of being closed-minded or dogmatic about religion in particular. Rather, the Positivists had very specific views about the nature of language and meaning, and the relationship of meaning to observation and experience.

World War I and World War II no doubt also shook many people's faith in any kind of benevolent deity and solidified the skepticism of those who already doubted. Yet, even during this early 20th century flowering of atheism within philosophy, philosophers like Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), whose manuscripts make frequent allusions not only to the Bible, but to Christian thinkers from St. Augustine to Kierkegaard, Newman, and Tolstoy. Wittgenstein was both baptized and buried as a Catholic, though between those times he was not a practicing Catholic. Nevertheless, he was deeply interested in religious questions. He is reported to have once said, "I am not a religious man, but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view."

Meanwhile, Continental Philosophy has often been bound up in one way or another with religion as well. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) did not grow up religious, and seems to have strayed away again in his later years, but we do know that at one point in his twenties after having read the New Testament he was converted to Christianity and baptized in the Lutheran Church. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) actually began his studies as a Roman Catholic seminarian before switching to philosophy, and he was influenced by the neo-Thomism he had encountered in seminary (McGrath 2006, *passim*). Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was not religious in any ordinary sense. Yet his philosophy is in many ways deeply engaged with religion, as it attempts to explore what the meaning of life could once be rejected by the traditional Western religious paradigm. In "Existentialism is a Humanism," Sartre describes his entire existentialist project by saying that "Existentialism is nothing else but an attempt to draw the full conclusions from a consistently atheistic position."

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is another 20th-century Continental philosopher one cannot describe as religious in any conventional sense, and yet it's been reported that he "would sometimes laugh about his fascination with Catholic topics," often criticizing Christianity, but sometimes becoming an unexpected defender of certain aspects of it.

In his later years, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) wrote and spoke explicitly about his ambivalent relationship to his Jewish identity, and how deeply it affected much of his thinking. Thus, even during the heyday of 20th-century atheism, although most philosophers didn't *adhere* to any traditional religion, they were still frequently *engaged* with religious thought at a deep level (whether or not this was always made explicit).

In the middle of the 20th century, philosophers' attitudes towards religion began changing. At the same time that philosophers began to see deep problems with the Logical Positivists' very narrow theory of meaning, a small number of mostly English-speaking, Christian philosophers began a firm and sustained series of defenses of the rationality of theistic belief against the then-crumbling Positivist theory of meaning.

The reputation of closed-mindedness about religion among philosophers results from a misunderstanding of one particular school of thought that has somehow managed to overshadow nearly the entire history of philosophy from antiquity to the 20th century. The truth is that most philosophers throughout history have had religious beliefs of some sort, and many of the non-religious minority have been interested in, even consciously influenced by, religion. And while Logical Positivism's dismissal of religious talk as meaningless may sound insulting when viewed out of context, it was a straight-forward and unavoidable logical consequence of the then-dominant view about linguistic meaning in general. That view about language, however, met its demise some time ago.

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*Adapted from [Introduction to Philosophy: Philosophy of Religion](#) by Beau Branson is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0.](#)*

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> Question to Consider: For many, thinking of faith means thinking of love. While religion can be studied from a pragmatic point of view, when you think of faith, what is the role of love?

# 11. The Enlightenment

## The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment, a philosophical movement that dominated in Europe during the 18th century, was centered around the idea that reason is the primary source of authority and legitimacy, and advocated such ideals as liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government, and separation of church and state.

The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Enlightenment, was a philosophical movement that dominated the world of ideas in Europe in the 18th century. It was centered around the idea that reason is the primary source of authority and legitimacy, and it advocated such ideals as liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government, and separation of church and state. The Enlightenment was marked by an emphasis on the scientific method along with increased questioning of religious orthodoxy. The ideas of the Enlightenment undermined the authority of the monarchy and the church, and paved the way for the political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The ideas of the Enlightenment played a major role in inspiring the French Revolution, which began in 1789 and emphasized the rights of the common people, as opposed to the exclusive rights of the elites. However, historians of race, gender, and class note that Enlightenment ideals were not originally envisioned as universal in the today's sense of the word. Although they did eventually inspire the struggle for rights of people of color, women, or the working masses, most Enlightenment thinkers did not advocate equality for all, regardless of race, gender, or class, but rather insisted that rights and freedoms were not hereditary. This perspective directly attacked the traditionally exclusive position of the European aristocracy, but was still largely limited to expanding the political and individual rights of white males of particular social standing.

## Philosophy

In the mid-18th century, Europe witnessed an explosion of philosophic and scientific activity that challenged traditional doctrines and dogmas. The philosophic movement was led by Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who argued for a society based upon reason rather than faith and Catholic doctrine, for a new civil order based on natural law, and for science based on experiments and observation. The political philosopher Montesquieu

introduced the idea of a separation of powers in a government, a concept which was enthusiastically adopted by the authors of the United States Constitution. While the philosophers of the French Enlightenment were not revolutionaries, and many were members of the nobility, their ideas played an important part in undermining the legitimacy of the Old Regime and shaping the French Revolution.

There were two distinct lines of Enlightenment thought: the radical enlightenment, inspired by the philosophy of Spinoza, advocating democracy, individual liberty, freedom of expression, and eradication of religious authority. A second, more moderate variety, supported by René Descartes, John Locke, Christian Wolff, Isaac Newton and others, sought accommodation between reform and the traditional systems of power and faith.

Much of what is incorporated in the scientific method (the nature of knowledge, evidence, experience, and causation), and some modern attitudes towards the relationship between science and religion, were developed by David Hume and Adam Smith. Hume became a major figure in the skeptical philosophical and empiricist traditions of philosophy. Immanuel Kant tried to reconcile rationalism and religious belief, individual freedom and political authority, as well as map out a view of the public sphere through private and public reason. Kant's work continued to shape German thought, and indeed all of European philosophy, well into the 20th century. Mary Wollstonecraft was one of England's earliest feminist philosophers. She argued for a society based on reason, and that women, as well as men, should be treated as rational beings.

*Encyclopedie's frontspiece, engraving by Benoit Louis Prevost*

"If there is something you know, communicate it. If there is something you don't know, search for it." An engraving from the 1772 edition of the Encyclopédie. Truth, in the top center, is surrounded by light and unveiled by the figures to the right, Philosophy and Reason.

## Science

While the Enlightenment cannot be pigeonholed into a specific doctrine or set of dogmas, science came to play a leading role in Enlightenment discourse and thought. Many Enlightenment writers and thinkers had backgrounds in the sciences, and associated scientific advancement with the overthrow of religion and traditional authority in favor of the development of free speech and thought. Broadly speaking, Enlightenment science greatly valued empiricism and rational thought, and was embedded with the Enlightenment ideal of advancement and progress. As with most Enlightenment views, the benefits of science were not seen universally.

# Modern Western Government

The Enlightenment has long been hailed as the foundation of modern western political and intellectual culture. It brought political modernization to the west, in terms of focusing on democratic values and institutions, and the creation of modern, liberal democracies.

The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes ushered in a new debate on government with his work *Leviathan* in 1651. Hobbes also developed some of the fundamentals of European liberal thought: the right of the individual; the natural equality of all men, the artificial character of the political order (which led to the later distinction between civil society and the state), the view that all legitimate political power must be "representative" and based on the consent of the people, and a liberal interpretation of law which leaves people free to do whatever the law does not explicitly forbid.

John Locke and Rousseau also developed social contract theories. While differing in details, Locke, Hobbes, and Rousseau agreed that a social contract, in which the government's authority lies in the consent of the governed, is necessary for man to live in civil society. Locke is particularly known for his statement that individuals have a right to "Life, Liberty and Property," and his belief that the natural right to property is derived from labor. His theory of natural rights has influenced many political documents, including the United States Declaration of Independence and the French National Constituent Assembly's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Though much of Enlightenment's political thought was dominated by social contract theorists, some Scottish philosophers, most notably David Hume and Adam Ferguson, criticized this camp. Theirs was the assumption that governments derived from a ruler's authority and force (Hume) and polities grew out of social development rather than social contract (Ferguson).

# Religion

Enlightenment era religious commentary was a response to the preceding century of religious conflict in Europe. Enlightenment thinkers sought to curtail the political power of organized religion, and thereby prevent another age of intolerant religious war. A number of novel ideas developed, including Deism (belief in God the Creator, with no reference to the Bible or any other source) and atheism. The latter was much discussed but there were few proponents. Many, like Voltaire, held that without belief in a God who punishes evil, the moral order of society was undermined.

The radical Enlightenment promoted the concept of separating church and state, an idea often credited to Locke. According to Locke's principle of the social contract, the government lacked authority in the realm of individual conscience, as this was something rational people could not cede to the government for it or others to control. For Locke, this created a natural right in the liberty of conscience, which he said must therefore remain protected from any government authority. These views on religious tolerance and the importance of individual conscience, along with the social contract, became particularly influential in the American colonies and the drafting of the United States Constitution.

*Mary Wollstonecraft by John Opie, National Portrait Gallery, London*

While the philosophy of the Enlightenment was dominated by men, the question of women's rights appeared as one of the most controversial ideas. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of few female thinkers of the time, was an English writer, philosopher, and advocate of women's rights. She is best known for *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*(1792), in which she argues that women are not naturally inferior to men, but appear to be only because they lack education. She suggests that both men and women should be treated as rational beings and imagines a social order founded on reason.

Question to Consider: What is the role of women in the Enlightenment? How does that role compare to the role of women in other periods, like the Athenians in the Age of Pericles?

# Rationalism

Rationalism, or a belief that we come to knowledge through the use of logic, and thus independently of sensory experience, was critical to the debates of the Enlightenment period, when most philosophers lauded the power of reason but insisted that knowledge comes from experience.

Rationalism—as an appeal to human reason as a way of obtaining knowledge—has a philosophical history dating from antiquity. While rationalism, as the view that reason is the main source of knowledge, did not dominate the Enlightenment, it laid critical basis for the debates that developed over the course of the 18th century. As the Enlightenment centered on reason as the primary source of authority and legitimacy, many philosophers of the period drew from earlier philosophical contributions, most notably those of René Descartes (1596-1650), a French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist. Descartes was the first of the modern rationalists. He thought that only knowledge of eternal truths (including the truths of mathematics and the foundations of the sciences) could be attained by reason alone, while the knowledge of physics required experience of the world, aided by the scientific method. He argued that reason alone determined knowledge, and that this could be done independently of the senses.

*Rene Descartes, after Frans Hals*

# Immanuel Kant

Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz are usually credited for laying the groundwork for the 18th-century Enlightenment. During the mature Enlightenment period, Immanuel Kant attempted to explain the relationship between reason and human experience, and to move beyond the failures of traditional philosophy and metaphysics. He wanted to put an end to an era of futile and speculative theories of human experience, and regarded himself as ending and showing the way beyond the impasse between rationalists and empiricists. He is widely held to have synthesized these two early modern traditions in his thought.

*Immanuel Kant, artist unknown*

*Natural Rights*

Natural rights, understood as those that are not dependent on the laws, customs, or beliefs of any particular culture or government,(and therefore, universal and inalienable) were central to the debates during the Enlightenment on the relationship between the individual and the government.

## Natural Rights and Natural Law

Natural rights are usually juxtaposed with the concept of legal rights. Legal rights are those bestowed onto a person by a given legal system (i.e., rights that can be modified, repealed, and restrained by human laws). Natural rights are those that are not dependent on the laws, customs, or beliefs of any particular culture or government, and are therefore universal and inalienable (i.e., rights that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws). Natural rights are closely related to the concept of natural law (or laws). During the Enlightenment, the concept of natural laws was used to challenge the divine right of kings, and became an alternative justification for the establishment of a social contract, positive

law, and government (and thus, legal rights) in the form of classical republicanism (built around concepts such as civil society, civic virtue, and mixed government). Conversely, the concept of natural rights is used by others to challenge the legitimacy of all such establishments.

The idea of natural rights is also closely related to that of human rights; some acknowledge no difference between the two, while others choose to keep the terms separate to eliminate association with some features traditionally associated with natural rights.

## Natural Rights and Social Contract

Although natural rights have been discussed since antiquity, it was the philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment that developed the modern concept of natural rights, which has been critical to the modern republican government and civil society.

Thomas Hobbes' conception of natural rights extended from his conception of man in a "state of nature." He argued that the essential natural (human) right was "to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say, of his own Life." Hobbes sharply distinguished this natural "liberty" from natural "laws." In his natural state, according to Hobbes, man's life consisted entirely of liberties, and not at all of laws. Since by our (human) nature, we seek to maximize our well being, rights are prior to law, natural or institutional, and people will not follow the laws of nature without first being subjected to a sovereign power, without which all ideas of right and wrong are meaningless.
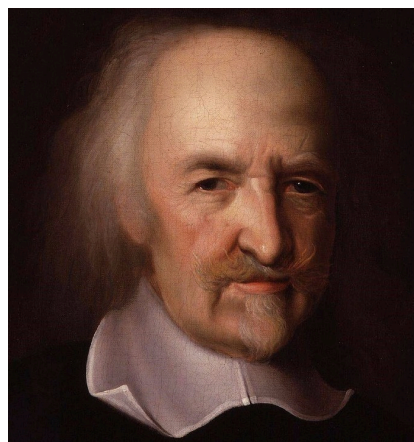


*Portrait of Thomas Hobbes by John Michael Wright, National Portrait Gallery, London*

The most famous natural right formulation comes from John Locke in his *Second Treatise*, when he introduces the state of nature. For Locke, the law of nature is grounded on mutual security, or the idea that one cannot infringe on another's natural rights, as every man is equal and has the same inalienable rights. These natural rights include perfect equality and freedom and the right to preserve life and property. Such fundamental rights could not be surrendered in the social contract. Another 17th-century Englishman, John Lilburne (known as Freeborn John) argued for level human rights that he called "freeborn rights," which he defined as being rights that every human being is born with, as opposed to rights bestowed by government or by human law. The distinction between alienable and unalienable rights was introduced by Francis Hutcheson, who argued that "Unalienable Rights are essential Limitations in all Governments." In the German Enlightenment, Georg Hegel gave a highly developed treatment of the inalienability argument. Like Hutcheson, he based the theory of inalienable rights on the *de facto* inalienability of those aspects of personhood that distinguish persons from things. A thing, like a piece of property, can in fact be transferred from one person to another. According to Hegel, the same would not apply to those aspects that make one a person. Consequently, the question of whether property is an aspect of natural rights remains a matter of debate.

Thomas Paine further elaborated on natural rights in his influential work *Rights of Man* (1791), emphasizing that rights cannot be granted by any charter because this would legally imply they can also be revoked, and under such circumstances, they would be reduced to privileges.
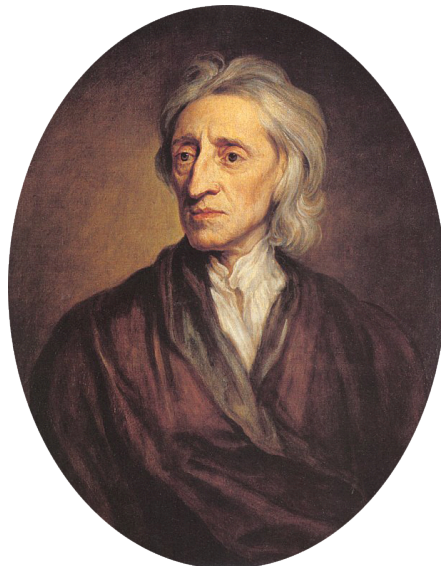
*Portrait of John Locke by Sir Godfrey Kneller, 1697, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg*

Questions to Consider: What are natural rights? What is social contract? How do you see these applied today?

# 12. The Romantic Era

## The Romantic Era

In his preface to *Hernani*, Victor Hugo wrote that "Romanticism was nothing more than liberalism in literature." Romanticism can be considered a rebellion against the conservative thought and literature of the eighteenth-century Age of Reason, a period that looked to ancient Rome and classical forms for models of perfection. The eighteenth-century Age of Reason was politically conservative and monarchic; other features, especially in terms of literature, include decorum, conventionality, harmony, artificiality, logic, and objectivity. Romanticism is neither romance nor the desire for prettiness or sentimentality; instead, it is closer to being anti-eighteenth century, or a repudiation of what went before. The idea of liberalism, to which Hugo referred, is expressed in the Romantic desire for an egalitarian (as opposed to monarchic) government, and for the freedom of the individual.

*"Ossian receiving the Ghosts of the French Heroes" by Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson is in the public domain.*

This revolutionary spirit was inspired by actual revolutions, including the American Revolution (1775-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1790s). These revolutions occurred within a wealth of intellectual thought and new ideas on what were human rights and what role government and society played in securing these rights. Some influential works were Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762), which questioned the efficacy of existing political systems; Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution* in France (1790), which considered the consequences of revolution to the status quo; and Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791-92), which suggested that all humans possessed inherent rights, rights that governments could potentially or actually threaten. Universal human rights existed independently of people's social position or class. They considered the qualities that

all humans shared, regardless of family, history, or income. The Romantics thought that all humans shared emotions and imagination. For the Romantics, these qualities served to validate human equality (though they were typically thinking of people like themselves).

Romanticism regarded as values subjectivity and individuality. It shifted the eighteenth century's focus on outward action to a new focus on inward action, that is, to action in the mind. Romantic literature scrutinized feelings and the relation of feeling to the outer world. Sincerity, openness, transparency, and spontaneity allowed that relationship to be more apparent, and the lyric, or song-like expression of an individual's emotions, became a characteristic Romantic genre. The imaginative individual created from the external impressions of natural beauty and human civilization an ideal of perfection within themselves, the embodiment of which they then sought to find in the external world. The Romantic image of the skylark, nightingale, midnight frost epitomize their quest for a union of the organic and the imaginative. The "closet drama," or dramas not intended to be (or even able to be) performed, and the historical novel, in which time and place could be conflated, were genres well-suited to Romantic expression. Related qualities of the unformulated, or innocent; the unconscious; and the mysterious (and even "exotic") actuated Romantic focus on, or interest in, children, and the child-like; nature, and those perceived as being close to nature, like agricultural workers; and the imaginative, or the poet.

The imaginative individual's response to nature, even to the possibility of animism in nature, reflected the importance of emotion over logic and order, for uncultivated nature. And nature in its most awe-inspiring "inhuman" forms inspired a range of emotions, from love to terror. In such moments of extreme emotion, the Romantic writer often felt connected with the sublime, with something beyond themselves, and so could see more deeply into the world than could "insensitive" individuals or those who accepted conformity or imitation. The ability to see things beyond the routine, to express thought and feeling combined, to be authentic individuals uncorrupted or made numb by society characterized the Romantic's attitudes towards and use of children and poets as touchstones. Because children, and Romantic writers, did not conform yet to societal pressures, their imaginations were truer, more active, and even prophetic in their power. Romanticism lauded and upheld the imagination as a form of individual power and freedom for all humans.

The different pressures placed upon the actual individual power and freedom of women, blacks, Roman Catholics, the rural poor, and the displaced, among others, also received nuanced attention and expression. William Blake's (1757- 1827) ironies, Mary Shelley's

(1797-1851) "monstrous" creativity, and Charlotte Smith's (1749-1806) anti-slavery activism, for example, demonstrated the fragility and tentativeness of any powers and any freedoms as well as the possible futility and danger of prophecy.

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Questions to Consider: Why do you think this period is referred to as Romanticism? What is it a foil to?

# 13. Music of the Romantic Era
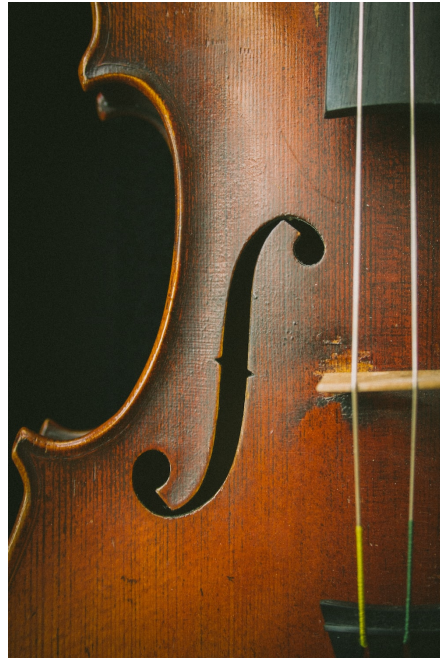


*Photo by *[*Johanna Vogt*](https://...)* on *[*Unsplash*](https://...)

