

## TEACHER LESSON NOTES

### *The Renaissance*

#### CHAPTER 3: THE CRADLE OF THE RENAISSANCE

##### Lesson Objectives

1. Understand Florentine society during the 1400s and its dependence upon wealthy merchant-class families.
2. Understand the development of a republican form of government as the old noble class lost power in Florence.
3. Identify the contributions to the Renaissance of Florentine artists.
4. Understand the roles of members of the Medici Family in Florence's history.

##### Lesson Resources

1. Core Knowledge Online Resources: <https://www.coreknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CKHG-Online-Resources-From-the-Renaissance-to-Englands-Golden-Age.pdf>
2. The Great Courses "The Italian Renaissance" by Dr. Kevin Bartlett, Lectures 7-12
3. CK Teacher Guide and Student Reader

##### Materials needed for lesson

1. Slides and Projector
2. Display and student copies of Map of Renaissance Italy (found on p. 125 of Renaissance teacher guide)
3. Student notebook
4. Timeline cards for chapter 3

##### Introduction to lesson (5 minutes)

- Ask students to focus on the image of the Italian city on this page. What structures do they see that stand out among the rest? Can they identify what they think those buildings might be? Why? Tell students that the building on the left of the screen is called the public square, or the Pallazo del Signorio, and the one on the right is a church called the Duomo. Tell students that these buildings are some of the magnificent structures that were built during the 1300 and 1400s in Florence.
- What is a cradle? Why might this chapter be titled as such? (This city experienced the birth of the Renaissance before other cities, or at least it was more evident to people living here at the time that something was changing.)
- **Review:** What did we learn about why the Renaissance began in Italy? (It's location in the Mediterranean Sea made its people amenable to trade, merchants became wealthy and took an interest in government affairs, merchants needed to educate their sons in contracts and the law, it's the site of the ancient Roman empire, and Greek scholars fled there after the fall of Constantinople in 1453)
- What did we learn about the rising status of artists during the Renaissance? Why was there an emphasis placed on human achievement? (As merchants became wealthy, they commissioned artists to create works to honor the people in this rising class. Merchants also contributed to the overall wealth and beauty of their cities with public art. Artists were in demand, and had more recognition as creators rather than as makers. They were

humanists, and as the culture shifted to recognize human achievement and greatness, artists began to rise in status.)

### Prepare for Reading

- Tell students that in this lesson we will read about how Florence became one of the most important cities in Italy. Display the map of Renaissance Italy, and ask students to locate the city state of Florence. Remind students that a city-state is a region that is an independent political state with its own ruling government. Italy was not a unified country at this point.
- We will also read about the most powerful family in Florence, the Medici. Call attention to the focus question on the next slide.

### Focus Question (2 minutes)

- Read the focus question, and direct students to update their notebooks with the chapter title and the focus question. Then, direct students to look for ways that the success of merchants and bankers like the Medici benefited artists and made Florence the cradle of the Renaissance.

### Important Words (2-3 minutes)

- Read the following words and have students say them out loud. Use the word in a sentence, and explain their meanings. When you read them in the text, be sure to have the class read the word aloud, and ask students to explain the meaning and how it fits into the narrative of Florence's history during the Renaissance

### Learn (10 minutes)

- Direct students to update their notes with “The City on the Arno” as the main idea. As you read each section of the text (read aloud, partner read, independent read depending on what you think works best for your class), make sure to pause and explain parts that may be confusing (use the note stems to ask key questions and assess understanding), and flesh out this section of the reading with the following additions. Ask literal questions first, then move on to the key questions to help students evaluate what they have learned. Afterwards, use these note stems to help students to think about what key details they need to write down in their notebooks. Students should take their notes after you've read and discussed each section.

### Key questions for this section of the reading

- Why does a city have to be wealthy and stable before artists and scholars can flourish there?
- How does the image on p. 23 of the reader demonstrate Florence's commercial success?
- Additional notes on the reading:
  - **Geographic Advantages**
    - founded in Roman times on flat land alongside the river Arno; good for growing food and expanding city size
    - to the west, the river gave it access to sea
    - city was accessible in other directions through a variety of mountain passes
    - goods and people were therefore transported easily
  - **Political Stability**
    - by 1472 Florence had a powerful merchant class and became known for its artists and architects

- in the late 1300s workers and merchants rebelled against the old noble families and demanded more representation and less taxation
- during the 1400s a new class developed, and they were very wealthy; the old signoria (nobles) lost power as the merchants rose in status
- these families became patrons because they sought family honor and recognition in the community as benefactors
- Florence became stable in part because the old fashion of dueling nobles faded away

**Image:** Ask students to think about why the River Arno helped contribute to the financial success of Florence. Point out the symmetry of the windows and arches.

**Learn (10 minutes)**

- Direct students to update their notes with “Wool and Banking” as the main idea. As you read each section of the text, make sure to pause and explain parts that may be confusing (use the note stems to ask key questions and assess understanding), and flesh out this section of the reading with the following additions. Ask literal questions first, then move on to the key questions to help students evaluate what they have learned. Afterwards, use these note stems to help students to think about what key details they need to write down in their notebooks. Students should take their notes after you’ve read and discussed each section.

