

The Renaissance

1500-1670







- Quickwrite: Notice people's clothing and body language. What does this tell us about this time period? What does this society value?
- Power – What gives people power in this time period? Who has it and how do they get it? How do you know?

Before the Renaissance:

Medieval

500-1500

- 1,000 years of almost nothing
 - Few works of art, literature, and music
 - Few advancements in science and medicine



Before the Renaissance:
Medieval
500-1500

- ▶ Marked by the Black Plague
 - ▶ 30-60% of Europeans were ultimately killed
 - ▶ People believed that the plague was punishment from God and did little to combat it.



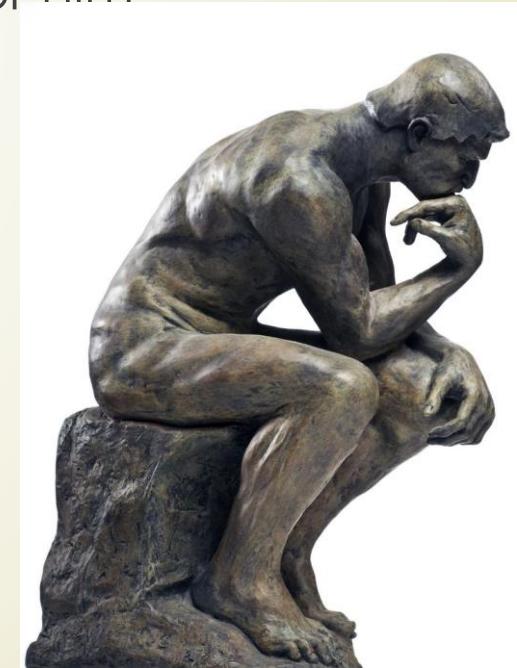
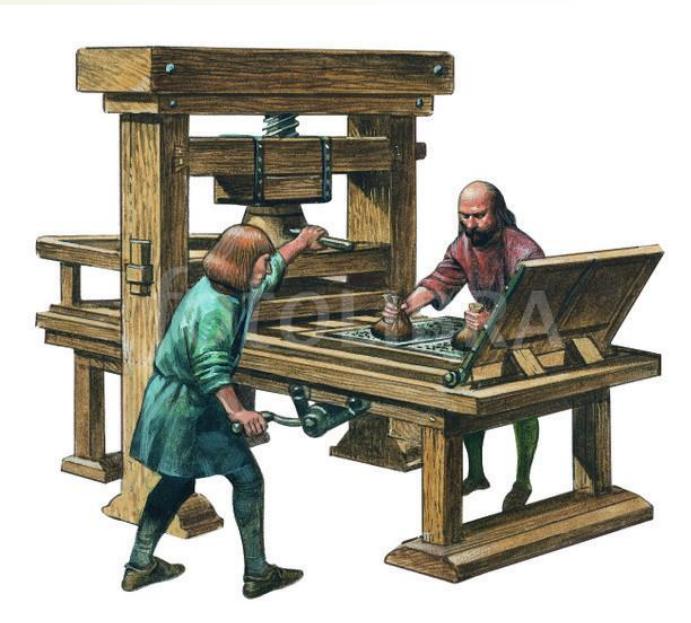
Renaissance: Awakening and Rebirth

- ▶ By contrast, citizens of the Renaissance time period believed that people could make progress and seek perfection of their own volition.
- ▶ Greek and Roman ideals were revived.
- ▶ The arts and sciences were explored with optimistic vigor.
- ▶ People were ready to put the horrors of Medieval life (including the Black Plague) behind them.



Behold: The Power of Words

- ▶ In 1440, the Printing Press changed the world of literature, making it possible to mass-produce texts – something that had never been done before.
- ▶ An individual could now engage with a text on his own, without a priest or nobleman reading and interpreting it for him