## Music of the Romantic Era

When people talk about "Classical" music, they usually mean music of the Western world of any time period. But the Classical period was actually a very short era, basically the second half of the eighteenth century. Only two Classical-period composers are widely known: Mozart and Haydn.

> 📠 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *[*https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/westerncivilization/?p=87#oembed-1*](https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/westerncivilization/?p=87#oembed-1)

"[Haydn: The Creation|Nederlands Kamerkoor, Concerto D'Amsterdam & Klaas Stock (2009)](#)." *YouTube*, uploaded by DW Classical Music, 12 Mar. 2022.

The Romantic era produced many more composers whose names and music are still familiar and popular today: Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Schumann, Schubert, Chopin, and Wagner are perhaps the most well-known, but there are plenty of others who may also be familiar, including Strauss, Verdi, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Puccini, and Mahler. Ludwig van Beethoven, possibly the most famous composer of all, is harder to place. His early works are from the Classical period and are clearly Classical in style. But his later music, including the majority of his most famous music, is just as clearly Romantic.

The term Romantic covers most of the music (and art and literature) of Western civilization from the nineteenth century (the 1800's). But there has been plenty of music written in the Romantic style in the twentieth century (including many popular movie scores), and music isn't considered Romantic just because it was written in the nineteenth century. The beginning of that century found plenty of composers (Rossini, for example) who were still writing Classical-sounding music. And by the end of the century, composers were turning away from Romanticism and searching for new idioms, including post-Romanticism, Impressionism, and early experiments in Modern music.

## Background, Development, and Influence

## Classical Roots

Sometimes a new style of music happens when composers forcefully reject the old style. Early Classical composers, for example, were determined to get away from what they considered the excesses of the Baroque style. Modern composers also were consciously trying to invent something new and very different.

But the composers of the Romantic era did not reject Classical music. In fact, they were consciously emulating the composers they considered to be the great classicists: Haydn, Mozart, and particularly Beethoven. They continued to write symphonies, concertos, sonatas, and operas, forms that were all popular with classical composers. They also kept the basic rules for these forms, as well as keeping the rules of rhythm, melody, harmony, harmonic progression, tuning, and performance practice that were established in (or before) the Classical period.

The main difference between Classical and Romantic music came from attitudes towards these "rules". In the eighteenth century, composers were primarily interested in forms, melodies, and harmonies that provided an easily-audible structure for the music.

# Different Approaches to Romanticism

In fact, one could divide the main part of the Romantic era into two schools of composers. Some took a more conservative approach. Their music is clearly Romantic in style and feeling, but it also still clearly does not want to stray too far from the Classical rules. Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms are in this category.

Other composers felt more comfortable with pushing the boundaries of the acceptable. Berlioz, Strauss, and Wagner were all progressives whose music challenged the audiences of their day.

# Where to Go After Romanticism?

Perhaps it was inevitable, after decades of pushing at all limits to see what was musically acceptable, that the Romantic era would leave later composers with the question of what to explore or challenge next. Perhaps because there was no clear answer to this question (or several possible answers), many things were happening in music by the end of the Romantic era.

The period that includes the final decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth is sometimes called the post-Romantic era. This is the period when many composers concentrated on the traditions of their own countries, producing strongly nationalistic music. Others, such as Mahler and Strauss, were taking Romantic musical techniques to their utmost reasonable limits.

# Context

Music doesn't happen in a vacuum. It is affected by other things that are going on in society; ideas, attitudes, discoveries, inventions, and historical events may affect the music of the times.

For example, the "Industrial Revolution" was gaining steam throughout the nineteenth century. This had a very practical effect on music: there were major improvements in the mechanical valves and keys that most woodwinds and brass instruments depend on. The new, improved instruments could be played more easily and reliably, and often had a bigger, fuller, better-tuned sound. Strings and keyboard instruments dominate the music of the Baroque and Classical periods, with small groups of winds added for color. As the nineteenth century progressed and wind instruments improved, more and more winds

were added to the orchestra, and their parts became more and more difficult, interesting, and important. Improvements in the mechanics of the piano also helped it usurp the position of the harpsichord to become the instrument that to many people is the symbol of Romantic music.

Another social development that had an effect on music was the rise of the middle class. Classical composers lived on the patronage of the aristocracy; their audience was generally small, upper-class, and knowledgeable about music. The Romantic composer, on the other hand, was often writing for public concerts and festivals, with large audiences of paying customers who had not necessarily had any music lessons. In fact, the nineteenth century saw the first "pop star"-type stage personalities. Performers like Paganini and Liszt were the Elvis Presleys of their day.

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# 14. Poetry of the Romantic Era

## Poetry of the Romantic Era

Love and romance is a common theme in poetry and music. Consider these pieces from the Romantic Era, then consider what modern poetry or music might be viewed in a similar way in the future. How do these pieces speak to the beliefs of the people of the Romantic Era? How do they fit in the time of the transcendentalists?

## "Last Words on Greece" by Lord Byron

What are to me those honours or renown
Past or to come, a new-born people's cry?
Albeit for such I could despise a crown
Of aught save laurel, or for such could die.
Of thine to me is as an adder's eye.
To the poor bird whose pinion fluttering down
Wafts unto death the breast it bore so high;
Such is this maddening fascination grown,
So strong thy magic or so weak am I.

First published, Murray's Magazine, February, 1887, vol. i. p. 146

*"Lord Byron, a coloured engraving" by Wikimedia is in the public domain.*

Byron was a modern-style pop culture celebrity. His behavior was considered scandalous, and this brought him fame and often trouble. He married, but they quickly separated, and Byron had a series of affairs; his affairs with women are documented, though it is suggested that he had affairs with young men, as well, one of whom he left money in his will. He traveled extensively and develop passion for causes and people as a result.

Adapted from "Lord Byron." by Wikipedia is licensed CC BY-SA 4.0.

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## "She was a Phantom of delight" by William Wordsworth

She was a Phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely Apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin-liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A Creature not too bright or good

For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

Composed 1804.—Published 1807

After a brief affair that produced a daughter, William Wordsworth lived with his sister and fellow Romantic Samuel Taylor Coleridge in England for a time. Later he formed the Lake Poets with Coleridge and Robert Southey. He eventually married a childhood friend with whom he had five children. He formed close friendships with painter William Green and writer Charles Lamb. His close friendships informed much of his writing.

*William Wordsworth by Wikimedia is in the public domain.*

## Stanzas ["Oh, come to me in dreams, my love!"] by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Oh, come to me in dreams, my love!
I will not ask a dearer bliss;
Come with the starry beams, my love,
And press mine eyelids with thy kiss.

'Twas thus, as ancient fables tell,
Love visited a Grecian maid,
Till she disturbed the sacred spell,
And woke to find her hopes betrayed.
But gentle sleep shall veil my sight,
And Psyche's lamp shall darkling be,
When, in the visions of the night,
Thou dost renew thy vows to me.
Then come to me in dreams, my love,
I will not ask a dearer bliss;
Come with the starry beams, my love,
And press mine eyelids with thy kiss.

*"[Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley](#)" by [Wikimedia](#) is in the [public domain](#).*

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Richard Rothwell's portrait of Shelley was shown at the Royal Academy in 1840, accompanied by lines from Percy Shelley's poem "The Revolt of Islam" calling her a "child of love and light." [Wikipedia Contributors.](#).

Shelley is perhaps most famous for having written *Frankenstein* and for having been married to fellow writer Percey Bysshe Shelley. Her relationship with Shelley began while he was married to another, and it was only after his first wife's suicide and the death of Mary and Percey's premature child that they were able to marry. The two embodied much of the Romantic movement, including pursuing close friendships with other artists, like Lord Byron, and being involved in scandal. She was the second child of the feminist philosopher, educator, and writer Mary Wollstonecraft and the first child of the philosopher, novelist, and journalist William Godwin.

Adapted from "[Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley](#)" by [Wikipedia](#) is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

Question to Consider: How do these pieces speak to the beliefs of the people of the Romantic Era? How do they fit in the time of the transcendentalists? Then, consider a modern poem or lyrics and explain why the piece will be considered indicative of the way current society views love. What makes the piece unique to this time?

# 15. Transcendentalism

## Transcendentalism

What is Transcendentalism? Who are the key players in it? Ralph Waldo Emerson plays an important role in this era. Understanding what distinguishes his work can help you to understand the characteristics of the era. In what ways is love manifested in the Transcendentalist movement?

> 📠 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/westerncivilization/?p=93#oembed-1*

"LITERATURE-Ralph Waldo Emerson." *YouTube*, uploaded by The School of Life, 6 May 2016.

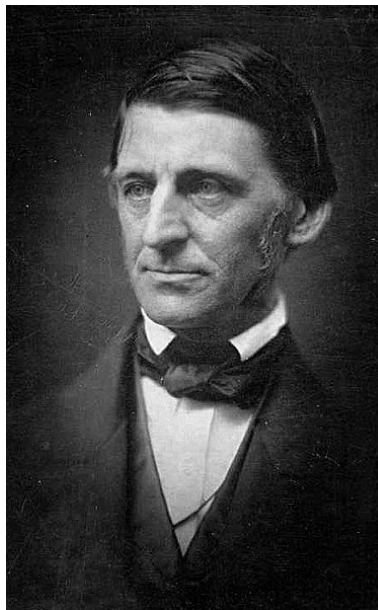## Transcendentalism of the Nineteenth Century

Transcendentalism was America's first notable intellectual and philosophical movement. It developed in the 1830s and 1840s in the New England region of the United States as a protest against the general state of culture and society. In particular, transcendentalists criticized the state of intellectualism at Harvard University and the doctrine of the Unitarian church taught at Harvard Divinity School.

### Core Beliefs

Transcendentalism became a movement of writers and philosophers who were loosely bound together by adherence to an idealistic system of thought based on the idea that perception is better than logic or experience. Among the transcendentalists' core beliefs was the inherent goodness of both humans and nature. Transcendentalists believed that society and its institutions, particularly organized religion and political parties, ultimately corrupted the purity of the individual. They had faith that man is at his best when truly "self-reliant" and independent. It was believed that only from such real individuals could

true community be formed. Rooted in the transcendental philosophy of Immanuel Kant (and of German idealism, more generally), the movement developed as a reaction against eighteenth-century rationalism, John Locke's philosophy of sensualism, and the Manifest Destiny of New England Calvinism. Its fundamental belief was in the unity and immanence of God in the world.

The publication of Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1836 essay "Nature" is usually considered the watershed moment at which transcendentalism became a major cultural movement. Emerson closed the essay by calling for a revolution in human consciousness to emerge from the new idealist philosophy. Early in the movement's history, critics use the term "transcendentalist" as a pejorative, and suggested that the members' position was beyond sanity and reason.



*Photo of Ralph Waldo Emerson by Wikipedia is in the public domain.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson: Ralph Waldo Emerson (May 25, 1803–April 27, 1882) was an American essayist, lecturer, and poet who led the transcendentalist movement of the mid-nineteenth century.*

The transcendentalists varied in their interpretations of how their ideas should manifest. Some among the group linked it with utopian social change; for example, Orestes Brownson connected it with early socialism, while others such as Emerson considered it an exclusively individualist and idealist project. In his 1842 lecture "The Transcendentalist," Emerson suggested that the goal of a purely transcendental outlook on life was impossible

to attain in practice. The transcendentalists desired to ground their religion and philosophy in transcendental principles that were not based on, or falsifiable by, physical experience, but that were derived from the inner spiritual or mental essence of the human. In contrast, they were intimately familiar with the English romantics, and the transcendental movement may be partially described as an American outgrowth of romanticism.

By the late 1840s, Emerson believed the movement was dying out, and even more so after the death of Margaret Fuller in 1850. Fuller was an American journalist, critic, and women's-rights advocate closely associated with the movement; according to Emerson, "she represents an interesting hour and group in American cultivation."

## Emerson's Influence

Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American essayist, lecturer, and poet, was seen as a champion of individualism and a critic of the pressures of society. He disseminated his thoughts through dozens of published essays and more than 1,500 public lectures. Emerson gradually moved away from the religious and social beliefs of his contemporaries, formulating and expressing the philosophy of transcendentalism in his 1836 essay "Nature." Following this groundbreaking work, he gave a speech entitled, "The American Scholar" in 1837. Emerson's first two collections of essays, published in 1841 and 1844, represent the core of his thinking.

Emerson wrote on a number of subjects, never espousing fixed philosophical tenets but developing certain ideas and themes such as individuality, freedom, humankind's ability to realize almost anything, and the relationship between the soul and the surrounding world. While his writing style can be seen as somewhat impenetrable, Emerson's essays remain among the linchpins of American thinking and have greatly influenced the thinkers, writers, and poets who have followed him.

## Thoreau's Influence

Henry David Thoreau was an American author, poet, philosopher, abolitionist, naturalist, tax resister, development critic, surveyor, historian, and leading transcendentalist. He is best known for his book *Walden,* a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, and his essay "Civil Disobedience," an argument for individual resistance to civil government in moral opposition to an unjust state.

Among Thoreau's lasting contributions were his writings on natural history and philosophy, in which he anticipated the methods and findings of ecology and environmental history, two sources of modern day environmentalism. His literary style interweaves close natural

observation, personal experience, pointed rhetoric, symbolic meanings, and historical lore. He was also deeply interested in the idea of survival in the face of hostile elements, historical change, and natural decay. At the same time, he advocated abandoning waste and illusion in order to discover life's true essential needs.

He was a lifelong abolitionist, delivering lectures that attacked the Fugitive Slave Law while praising the writings of Wendell Phillips and defending abolitionist John Brown. Thoreau's philosophy of civil disobedience later influenced the political thoughts and actions of such notable figures as Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Transcendentalists were all from the greater Boston area, mostly men, all white, and most shared a Unitarian faith. Most Black Americans at this time were enslaved. Were there any widely known Black thinkers during this period? Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Frederick Douglass embodied Transcendentalist philosophy. They encountered Transcendentalism as free Black Americans living in the North. Both were well-educated and effective public speakers. Both were engaged in abolition, civil rights, and temperance movements.

## Focus on Individualism

Individualism is the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, or social outlook that stresses the moral worth and value of the individual. Individualists promote the exercise of one's goals and desires and so value independence and self-reliance while opposing external interference upon one's own interests by society or institutions such as the government. Liberalism, existentialism, and anarchism are examples of movements that take the human individual as a central unit of analysis. Individualism is associated with artistic and bohemian interests and lifestyles in which there is a tendency towards self-creation and experimentation as opposed to tradition or popular mass opinions and behaviors, and also with humanist philosophical positions and ethics.

Emerson championed individuality, freedom, and humankind's ability to realize almost anything. In his essay "Nature," Emerson asserted that because God's presence is inherent in both humanity and nature, all people contain seeds of divinity. His essay "Self-Reliance" thoroughly emphasizes the need for each individual to avoid conformity and false consistency and to follow his or her own instincts and ideas.

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Questions to Consider: Individualism may seem like an intrinsic characteristic of the people in the West and specifically of the United States, but that ideal evolved. What are the benefits of individualism? What might be its weaknesses?

# PART III
# DISCOVERY

# 16. What does it mean to make a discovery?

## What does it mean to make a Discovery?

What is the role of discovery in human history? As we trace a line over periods of discovery, consider the lasting impact of each, as that is what makes a discovery important. From Plato and Aristotle, the fathers of modern philosophy; to the Silk Road, which was born in the east but deeply impacted the west (if for no other reason than its role in contributing to the spread of the Plague); to the Enlightenment and changing views of faith; to the discovery of the Americas; to a renaissance for black artists in Harlem; to the Industrial Revolution, which radically changed the way that people lived and how the world works, for better and worse. The thread of change ties these and hundreds of other important discoveries together, and the overarching impetuses and results are our focus.



*Image of ornate, cast iron late 19th century sewing machine by Panjigally is licensed CC BY-SA 4.0.*

# 17. Plato & Aristotle

## Plato, Aristotle, and Legacy

## Thought Experiments

When philosophers want to clarify the relationship between concepts, they often consider hypothetical scenarios meant to isolate one or more features of a concept and place it in the appropriate relationship with other concepts. Such hypothetical scenarios are called thought experiments. These imaginative scenarios allow us to test or compare concepts to better understand their connections and logical consequences. Philosophers have used thought experiments for as long as we have a written record of philosophical thought. For instance, Plato devised an elaborate thought experiment in The Republic, in which he depicts Socrates and several of his friends describing an ideal city. The premise of this thought experiment is that if the philosophers could describe an ideal city in detail, they would be able to identify which part of the city gives rise to justice.

Aristotle, a Greek philosopher who followed Plato, arrives at the famous claim that "nature abhors a vacuum" (i.e., nature would not allow empty space between matter) by constructing a thought experiment. To argue for this conclusion, Aristotle assumes that there is such a void and then asks, how could one know the distance between two points in a vacuum? If there is any distance between two points, Aristotle reasons, that distance would have to be the property of something. But, by hypothesis, there is nothing between the two points: it is a pure void. Aristotle bases his reasoning on the idea that it is impossible for properties to exist without something they are the property of. This argument reveals that Aristotle thinks distance is a property of matter. Accordingly, it is impossible to measure distance in a pure void. Therefore, Aristotle reasons, it is not possible for a void to exist because it would occupy a distance that has no measure. Puzzles like this one can prompt fruitful philosophical reflection. What do you think about it?

Plato and his successors were prone to mysticism. It was easy to translate the philosophical theory of the forms into a mystical doctrine in which the forms were known by the mind of God. Aristotle resisted this trend. At the center of Aristotle's work was his doctrine of the four causes. He believed that the nature of any single thing could be understood by answering four basic questions: "What's it made of?" (material cause), "What shape does it have?" (formal cause), "What agent gave it this form?" (efficient cause), and, finally, "What is its end goal?" (final cause). Not only can we explain the nature of anything by answering these four

basic questions, we can also understand the nature of the universe. Aristotle's universe is a closed system that is comprehensible to humanity because it is composed of these four causes. Each cause leads to another, until we get to the first cause or prime mover at the head of it all. Somewhat obscurely, Aristotle claims that this first cause is "thought thinking itself."

It is important to understand Aristotle's account of the soul. Unlike Plato, who held that the soul is an eternal substance that is reborn in various bodies, Aristotle has a functional conception of the soul. He defined the soul based upon what the soul does. In Aristotle's understanding, all living things have souls. Plants have a vegetative soul that promotes growth and the exchange of nutrients. The animal soul, in addition to taking in nutrients and growing, experiences the world, desires things, and can move of its own volition. Added to these various functions in humans is the ability to reason.
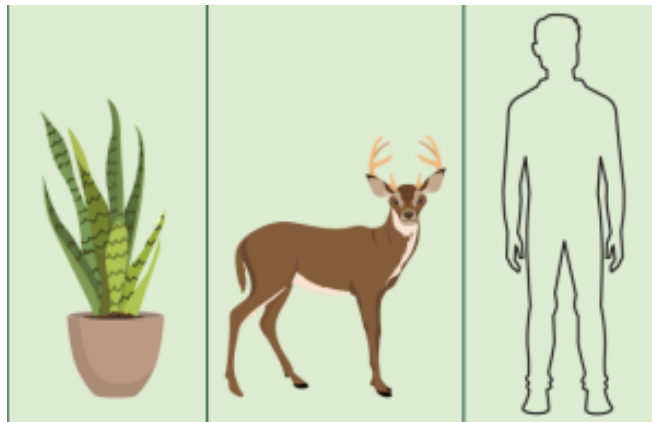
Aristotle believed that all living beings had souls, but that the souls of various types of creatures  differed in their abilities. The soul of a plant promotes growth and the exchange of nutrients. The animal soul allows for everything a plant can do, with the additional ability to desire things and move of its own volition. Only the human soul makes possible the ability to reason.

