

CHAPTER 18:

YOU NEED A RENAISSANCE

The Renaissance, Reformation and Scientific Revolution:
1350 to 1700

INTRO

The Renaissance took place in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries. Historians consider it a renaissance, or rebirth, because it was a time

period of unprecedented growth in the arts and sciences, like a revival of the high culture of the Greeks and Romans. This explosion of cultural development followed what had been a rather dark period during the Middle Ages. This was the time of Shakespeare's plays, Galileo's experiments, Michelangelo's paintings, and Martin Luther's new church. A lot was going on.

The Mona Lisa



YOU NEED A RENAISSANCE

LYRICS

Yeah, it's the Renaissance
They're so little art in the Dark Age,
Just a couple jokes
Like in a card game.
But things change
And those hard days
Turn into the Renaissance,
Now art pays.
Let's get classical,
Take it back to Greeks.
We're smarter now,
We're practically geeks
The Medici family will pay you
Med cleubeans,
If you paint something
That doesn't look like a cartoon
So we add perspective,
Paint in 3-D,
Make the background small,
It's easy.
Raphael, Michelangelo,
Leonardo go vine, and Donatello
Aren't those the Ninja turtles?
Yeah, that's it.
But the Shitne Chappel don't
Paint itself, kid.
Mona Lisa smiles, that's so new,
Sculpt Greek and Bible dudes in
Their jorinda, suits.
If you're sick of eating the same
Thing for lunch, stand up!
Nobody's thinking 'cause it's cool
To be dumb, stand up!
There's no art, just guys and greed,
Stand up!

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

There's so little art in the Dark Age...

Part of the impetus for the Renaissance was the Black Death, or **bubonic plague**, which killed millions of Europeans. This had one positive effect — it left more in terms of food, resources, and wealth for those who survived. This bounty helped usher in an economic boom. Trade rebounded, a large middle class grew, governments reorganized and life was generally more stable and prosperous. And all of this actively encouraged artists and thinkers to do their thing.

Let's get classical, take it back to Greeks...

The word **renaissance** means "rebirth," and what was reborn was the artistic and philosophical achievements of ancient Greece and Rome. A new breed of mostly Italian artists were extremely interested in the sculpture, paintings, architecture and philosophy of the ancient Greeks and Romans who, they thought, had done things really well.

We're smarter now, we're practically geeks...

These new thinkers went nuts for Greek and Roman writing. They read it, copied and translated it and wrote responses. Most of them wrote with pens, which they had to dip into ink every few seconds. But in Germany, a man named **Johann Gutenberg** (1398-1468) soon changed the world with his invention — a movable-type **printing press**. That is, letters could be rearranged so that multiple books could be printed on the same

machine. This forever changed the world of literature, creating an explosion of books.

Prior to Gutenberg's press, there were few copies of titles because it was difficult to make them. With movable type, books could be printed one after the other. Scientists could now share their work easily, for example, and priceless old texts could be preserved for the future. Playwrights like Shakespeare could expose their masterpieces to wide audiences. All of the ideas bubbling about during the Renaissance could be given wide distribution. It was certainly revolutionary.

The Medici Family will pay you mad doubloons...

Great art basically takes two things: amazing artists and people willing to pay the artists (so they don't have to spend all their time farming or fixing toilets or whatever). Lucky for us, the Italian Renaissance had both.

In the 1300s, Italy was a land of city-states. Places like Milan, Venice and Florence were important centers of trade and commerce. No single monarchy ruled in Italy, so powerful families were able to control regions. This was what happened in Florence, where the **Medici family** came to power. First, Cosimo de Medici took over the government of the city; then his son Lorenzo followed his father's footsteps. Florence, which had been promoted as a center of intellectual activity under previous rulers, attracted many great minds. The Medici family continued to encourage artists and thinkers, and they became great patrons of culture – they'd pay top dollar to the best artists.

So we add perspective, paint in 3-D...

