

# R1 THE RENAISSANCE BEGINS IN ITALY

Although not yet a unified nation, there were many reasons why the Renaissance began in Italy. Its central position in the Mediterranean Sea and a long coastline made it a natural center for trade in the region. Merchants reached the Italian peninsula by following the 12th century routes of the Christian Crusaders. They sailed to Italian ports with their ships full of goods such as silk, salt, and spices. Bankers exchanged their currencies and this wealth paid the wages of a growing middle class which included the ship builders and suppliers for the merchants and their ships.

Merchants and bankers made more money than was needed for expenses so they used this extra wealth to support the arts. They became PATRONS for gifted people, supporting them so they had the time to develop their skills and talents. The arts and ideas of the Greek and Roman civilizations were rediscovered. During the Renaissance, new techniques and inventions appeared and money from trade paid for it all.

The Italians had not been isolated from the rest of the world as had people in Europe who for the most part lived on feudal manors and estates. Being on a peninsula, the Italians were more quickly exposed to new ideas and products. It was the ideal location for the beginning of the Renaissance.

Changes that started in Italy began to spread north, from one trade center to the next. New ideas and goods began to travel from Rome, Venice, and Genoa, to London, Paris, and Amsterdam. While this “rebirth” and learning began in the 1300s, its influence did not reach England until the 1600s during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

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Write the answers on your paper. **DO NOT WRITE ON THIS CARD.**

1. What is one reason the Renaissance began in Italy?
2. What civilizations were rediscovered?
3. How did the geography of Italy influence trade?
4. T F Bankers and merchants became patrons for gifted artists.
5. T F The Renaissance reached England before it came to Italy.
6. What were some important Italian trading cities?
7. T F New ideas as well as trade goods were exchanged.