It is generally true to say that Plato tended to be more focused on the transcendental world of the forms while Aristotle and his followers were more focused on this worldly existence. They shared a belief that the universe was comprehensible and that reason should serve as a guide to ordering our lives.

# The Allegory of the Cave

In Book VII of *The Republic*, Plato offered his allegory of the cave, which depicts prisoners who have mistaken shadows cast on the wall of the cave for real beings and therefore have mistaken illusion for truth. The prisoners have been imprisoned throughout their lives. They are chained in place and have been positioned so that they can only see shadows that are cast upon the wall in front of them. They have come to treat the shadows not as the reflections that they are, but as something real. In an unexpected plot twist, one prisoner escapes and reaches the cave entrance. There, for the first time, he sees the sun, the true source of light (knowledge). After adjusting to the overpowering light emanating from the sun, the prisoner realizes that a fire was causing objects to cast shadows on the cave wall. The shadows cast by the fire within the cave were reflections. He realized that the shadows are not actual being or truth; they were merely fading facsimiles of reality. The escaped prisoner, freed from the chains of his earlier captivity (metaphorically speaking), understands the true nature of being and truth. He returns to the cave to "free" his fellow captives, but his claim is rejected by those in chains.

# Plato's Notion of Substance and Form

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"The Allegory of the Cave." *YouTube*, uploaded by TED-ed, 17 Mar. 2015

The prisoners were mistaking shadows for that which was real. But shadows do not last. As soon as the source of light fades, the shadows too disappear. If we want to identify the really real, Plato argued, we need to go beyond mere shadows and try to find those beings whose reality is not temporary. The idea or form of a thing, unlike the material "shadow," was not subject to atrophy and change.

To account for the fundamental whatness of a thing, Plato suggested an unchanging form or idea as the underlying and unchanging substance. As all things within a person's reality are subject to change, Plato reasoned that the forms or unchanging basic realities concerning all things must not be located within this world. He therefore posited a realm in which change did not occur.

There is an intuitive appeal to Plato's accounting of the real to forms. How else could we explain our ability to recognize a type of being given the sheer number of differences we will observe in the instances of a thing? We can make sense of dog, for example, because beyond the differences found among spaniels, poodles, and retrievers, there is a form of dog that accounts for knowing dog and being as dog.

## Aristotle on Matter and Form

Aristotle, a student of Plato, disagreed with his teacher. If forms did exist, he challenged, then how could forms influence things? How could an immaterial form–which lacks matter—cause change to material entities? In addition, what about concepts that are not easily reducible to a simple meaning or idea? Aristotle noted that "good was said in many ways" (Ethics 1096a–b as found in Adamson 2016, 232). The reduction to a single form to identify the whatness for something works when the concept is simple but does not work when a wide ranging concept (such as "the good") is considered. Aristotle agreed with the approach of isolating dog-ness as the essence, but through the study of specific instances or particulars. He encouraged natural observation of the entity in question and introduced the categories of species and genera.



*School of Athens* (modification of work "The School of Athens by Raphael") by *Bradley Weber*/ Flickr, *CC BY 2.0*

Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not focus an otherworldly form or collection of forms. In his middle and later works, Aristotle explained substance through a composite of matter and form. Form, much like an idea a sculptor has in mind, is the unchanging purpose or

whatness informing each particular or individual instance. In this case of a sculpture, the sculptor's vision or idea was referred to as the formal cause. The marble would be the material cause. The ability and artistic skill of the sculptor was termed the efficient cause. The final cause reflected the purpose of the being, or the reason why the sculpture was made in the first place.

The attitudes of Plato and Aristotle are reflected in Figure 6.5. This section details the interaction between the two central characters in the oil-on-canvas painting. Plato is the subject displayed to the left of center, and Aristotle is the subject depicted to the right of center. Plato's gesture toward the heavens with his right hand was the artist's way of recognizing Plato's theory of forms. For Plato, forms were immutable and the ultimate reality. Forms were supposed to exist outside of our earthly realm as the things we observe are subject to change. Aristotle's gesture with his right hand was the artist's representation of Aristotle's stressing of the form embedded within particular matter. The ultimate reality was supposed to be within each instance of matter observed. The material components were subject to change, but the form was not.

What do you think? The crucial difference introduced at this historical point was the emphasis placed upon particulars, individual instances of an entity, by Aristotle. While Plato stressed forms and asserted that there could be no individual instance without the form, Aristotle stressed particulars and asserted that without individual instances, there could be no knowledge of the form. Whereas Plato holds that beauty itself causes the beauty we see in flowers or faces, Aristotle asserts that there is no such thing as beauty without beautiful things, such as flowers and faces (Adamson 231)

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"Plato and Aristotle: Crash Course History of Science #3." *YouTube*, uploaded by Crash Course, 16 Apr. 2018.

# 18. The Silk Road

## Establishment of the Silk Road

Through southern and western conquests, the Han Dynasty of China (206 BCE-220 CE) made contact with the Indian cultural sphere. Emperor Wu repelled the invading barbarians (the Xiongnu, or Huns, a nomadic-pastoralist warrior people from the Eurasian steppe) and roughly doubled the size of the empire, claiming lands that included Korea, Manchuria, and even part of Turkistan. As China pushed its borders further, trade contacts were established with lands to the west, most notably via the Silk Road.
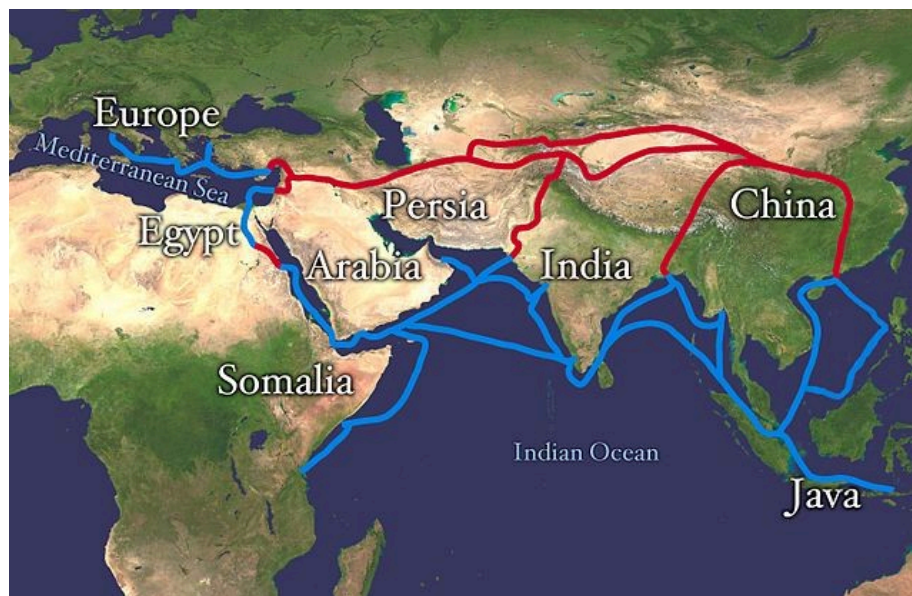


*Map of Silk Road. In this map of the Silk Road, red shows the land route and blue shows the maritime route.*

The Silk Road was a series of trade and cultural transmission routes that were central to cultural interaction between the West and East. Silk was certainly the major trade item from China, but many other goods were traded as well. These routes enabled strong trade relationships to develop with Persia, India, and the Roman Empire.

*Example of Woven Silk Textile. This woven silk textile from the Western Han era was found at Tomb No. 1 at Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan Province.*

## Chinese Control of the Silk Road

This expanded western territory became particularly important because of the silk routes. By this century, the Chinese had become very active in the silk trade, though until the Hans provided sufficient protection, the Silk Road had not functioned well because of nomad pirates. Expansion by the Han took place around 114 BCE, led mainly by imperial envoy Zhang Qian. The Great Wall of China was expanded to provide extra protection.

The Tang Dynasty reopened the route in 639 CE, but then lost it to the Tibetans in 678 CE. Control of the Silk Road would shuttle between China and Tibet until 737 CE. This second *Pax Sinica* helped the Silk Road reach its golden age. China was open to foreign cultures, and its urban areas could be quite cosmopolitan. The Silk Road helped to integrate cultures, but also exposed tribal and pastoral societies to new developments, sometimes causing them to become skilled warriors.

## The Mongolian Empire and the Disintegration of the Silk Road

The Mongol Empire, and *Pax Mongolica*, strengthened and re-established the Silk Road between 1207 and 1360 CE. However, as the Mongol Empire disintegrated, so did the Silk Road. Gunpowder hastened the failing integration, and the Silk Road stopped being a shipping route for silk around 1453 CE. A lasting effect of this was to inspire Europeans to find alternate routes to Asia for trade, including Christopher Columbus' famous overseas voyage in 1492.

Questions to Consider: What is the impact of the Silk Road on the development of the west? How was western civilization changed as a result of the Silk Road? In addition to trade, what else did the Silk Road contribute? Discovery is always about more than finding new land and new trading partners. In this sense, discovery leads to both positive and negative outcomes. When you think of the discoveries in this module, what positive and negative outcomes can you identify?

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*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.whccd.edu/westerncivilization/?p=103#oembed-1*

"The Silk Road and Ancient Trade: Crash Course World History #9." *YouTube*, uploaded by Crash Course, 22 Mar. 2012.

# 19. Faith in the Enlightenment

The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, is often considered an era of tolerance and religious freedom following dominance by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages. But was the Enlightenment anti-religious? How did the radical change in thinking about faith evolve? Why?

The Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, was an intellectual and cultural movement in the eighteenth century that emphasized reason over superstition and science over blind faith. Using the power of the press, Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke, Isaac Newton, and Voltaire questioned accepted knowledge and spread new ideas about openness, investigation, and religious tolerance throughout Europe and the Americas. Many consider the Enlightenment a major turning point in Western civilization, an age of light replacing an age of darkness.

Several ideas dominated Enlightenment thought, including rationalism, empiricism, progressivism, and cosmopolitanism. Rationalism is the idea that humans are capable of using their faculty of reason to gain knowledge. Empiricism promotes the idea that knowledge comes from experience and observation of the world. Progressivism is the belief that through their powers of reason and observation, humans could make unlimited, linear progress over time. Finally, cosmopolitanism reflected Enlightenment thinkers' view of themselves as citizens of the world and actively engaged in it, as opposed to being provincial and close-minded. In all, Enlightenment thinkers endeavored to be ruled by reason, not prejudice.

## What were the arguments against the Catholic Church?

During this time, "the Church" referred to the Catholic church. According to Peter Benson in "The Dialectics of Faith & Enlightenment" for *Philosophy Now*, "though Faith considers its transcendent God to be immune from the criticisms of the Enlightenment; the Enlightenment itself was skeptical, rather than rejecting the existence of such a Being. Enlightenment thinkers tended towards agnosticism rather than atheism. Often, like Rousseau, they believed in some kind of supreme Being, but wanted to dismantle the restrictive social structures of religion. Their real quarrel was with the Church and the priests, whom they took to be deliberately deceiving the people, keeping the population in their lowly place with religious hocus-pocus."

According to Aatif Rashid, "The Catholic Church cemented its power in the 11th century with the investiture controversy. Until the 11th century, church officials were appointed not by the pope but by kings who took bribes, a practice known as simony. Pope Gregory VII banned simony in 1075, and when Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV continued the practice, Gregory excommunicated him and declared his rule illegitimate, and in doing so instigated a rebellion against him by German princes. Without the pope's spiritual authority, Henry's power was considered meaningless."

So the leaders of powerful countries lost power over church officials, and the popes gained power.

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Rashid, Aatif. "Synonym." *Classroom.synonym.com*, Leaf Group202, 2020, https://classroom.synonym.com/.

What are the key characteristics of the Enlightenment, and how do they impact faith?

# 20. The Discovery of the Americas

## North America Before the Arrival of Europeans

Prior to the "discovery" of what would become the United States, millions of people inhabited the land. Most of these native people organized into tribes and lived more in tune with nature than those that followed. The Europeans did not find the kind of civilizations they were familiar with or even the powerful empires of the Aztec or Incans, which may have made it easier for them to think of themselves as discovering the land rather than conquering it.

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"The Black Legend, Native Americans, and Spaniards: Crash Course US History #1." *YouTube*, uploaded by Crash Course, 31 Jan. 2013.

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Questions to Consider: For hundreds of years, American education has glorified the explorers who "discovered" America while diminishing the role of the indigenous people. Why? Why is the recognition of indigenous people vital to an understanding of the development of the West? What good was brought by these explorers? What bad?

# 21. The Industrial Revolution

## The Industrial Revolution

Following 1850, the Industrial Revolution entered a more fast paced period of invention. Scientists and engineers working in laboratories began to replace people working in the field. Machines began to perfect the work that people used to do. Mass production and assembly lines began to change the work that people did. These machines were faster and more precise than individuals who may have previously assembled similar things or done similar work. So this is progress but also a major change in the work that people did and the kinds of work that was available. There was a growing need for raw materials to feed these machines, which led to Imperialism. This growth in industry leads to demands for and growth in communication and transportation. The telegraph and then radio come into use. Railroads greatly expanded. Automobiles become more readily available. The Wright brothers fly. Rapid growth of industry leads to changes in business as corporations take the place of individual businesses.

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"The Industrial Revolution: Crash Course European History #24." *YouTube*, Uploaded by CrashCourse, 5 Nov. 2019.

*Photo* by *Mike Marrah* on *Unsplash*

# Capitalism, Modernization, and Industrialization

As Western societies transitioned from pre-industrial economies based primarily on agriculture to industrialized societies in the 19th century, some people worried about the impacts such changes would have on society and individuals. Three early sociologists, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Emile Durkheim, envisioned different outcomes of the Industrial Revolution on both the individual and society and described these effects in their work.

## Weber and Rationalization

Max Weber was particularly concerned about the rationalization of society due to the Industrial Revolution and how this change would affect humanity's agency and happiness. Weber's understanding of rationalization was three-fold: first, as individual cost-benefit calculations; second, as the transformation of society into a bureaucratic entity; last, and on a much wider scale, as the opposite of perceiving reality through the lens of mystery and magic (disenchantment). Since Weber viewed rationalization as the driving force of society and given that bureaucracy was the most rational form of institutional governance, Weber believed bureaucracy would spread until it ruled society.

As Weber did not see any alternative to bureaucracy, he believed it would ultimately lead to an iron cage : there would be no way to escape it. Weber viewed this as a bleak outcome that would affect individuals' happiness as they would be forced to function in a society with rigid rules and norms. without the possibility of change.

Related to rationalization is the process of disenchantment, in which the world is becoming more explained and less mystical, moving from polytheistic religions to monotheistic ones and finally to the Godless science of modernity. Those processes affect all of society, removing "sublime values … from public life" and making art less creative.

## Marx and Alienation

Karl Marx took a different perspective on the Industrial Revolution. According to Marx, a capitalist system results in the alienation (or estrangement) of people from their "species being." Species being is a concept that Marx deploys to refer to what he sees as the original or intrinsic essence of the species, which is characterized both by plurality and dynamism: all beings possess the tendency and desire to engage in multiple activities to promote their mutual survival, comfort and sense of inter-connection

In a capitalist society (which co-evolved with the Industrial Revolution), the proletariat, or working class, own only their labor power and not the fruits of their labor (i.e. the results of production). The capitalists, or bourgeoisie, employ the proletariat for a living wage, and, in turn, they keep the products of the labor. A major implication of this system is that workers lose the ability to determine their lives and destinies by being deprived of the right to conceive of themselves as the director of their actions, to determine the character of their actions, to define their relationship to other actors, and to use or own the value of what is produced by their actions. This is what Marx refers to as alienation.

## Durkheim and Solidarity

Similar to Weber and Marx, Durkheim also believed that the societal changes brought upon by industrialization could eventually lead to unhappiness. According to Durkheim, an important component of social life was social solidarity, which can be understood as a sense of community. For example, in his classic study, *Suicide*, Durkheim argued that one of the root causes of suicide was a decrease in social solidarity, a phenomenon which Durkheim referred to as anomie (French for chaos). Durkheim also argued that the

increasing emphasis on individualism in Protestant religions – in contrast to Catholicism – contributed to a corresponding rise in anomie, which resulted in higher suicide rates among Protestants than among Catholics.

According to Durkheim, the types of social solidarity correlate with types of society. Durkheim introduced the terms "mechanical" and "organic solidarity" as part of his theory of the development of societies in *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893). In a society exhibiting mechanical solidarity, its cohesion and integration comes from the homogeneity of individuals—people feel connected through similar work, educational and religious training, and lifestyle. Mechanical solidarity normally operates in "traditional" and small scale societies. Organic solidarity comes from the interdependence that arises from specialization of work and the complementarities between people—a development which occurs in "modern" and "industrial" societies. Thus, organic solidarity is social cohesion based upon the dependence individuals have on each other in more advanced societies. Although individuals perform different tasks and often have different values and interest, the order and very solidarity of society depends on their reliance on each other to perform their specified tasks.

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Questions to Consider: How do you think people of that time felt about the changes? How does it compare to how people today think about technology taking jobs that people did?

# 22. The Harlem Renaissance

## The Harlem Renaissance

According to Britannica, the Harlem Renaissance was an igniting of African American culture, most notably in the creative arts, that occurred between 1918-37. It is the most significant movement in African American literary history. Artists worked to "reconceptualize 'the Negro' apart from the white stereotypes that had influenced Black peoples' relationship to their heritage and to each other" (Hutchinson). This movement is unique in its close relationship to civil rights reforms. Significant contributions to the movement were made by intellectuals W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Cyril Briggs, and Walter Francis White. Writers and poets Zora Neale Hurston, Effie Lee Newsome, Countee Cullen; visual artists Aaron Douglas and Augusta Savage. Legendary musicians Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Josephine Baker, Fats Waller, Jelly Roll Morton.



*Photo* published in *The Messenger in 1919 is in the* *public domain*.

# Civil Rights and the Harlem Renaissance

Most importantly, the Harlem Renaissance instilled in African Americans across the country a new spirit of self-determination and pride, a new social consciousness, and a new commitment to political activism, all of which would provide a foundation for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In doing so, it validated the beliefs of its founders and leaders like Alain Locke and Langston Hughes that art could be a vehicle to improve the lives of the African Americans.

## Artists of the Harlem Renaissance

What great art and artists rose during this period? What is the impact of their work? Two important poets of the era are Langston Hughes and Claude McKay in part because of the content of their work.



*Image of Langston Hughes* by *Wikipedia* is in the *public domain*

# EPILOGUE

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen *servant*
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed,—

I, too, am America.

[109]

*Photo of the poet, novelist and short story writer Claude McKay is in the Public Domain*

# "In Bondage" by Claude McKay

I would be wandering in distant fields
Where man, and bird, and beast, lives leisurely,
And the old earth is kind, and ever yields
Her goodly gifts to all her children free;
Where life is fairer, lighter, less demanding,
And boys and girls have time and space for play
Before they come to years of understanding—
Somewhere I would be singing, far away.
For life is greater than the thousand wars
Men wage for it in their insatiate lust,
And will remain like the eternal stars,
When all that shines to-day is drift and dust
But I am bound with you in your mean graves,
O black men, simple slaves of ruthless slaves.
"In Bondage" by Claude McKay is in the public domain.

# Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston was an author, anthropologist, and filmmaker. She portrayed racial struggles in the early-1900s American South. A prolific writer, her most popular novel is *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which was published in 1937. The settings for much of her work are based on her upbringing in the South. She attended Barnard College and Columbia University, where she studied anthropology. She was interested in African-American and Caribbean folklore and how these contributed to the community's identity.

Hurston's works concerned both the African-American experience and her struggles as an African-American woman. Her novels went relatively unrecognized by the literary world for decades. In 1975, fifteen years after Hurston's death, interest in her work was revived after author Alice Walker published an article, "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston" (later retitled "Looking for Zora"), in the March issue of *Ms.* magazine that year.

"[Zora Neale Hurston – American Folklorist.](#)" *YouTube*. Uploaded by Biography, 29 Jan. 2013.