One of the most impressive innovations of Renaissance painters was thinking about **three dimensions**. To make their paintings more lifelike, artists like Leonardo da Vinci studied how things in the background look smaller. The effect was incredible: Giant canvases or murals showed Greek gods moving among crumbling ruins with ships in the distance; vivid portraits depicted children playing in the background. These little touches added a lot.

Raphael...

For **Raphael Sanzio** (1483-1520), talent was in the blood. The painter's father was also an artist, and Raphael learned a lot about shade and light, depth and perspective from him and others. By the time he was 21, he had painted his first masterpiece, *The Marriage of the Virgin*. When he was ready to head out on his own, Raphael went where the action was – Florence, where he met Michelangelo, Leonardo, and others, and studied their techniques. He was commissioned by the Vatican to do a series of paintings. One of these, *The School of Athens*, is probably his most famous work.

Michelangelo...

One of the beneficiaries of the Medici's was a sculptor named **Michelangelo Buonarroti** (1475-1564). Michelangelo was friendly with Lorenzo de Medici and studied sculpture at his home. The young artist would take what he learned and turn it into masterworks like *David* and the *Pieta*, pieces that remain among the most famous sculptures of all time. Not long after completing them, Michelangelo was hired to paint frescoes on the ceiling of

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LYRICS continued

You need a renaissance, stand up!

Do you believe in magic like people used to?

You get sick, and you think God hates you.

They didn't question.

What the priests told 'em, until a couple of scientists

Got emboldened.

They said, "I won't take your word

As the truth.

If you want me to believe, you better show me proof."

Poof!

This was the Scientific Revolution.

How you like them apples?

Like Isaac Newton.

Now everybody thought,

God made the Earth.

And put it in the

Center of the universe.

Copernicus thought

It was the sun at center.

Like the gum's at the center of a...

A Blow Pop.

Galileo's telescope

Proved the Earth moved.

The Pope said, "Galileo's a fool!"

Actually, the Pope couldn't

Handle the facts.

Course science kind of gave him

Like a panic attack.

HOOK

"Tell me, have you sinned?"

Yeah, like every day.

"Well, if you pay me lots of money,

I can make it go away."

the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

Leonardo da Vinci...

When we use the term "Renaissance Man," we're describing someone like **Leonardo da Vinci** (1452-1519). Not just because he lived during this time period, but because he was great at many things. Most famous as the artist who painted the *Mona Lisa*, Leonardo was good at most everything he did. He was a scientist, an inventor – dude could even sing! He painted and worked on all kinds of scholarly studies, from geometry to flying machines to architecture. But he was still able to come up with some of the world's most famous paintings, including *The Last Supper* and the *Mona Lisa*. Unquestionably, the man was a genius.

Donatello...

Like Michelangelo, **Donatello** (1386-1466) was a sculptor. He was one of the greatest of all time, and he made his early mark in Florence, where he was born in the city. And like Michelangelo, one of his most famous pieces was a sculpture called *David* – it was the first nude sculpture to be done in the Renaissance. Donatello did work for the Medici family, and his art – which included other masterpieces like *St. George and the Dragon*, *St. Mark*, *St. Peter* and *St. John the Evangelist* – played with classical Greek and Roman themes as well as Christian ones.

Do you believe in magic like people used to...

The Middle Ages in Europe was a **superstitious** time. Few were educated except for members of the clergy, (priests and monks). To most people, God worked in mysterious ways, and

if it wasn't God, it might be a fairy, demon or witch that made your brother act so strangely. If a town suspected a certain woman was a witch, they might take her from her house, tie her to a stake, and burn her.

You get sick, and you think that God hates you...

The Spanish Inquisition was a dark spot during the glory days of the Renaissance. Ferdinand and Isabella, monarchs of Spain, wanted to use religion to unite the Kingdom of Spain under their rule. It had previously been divided up by differing religious factions - Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims. Ferdinand and Isabella thought they could unite the nation if everyone were Catholic. So in 1478 they basically told those who didn't share their beliefs - the so-called "heretics" - to leave. If they didn't leave, members of the Inquisition would arrest, torture and kill them. Thousands were executed. For years, the Inquisition tried to stomp people out simply because they were different.

