Early Renaissance
What was the Renaissance?

- Period following the middle ages (1450-1550)
- “Rebirth” of classical Greece and Rome
- Began in Italy
- Moved to northern Europe
Objectives

• During the middle ages
  – Find God
  – Prove pre-conceived ideas

• During the Renaissance
  – Find man
  – Promote learning
"The Renaissance gave birth to the modern era, in that it was in this era that human beings first began to think of themselves as *individuals*. In the early Middle Ages, people had been happy to see themselves simply as parts of a greater whole – for example, as members of a great family, trade guild, nation, or Church. This communal consciousness of the Middle Ages gradually gave way to the individual consciousness of the Renaissance."

Humanism

• Pursuit of individualism
  – Recognition that humans are creative
  – Appreciation of art as a product of man
• Basic culture needed for all
• Life could be enjoyable
• Love of the classical past
Causes of the Renaissance

• Lessening of feudalism
  – Church disrespected
  – Nobility in chaos
  – Growth of Middle Class through trade

• Fall of Constantinople
  – Greek scholars fled to Italy

• Education

• Nostalgia among the Italians to recapture the glory of the Roman empire
Italian Background

- Major city centers
  - Venice: Republic ruled by oligarchy, Byzantine origins
  - Milan: Visconti and Sforza families
  - Florence (Tuscany): Republic ruled by the Medici
  - Papal States: Ruled by the Pope
  - Kingdom of Naples: King of Aragon
Italian Background

• Florence
  – Medici's—family of physicians
  – Money in banking
  – Financed wool trade
  – Became defacto rulers of Florence
Italian Background

• Cosimo de Medici
  – Advanced arts and education
• Piero de Medici
  – Continued father’s artistic support
• Lorenzo de Medici
  – Poet
  – Friend of Michelangelo
  – Rebuilt University of Pisa
  – Continued to invite scholars to Florence
Italian Background

• Piero de Medici
  – Forced to make military and commercial concessions to King of France
  – Medici’s forced out of the city

• Savonarola
  – Friar who decried money, power
  – Gained power in lower class, but lost pope’s support
  – Excommunicated and hung
Pico della Mirandola

• Close friend of Lorenzo Medici
• Brilliant and well educated
• Wrote set of 900 theses to cover all knowledge
• Believed human learning was based on basic truths
  – Wrote On Dignity of Man
Erasmus

• The leading humanist of the age
• Studied ancient languages
  – Translated New Testament
• Criticized Martin Luther
  – ...Free Will and Hyperaspistes
• In Praise of Folly
  – Major work
  – Written in classical style
  – Discoursed on the foolishness and misguided pompousness of the world
Early Renaissance Sculpture
Ghiberti

- Sculpture competition with Brunelleschi
- *Gates of Paradise*
Gates of Paradise
“Sacrifice of Isaac” Panels

Ghiberti

Brunelleschi
Donatello

Saint George  David  Mary Magdalene
Early Renaissance Architecture
Filippo Brunelleschi

- Founded Renaissance style
  - Simple lines
  - Substantial walls
  - Structural elements not hidden
Filippo Brunelleschi

- Il Duomo Cathedral’s dome (Florence)
Filippo Brunelleschi

- Commissioned to build the cathedral dome
  - Use unique architectural concepts
    - Studied Pantheon
    - Used ribs for support
  - Structural elements have been copied on other buildings
Dome Comparison

Il Duomo (Florence)  St. Peter’s (Rome)  St. Paul’s (London)  US capital
Filippo Brunelleschi

- Pazzi Palace Chapel
- Compare to Gothic
Early Renaissance Art

- What was different in the Renaissance:
  - Realism
  - Perspective
  - Classical (pagan) themes
  - Geometrical arrangement of figures
  - Light and shadowing (chiaroscuro)
  - Softening of edges (sfumato)
  - Backgrounds
  - Artist able to live from commissions
Masaccio

- Realism and expression
  - *The Expulsion from Paradise*
Masaccio

- **Perspective**
  - *Tribute Money*
  - Size of people diminishes with distance
  - Use of light, shadow and drama
Masaccio

- **Perspective (cont.)**
  - *The Holy Trinity with the Virgin and St. John*
  - Geometry
  - Inscription: "What you are, I once was; what I am, you will become."
Perspective

- overlapping
- diminution
- vertical perspective
- diagonal perspective
- atmospheric perspective

- orthogonals
- divergent perspective
- intuitive perspective

- one-point
- vanishing point
- horizon line
- vanishing point
- two-point
- linear perspective
Sandro Botticelli

- Pagan themes
  - *La Primavera*
  - *The Birth of Venus*
- Attempt to depict perfect beauty
Classical Pose

Birth of Venus

Medici Venus
(1st century AD)
Botticelli: illustrations for Dante’s Divine Comedy
Renaissance Man

- Broad knowledge about many things in different fields
- Deep knowledge of skill in one area
- Able to link areas and create new knowledge
"In 1423...a Sicilian adventurer named Giovanni Aurispa returned from Constantinople with a hoard of 238 manuscripts written in Greek, a language that scholars in Italy had learned only in the previous few decades. Among these treasures were six lost plays by Aeschylus and seven by Sophocles... But there was also a complete copy of the works of the geometer Proclus of Alexandria and, even more important for engineers, a treatise on ancient lifting devices, the *Mathematical Collection* of Pappus of Alexandria. In the decades that followed, so many manuscripts on Greek mathematics and engineering emerged that it is possible to speak of a "renaissance of mathematics" in fifteenth-century Italy."

“O investigator, do not flatter yourself that you know the things nature performs for herself, but rejoice in knowing that purpose of those things designed by your own mind.”

Leonardo da Vinci