Questions to Consider: How did these writers help readers of the time make new discoveries? What were those discoveries? Do readers today make the same discoveries in reading their works?
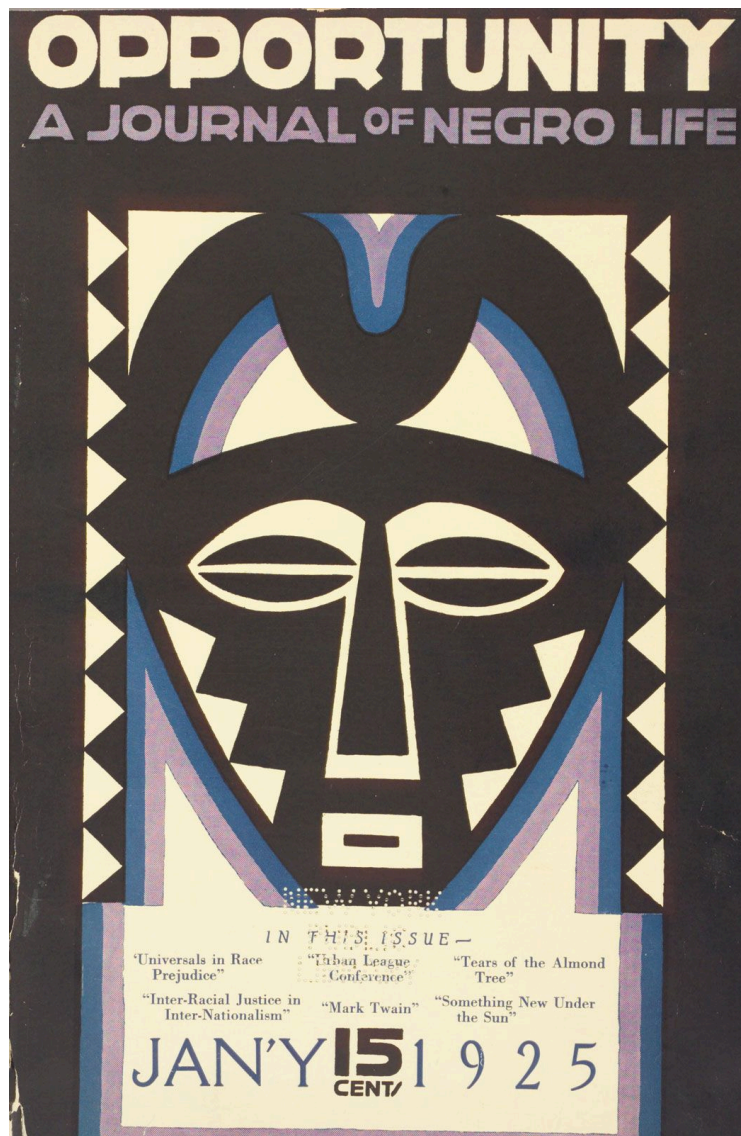
*Cover of Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life, January 1925. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library Digital Collection*

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Questions to Consider: What is the Harlem Renaissance? Why is is important? What are the lasting impacts of it?

# PART IV
# CONQUEST

# 23. What is a conquest?

## What is Conquest?

Merriam-Webster defines a conquest as the act or process of conquering, something conquered, a person whose favor or hand has been won. The term was first used in the 14th century. To conquer is to gain or acquire by force of arms, to gain mastery over or win by overcoming obstacles or opposition, to overcome by mental or moral power. How are the origins of a people likely to include conquest? How is the expansion of a country likely to do the same? When power shifts, how likely is conquest to have been the cause? Can conquest occur without battle? If people suffer over a period of time, power slipping from them, have they been conquered? Consider these questions as you explore these materials.



*"Fires burning along Archer and Greenwood during the massacre" from Wikipedia is in the public domain.*

# 24. Ancient Rome
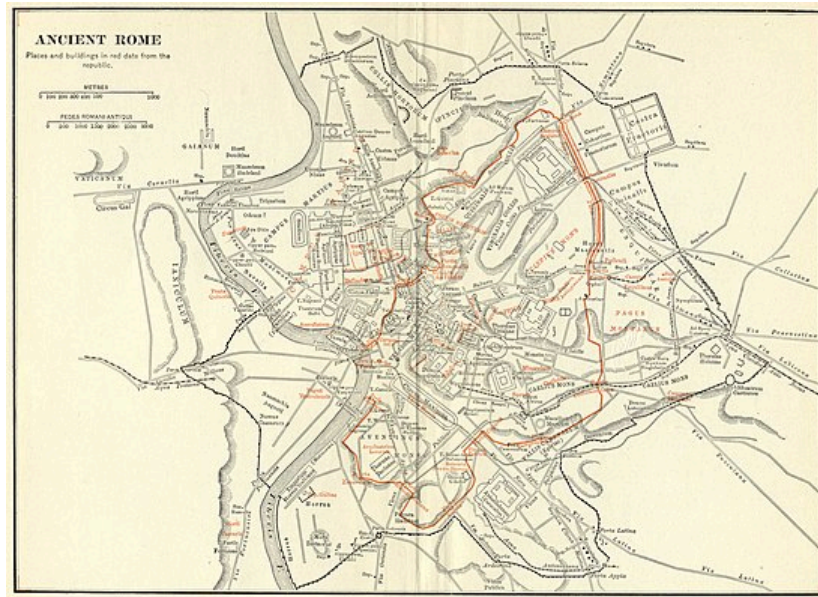


*Platner's map of Rome for The Topography and Monuments of Ancient Rome (1911) from Wikipedia is in the Public Domain.*

## The Founding of Rome

Myths surrounding the founding of Rome describe the city's origins through the lens of later figures and events.

The founding of Rome can be investigated through archaeology, but traditional stories, handed down by the ancient Romans themselves, explain the earliest history of their city in terms of legend and myth. The most familiar of these myths, and perhaps the most famous of all Roman myths, is the story of Romulus and Remus, the twins who were suckled by a she-wolf. The twins were abandoned at birth due to a prophecy that they would overthrow the great-uncle who had overthrown their grandfather, which they did when they were grown and understood their origins. After restoring their grandfather to the throne, they established Rome, though in the process Romulus killed his brother.

*The Capitoline Wolf: The iconic sculpture of Romulus and Remus being suckled by the she-wolf who raised them. Traditional scholarship says the wolf-figure is Etruscan, 5th century BCE, with figures of Romulus and Remus added in the 15th century CE by Antonio Pollaiuolo. Recent studies suggest that the wolf may be a medieval sculpture dating from the 13th century CE.*

# Early Roman Society

Roman society was extremely patriarchal and hierarchical. The adult male head of a household had special legal powers and privileges that gave him jurisdiction over all the members of his family, including his wife, adult sons, adult married daughters, and slaves, but there were multiple, overlapping hierarchies at play within society at large. An individual's relative position in one hierarchy might have been higher or lower than it was in another. The status of freeborn Romans was established by their ancestry; their census rank, which in turn was determined by the individual's wealth and political privilege; and citizenship, of which there were grades with varying rights and privileges.

## *Ancestry*

The most important division within Roman society was between patricians, a small elite who monopolized political power, and plebeians, who comprised the majority of Roman society. These designations were established at birth, with patricians tracing their ancestry back to the first Senate established under Romulus. Adult, male non-citizens fell outside the realms of these divisions, but women and children, who were also not considered formal citizens, took the social status of their father or husband. Originally, all public offices

were only open to patricians and the classes could not intermarry, but, over time, the differentiation between patrician and plebeian statuses became less pronounced, particularly after the establishment of the Roman republic.

## Citizenship

Citizenship in ancient Rome afforded political and legal privileges to free individuals with respect to laws, property, and governance. Most adult, free-born men within the city limits of Rome held Roman citizenship. Free-born women in ancient Rome were considered citizens, but they could not vote or hold political office. The status of a woman's citizenship affected the citizenship of her offspring.

Classes of non-citizens existed and held different legal rights. Under Roman law, slaves were considered property and held no rights. However, certain laws did regulate the institution of slavery, and extended protections to slaves that were not granted to other forms of property.

Ironically, many slaves originated from Rome's conquest of Greece, and yet Greek culture was considered, in some respects by the Romans, to be superior to their own. In this way, it seems Romans regarded slavery as a circumstance of birth, misfortune, or war, rather than being limited to, or defined by, ethnicity or race.

Skin tones did not carry any social implications, and no social identity, either imposed or assumed, was associated with skin color. Although the color black was associated with ill-omens in the ancient Roman religion, racism as understood today developed only after the classical period:

> "The ancients did not fall into the error of biological racism; black skin color was not a sign of inferiority. Greeks and Romans did not establish color as an obstacle to integration in society. An ancient society was one that for all its faults and failures never made color the basis for judging a man."
> — FRANK SNOWDEN, JR.

## Women in Wider Society

Roman women had a very limited role in public life. They could not attend, speak in, or vote at political assemblies, and they could not hold any position of political responsibility. Whilst it is true that some women with powerful partners might influence public affairs through their husbands, these were the exceptions. It is also interesting to note that those females who have political power in Roman literature are very often represented as motivated by

such negative emotions as spite and jealousy, and, further, their actions are usually used to show their male relations in a bad light. Lower class Roman women did have a public life because they had to work for a living. Typical jobs undertaken by such women were in agriculture, markets, crafts, as midwives and as wet-nurses.

Roman religion was male-dominated, but there were notable exceptions where women took a more public role such as the priestesses of Isis (in the Imperial period) and the Vestals. These latter women, the Vestal Virgins, served for 30 years in the cult of Vesta and they participated in many religious ceremonies, even performing sacrificial rites, a role typically reserved for male priests. There were also several female festivals such as the Bona Dea and some city cults, for example, of Ceres. Women also had a role to play in Judaism and Christianity but, once again, it would be men who debated what that role might entail.

# The Establishment of the Roman Republic

In 509, when the Romans overthrew the unpopular king, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, and established a republican form of government. The Roman monarchy was overthrown around 509 BCE, during a political revolution that resulted in the expulsion of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome. Subsequently, the Roman Republic was established.

## *Structure of the Republic*

The Roman Republic was composed of the Senate, a number of legislative assemblies, and elected magistrates.

The Constitution of the Roman Republic was a set of guidelines and principles passed down, mainly through precedent. The constitution was largely unwritten and uncodified, and evolved over time. Rather than creating a government that was primarily a democracy (as was ancient Athens), an aristocracy (as was ancient Sparta), or a monarchy (as was Rome before, and in many respects after, the Republic), the Roman constitution mixed these three elements of governance into their overall political system. The democratic element took the form of legislative assemblies; the aristocratic element took the form of the Senate; and the monarchical element took the form of the many term-limited consuls.

*The Roman SPQR Banner: "SPQR" (senatus populusque romanus) was the Roman motto, which stood for "the Senate and People of Rome".*

## The Roman Senate

The Senate's ultimate authority derived from the esteem and prestige of the senators and was based on both precedent and custom. The Senate passed decrees, ostensibly "advice" handed down from the senate to a magistrate. In practice, the magistrates usually followed the *senatus consulta*. The focus of the Roman Senate was usually foreign policy. However, the power of the Senate expanded over time as the power of the legislative assemblies declined, and eventually the Senate took a greater role in civil law-making.



*Curia Iulia – The Roman Senate House: The Curia Julia in the Roman Forum, the seat of the imperial Senate.*

*Legislative Assemblies*

Roman citizenship was a vital prerequisite to possessing many important legal rights, such as the rights to trial and appeal, marriage, suffrage, to hold office, to enter binding contracts, and to enjoy special tax exemptions.

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# Roman Society Under the Republic

In the first few centuries of the Roman Republic, a number of developments affected the relationship between the government and the Roman people, particularly in regard to how that relationship differed across the separate strata of society.

## *Art and Literature in the Roman Republic*

Culture flourished during the Roman Republic with the emergence of great authors, such as Cicero and Lucretius, and with the development of Roman relief and portraiture sculpture.

Roman literature was, from its very inception, heavily influenced by Greek authors. Some of the earliest works we possess are historical epics telling the early military history of Rome, similar to the Greek epic narratives of Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides. Virgil, though generally considered to be an Augustan poet, and famous for his *Aeneid*, represents the pinnacle of Roman epic poetry.

# The Age of Cicero



*Bust of Cicero: A mid-first century CE bust of Cicero, in the Capitoline Museums, Rome*

Cicero has traditionally been considered the master of Latin prose. The writing he produced from approximately 80 BCE until his death in 43 BCE, exceeds that of any Latin author whose work survives, in terms of quantity and variety of genre and subject matter. His philosophical works were the basis of moral philosophy during the Middle Ages, and his speeches inspired many European political leaders, as well as the founders of the United States.

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# Crises of the Republic

The 1st century BCE saw tensions between patricians and plebeians erupt into violence, as the Republic became increasingly more divided and unstable.

The Crises of the Roman Republic refers to an extended period of political instability and social unrest that culminated in the demise of the Roman Republic, and the advent of the Roman Empire from about 134 BCE-44 BCE. The exact dates of this period of crisis

are unclear or are in dispute from scholar to scholar. Though the causes and attributes of individual crises varied throughout the decades, an underlying theme of conflict between the aristocracy and ordinary citizens drove the majority of actions.

Following a period of great military successes and economic failures of the early Republican period, many plebeian calls for reform among the classes had been quieted. However, many new slaves were being imported from abroad, causing an unemployment crisis among the lower classes. A flood of unemployed citizens entered Rome, giving rise to populist ideas throughout the city.

## Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar was a late Republic statesman and general who waged civil war against the Roman Senate, defeating many patrician conservatives before he declared himself dictator.

Gaius Julius Caesar was a Roman general, statesman, consul, and notable author of Latin prose. He played a critical role in the events that led to the demise of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire. Caesar became the first Roman general to cross both when he built a bridge across the Rhine and conducted the first invasion of Britain.

# Caesar as Dictator
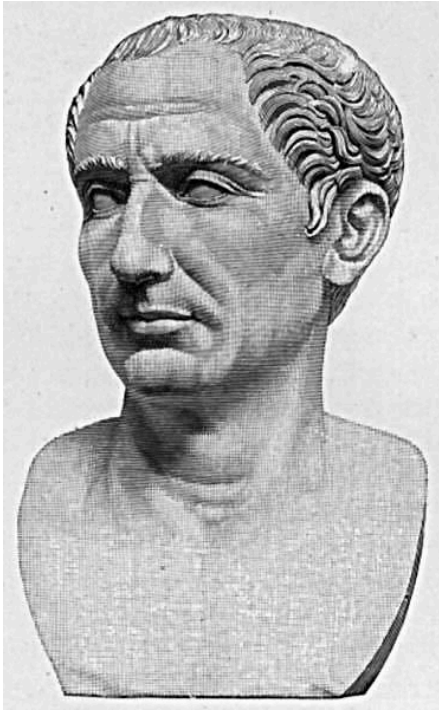


*Bust of Cicero: A mid-first century CE bust of Cicero, in the Capitoline Museums, Rome.*

After assuming control of the government upon the defeat of his enemies in 45 BCE, Caesar began a program of social and governmental reforms that included the creation of the Julian calendar.

To minimize the risk that another general might attempt to challenge him, Caesar passed a law that subjected governors to term limits. All of these changes watered down the power of the Senate, which infuriated those used to aristocratic privilege. Such anger proved to be fuel for Caesar's eventual assassination.

Despite the defeat of most of his conservative enemies, however, underlying political conflicts had not been resolved. On the Ides of March (March 15) 44 BCE, Caesar was scheduled to appear at a session of the Senate, and a group of senators led by Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus conspired to assassinate him.

# Founding of the Roman Empire



*Augustus of Prima Porta: The statue of Augustus of Prima Porta is perhaps one of the best known images of the Emperor Augustus. It portrays the emperor as perpetually youthful, and depicts many of the key propaganda messages that Augustus put forth during his time as emperor.*

Augustus rose to power after Julius Caesar's assassination, through a series of political and military maneuvers, eventually establishing himself as the first emperor of Rome. He is regarded by many scholars as the founder and first emperor of the Roman Empire. He ruled from 27 BCE until his death in 14 CE.

Augustus was born Gaius Octavius, and in his early years was known as Octavian. He was from an old and wealthy equestrian branch of the plebeian Octavii family. Following the assassination of his maternal great-uncle, Julius Caesar, in 44 BCE, Caesar's will named Octavian as his adopted son and heir when Octavian was only 19 years old. The young Octavian quickly took advantage of the situation and ingratiated himself with both the Roman people and his adoptive father's legions, thereby elevating his status and importance within Rome. Octavian found Mark Antony, Julius Caesar's former colleague and the current consul of Rome, in an uneasy truce with Caesar's assassins, who had been granted general amnesty for their part in the plot. Nonetheless, Antony eventually succeeded in driving most of them out of Rome, using Caesar's eulogy as an opportunity to mount public opinion against the assassins.

Mark Antony began amassing political support, and Octavian set about rivaling it. Eventually, many Caesarian sympathizers began to view Octavian as the lesser evil of the two. Octavian allied himself with optimate factions, despite their opposition to Caesar when he was alive.

The Roman Senate, at Octavian's direction, declared war on Cleopatra's regime in Egypt and proclaimed Antony a traitor. Antony was defeated by Octavian at the naval Battle of Actium the same year. Defeated, Antony fled with Cleopatra to Alexandria where they both committed suicide. With Antony dead, Octavian was left as the undisputed master of the Roman world. Octavian would assume the title Augustus, and reign as the first Roman Emperor.

# The Pax Romana

The Pax Romana, which began under Augustus, was a 200-year period of peace in which Rome experienced minimal expansion by military forces.

## *Augustus's Constitutional Reforms*

After the demise of the Second Triumvirate, Augustus restored the outward facade of the free Republic with governmental power vested in the Roman Senate, the executive magistrates, and the legislative assemblies. In reality, however, he retained his autocratic power over the Republic as a military dictator. By law, Augustus held powers granted to him for life by the Senate, including supreme military command and those of tribune and censor. It took several years for Augustus to develop the framework within which a formally republican state could be led under his sole rule.

Augustus passed a series of laws between the years 30 and 2 BCE that transformed the constitution of the Roman Republic into the constitution of the Roman Empire. During this time, Augustus reformed the Roman system of taxation, developed networks of roads with an official courier system, established a standing army, established the Praetorian Guard, created official police and fire-fighting services for Rome, and rebuilt much of the city during his reign.

## *The Julio-Claudian Emperors*

The Julio-Claudian emperors expanded the boundaries of the Roman Empire and engaged in ambitious construction projects. However, they were met with mixed public reception due to their unique ruling methods.

# Tiberius

Tiberius: Tiberius,
*Romisch-Germanisches Museum,
Cologne*

Tiberius was the second emperor of the Roman Empire and reigned from 14 to 37 CE. The previous emperor, Augustus, was his stepfather; this officially made him a Julian. However, his biological father was Tiberius Claudius Nero, making him a Claudian by birth. Subsequent emperors would continue the blended dynasty of both families for the next 30 years, leading historians to name it the Julio-Claudian Dynasty. Tiberius is also the grand-uncle of Caligula, his successor, the paternal uncle of Claudius, and the great-grand uncle of Nero.

Tiberius is considered one of Rome's greatest generals. His conquests laid the foundations for the northern frontier. However, he was known by contemporaries to be dark, reclusive, and somber—a ruler who never really wanted to be emperor. Tiberius attempted to play the part of the reluctant public servant, but came across as derisive and obstructive. His direct orders appeared vague, inspiring more debate than action and leaving the Senate to act on its own.

# Caligula



*Caligula: Emperor Caligula, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek*

When Tiberius died in 37 CE, his estate and titles were left to Caligula and Tiberius's grandson, Gemellus, with the intention that they would rule as joint heirs. However, Caligula's first act as Princeps was to to void Tiberius's will and have Gemellus executed. When Tiberius died, he had not been well liked. Caligula, on the other hand, was almost universally celebrated when he claimed the title. There are few surviving sources on Caligula's reign. Caligula's first acts as emperor were generous in spirit but political in nature. He granted bonuses to the military. He destroyed Tiberius's treason papers and declared that treason trials would no longer continue as a practice, even going so far as to recall those who had already been sent into exile for treason. He also helped those who had been adversely affected by the imperial tax system, banished certain sexual deviants, and put on large public spectacles, such as gladiatorial games, for the common people.