If you want me to believe you better show me proof...

An amazing revolution occurred alongside the artistic changes of the Renaissance. Most people call it the Scientific Revolution, but you could call it the "why revolution." Just like an annoying three-year-old, scientists began asking "Why?" to everything. The sky is blue. Why? Some stars don't move straight across the sky; they make circles. Why? These scientists realized that just because their moms and dads told them something was true didn't mean actually it was. They wanted to observe the truth.

Poof! This was the Scientific Revolution...

Thanks to the Scientific Revolution, we prove things as either true or false. But how do we go about proving something? To help people, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) came up with what is known as the scientific method. The idea that a scientific project should begin by observing or exploring an idea or phenomenon. Then the scientist should make his or her theory about how something works - called the hypothesis. After that, the theory should be tested. This is still the way scientists approach their work today.

How you like them apples? Like Isaac Newton...

There is a popular myth that Isaac Newton was chilling under an apple tree when an apple fell on his head and this made him "discover" gravity. Erase that image from your mind. There was no apple tree and gravity had already been "discovered." What Newton did discover was how all objects pull on each other, and that how much they pull depends on their mass. Newton's theories beefed up the theories of other great scientists, including Copernicus and Galileo.

Copernicus thought it was the sun at center...

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) was a real troublemaker - according to the Catholic Church, at least. The great Polish astronomer had this idea that the Earth rotated and revolved around the sun. Until that time, everyone believed that the Earth was the center of the universe and the sun rotated around it. Copernicus's ideas got him all kinds of angry mail, and the Church banned his landmark book.

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LYRICS CONTINUED

That's what Catholics did,
Selling indulgences,
Till a monk named Martin Luther
Wasn't feeling it.
Wrote 95 theses and
Tacked 'em up,
Said the Church is too fat
Like a Reese's Cup.
We need to be more
Personal with Jesus.
His friends protested,
So they're Protestants.

Over in England, we find Henry VIII,
With like 30 ladies.
That he wanted to date.
Now, you know how docs
Want to play ball with their son?
Well, his wife Catherine
Wasn't giving him one.
So Henry asked the Pope,
"Yo, can I get a divorce?"
But the Pope said, "No, you've
Got to stay the course."
What do you do if you're a king
And your church says wait?
Well, you start your own church
If you're Henry VIII.

Hook

The Revolution of the Holy Spheres.
Scientists now believe that the universe
doesn't even have a center.

Galileo's telescope proved the Earth moved...

Another hugely important scientist, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), was one of the few people who thought Copernicus had the right idea. And Galileo could prove it. He invented a telescope and looked into space in a way that no one had before. He was then able to see what was orbiting what. His contributions to physics were likewise extraordinary. One of them, still taught in classrooms everywhere, was that the weight of an object doesn't determine how fast it falls. If you drop a heavy item, such as a stone, and a lighter item, like a pin, at the same time, they'll hit the ground simultaneously. His findings would change science. For his contributions, the Catholic Church put Galileo under house arrest and made him publicly deny what he had written.

That's what the Catholics did, selling indulgences...

It was time for the Catholic Church, such a powerful force in the Middle Ages, to change. One of the most unpopular practices of the Church was the selling of indulgences. Priests said that the more money you gave them for these "indulgences," the faster you'd get into heaven when you died.

Till a monk named Martin Luther wasn't feeling it...

A German monk named Martin Luther was outraged by this; to him, it seemed to go against the teachings of Jesus. So, piping mad, Luther

scribbled 95 things he hated about the Church on a piece of paper one night, marched down to his church, and tacked them to the door. They were soon known as the **95 Theses** (a thesis is an argument). This was Halloween, 1517. Boo!

Wrote 95 theses and tacked 'em up...