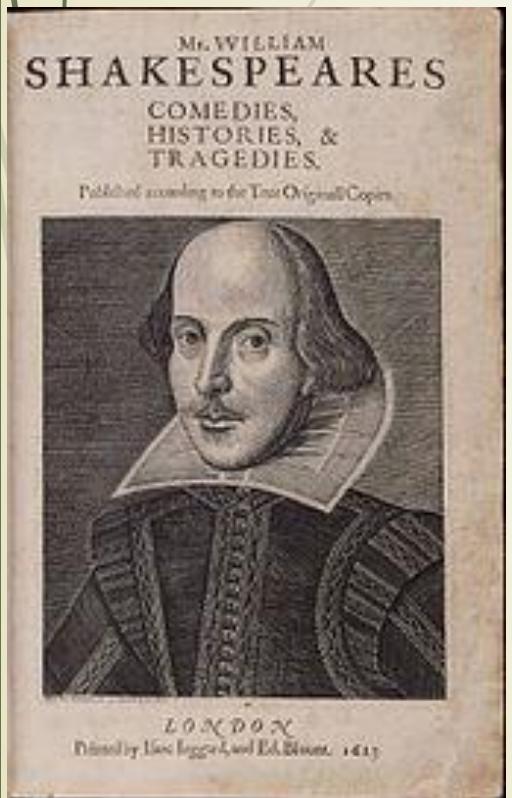
Renaissance Literature

- ▶ During this age of experimentation, poets experimented with form (line length, rhyme, etc.)
- ▶ Dramatists (play writers) revived the Greek and Roman traditions.
- ▶ Common themes during this time period included beauty and truth.
- ▶ It was especially popular to interweave a layer of wit or cleverness into the text to showcase one's intellect - the crown jewel of a renaissance man.



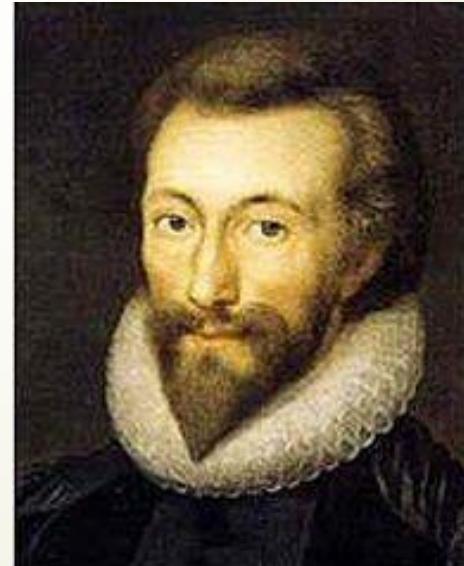
Shakespeare

- ▶ Renowned for his complex characters, and his ability to shift between comedy AND tragedy
- ▶ Unmatched variety, profundity, and exquisite use of language
- ▶ Shrouded in mystery (and conspiracy) because, in this time period, it was unheard of to “own” your work/words
 - ▶ Therefore it was also nearly impossible to earn a living as a writer
 - ▶ “Starving artists”



Other Renaissance Authors

- ▶ John Milton - “Paradise Lost”
- ▶ Edmund Spencer – “Faerie Queen”
- ▶ John Donne – Metaphysical Poet



Starving Artists



Shakespeare and his Friends. John Faed (1820-1902) . Private Collection.

- ▶ Vagabond playwrights and actors traveled around performing plays in towns or, if they were well-regarded, in the courts of royalty.
- ▶ Plays were funded by individual benefactors on a case-by-case basis. Actors and writers had to pursue their art as a hobby on the side if they wanted to eat.
- ▶ All actors were men or boys; even those who filled the roles of women.

Theater Culture



A PLAY IN A LONDON INN YARD, IN THE TIME OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

From Thornbury's *Old and New London*, Cassell & Co, 1881.

- ▶ The well-educated typically loathed the playhouses because of the “riff-raff” that they seemed to attract; pubs and brothels inevitably coexisted with the dramatic culture.
- ▶ This may have also reflected a general angst towards the accessibility of literature and drama to the lower class.
- ▶ Conservative groups believed the cross-dressing and bawdy humor of plays was sinful. They also scorned children who often preferred to see a play than study or do something more academic.

Politics & Power

- Revisit your quickwrite. Based on the historical context and your ideas from the painting, what conclusions can you draw about politics and power in this time period?
 - Who has power? Who does not?
 - What system of rules govern this society?

Gender Roles & Love

- Using your quickwrite and the historical context, what conclusions do you draw about gender roles and love during the renaissance?
 - What does love mean to people in the renaissance? How much is it valued?
 - What is expected of a man in this society? A woman?



For Reference:

- ▶ The Literature Network. <http://www.onlineliterature.com/periods/renaissance.php>



MOMENT

- An access strategy for ANY poem
 - Moment - striking imagery
 - Opposition - contrast
 - Movement - consider the piece from beginning to end
 - Evocation – mood, emotion and **why**
 - Notation – lyrical and musical structure
 - Tension – attachments between reader and poem, and the changes of them