Although he is described as a noble and moderate ruler during the first six months of his reign, sources portray him as a cruel and sadistic tyrant immediately thereafter. The transitional point seems to center around an illness Caligula experienced in October of 37 CE. It is unclear whether the incident was merely an illness or if Caligula had been poisoned. Either way, following the incident, the young emperor began dealing with what he considered to be serious threats, by killing or exiling those who were close to him. During the remainder of his reign, he worked to increase the personal power of the emperor during his short reign and devoted much of his attention to ambitious construction projects and luxurious dwellings for himself.

In 39 CE, relations between Caligula and the Senate deteriorated. Caligula ordered a new set of treason investigations and trials, replacing the consul and putting a number of senators to death. Many other senators were reportedly treated in a degrading fashion and humiliated by Caligula. In 41 CE, Caligula was assassinated as part of a conspiracy by officers of the Praetorian Guard, senators, and courtiers. The conspirators used the assassination as an opportunity to re-institute the Republic but were ultimately unsuccessful.

## Claudius

Claudius, the fourth emperor of the Roman Empire, was the first Roman Emperor to be born outside of Italy. He was afflicted with a limp and slight deafness, which caused his family to ostracize him and exclude him from public office until he shared the consulship with his nephew, Caligula, in 37 CE. Due to Claudius's afflictions, it is likely he was spared from the many purges of Tiberius and Caligula's reigns. As a result, Claudius was declared Emperor by the Praetorian Guard after Caligula's assassination, due to his position as the last man in the Julio-Claudian line.

Despite his lack of experience, Claudius was an able and efficient administrator, as well as an ambitious builder; he constructed many roads, aqueducts, and canals across the Empire. His reign also saw the beginning of the conquest of Britain.

## The Last Julio-Claudian Emperors

Nero's consolidation of personal power led to rebellion, civil war, and a year-long period of upheaval, during which four separate emperors ruled Rome.

## Nero

Nero reigned as Roman Emperor from 54 to 68 CE, and was the last emperor in the Julio-Claudian Dynasty. Nero focused on diplomacy, trade, and enhancing the cultural life of the Empire during his rule. He ordered theaters to be built and promoted athletic games.

Nero's consolidation of power included a slow usurpation of authority from the Senate. Although he had promised the Senate powers equivalent to those it had under republican rule, over the course of the first decade of Nero's rule, the Senate was divested of all its authority, which led to conspiracies. These conspiracies failed, which led to the execution of all conspirators. Seneca was also ordered to commit suicide after he admitted to having prior knowledge of the plot. Following a rebellion and the refusal of his army officers to follow his commands, Nero committed suicide.

# Eruptions of Vesuvius and Pompeii

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE was one of the most catastrophic volcanic eruptions in European history, with several Roman settlements obliterated and buried, and thereby preserved, under ash.

Although his administration was marked by a relative absence of major military or political conflicts, Titus faced a number of major disasters during his brief reign. On August 24, 79 CE, barely two months after the accession of Agricola, Mount Vesuvius erupted, resulting in the almost complete destruction of life and property in the cities and resort communities around the Bay of Naples. The cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum were buried under meters of stone and lava, killing thousands of citizens. Titus appointed two ex-consuls to organize and coordinate the relief effort, while personally donating large amounts of money from the imperial treasury to aid the victims of the volcano. Additionally, he visited Pompeii once after the eruption and again the following year.

The city was lost for nearly 1,700 years before its accidental rediscovery in 1748. Since then, its excavation has provided an extraordinarily detailed insight into the life of a city at the height of the Roman Empire, frozen at the moment it was buried on August 24, 79. The Forum, the baths, many houses, and some out-of-town villas, like the Villa of the Mysteries, remain surprisingly well preserved. On-going excavations reveal new insights into the Roman history and culture.

## *The Eruption*

Reconstructions of the eruption and its effects vary considerably in the details but have the same overall features. The eruption lasted for two days. The morning of the first day, August 24, was perceived as normal by the only eyewitness to leave a surviving document, Pliny the Younger, who at that point was staying on the other side of the Bay of Naples, about 19 miles from the volcano, which may have prevented him from noticing the early signs of the eruption. He was not to have any opportunity, during the next two days, to talk to people who had witnessed the eruption from Pompeii or Herculaneum (indeed he never mentions Pompeii in his letter), so he would not have noticed early, smaller fissures and releases of ash and smoke on the mountain, if such had occurred earlier in the morning.

Around 1:00 p.m., Mount Vesuvius violently exploded, throwing up a high-altitude column from which ash began to fall, blanketing the area. Rescues and escapes occurred during this time. At some time in the night or early the next day, August 25, pyroclastic flows in the close vicinity of the volcano began. Lights seen on the mountain were interpreted as

fires. The flows were rapid-moving, dense, and very hot, knocking down wholly or partly all structures in their path, incinerating or suffocating all population remaining there and altering the landscape, including the coastline. These were accompanied by additional light tremors and a mild tsunami in the Bay of Naples. By evening of the second day the eruption was over, leaving only haze in the atmosphere, through which the sun shone weakly.



*Pompeii's "Garden of the Fugitives": Plaster casts of victims still in situ; many casts are in the Archaeological Museum of Naples.*

Pliny the Younger wrote an account of the eruption:

Broad sheets of flame were lighting up many parts of Vesuvius; their light and brightness were the more vivid for the darkness of the night... it was daylight now elsewhere in the world, but there the darkness was darker and thicker than any night.

In Pompeii, the eruption destroyed the city, killing its inhabitants and burying it under tons of ash. Evidence for the destruction originally came from a surviving letter by Pliny the Younger, who saw the eruption from a distance and described the death of his uncle, Pliny the Elder, an admiral of the Roman fleet, who tried to rescue citizens. The site was lost for about 1,500 years until its initial rediscovery in 1599 and broader rediscovery almost 150 years later. The objects that lay beneath the city have been preserved for centuries because of the lack of air and moisture. These artifacts provide an extraordinarily detailed insight into the life of a city during the Pax Romana. During the excavation, plaster was used to fill in the voids in the ash layers that once held human bodies. This allowed archaeologists to see the exact position the person was in when he or she died.

## Flavian Architecture

Under the Flavian Dynasty, a massive building program was undertaken, leaving multiple enduring landmarks in the city of Rome, the most spectacular of which was the Flavian Amphitheater, better known as the Colosseum.

The Flavian Dynasty is perhaps best known for its vast construction program on the city of Rome, intended to restore the capital from the damage it had suffered during the Great Fire of 64, and the civil war of 69. Vespasian added the temple of Peace and the temple to the deified Claudius. In 75, a colossal statue of Apollo, begun under Nero as a statue of himself, was finished on Vespasian's orders, and he also dedicated a stage of the theater of Marcellus. Construction of the Flavian Amphitheater, presently better known as the Colosseum (probably after the nearby statue), was begun in 70 CE under Vespasian, and finally completed in 80 under Titus. In addition to providing spectacular entertainments to the Roman populace, the building was also conceived as a gigantic triumphal monument to commemorate the military achievements of the Flavians during the Jewish wars. Adjacent to the amphitheater, within the precinct of Nero's Golden House, Titus also ordered the construction of a new public bath-house, which was to bear his name. Construction of this building was hastily finished to coincide with the completion of the Flavian Amphitheater.

*The Flavian Amphitheater: The most enduring landmark of the Flavian Dynasty was the Flavian Amphitheater, better known as the Colosseum. Its construction was begun by Vespasian, and ultimately finished by Titus and Domitian, financed from the spoils of the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple.*

## The Nerva-Antonine Dynasty

The Nerva-Antonine Dynasty was a dynasty of seven Roman Emperors who ruled over the Roman Empire during a period of prosperity from 96 CE to 192 CE. The most famous of these is Marcus Aurelius.

*Bust of Hadrian: Bust of the Emperor Hadrian, who ruled from 117-138 CE.*

## Hadrian

Hadrian was Roman Emperor from 117 to 138 CE. Known for his grand building projects, he re-built the Pantheon and constructed the Temple of Venus and Roma. He is also known for building Hadrian's Wall, which marked the northern limit of Roman Britain. Evidence of the wall still exists. During his reign, Hadrian traveled to nearly every province of the Empire. An ardent admirer of Greece, he sought to make Athens the cultural capital of the empire, and created a popular cult in the name of his Greek lover, Antinous. He spent extensive amounts of his time with the military; he usually wore military attire and even dined and slept amongst the soldiers.



*Photo by Toa Heftiba on Unsplash*

## Marcus Aurelius

Marcus Aurelius was Roman Emperor from 161 to 180 CE. He was the last of the Five Good Emperors and was a practitioner of Stoicism. His untitled writing, commonly known as the Meditations, is the most significant source of our modern understanding of ancient Stoic philosophy.

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## Constantine and Christianity

The first recorded official persecution of Christians on behalf of the Roman Empire was in AD 64, when, as reported by the Roman historian Tacitus, Emperor Nero attempted to blame Christians for the Great Fire of Rome. According to Church tradition, it was during the reign of Nero that Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome. However, modern historians debate whether the Roman government distinguished between Christians and Jews prior to Nerva's modification of the *Fiscus Judaicus* in 96, from which point practising Jews paid the tax and Christians did not.

Christians suffered from sporadic and localized persecutions over a period of two and a half centuries. Their refusal to participate in the imperial cult was considered an act of treason and was thus punishable by execution. The most widespread official persecution was carried out by Diocletian beginning in 303. During the Great Persecution, the emperor ordered Christian buildings and the homes of Christians torn down and their sacred books collected and burned. Christians were arrested, tortured, mutilated, burned, starved, and condemned to gladiatorial contests to amuse spectators. The Great Persecution officially ended in April 311, when Galerius, which granted Christians the right to practice their religion, although it did not restore any property to them. Constantine, caesar in the Western Empire, and Licinius, caesar in the East, also were signatories to the edict.

During Constantine's reign, (306–337 AD), Christianity began to transition to the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. Historians remain uncertain about Constantine's reasons for favoring Christianity, and theologians and historians have often argued about which form of early Christianity he subscribed to.

Constantine ruled the Roman Empire as sole emperor for much of his reign. Some scholars allege that his main objective was to gain unanimous approval and submission to his authority from all classes, and therefore he chose Christianity to conduct his political propaganda, believing that it was the most appropriate religion that could fit with the imperial cult. Regardless, under the Constantinian dynasty Christianity expanded

throughout the empire, launching the era of the state church of the Roman Empire. His formal conversion in 312 is almost universally acknowledged among historians. According to Hans Pohlsander, professor emeritus of history at the University at Albany, SUNY, Constantine's conversion was just another instrument of *realpolitik* in his hands meant to serve his political interest in keeping the empire united under his control:

> The prevailing spirit of Constantine's government was one of conservatism. His conversion to and support of Christianity produced fewer innovations than one might have expected; indeed they served an entirely conservative end, the preservation and continuation of the Empire.
> —HANS POHLSANDER, *THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE*

Constantine's decision to cease the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire was a turning point for early Christianity, sometimes referred to as the Triumph of the Church, the Peace of the Church or the Constantinian shift. The emperor became a great patron of the Church and set a precedent for the position of the Christian emperor within the Church.

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# 25. The Middle Ages

The Middle Ages or Medieval period is a stretch of European history that lasted from the 5 [th] until the 15th centuries It began with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, and was followed by the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery. The Middle Ages is the middle period of the traditional division of Western history into Classical, Medieval, and Modern periods. The period is subdivided into the Early Middle Ages, the High Middle Ages, and the Late Middle Ages. For some Renaissance scholars, the years between the end of the Roman Empire and their own age were of little value. They saw 1000 years of darkness caused by the loss of the law and order of the Romans and its replacement by feudalism. Few strides were seen as being made in military strength, trade, or architecture. Roads deteriorated, making travel more difficult.

In the Early Middle Ages, depopulation, deurbanization, and barbarian invasions, which began in Late Antiquity, continued. The barbarian invaders formed new kingdoms in the remains of the Western Roman Empire. In the 7 [th] century North Africa and the Middle East, once part of the Eastern Roman Empire (the Byzantine Empire), became an Islamic Empire after conquest by Muhammad's successors. Although there were substantial

changes in society and political structures, the break with Antiquity was not complete. The still sizeable Byzantine Empire survived and remained a major power. The empire's law code, the Code of Justinian, was widely admired. In the West, most kingdoms incorporated extant Roman institutions, while monasteries were founded as Christianity expanded in western Europe. The Franks, under the Carolingian dynasty, established an empire covering much of western Europe; the Carolingian Empire endured until the 9<sup>th</sup> century, when it succumbed to the pressures of invasion — the Vikings from the north; the Magyars from the east, and the Saracens from the south.

During the High Middle Ages, which began after AD 1000, the population of Europe increased greatly as technological and agricultural innovations allowed trade to flourish and crop yields to increase. Manorialism, the organization of peasants into villages that owed rent and labor services to the nobles; and feudalism, the political structure whereby knights and lower-status nobles owed military service to their overlords, in return for the right to rent from lands and manors – were two of the ways society was organized in the High Middle Ages. The Crusades, first preached in 1095, were military attempts, by western European Christians, to regain control of the Middle Eastern Holy Land from the Muslims. Kings became the heads of centralized nation states, reducing crime and violence but making the ideal of a unified Christendom more distant. Intellectual life was marked by scholasticism, a philosophy which emphasized joining faith to reason, and by the founding of universities. The philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, the paintings of Giotto, the poetry of Dante and Chaucer, the travels of Marco Polo, and the architecture of Gothic cathedrals such as Chartres are among the outstanding achievements of this period.

The Late Middle Ages were marked by difficulties and calamities, such as famine, plague, and war, which much diminished the population of western Europe; in the four years from 1347 through 1350, the Black Death killed approximately a third of the European population. Controversy, heresy, and schism within the Church paralleled the warfare between states, the civil war, and peasant revolts occurring in the kingdoms. Cultural and technological developments transformed European society, concluding the Late Middle Ages and beginning the Early Modern period.

## Early Middle Ages

Although the political structure in western Europe had changed, the divide is not as extensive as some historians have claimed. Although the activity of the barbarians is usually described as "invasions", they were not just military expeditions but were migrations of

entire peoples into the Empire. Such movements were aided by the refusal of the western Roman elites to either support the army or pay the taxes that would have allowed the military to suppress the migration.

This led to a fusion of the Roman culture with the customs of the invading tribes, including the popular assemblies which allowed free male tribal members more say in political matters. Material artifacts left by the Romans and the invaders are often similar, with tribal items often being obviously modeled on Roman objects. Similarly, much of the intellectual culture of the new kingdoms was directly based on Roman intellectual traditions.

An important difference was the gradual loss of tax revenue by the new polities. Many of the new political entities no longer provided their armies with tax revenues, instead allocating land or rents. This meant there was less need for large tax revenues and so the taxation systems decayed. Warfare was common between and within the kingdoms. Slavery declined as the supply declined, and society became more rural.
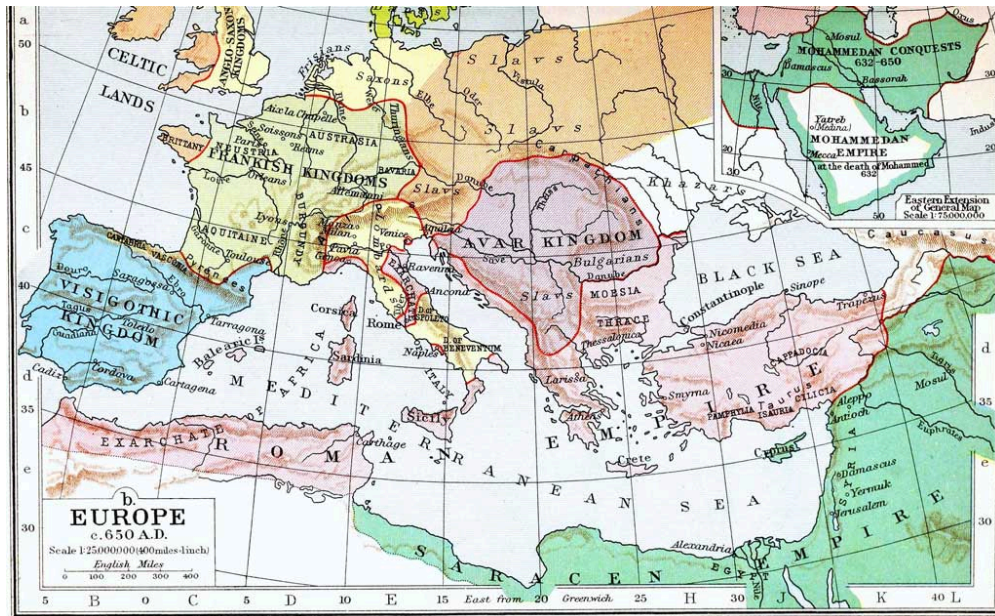
[Europe around 650](#) by Ramsey Muir is in the [Public Domain](#)

Between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, new peoples and powerful individuals filled the political void left by Roman centralized government. With the invasions came new ethnic groups into parts of Europe, but the settlement was uneven, with some regions such as Spain having a larger settlement of new peoples than other places. The settlement of peoples was accompanied by changes in languages. The Latin of the Western Roman Empire was gradually replaced by languages based on but distinct from Latin, which are collectively known as romance languages. These changes from Latin to the new languages took many centuries and went through a number of stages.

Society in western Europe changed with the new rulers. Some of the Roman elite families died out while others became more involved with Church than secular affairs. The older values of Latin scholarship and education mostly disappeared, and while literacy remained important, it became a practical skill rather than a sign of elite status.

By the late 6<sup>th</sup> century, the principal means of religious instruction in the Church ceased to be the book and was replaced with music and art. Most intellectual efforts went towards imitating classical scholarship, but some original works were created, along with now-lost oral compositions.

With laymen, a similar change took place, with the aristocratic culture focusing on great feasts held in halls. Clothing for the elites was richly embellished with jewels and gold. Lords and kings supported entourages of fighters who formed the backbone of the military forces of the time. Family ties within the elites were important, as were the virtues of loyalty, courage, and honor.

Peasant society is much less documented than the nobility. Most of the surviving information available to historians comes from archaeology; few detailed written records documenting peasant life remain from before the 9<sup>th</sup>century. Most the descriptions of the lower classes come from either law codes or writers from the upper classes. Landholding patterns in the West were not uniform, with some areas having greatly fragmented landholding patterns and other areas with a pattern of large, contiguous blocks of land being the norm. These differences allowed for a wide variety of peasant societies with some being dominated by aristocratic landholders and others having a great deal of autonomy.



*Medieval illustration of men harvesting wheat with reaping-hooks by Ann Scott is in the Public Domain*

Land settlement also varied greatly. Some peasants lived in large settlements that numbered as many as 700 inhabitants. Others lived in small groups of a few families and still others lived on isolated farms spread over the countryside. There were also areas where the pattern was a mix of two or more of those systems. Unlike in the late Roman period, there was no sharp break between the legal status of the free peasant and the aristocrat, and it was possible for a free peasant's family to rise into the aristocracy over a number of generations through military service to a powerful lord.

Roman city life and culture changed greatly in the early Middle Ages. Although Italian cities remained inhabited places, they contracted greatly in size. Rome shrank from a population of hundreds of thousands to around 30,000 by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Roman temples were converted into Christian churches and the city walls remained in use. In Northern Europe, cities also shrank, while the public monuments and other public buildings were raided for building materials. The establishment of new kingdoms often meant some growth for the towns chosen as capitals.

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Question to consider: In what ways do you think the average person's life suffered after the fall of the Roman Empire?

## Life in the High Middle Ages



*"Representation of the tripartite social order of the middle ages"* *by an unknown author is licensed under* *Public Domain*.

The High Middle Ages saw an expansion of population with rough estimates of the increase from the year 1000 until 1347 indicating that the population of Europe grew from 35 to 80 million. The exact cause or causes of the growth remain unclear, though improved agricultural techniques, the decline of slaveholding, a more clement climate and the lack of invasion may all have contributed.

As much as 90 percent of the European population lived in rural areas. Many of them were no longer settled in isolated farms but had gathered into manors or villages. These peasants were often subject to noble overlords and owed them rents and other services, in a system known as manorialism.