Luther also thought that mass (Catholic church service) should be conducted in the native tongue of the people, not in Latin, which many people didn't understand. His push for change gave birth to the **Reformation**. His followers felt the same way; they wanted to protest against the Church, so they became known as **Protestants**. Nowadays, there are lots of sects that are considered Protestant: Baptists, Anglicans, Lutherans, born-again Christians and many others all trace their origin back to Martin Luther.

Said the church is too fat like a Reese's Cup...

The Reformation hit the Catholic Church hard. All of its major figures – the Pope, cardinals, archbishops – decided a meeting was necessary. They wanted to come up with a plan to address the points made by the Protestants who had left the Church. Some Catholics wanted to try and bring them back; others just wanted to figure out how to move into the future. They wanted to reconsolidate the power and respect of the Church. Over the course of 18 years, starting in 1545, they met at Trent, a town on the border of Germany and Italy. **The Council of Trent** worked – it established a doctrine that the Catholic Church would live by for years.

We need to be more personal with Jesus...

Pope Leo X was the one who had allowed priests to sell indulgences. He did it to raise money for building awesome churches in Rome, including St. Peter's Basilica. In 1521, Leo threw Martin Luther out of the church (excommunication).

Over in England, we find Henry VIII...

When **King Henry VIII** took the throne of England upon the death of his father, people everywhere hailed the new king. He was a scholar, musician and athlete, and his subjects liked him. The new king didn't have much interest in the affairs of the state; he left much of the political work of the time to his aid, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Some scholars claim Wolsey was the real power behind the throne. Henry was famous for many things – he had six wives, several of whom ended up imprisoned in the famous Tower of London. (They are said to haunt the place.) He was opposed to Luther and his reforms, and for that Pope Leo X gave him the title "Defender of the Faith." But he later declared himself the supreme head of the Church of England, effectively breaking ties with Rome.

You know how dads want to play ball with their son...

It all began when Henry was married to his first wife, **Catherine of Aragon**. They had a girl together, "Bloody Mary" (see below), but no boys. That bothered old Henry; he really wanted a son to be the next king. Plus, he was kind of eyeing this lady-in-waiting at the court named **Anne Boleyn**. So he asked Pope Clement for a divorce. The Catholic Church forbade divorce,

but Clement had personal reasons for saying no as well. Henry basically replied, "Fine, if you won't let me get divorced, I'll start my own church and I'll grant myself a divorce." He did, and the church he founded is known as the Anglican Church or the Church of England.

Well, his wife Catherine wasn't giving him one...

Queen Mary I will always be known by her nickname – Bloody Mary. Mary only reigned for five years, but during that time she had a lot of people killed, hence the name. One of the first things she did when she took office was have her cousin and potential rival, Jane Grey, killed. Mary was intent upon returning England to the Roman Catholic Church, so she decided that the Protestants that had been growing in numbers in England would simply have to be put to death. Hundreds of Protestant leaders were executed during her reign. She married Philip II, King of Spain, who ruled during the Spanish Inquisition.

Well, you start your own church if you're Henry VIII...

Next upon the English throne was Mary's half-sister, **Elizabeth I**. She had been imprisoned by Queen Mary in the Tower of London, a landmark structure known for its many famous prisoners. When she took the throne in 1559, Elizabeth set about undoing much of Mary's work. Many consider her one of the greatest monarchs in English history. She established the Church of England once and for all. During her reign the English defeated the Spanish Armada and became a major power player in European politics. And during the **Elizabethan Age**, the arts flourished

in England.

Many scholars give the title of "most important writer ever" to Elizabethan poet and playwright **William Shakespeare** (1564-1616). And it's hard to argue with this claim since his work has been read and his plays performed almost constantly since his day. He wrote 37 plays – *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* among them. During his lifetime, his plays were performed at the Globe Theatre. It was a famous playhouse in London that seated 3,000 and was affordable for most people. One of the biggest and most influential people in all of academia, he never attended college. It would be virtually impossible to list the number of references to Shakespeare's work in our cultural history since his death.