**Key questions for this section of the reading**

- How did wealthy wool makers and bankers change Florence?
- Challenge question: Can you be virtuous if you are very wealthy?
- Additional notes on the reading:
  - **Banking**
    - banking is a business whereby someone puts money in the bank for safe-keeping, and the banker uses some of that money to invest in other things to make more money
    - the idea is that someone will not pull out all of their money at any one time to there’s money for the banker to work with
    - when the banker makes more money, the customer also gets some of that profit, but the banker can become wildly wealthy if he invests well
  - **The Founding of the Republic**
    - after the fall of the Roman empire, old patrician families who remained in power in Florence controlled the government
    - violence and death prevailed, and the government was generally unstable
    - the nobles, or signori, built tall fortresses and castles to defend their territories during the middle ages
    - this began to change as the commercial success of merchants rose
    - Black Death also contributed to rising status of merchants as labor shortage increased
    - merchants in the most prominent guilds were the first to restructure Florence’s government from an oligarchy to a republic
    - review the meaning of republic-a government in which elected officials make and execute law
  - **Political Representation**

- at first only wealthy families from seven great guilds were allowed to participate in government; these families also contributed lavishly to the general well-being of the city
- later 14 other guilds were admitted into the government
- not everyone was able to participate, only the wealthiest families, but other families benefited from the beneficence of the leading families. In Florence we see the arrival of the first public schools and public dowry funds
- humanist principles began to permeate the Florentine understanding of a virtuous city

### Learn (10 minutes)

- Direct students to update their notes with “A Powerful Family” as the main idea. Explain that students will now read about an example of one of those rich merchant families they’ve learned about—the most important one, in fact. As you read each section of the text, make sure to pause and explain parts that may be confusing (use the note stems to ask key questions and assess understanding), and flesh out this section of the reading with the following additions. Ask literal questions first, then move on to the key questions to help students evaluate what they have learned. Afterwards, use these note stems to help students to think about what key details they need to write down in their notebooks. Students should take their notes after you’ve read and discussed each section.

### Key questions for this section of the reading

- How did Cosimo use his wealth for the good? Did he ever use it for evil? How?
- How did Cosimo use his influence to dominate the city of Florence? Was Florence really a republic?
- Additional notes on the reading:
  - **Cosimo de Medici**
    - Cosimo made it a point to be one of the commoners. Though he was fabulously wealthy, he did not flaunt his wealth in his attire.
    - he was seen as the representative of the citizens, and worked hard to establish and maintain that reputation
    - as a humanist, he started the Platonic Academy, and invited leading scholars and artists to learn and discuss the great works of antiquity, especially Plato
    - the Neoplatonists, or New Platonists, revived Plato’s works and discussed the perfect republic
    - it was in this academy that great thinkers, poets, and artists came to work and learn
    - Cosimo was a master businessman and patron; he blended art, learning, and business tact together to become the leading citizen of the republic
    - he was asked many times to take over the government of Florence, but like Cincinnatus, he never would. He did, however, make sure that only those he trusted were placed into positions of authority.
  - **The Duomo**
    - The Santa Maria del Fiore was established in the 1300s, but no one had been able to create a dome large enough to cover the large opening
    - Brunelleschi won the bid as master architect
    - he found a way to bend the major beams on the inside and use a series of chains that wrapped around the interior wood to give the dome its shape. He then added two layers of brick; one on the inside, one on the outside

- he even had to design a new machine to hoist the dome to the top of the church!

**Image:** If time, show students the Duomo up close, or save it for another time.

**Image:** Notice the scrolls and letters that surround Cosimo.

**Learn (10 minutes)**

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**Key questions for this section of the reading**

- How did Lorenzo carry on the Medici family hegemony (family power)?
- How did he continue to make Florence the cradle of the Renaissance?
- Additional notes on the reading:
  - **The attempted assassination of Lorenzo de Medici**
    - the Medici weren’t the only powerful bankers in Florence. There was another family named the Pazzi Family.
    - the Medici were Pope Sixtus IV’s preferred bankers and the Pazzi hated them
    - Lorenzo resisted the pope and the archbishop of Pisa as they fought battles to win larger territories for the Papal States
    - members of the Pazzi family hatched a plan with the backing of the pope to assassinate the Medici
    - during high Easter mass, literally during the transubstantiation of the host, the assassins swept in and stabbed Lorenzo and his brother!
    - Lorenzo’s brother died immediately, and Lorenzo escaped with a neck injury
    - Interestingly, the people of Florence backed the Medici and helped to capture and assassinate the villains (including the Archbishop of Pisa!!)
    - Medici support was cemented in Florence after this

**Lesson Conclusion (5 minutes)**

1. Display lesson timeline cards and review major points from the lesson.
2. Direct students to reread the focus question: How did the success of merchants and bankers during the Renaissance benefit artists?
3. Use Subject/Predicate/Complete It sentence structure to turn the focus question into a declarative topic sentence: (example)The success of merchants and bankers during the Renaissance benefited artists in several ways.
4. Students then compose a sentence from each section of the reading that helps to answer the topic sentence.
5. Finish for homework.