The clergy was divided into two types — the secular clergy who lived in the world, and the regular clergy, or those who lived under a religious rule and were usually monks. Most of the regular clergy were drawn from the ranks of the nobility, the same social class that served as the recruiting ground for the upper levels of the secular clergy. The local parish priests were often drawn from the peasant class.

# Crusades



*"[A battle of the Second Crusade](#)" by anonymous is licensed under [Public Domain.](#)*

The Crusades were intended to seize Jerusalem from Muslim control. The first Crusade was proclaimed by Pope Urban II (pope 1088–1099). Tens of thousands of people from all levels of society mobilized across Europe, and captured Jerusalem in 1099 during the First Crusade. Further crusades were called to aid the crusaders in conflicts with Islamic states, or such as the Third Crusade, called to try to regain Jerusalem, which was captured in 1187.

Popes called for crusades to take place other than in the Holy Land, with crusades being proclaimed in Spain, southern France, and along the Baltic. The Spanish crusades became fused with the Reconquista, or reconquest, of Spain from the Muslims.

## Technology and military

In the 12$^{th}$ and 13$^{th}$ centuries, Europe saw a number of innovations in methods of production and economic growth. Major technological advances included the invention of the windmill, the first mechanical clocks, the first investigations of optics and the creation of crude lenses, the manufacture of distilled spirits and the use of the astrolabe. Glassmaking advanced with the development of a process that allowed the creation of transparent glass in the early 13$^{th}$ century. Transparent glass made possible the science of optics by Roger Bacon (d. 1294), who is credited with the invention of eyeglasses.

A major agricultural innovation was the development of a 3-field rotation system for planting crops. The development of the heavy plow allowed heavier soils to be farmed more efficiently, an advance that was helped along by the spread of the horse collar, which led to the use of draught horses in place of oxen. Horses are faster than oxen and require less pasture, factors which aided the utilization of the 3-field system.
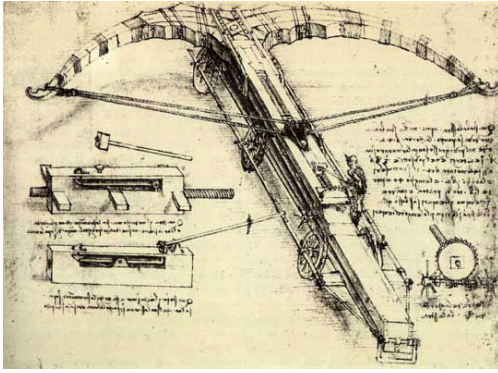
Crossbows, which had been known in Late Antiquity, increased in use, partly because of the increase in siege warfare in the 10th and 11th centuries. Military affairs saw an increase in the use of infantry with specialized roles during this period. Besides the still dominant heavy cavalry, armies often included both mounted and infantry crossbowmen, as well as sappers and engineers. The increasing use of crossbows during the 12th and 13th centuries led to the use of closed-face helmets, heavy body armor, as well as horse armor. By the mid-13th century, gunpowder had also become evident in warfare.

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# 26. Spanish Exploration and Conquest

## Spanish Exploration and Conquest

The history of Spanish exploration begins with the history of Spain itself. During the fifteenth century, Spain hoped to gain advantage over its rival, Portugal. The marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile in 1469 unified Catholic Spain and began the process of building a nation that could compete for worldwide power. Since the 700s, much of Spain had been under Islamic rule, and King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I, arch-defenders of the Catholic Church against Islam, were determined to defeat the Muslims in Granada, the last Islamic stronghold in Spain. In 1492, they completed the Reconquista: the centuries-long Christian conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. The Reconquista marked another step forward in the process of making Spain an imperial power, and Ferdinand and Isabella were now ready to look further afield.

Their goals were to expand Catholicism and to gain a commercial advantage over Portugal. To those ends, Ferdinand and Isabella sponsored extensive Atlantic exploration. Spain's most famous explorer, Christopher Columbus, was actually from Genoa, Italy. He believed that, using calculations based on other mariners' journeys, he could chart a westward route to India, which could be used to expand European trade and spread Christianity. Starting in 1485, he approached Genoese, Venetian, Portuguese, English, and Spanish monarchs, asking for ships and funding to explore this westward route. All those he petitioned, including Ferdinand and Isabella at first, rebuffed him; their nautical experts all concurred that Columbus's estimates of the width of the Atlantic Ocean were far too low. However, after three years of entreaties, and, more important, the completion of the Reconquista, Ferdinand and Isabella agreed to finance Columbus's expedition in 1492, supplying him with three ships: the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. The Spanish monarchs knew that Portuguese mariners had reached the southern tip of Africa and sailed the Indian Ocean. They understood that the Portuguese would soon reach Asia and, in this competitive race to reach the Far East, the Spanish rulers decided to act.

# Christopher Columbus and the New World

Columbus held erroneous views that shaped his thinking about what he would encounter as he sailed west. He believed the earth to be much smaller than its actual size and, since he did not know of the existence of the Americas, he fully expected to land in Asia. On October 12, 1492, however, he made landfall on an island in the Bahamas. He then sailed to an island he named Hispaniola (present-day Dominican Republic and Haiti). Believing he had landed in the East Indies, Columbus called the native Taínos he found there "Indios," giving rise to the term "Indian" for any native people of the New World. Upon Columbus's return to Spain, the Spanish crown bestowed on him the title of Admiral of the Ocean Sea and named him governor and viceroy of the lands he had discovered. As a devoted Catholic, Columbus had agreed with Ferdinand and Isabella prior to sailing west that part of the expected wealth from his voyage would be used to continue the fight against Islam.



*This sixteenth-century map shows the island of Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and Dominican Republic). Note the various fanciful elements, such as the large-scale ships and sea creatures, and consider what the creator of this map hoped to convey. In addition to navigation, what purpose would such a map have served?*

Columbus's 1493 letter, or *probanza de mérito* (proof of merit), describing his "discovery" of a New World inspired excitement in Europe. *Probanzas de méritos* were reports and letters written by Spaniards in the New World to the Spanish crown, designed to win royal patronage. Today they highlight the difficult task of historical work; while the letters are primary sources, historians need to understand the context and the culture in which the conquistadors, as the Spanish adventurers came to be called, wrote them and distinguish their bias and subjective nature. While they are filled with distortions and

fabrications, *probanzas de méritos* are still useful in illustrating the expectation of wealth among the explorers as well as their view that native peoples would not pose a serious obstacle to colonization.

## Exploring the New World

Many other Europeans followed in Columbus's footsteps, drawn by dreams of winning wealth by sailing west. Another Italian, Amerigo Vespucci, sailing for the Portuguese crown, explored the South American coastline between 1499 and 1502. Unlike Columbus, he realized that the Americas were not part of Asia but lands unknown to Europeans. Vespucci's widely published accounts of his voyages fueled speculation and intense interest in the New World among Europeans. Among those who read Vespucci's reports was the German mapmaker Martin Waldseemuller. Using the explorer's first name as a label for the new landmass, Waldseemuller attached "America" to his map of the New World in 1507, and the name stuck.



*This 1502 map, known as the Cantino World Map, depicts the cartographer's interpretation of the world in light of recent discoveries. The map shows areas of Portuguese and Spanish exploration, the two nations' claims under the Treaty of Tordesillas, and a variety of flora, fauna, figures, and structures.*

Columbus's discovery opened a floodgate of Spanish exploration. Inspired by tales of rivers of gold and timid, malleable natives, later Spanish explorers were relentless in their quest for land and gold. Hernán Cortés hoped to gain hereditary privilege for his family, tribute payments and labor from natives, and an annual pension for his service to the crown. Cortés arrived on Hispaniola in 1504 and took part in the conquest of that island.

## The Aztecs

In anticipation of winning his own honor and riches, Cortés later explored the Yucatán Peninsula. In 1519, he entered Tenochtitlán, the capital of the Aztec (Mexica) Empire. He and his men were astonished by the incredibly sophisticated causeways, gardens, and temples in the city, but they were horrified by the practice of human sacrifice that was part of the Aztec religion. Above all else, the Aztec wealth in gold fascinated the Spanish adventurers.

Hoping to gain power over the city, Cortés took Moctezuma, the Aztec ruler, hostage. The Spanish then murdered hundreds of high-ranking Mexica during a festival to celebrate Huitzilopochtli, the god of war. This angered the people of Tenochtitlán, who rose up against the interlopers in their city. Cortés and his people fled for their lives, running down one of Tenochtitlán's causeways to safety on the shore. Smarting from their defeat at the hands of the Aztec, Cortés slowly created alliances with native peoples who resented Aztec rule. It took nearly a year for the Spanish and the tens of thousands of native allies who joined them to defeat the Mexica in Tenochtitlán, which they did by laying siege to the city. Only by playing upon the disunity among the diverse groups in the Aztec Empire were the Spanish able to capture the grand city of Tenochtitlán. In August 1521, having successfully fomented civil war as well as fended off rival Spanish explorers, Cortés claimed Tenochtitlán for Spain and renamed it Mexico City.

The traditional European narrative of exploration presents the victory of the Spanish over the Aztec as an example of the superiority of the Europeans over the savage Indians. However, the reality is far more complex. When Cortés explored central Mexico, he encountered a region simmering with native conflict. Far from being unified and content under Aztec rule, many peoples in Mexico resented it and were ready to rebel. One group in particular, the Tlaxcalan, threw their lot in with the Spanish, providing as many as 200,000 fighters in the siege of Tenochtitlán. The Spanish also brought smallpox into the valley of Mexico. The disease took a heavy toll on the people in Tenochtitlán, playing a much greater role in the city's demise than did Spanish force of arms.

Cortés was also aided by a Nahua woman called Malintzin (also known as La Malinche or Doña Marina, her Spanish name), whom the natives of Tabasco gave him as tribute. Malintzin translated for Cortés in his dealings with Moctezuma and, whether willingly or under pressure, entered into a physical relationship with him. Their son, Martín, may have been the first mestizo (person of mixed indigenous American and European descent). Malintzin remains a controversial figure in the history of the Atlantic World; some people view her as a traitor because she helped Cortés conquer the Aztecs, while others see her as a victim of European expansion. In either case, she demonstrates one way in which native peoples responded to the arrival of the Spanish. Without her, Cortés would not have been able to communicate, and without the language bridge, he surely would have been less successful in destabilizing the Aztec Empire. By this and other means, native people helped shape the conquest of the Americas.

## Consequences

Spain's drive to enlarge its empire led other hopeful conquistadors to push further into the Americas, hoping to replicate the success of Cortés and Pizarro. Hernando de Soto had participated in Pizarro's conquest of the Inca, and from 1539 to 1542 he led expeditions to what is today the southeastern United States, looking for gold. He and his followers explored what is now Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas. Everywhere they traveled, they brought European diseases, which claimed thousands of native lives as well as the lives of the explorers. In 1542, de Soto himself died during the expedition. The surviving Spaniards, numbering a little over three hundred, returned to Mexico City without finding the much-anticipated mountains of gold and silver.

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Adapted from "Portuguese Exploration and Spanish Conquest."  by OER Commons, CC-BY NC SA.

# 27. English Colonization

Spain had a one-hundred-year head start on New World colonization, and a jealous England eyed the enormous wealth that Spain gleaned. The Protestant Reformation had shaken England, but Elizabeth I assumed the English crown in 1558. Elizabeth oversaw England's so-called golden age, which included both the expansion of trade and exploration and the literary achievements of Shakespeare and Marlowe. English mercantilism, a state-assisted manufacturing and trading system, created and maintained markets. The markets provided a steady supply of consumers and laborers, stimulated economic expansion, and increased English wealth.

However, wrenching social and economic changes unsettled the English population. The island's population increased from fewer than three million in 1500 to over five million by the middle of the seventeenth century. The skyrocketing cost of land coincided with plummeting farming income. Rents and prices rose but wages stagnated. Moreover, movements to enclose public land—sparked by the transition of English landholders from agriculture to livestock raising—evicted tenants from the land and created hordes of landless, jobless peasants that haunted the cities and countryside. One quarter to one half of the population lived in extreme poverty.

New World colonization won support in England amid a time of rising English fortunes among the wealthy, a tense Spanish rivalry, and mounting internal social unrest. But supporters of English colonization always touted more than economic gains and mere national self-interest. They claimed to be doing God's work. Many claimed that colonization would glorify God, England, and Protestantism by Christianizing the New World's pagan peoples. Advocates such as Richard Hakluyt the Younger and John Dee, for instance, drew upon *The History of the Kings of Britain*, written by the twelfth-century monk Geoffrey of Monmouth, and its mythical account of King Arthur's conquest and Christianization of pagan lands to justify American conquest. Moreover, promoters promised that the conversion of New World Native Americans would satisfy God and glorify England's "Virgin Queen," Elizabeth I, who was seen as nearly divine by some in England. The English imagined themselves superior to the Spanish, who still bore the Black Legend of inhuman cruelty. English colonization, supporters argued, would prove that superiority.

In his 1584 "Discourse on Western Planting," Richard Hakluyt amassed the supposed religious, moral, and exceptional economic benefits of colonization. He repeated the Black Legend of Spanish New World terrorism and attacked the sins of Catholic Spain. He promised that English colonization could strike a blow against Spanish heresy and bring Protestant religion to the New World. English interference, Hakluyt suggested, might provide the only salvation from Catholic rule in the New World. The New World, too, he said, offered obvious economic advantages. Trade and resource extraction would enrich the English treasury. England, for instance, could find plentiful materials to outfit a world-class navy. Moreover, he said, the New World could provide an escape for England's vast armies of landless "vagabonds." Expanded trade, he argued, would not only bring profit but also provide work for England's jobless poor. A Christian enterprise, a blow against Spain, an economic stimulus, and a social safety valve all beckoned the English toward a commitment to colonization.

This noble rhetoric veiled the coarse economic motives that brought England to the New World. New economic structures and a new merchant class paved the way for colonization. England's merchants lacked estates, but they had new plans to build wealth. By collaborating with new government-sponsored trading monopolies and employing financial innovations such as joint-stock companies, England's merchants sought to improve on the Dutch economic system. Spain was extracting enormous material wealth from the New World; why shouldn't England? Joint-stock companies, the ancestors of modern corporations, became the initial instruments of colonization. With government monopolies, shared profits, and managed risks, these money-making ventures could attract and manage the vast capital needed for colonization. In 1606 James I approved the formation of the Virginia Company (named after Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen).

Rather than formal colonization, however, the most successful early English ventures in the New World were a form of state-sponsored piracy known as privateering. Queen Elizabeth sponsored sailors, or "Sea Dogges," such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake, to plunder Spanish ships and towns in the Americas. Privateers earned a substantial profit both for themselves and for the English crown. England practiced piracy on a scale, one historian wrote, "that transforms crime into politics."[20] Francis Drake harried Spanish ships throughout the Western Hemisphere and raided Spanish caravans as far away as the coast of Peru on the Pacific Ocean. In 1580 Elizabeth rewarded her skilled pirate with knighthood. But Elizabeth walked a fine line. With Protestant-Catholic tensions already running high, English privateering provoked Spain. Tensions worsened after the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, a Catholic. In 1588, King Philip II of Spain unleashed the fabled Armada. With 130 ships, 8,000 sailors, and 18,000 soldiers, Spain launched the largest invasion in history to destroy the British navy and depose Elizabeth.

An island nation, England depended on a robust navy for trade and territorial expansion. England had fewer ships than Spain, but they were smaller and swifter. They successfully harassed the armada, forcing it to retreat to the Netherlands for reinforcements. But then a fluke storm, celebrated in England as the "Protestant wind," annihilated the remainder of the fleet. The destruction of the armada changed the course of world history. It not only saved England and secured English Protestantism, but it also opened the seas to English expansion and paved the way for England's colonial future. By 1600, England stood ready to embark on its dominance over North America.

English colonization, however, began haltingly. Sir Humphrey Gilbert labored throughout the late sixteenth century to establish a colony in Newfoundland but failed. In 1587, with a predominantly male cohort of 150 English colonizers, John White reestablished an abandoned settlement on North Carolina's Roanoke Island. Supply shortages prompted White to return to England for additional support, but the Spanish Armada and the mobilization of British naval efforts stranded him in Britain for several years. When he finally returned to Roanoke, he found the colony abandoned. What befell the failed colony? White found the word *Croatoan* carved into a tree or a post in the abandoned colony. Historians presume the colonists, short of food, may have fled for a nearby island of that name and encountered its settled native population. Others offer violence as an explanation. Regardless, the English colonists were never heard from again. When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, no Englishmen had yet established a permanent North American colony.

After King James made peace with Spain in 1604, privateering no longer held out the promise of cheap wealth. Colonization assumed a new urgency. The Virginia Company, established in 1606, drew inspiration from Cortés and the Spanish conquests. It hoped to find gold and silver as well as other valuable trading commodities in the New World: glass,

iron, furs, pitch, tar, and anything else the country could supply. The company planned to identify a navigable river with a deep harbor, away from the eyes of the Spanish. There they would find a Native American trading network and extract a fortune from the New World.

Adapted from "English Colonization" by American Yawp is licensed CC-BY-SA 4.0.

Question to consider: Change one facet of English colonization: no failure in farming income in England, no belief in the need to Christianize Native people, no failure of the Spanish armada, etc. How might what is now known as the United States have evolved differently?

# 28. The Plight of the Native Americans

## The Plight of the Native Americans

As railroads, farms, and cattle ranches disrupted buffalo migration patterns and settled the Great Plains, the region's earliest inhabitants took notice. The situation was aggravated by the government's desire to confine the Plains Indians to reservations, teach them to cultivate land like whites, and leave their hunting and roaming past behind. The Plains Wars which followed resulted in a series of forts along the major trails to the West. As the Plains Indians were increasingly neutralized by the government, the farmers could focus on big business as their primary adversary.

As in the East, expansion into the plains and mountains by miners, ranchers, and settlers led to increasing conflicts with the Native Americans of the West. Many tribes of Native Americans — from the Utes of the Great Basin to the Nez Perces of Idaho — fought the whites at one time or another. But the Sioux of the Northern Plains and the Apache of the Southwest provided the most significant opposition to frontier advance. Led by such resourceful leaders as Red Cloud and Crazy Horse, the Sioux were particularly skilled at high-speed mounted warfare. The Apaches were equally adept and highly elusive, fighting in their environs of desert and canyons.

## The Plains Wars

The nomadic plains Indians had become efficient hunters and warriors due to the Spanish introduction of the horse in the 1500s. No longer did they find it necessary to frighten whole herds of bison over cliffs only to use a few animals. Their newfound abilities as horsemen had given them a ferocious edge over their prey and their enemies.

Endowed with all of humanity's peculiarities, Indigenous Americans traveled, traded, made war and peace, and adapted to the cultures they came in contact with. If a neighboring people had found a better way to do something, it generally became an accepted practice. When Europeans arrived, Native Americans quickly adopted firearms, metal tools, and horses. So thoroughly was the horse adapted into indigenous culture that it became a fixture, ever-present from the beginning of time in native myth.

## Reservations

In order to maintain peace between settlers, emigrants, and indigenous peoples, the government attempted to open a corridor through the Plains by pushing natives into northern and southern reservations. This, it was hoped, would allow safe passage of wagon trains; but a string of prairie forts was developed along this corridor for added security. The Horse Creek Council of 1851 established a large reservation in North Dakota and Montana—The northern boundary of this corridor. The southern boundary was established in 1853 at the Fort Atkinson Council in Kansas. Roughly, the agreement was that the tribes would stay on their side of the lines and the government would compensate for the lost land with annual payments and never violate the agreement.

## Problems of Perception

Problems of perception and treaty failures ensured that peace would be short-lived. From the White perspective the presence of thousands of Indians at the councils lent legitimacy to the proceedings. The Indian viewpoint was that a few chiefs could not speak for the whole. Both sides mistakenly assumed that the government would be able (and willing) to channel settlement away from the reservations. Ultimately, the failure to make annual payments, new gold finds near Pike's Peak, Colorado and the Black Hills of South Dakota, as well as the introduction of land-hungry settlers, sank the earlier agreements in a mire of blood and warfare.



*"Battle of Little Bighorn" by Kicking Bear. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons*

War came, among other things, due to gold, disruption, and treaty failures. In 1848, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in Coloma, California, thus beginning the greatest migration of humanity in the Western hemisphere. Migrants went overland on the Oregon and California Trails, over oceans from as far away as China and Australia, and even from amongst indigenous peoples themselves.

Farming and ranching involved the obvious disruptions involved in permanent settlement of the land which hitherto had been occupied seasonally and briefly by Indians. Farmers put up fences to keep cattle out while ranchers put up fences to keep them in. Railroads bringing supplies to these settlers cut East/West across the prairie effectively creating a thousand-mile cattle guard which buffalo were hesitant to cross during their North/South migrations. Overland emigrants used up fuel, grass, and indigenous goodwill in great quantities, all of which eventually brought government involvement on the Plains.

Conflicts with the Plains Indians worsened after an incident where the Dakota (part of the Sioux nation), declaring war against the U.S. government because of long-standing grievances, killed five white settlers. Spontaneously, between five and eight hundred white settlers in territory ceded by the Sioux were then massacred, quite possibly without their even knowing of the government's failure to uphold its treaty agreements. Bad feelings and racism on both sides turned to outright hatred and, over a period of a quarter century, the Plains Indians lost their homeland.



*"White refugees during the Sioux Uprising." Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons*

Rebellions and attacks continued through the Civil War. In 1876 the last serious Sioux war erupted, when the Dakota gold rush penetrated the Black Hills. The Army was supposed to keep miners off Sioux hunting grounds, but effectively did little to protect Sioux lands. When ordered to take action against bands of Sioux hunting on the range according to their treaty rights, however, it moved quickly and vigorously.

In 1876, after several indecisive encounters, Colonel George Custer, leading a small detachment of cavalry encountered a vastly superior force of Sioux and their allies on the Little Bighorn River. Custer and his men were completely annihilated. Nonetheless the Native-American insurgency was soon suppressed. Later, in 1890, a ghost dance ritual on the Northern Sioux reservation at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, led to an uprising and a last, tragic encounter that ended in the death of about 150 Sioux men, women, and children.

Long before this, however, the way of life of the Plains Indians had been destroyed by an expanding white population, the coming of the railroads, and the slaughter of the buffalo, almost exterminated in the decade after 1870 by the settlers' indiscriminate hunting.

The Apache wars in the Southwest dragged on until Geronimo, the last important chief, was captured in 1886.
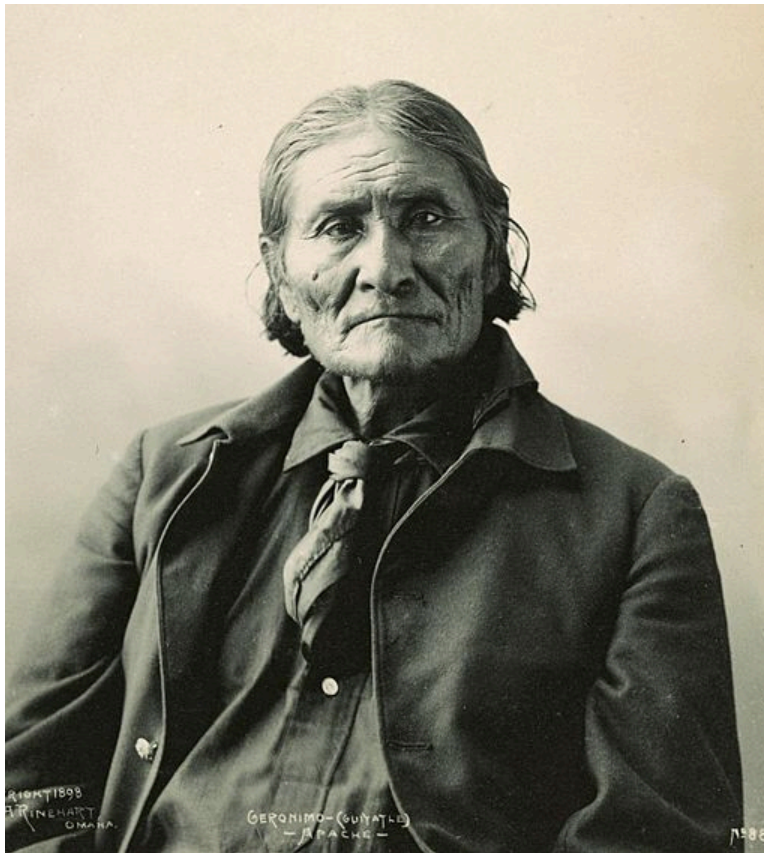
*Geronimo by Frank A. Rinehart. Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons*

Government policy ever since the Monroe administration had been to move the Native Americans beyond the reach of the white frontier. But inevitably the reservations had become smaller and more crowded. Some Americans began to protest the government's treatment of Native Americans. Helen Hunt Jackson, for example, an Easterner living in the West, wrote *A Century of Dishonor* (1881), which dramatized their plight and struck a chord in the nation's conscience. Most reformers believed the Native American should be assimilated into the dominant culture.

## Assimilation

Assimilation of the American Indian had been an on-again, off-again goal since at least as early as Thomas Jefferson's administration. Now, toward the end of the 1800s, eastern interests sponsored these boarding schools which forcibly removed Indian children from their homes in the West and educated them back East. The federal government even set

up a school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in an attempt to impose white values and beliefs on Native-American youths. (It was at this school that Jim Thorpe, often considered the best athlete the United States has produced, gained fame in the early 20th century.)

## Dawes Severalty Act

In 1887 the Dawes (General Allotment) Act reversed U.S. Native- American policy, permitting the president to divide up tribal land and parcel out 160 acres of land to each head of a family. Such allotments were to be held in trust by the government for 25 years, after which time the owner won full title and citizenship. Lands not thus distributed, however, were offered for sale to settlers. This policy, however well-intentioned, proved disastrous, since it allowed more plundering of Native-American lands. Moreover, its assault on the communal organization of tribes caused further disruption of traditional culture.



*"Ghost dance." Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons*

## Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee

In the last major pan-Indian movement, the Ghost Dance was a rejection of Easterners attempts at assimilation. In 1889, Wovoka, a Paiute,- claimed a revelation instructing all Indians to forsake white ways and to dance. Their reward would be the earth's opening up

and consuming all whites followed by a return of the buffalo and Indian lands. To this Sitting Bull added that the ghost dancer's white shirt would stop white bullets. This, the Army took as an ominous sign of impending warfare and moved to stop the dance.



*Mass grave for the dead Lakota after the conflict at Wounded Knee Creek by Northwestern Photo Co. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons*

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# 29. Tulsa Race Massacre

## Tulsa Race Massacre

Post World War I, racial tensions had culminated in the Red Summer of 1919 when violence broke out in at least twenty-five cities, including Chicago and Washington, D.C. The riots originated from wartime racial tensions. Industrial war production and massive wartime service created vast labor shortages, and thousands of Black southerners traveled to the North and Midwest to escape the traps of southern poverty. But the so-called Great Migration sparked significant racial conflict as white northerners and returning veterans fought to reclaim their jobs and their neighborhoods from new Black migrants.

Many Black Americans, who had fled the Jim Crow South and traveled halfway around the world to fight for the United States, would not so easily accept postwar racism. The overseas experience of Black Americans and their return triggered a dramatic change in Black communities. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote boldly of returning soldiers: "We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy!" But white Americans desired a return to the status quo, a world that did not include social, political, or economic equality for Black people.

Race riots had rocked the nation before, but the Red Summer was something new. Recently empowered Black Americans actively defended their families and homes from hostile white rioters, often with militant force. This behavior galvanized many in Black communities, but it also shocked white Americans who alternatively interpreted Black resistance as a desire for total revolution or as a new positive step in the path toward Black civil rights. In the riots' aftermath, James Weldon Johnson wrote, "Can't they understand that the more Negroes they outrage, the more determined the whole race becomes to secure the full rights and privileges of freemen?" Those six hot months in 1919 forever altered American society and roused and terrified those that experienced the sudden and devastating outbreaks of violence.

In 1921, Tulsa, Oklahoma saw one of the most violent attacks motivated by race in the country. The Black community of Greenwood was a thriving, economically successful community. This area was known as the "Black Wall Street" due to its economic success.

The Tulsa Massacre of 1921 was inspired by an alleged attack upon a White woman named Sarah Page by Dick Rowland. Rowland was taken into custody and a lynching was said to have been planned. Members of the Black community attempted to stop this lynching, and a violent altercation erupted into a riot. This riot devolved into a full-fledged massacre and destruction of Greenwood.



*"Tulsa Aftermath" by Wikimedia is in the Public Domain*

Bands of White attackers descended into Greenwood to attack and kill Black men of the community, as well as loot and burn businesses. This attack only ended when state authorities instituted martial law. The details of this attack had been obscured over the years, mostly downplayed by White authorities. There was little to no justice served for any of the crimes committed. The number of deaths is still unknown and property damage was extensive.

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Adapted from "World War I & Its Aftermath" by Tizoc Chavez et al. is licensed CC-BY-SA 4.0.

# PART V
# FREEDOM

# 30. What is freedom?

## What is freedom?

This may be the most difficult question, as the answer may rely on the person who is responding. But, as humans, and perhaps more specifically humans in the West, people share some history and some background assumptions about freedom. Freedom "is the one value that many people seem prepared to die for," writes sociologist Orlando Patterson, author of *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*. Individualism is characteristic of the west; to be an individual is to have the freedom to be that, right? Or maybe not.

Consider how freedom to live a bigger life and to have more opportunities began to evolve in the Late Middle Ages. What changes occurred during this time? What opportunities did those changes ultimately provide?

The Reformation in 16th century Europe was also a period of great change. The Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and its power was questioned, and ultimately it loses the grip it has held on people in the West. In many ways, this created more freedom for people both in terms of their beliefs as well as in term of the power structures. How important is the freedom of belief to you?

America began to change rapidly in the 20th century. The population shifted from farms to cities as the industrialization that began in the previous century became the primary source of employment. Women continued to join the workforce in record numbers and begin to expect more freedom and opportunities. In what way do opportunities create freedom?

The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire also leads to change in workers' rights. This disaster exposes a terrible price that was paid for those changes, yet the protections workers have today in this country are the result. So workers' rights to a safe workplace with reasonable hours is a freedom for which people fought.

The Enlightenment philosophers advocated for God-given rights of life, liberty, and property, which led to their inclusion in the Bill of Rights. This is the basis for the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement in the United States is the essence of what it means to fight for freedom. The fight for equality is a fight for basic human rights, the freedom to live how you want, where you want, with whom you want.

Historically, there have been many fights for freedom in the West; only a few are touched upon here. And there are still many rights and freedoms for which people are still fighting. What current fights for freedom can you think of?

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# 31. The Late Middle Ages

## The Late Middle Ages

### Famine and the Black Death in Europe

The years between 1300 and 1500 were among the most chaotic in western history. Plague, famine, war, and conquest destroyed long-lasting states. However, an intellectual renaissance and fierce determination led to the rise of new states and new growth.

As the thirteenth century drew to a close, Europe began to run into its limits, in terms of how many people a land's resources can support before food starts to run short. At the same time, the previously-warm climate began to cool, making conditions less suitable for agriculture. Famine returned to Europe.

Between 1315 and 1322, a set of extremely rainy, wet summers—accounts written at the time speak of castle walls being washed away in flood waters—caused crops to fail, resulting in massive famines and starvation. At the same time, livestock throughout western Europe died in droves from disease outbreaks of Rinderpest, Anthrax, and other diseases.

Many peasants starved. Many more suffered from malnutrition. Contemporary accounts refer to hungry peasants resorting to cannibalism. Like all other crops, cash crops also failed, so that those who did survive were poorer.

Scarcely a generation had passed after the Great Famine when Europe was hit by a global pandemic: the Black Death. The Black Death was almost certainly an outbreak of Bubonic Plague. This disease has an extremely high mortality rate; certain varieties can have a mortality rate of over ninety-nine percent, and even the more survivable varieties usually kill the majority of the infected. The Plague acts in three ways: the variety called Bubonic Plague results in painful, swollen lumps around the armpits, crotch, and neck (locations associated with the lymph nodes); when they burst, a foul-smelling pus emerges. The septicemic variety results in skin turning black and dying all over the body, and the pneumonic variety, which is almost always fatal, shows no visible symptoms, but affects the lungs, and can cause a victim to go from healthy to dead in the space of twenty-four hours.

The pandemic began in the Yuan Empire. Unfortunately for the rest of the world, the trade routes opened by the Mongols meant that not only could ideas and technology travel, but that disease could as well.

Its impact was calamitous. A little over half of Europe's population died. After the first

outbreak of the Plague, between 1347 and 1351, less virulent outbreaks continued to strike Europe nearly every year until 1782. Europe's population began a long decline; it did not start recovering until the fifteenth century. It did not return to its pre-Plague levels until the seventeenth (and in some regions, the eighteenth) century.



*Victims of the Black Death by Jose Lieferinxe CC0*

In the aftermath of the Plague, however, living conditions for those peasants who survived improved in many ways. Because there were fewer people, those who survived had access to more lands and resources. In addition, the need to find peasants to work the lands of the nobility meant that nobles often offered better wages and living conditions to those who would settle on their lands. As a result, peasant wages rose and serfdom in Western Europe gradually vanished. Although in some kingdoms, monarchs and their assemblies attempted to create legislation to reinforce the social status of the peasantry, these attempts were often unsuccessful.

# European Wars in the Late Middle Ages

Famine and disease were not the only disasters to strike late medieval Europe. The fourteenth century also saw an increase in both civil wars and wars between states. The Holy Roman Empire saw nearly a decade of civil war (1314 – 1326) between rival emperors and, because of the close relations of their kings, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway experienced frequent combinations of civil and interstate war until the 1397 Union of Kalmar brought the three together under one crown.

The longest-running of these wars was between England and France, the so-called Hundred Years' War (1337 – 1453). In 1328, the French king Charles IV died without a direct heir. England's king, Edward III (r. 1327 – 1377), related to the French royal family, claimed to be rightful heir to the crown of France. The resulting war would last over a century, although it was broken by frequent, lengthy truces. Although France had many more people than England, the kingdom of England was often able to defeat it. The main reason was that the English kings made increasing use of trained, disciplined infantry armies.



*England's King Edward III Surveying the Dead after the Battle of Crécy* by Virgil Master (illuminator), *Wikimedia is in the  Public Domain. Note that by the fourteenth century, a knight's armor was a combination of chain mail and metal plates.*

Question to Consider: How did the plague, famine, and war that occurred between 1300-1500 ultimately lead to a better quality of life for those who survived?

# 32. The Reformation

## The Reformation



*Photo* by *Cody Otto* on *Unsplash*

## A Challenge to the Church in Rome

The Baroque style emerged at the end of the sixteenth century in western Europe, inspired primarily by the Protestant Reformation's successful challenge to the spiritual and political power of the Church in Rome. This challenge was focused in part on the use of religious images. Many images were attacked or destroyed during this period, a phenomenon called iconoclasm.

### The Protestant Reformation

Today there are many types of Protestant churches. For example, Baptist is currently the largest denomination in the United States, but there are many dozens more. How did this happen? Where did they all begin? At the beginning of the 16th century, there was only one

church in Western Europe, what is now referred to as the Roman Catholic Church, under the leadership of the Pope in Rome. Prior to this time, the Roman Catholic Church was referred to simply as the Church.

## The Church and the State

In the year 1500, the Church (what we now call the Roman Catholic Church) was very politically and spiritually powerful in Western Europe, but there were other political forces at work, too. There was the Holy Roman Empire (largely made up of German speaking regions ruled by princes, dukes and electors), the Italian city-states, England, as well as the increasingly unified nation states of France and Spain, among others. The power of the rulers of these areas had increased in the previous century, and many were anxious to take the opportunity offered by the Reformation to weaken the power of the office of the Pope and increase their own power in relation to the Church in Rome and other rulers.

For some time the church had been seen as an institution plagued by internal power struggles (at one point in the late 1300s and 1400s the church was ruled by three Popes simultaneously). Popes and Cardinals often lived more like Kings than spiritual leaders. Popes claimed temporal (political) as well as spiritual power. They commanded armies, made political alliances and enemies, and, sometimes, even waged war. Simony (the selling of church offices) and nepotism (favoritism based on family relationships) were rampant. Clearly, if the Pope was concentrating on these worldly issues, there wasn't as much time left for caring for the souls of the faithful. The corruption of the Church was well known, and several attempts had been made to reform the Church (notably by John Wyclif and Jan Hus), but none of these efforts was successfully challenged Church practice until Martin Luther's actions in the early 1500s.

# Martin Luther



*Luther, Bust in Three-Quarter View, 1520 (The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston)*

Martin Luther was a German monk and Professor of Theology at the University of Wittenberg. Luther sparked the Reformation in 1517 by posting, at least according to tradition, his "95 Theses" on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. These theses were a list of statements that expressed Luther's concerns about certain Church practice, largely the sale of indulgences, but they were based on Luther's deeper concerns with church doctrine. Note that Protestant contains the word "protest," and that reformation contains the word "reform. This was an effort, at least at first, to protest some practices of the Catholic Church and to reform that Church.

## Indulgences

The sale of indulgences was a practice where the Church acknowledged a donation or other charitable work with a piece of paper (an indulgence), that certified that your soul would enter heaven more quickly by reducing your time in purgatory. If you committed no serious sins that guaranteed your place in hell, and you died before repenting and atoning for all of your sins, then your soul went to Purgatory, where you finished atoning for your sins before being allowed to enter heaven.

Pope Leo X had granted indulgences to raise money for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. These indulgences were being sold by Johann Tetzel not far from Wittenberg, where Luther was Professor of Theology. Luther was gravely concerned about the way in which getting into heaven was connected with a financial transaction. But the sale of indulgences was not Luther's only disagreement with the institution of the Church.

# Faith Alone

Martin Luther was very devout and had experienced a spiritual crisis. He concluded that no matter how "good" he tried to be, no matter how he tried to stay away from sin, he still found himself having sinful thoughts. He was fearful that no matter how many good works he did, he could never do enough to earn his place in heaven (remember that, according to the Catholic Church, doing good works, for example commissioning works of art for the Church, helped one gain entrance to heaven). This was a profound recognition of the inescapable sinfulness of the human condition. Luther found a way out of this problem when he read St. Paul, who wrote "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). Luther understood this to mean that those who go to heaven (the just) will get there by faith alone, not by doing good works. In other words, God's grace is something freely given to human beings, not something we can earn. For the Catholic Church on the other hand, human beings, through good works, had some control in their salvation.

# John Calvin

After the birth of Lutheranism, other denominations rose. The most significant of these was Calvinism. Jean Calvin, a French lawyer exiled for his sympathy with Protestantism, settled in Geneva, Switzerland in 1536. Calvin was a generation younger than Luther, and therefore was born into a world in which religious unity had already been fragmented; in that sense, the fact that he had Protestant views is not as surprising as Luther's break with the Church had been. In Geneva, Calvin began work on Christian theology and soon formed close ties with the city council. The result of his work was Calvinism, a distinct Protestant denomination that differed in many ways from Lutheranism.
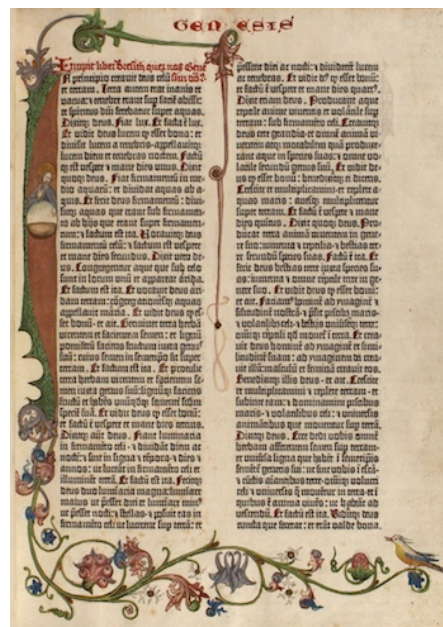


*Gutenberg Bible (British Museum)*

Calvin accepted Luther's insistence on the role of faith in salvation, but he went further. If God was all-powerful and all-knowing, and he chose to extend his grace to some people but not to others, Calvin reasoned, it was unlikely to imagine that humans could somehow influence Him. Not only was the Catholic insistence on good works wrong, the very idea

of free will in the face of the divine intelligence could not be correct. Calvin noted that only some parishioners in church services seemed to be able to grasp the importance and complexities of scripture, whereas most were indifferent or ignorant. He concluded that God, who transcended both time and space, chose some people as the "elect," those who will be saved, before they are even born. Free will is merely an illusion born of human ignorance, since the fate of a person's soul was determined before time itself began. This doctrine is called "predestination," and while the idea of the absence of free will and predetermined salvation may seem absurd at first sight, in fact it was simply the logical extension of the very concept of divine omnipotence according to Calvin.

## Scripture Alone

Luther and other reformers turned to the Bible, as opposed to the teachings of the Church, as the only reliable source of instruction.

The invention of the printing press in the middle of the 15th century by Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany together with the translation of the Bible into the vernacular meant that it was possible for those that could read to learn directly from the Bible without having to rely on a priest or other church officials. Before this time, the Bible was available in Latin, the ancient language of Rome spoken chiefly by the clergy. Before the printing press, books were handmade and extremely expensive. The invention of the printing press and the translation of the bible into the vernacular meant that for the first time in history, the Bible was available to those outside of the Church.

## The Counter-Reformation

The Church initially ignored Martin Luther, but Luther's ideas and variations of them, including Calvinism quickly spread throughout Europe. Luther was asked to recant (to disavow) his writings at the Diet of Worms (an unfortunate name for a council held by the Holy Roman Emperor in the German city of Worms). When Luther refused, he was excommunicated. The Church's response to the threat from Luther and others during this period is called the Counter-Reformation ("counter" meaning against).

# The Council of Trent

In 1545 the Church opened the Council of Trent to deal with the issues raised by Luther. The Council of Trent was an assembly of high officials in the Church who met on and off for eighteen years, principally in the Northern Italian town of Trent for 25 sessions. Outcomes of the process include the idea that the Council denied the Lutheran idea of justification by faith and affirmed, instead, the Doctrine of Merit, which allows practitioners to redeem themselves through good works and the sacraments. The affirmed the existence of Purgatory. They affirmed the importance of all seven sacraments. They affirmed the necessity of religious art. Finally, they affirmed the authority of scripture and the teachings and traditions of the Church.



*Session of the Council of Trent in Matthias Burglechner "Tyrolischer Adler," vol.IX*

## The Council of Trent on Religious Art

At the Council of Trent, the Church also reaffirmed the usefulness of images but indicated that Church officials should be careful to promote the correct use of images and guard against the possibility of idolatry.

The Reformation was a very violent period in Europe. Even family members were often pitted against one another in the wars of religion. Each side, both Catholics and Protestants, were often absolutely certain that they were in the right and that the other side was doing the devil's work. The artists of this period, like Michelangelo in Rome, Titian in Venice, Durer in Nuremberg, Cranach in Saxony, were impacted by these changes since the Church had been the single largest patron for artists. And now art was now being scrutinized in an entirely new way. The Catholic Church was looking to see if art communicated the stories of the Bible effectively and clearly (see Veronese's Feast in the House of Levi for more on this). Protestants on the other hand, for the most part lost the patronage of the Church and religious images were destroyed in iconoclastic riots.

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# 33. America Comes of Age

## America Comes of Age

The rise of modern America is frequently noted as beginning at the turn of the twentieth century (meaning 1900). What seemed to turn then, though, began in the previous century with increased productivity in all areas thanks primarily to industrialization and technology.

While farm production increased, the population surged toward urban areas. Millions of people from the countryside moved into cities, as did most immigrants, who at that time came primarily from southern and eastern Europe. In a span of just fifty years, city populations grew from around 6 to 44 million people.

As cities grew, how people got goods changed. Larger department stores with less expensive products as well mail-order catalogs took the place of small stores. Consumerism grew with the availability of goods. Suburbs developed as travel into cities became easier thanks to trains. Buildings began to grow up as space became more dear.

The roles and lives of women changed tremendously. Young working-class women filled jobs in factories; many of those factories would be considered sweatshops by today's standards. More women's colleges opened around the turn of the century. The "New Woman," as she was labeled, often had a college education and wanted more independence and options.

As the North industrialized in the first half of the 19th century, factories and mines hired young workers for a variety of tasks. According to the 1900 census, of the children ages ten to fifteen 18 percent were employed: 1,264,000 boys and 486,000 girls. Most worked on family farms. Every decade following 1870, the number of children in the workforce increased, with the percentage not dropping until the 1920s. Especially in textile mills, children were often hired together with both parents and could be hired for only $2 a week. Their parents could both work in the mill and watch their children at the same time. Children were useful for fixing machinery and squeezing into small spaces. Many families in mill towns depended on the children's labor to make enough money for necessities.

After many failed attempts, a federal law that restricts the employment and abuse of child workers was passed in 1938. It is this law and its provisions that set limits on potentially dangerous jobs and set the age of workers at 18 to encourage schooling. Children 14-16 have limited hours and restrictions on the type of work.

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# 34. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire and Workers' Rights

## The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

Do you know about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire? If you don't, you have likely reaped the benefits in one way or another. According to an article by Dr. Howard Markel entitled, "How the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire transformed labor laws and protected workers' health" on PBS.org, "on the corner of Washington Place and Greene Street, in New York City's Greenwich Village, is a bronze plaque affixed to the Neo-Renaissance façade of the Brown Building—now part of New York University. The building, it says, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and as a National Historical Landmark." The plaque is in memory of the 146 people, at least 125 of them immigrant women and some as young as 15, who died in the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire 110 years ago.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory made shirtwaists, which were cotton blouses that required no corset or hoops. The demand for the Triangle shirtwaists among the growing number of working women was huge, and the foreman in the factory  did everything they could to keep the women sewing for 13-hours a day, seven days a week for six dollars a week.

The "fireproof" Brown Building was constructed in 1901 of steel and iron. The Triangle firm was on the 8th, 9th and 10th floors, at the top of the building. The building was not a nice place to work as it had limited bathrooms, poor ventilation, dangerously dark stairwells, no overhead sprinklers, and only a single, poorly constructed fire escape. Due to the nature of the work at the Triangle Company, the workers were stationed close together and surrounded by flammable materials.

When the fire erupted, it spread quickly. Many workers could not find a way out and died from smoke inhalation or burned to death. Some jumped from the windows to avoid the fire. Others found the stairwell doors locked, which was a common practice at the time to avoid theft by workers. The poorly constructed fire escape quickly collapsed, dropping those on it to their deaths on the sidewalk.

The New York City Fire Department arrived quickly, but their ladders reached only as high as the 6th floor of the building, two entire floors below the fire. Those jumping also created a hazard for the rescue workers. The mounting dead, fifty of whom had jumped to avoid the fire, were covered in tarps and arranged in rows along the sidewalk by the city coroners for the newspaper photographers.

## The Public's Response and Workers' Rights

Huge public outcry led to legislation requiring improved factory safety standards and helped spur the growth of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), which fought for better working conditions. Ultimately, the New York State laws that came about quickly following the fire became federal laws during the New Deal. Much later, in 1970, the Occupational Safety and Health Act was created to ensure safe working conditions.



*Demonstration of protest and mourning for Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of March 25, 1911, By an unknown photographer, New York City, New York, April 5, 1911; General Records of the Department of Labor; Record Group 174; National Archives.*

Adapted from "The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire" by Wikipedia is licensed CC BY-SA 4.0.

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# 35. The Civil Rights Movement

## The Civil Rights Movement

During the 1960s, the federal government, encouraged by both genuine concern for the dispossessed and the realities of the Cold War, had increased its efforts to protect civil rights and ensure equal economic and educational opportunities for all. However, most of the credit for progress toward racial equality in the Unites States lies with grassroots activists. Indeed, it was campaigns and demonstrations by ordinary people that spurred the federal government to action. Although the African American civil rights movement was the most prominent of the crusades for racial justice, other ethnic minorities also worked to seize their piece of the American dream during the promising years of the 1960s. Many were influenced by the African American cause and often used similar tactics.

## Change from the Bottom Up

For many people inspired by the victories of *Brown v. Board of Education* in May of 1954 and the Montgomery Bus Boycott in December of 1955, the glacial pace of progress in the segregated South was frustrating if not intolerable. In some places, such as Greensboro, North Carolina, local NAACP chapters had been influenced by whites who provided financing for the organization. This aid, together with the belief that more forceful efforts at reform would only increase white resistance, had persuaded some African American organizations to pursue a "politics of moderation" instead of attempting to radically alter the status quo. Martin Luther King Jr.'s inspirational appeal for peaceful change in the city of Greensboro in 1958, however, planted the seed for a more assertive civil rights movement.

On February 1, 1960, four sophomores at the North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College in Greensboro—Ezell Blair, Jr., Joseph McNeil, David Richmond, and Franklin McCain—entered the local Woolworth's and sat at the lunch counter. The lunch counter was segregated, and they were refused service as they knew they would be. They had specifically chosen Woolworth's, because it was a national chain and was thus believed to be especially vulnerable to negative publicity. Over the next few days, more protesters joined the four sophomores. Hostile whites responded with threats and taunted the students by pouring sugar and ketchup on their heads. The successful six-month-long Greensboro sit-in initiated the student phase of the African American civil rights movement and, within two months, the sit-in movement had spread to fifty-four cities in nine states.

*Businesses such as this one were among those that became targets of activists protesting segregation. Segregated businesses could be found throughout the United States; this one was located in Ohio. (credit: Library of Congress)*

In the words of grassroots civil rights activist Ella Baker, the students at Woolworth's wanted more than a hamburger; the movement they helped launch was about empowerment. Baker pushed for a "participatory Democracy" that built on the grassroots campaigns of active citizens instead of deferring to the leadership of educated elites and experts. As a result of her actions, in April 1960, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed to carry the battle forward. Within a year, more than one hundred cities had desegregated at least some public accommodations in response to student-led demonstrations. The sit-ins inspired other forms of nonviolent protest intended to desegregate public spaces. "Sleep-ins" occupied motel lobbies, "read-ins" filled public libraries, and churches became the sites of "pray-ins."

Students also took part in the 1961 "freedom rides" sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and SNCC. The intent of the African American and white volunteers who undertook these bus rides south was to test enforcement of a U.S. Supreme Court decision prohibiting segregation on interstate transportation and to protest segregated waiting rooms in southern terminals. Departing Washington, DC, on May 4, the volunteers headed south on buses that challenged the seating order of Jim Crow segregation. Whites would ride in the back, African-Americans would sit in the front, and on other occasions, riders of different races would share the same bench seat. The freedom riders encountered little difficulty until they reached Rock Hill, South Carolina, where a mob severely beat John Lewis, a freedom rider who later became chairman of SNCC. The danger increased as the riders continued through Georgia into Alabama, where one of the two buses was firebombed outside the town of Anniston. The second group continued to Birmingham, where the riders were attacked by the Ku Klux Klan as they attempted to disembark at the city bus station. The remaining volunteers continued to Mississippi, where they were arrested when they attempted to desegregate the waiting rooms in the Jackson bus terminal.

*Civil rights activists Bayard Rustin, Andrew Young, Rep. William Fitts Ryan, James Farmer, and John Lewis (l to r) in a newspaper photograph from 1965.*



*During the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (a), a huge crowd gathered on the National Mall (b) to hear the speakers. Although thousands attended, many of the march's organizers had hoped that enough people would come to Washington to shut down the city.*

Other gatherings of civil rights activists ended tragically, and some demonstrations were intended to provoke a hostile response from whites and thus reveal the inhumanity of the Jim Crow laws and their supporters. In 1963, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) led by Martin Luther King, Jr. mounted protests in some 186 cities throughout the South. The campaign in Birmingham that began in April and extended into the fall of 1963 attracted the most notice, however, when a peaceful protest was met with violence by police, who attacked demonstrators, including children, with fire hoses and dogs. The

world looked on in horror as innocent people were assaulted and thousands arrested. King himself was jailed on Easter Sunday, 1963, and, in response to the pleas of white clergymen for peace and patience, he penned one of the most significant documents of the struggle—"Letter from a Birmingham Jail." In the letter, King argued that African Americans had waited patiently for more than three hundred years to be given the rights that all human beings deserved; the time for waiting was over.

## Letter from a Birmingham Jail

By 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. had become one of the most prominent leaders of the civil rights movement, and he continued to espouse nonviolent civil disobedience as a way of registering African American resistance against unfair, discriminatory, and racist laws and behaviors. While the campaign in Birmingham began with an African American boycott of white businesses to end discrimination in employment practices and public segregation, it became a fight over free speech when King was arrested for violating a local injunction against demonstrations. King wrote his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" in response to an op-ed by eight white Alabama clergymen who complained about the SCLC's fiery tactics and argued that social change needed to be pursued gradually. The letter criticizes those who did not support the cause of civil rights:

> In spite of my shattered dreams of the past, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership in the community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, serve as the channel through which our just grievances could get to the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed. I have heard numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshippers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers say follow this decree because integration is morally right and the Negro is your brother. In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, "Those are social issues with which the Gospel has no real concern," and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely other-worldly religion which made a strange distinction between body and soul, the sacred and the secular.

The vision of whites and African Americans working together peacefully to end racial injustice suffered a severe blow with the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee, in April 1968. King had gone there to support sanitation workers trying to

unionize. In the city, he found a divided civil rights movement; older activists who supported his policy of nonviolence were being challenged by younger African Americans who advocated a more militant approach. On April 4, 1968, King was shot and killed while standing on the balcony of his motel. Within hours, the nation's cities exploded with violence as angry African Americans, shocked by his murder, burned and looted inner-city neighborhoods across the country. While whites recoiled from news about the riots in fear and dismay, they also criticized African Americans for destroying their own neighborhoods; they did not realize that most of the violence was directed against businesses that were not owned by blacks and that treated African American customers with suspicion and hostility.



*Many businesses, such as those in this neighborhood at the intersection of 7th and N Streets in NW, Washington, DC, were destroyed in riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. BLACK FRUSTRATION, BLACK POWER*

The episodes of violence that accompanied Martin Luther King Jr.'s murder in 1968 were but the latest in a string of urban riots that had shaken the United States since the mid-1960s. Between 1964 and 1968, there were 329 riots in 257 cities across the nation. In 1964, riots broke out in Harlem and other African American neighborhoods. In 1965, a traffic stop set in motion a chain of events that culminated in riots in Watts, an African American neighborhood in Los Angeles. Thousands of businesses were destroyed, and, by the time the violence ended, thirty-four people were dead, most of them African Americans killed by the Los Angeles police and the National Guard. More riots took place in 1966 and 1967. Frustration and anger lay at the heart of these disruptions. Despite the programs of the Great Society, good healthcare, job opportunities, and safe housing were abysmally lacking in urban African American neighborhoods in cities throughout the country, including in the North and West, where discrimination was less overt but just as crippling. In the eyes of

many rioters, the federal government either could not or would not end their suffering, and most existing civil rights groups and their leaders had been unable to achieve significant results toward racial justice and equality. Disillusioned, many African Americans turned to those with more radical ideas about how best to obtain equality and justice. Within the chorus of voices calling for integration and legal equality were many that more stridently demanded empowerment and thus supported Black Power. Black Power meant a variety of things used by a variety of people. Long before Carmichael began to call for separatism, the Nation of Islam, founded in 1930, had advocated the same thing.

In the 1960s, its most famous member was Malcolm X, born Malcolm Little. The Nation of Islam advocated the separation of white Americans and African Americans because of a belief that African Americans could not thrive in an atmosphere of white racism. Indeed, in a 1963 interview, Malcolm X, discussing the teachings of the head of the Nation of Islam in America, Elijah Muhammad, referred to white people as "devils" more than a dozen times. Rejecting the nonviolent strategy of other civil rights activists, he maintained that violence in the face of violence was appropriate.



(a)                                          (b)

*Stokely Carmichael (a), one of the most famous and outspoken advocates of Black Power, is surrounded by members of the media after speaking at Michigan State University in 1967. Malcolm X (b) was raised in a family influenced by Marcus Garvey and persecuted for its outspoken support of civil rights. While serving a stint in prison for armed robbery, he was introduced to and committed himself to the Nation of Islam. (credit b: modification of work by Library of Congress)*

# The Mexican American Fight for Civil Rights

The African American bid for full citizenship was surely the most visible of the battles for civil rights taking place in the United States. However, other minority groups that had been legally discriminated against or otherwise denied access to economic and educational opportunities began to increase efforts to secure their rights in the 1960s. Like the African American movement, the Mexican American civil rights movement won its earliest victories in the federal courts. In 1947, in *Mendez v. Westminster*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that segregating children of Hispanic descent was unconstitutional. In 1954, the same year as *Brown v. Board of Education*, Mexican Americans prevailed in *Hernandez v. Texas*, when the U.S. Supreme Court extended the protections of the Fourteenth Amendment to all ethnic groups in the United States. The highest-profile struggle of the Mexican American civil rights movement was the fight that Caesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta waged in the fields of California to organize migrant farm workers. In 1962, Chavez and Huerta founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). In 1965, when Filipino grape pickers led by Filipino American Larry Itliong went on strike to call attention to their plight, Chavez lent his support. Workers organized by the NFWA also went on strike, and the two organizations merged to form the United Farm Workers. When Chavez asked American consumers to boycott grapes, politically conscious people around the country heeded his call, and many unionized longshoremen refused to unload grape shipments. In 1966, Chavez led striking workers to the state capitol in Sacramento, further publicizing the cause. Martin Luther King, Jr. telegraphed words of encouragement to Chavez, whom he called a "brother." The strike ended in 1970 when California farmers recognized the right of farm workers to unionize. However, the farm workers did not gain all they sought, and the larger struggle did not end.



*Cesar Chavez was influenced by the nonviolent philosophy of Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi. In 1968, he emulated Gandhi by engaging in a hunger strike.*

The equivalent of the Black Power movement among Mexican Americans was the Chicano Movement. Proudly adopting a derogatory term for Mexican Americans, Chicano activists demanded increased political power for Mexican Americans, education that recognized their cultural heritage, and the restoration of lands taken from them at the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. One of the founding members, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, launched the Crusade for Justice in Denver in 1965, to provide jobs, legal services, and healthcare for Mexican Americans. The African

American civil rights movement made significant progress in the 1960s. While Congress played a role by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968, the actions of civil rights groups were instrumental in forging new paths, pioneering new techniques and strategies, and achieving breakthrough successes. Civil rights activists engaged in sit-ins, freedom rides, and protest marches, and registered African American voters. Despite the movement's many achievements, however, many grew frustrated with the slow pace of change, the failure of the Great Society to alleviate poverty, and the persistence of violence against African Americans. Many African Americans in the mid- to late 1960s adopted the ideology of Black Power, which promoted their work within their own communities to redress problems without the aid of whites. The Mexican American civil rights movement, led largely by Cesar Chavez, also made significant progress at this time. The emergence of the Chicano Movement signaled Mexican Americans' determination to seize their political power, celebrate their cultural heritage, and demand their citizenship rights.

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# Conclusion



*[Photo](#)* by *[Jake Johnson](#)* on *[Unsplash](#)*

What motivates people, particularly in the West? Beauty, love, discovery, conquest, and freedom are some motivating ideas; what others can you identify? What can you use to support those ideas?

Is America, for example, about "truth, justice, and the American way," as Superman claims? If so, what fights for truth and justice can be used to support it? Is there evidence to counter truth and justice as ideas that motivate people in the United States?

David Robson, in an article entitled, "How East and West think in profoundly different ways" for BBC Future, asks readers to "Consider the USA, the most individualistic of all Western countries. Historians such as Frederick Jackson Turner have long argued that the expansion and exploration into the west has nurtured a more independent spirit, as each pioneer battled the wilderness and each other for their own survival." Do you see individualism (versus collectivism) as a motivating factor in the West? What evidence supports your opinion?

What motivates you?

# Work Cited

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