

Name: _____

Date: _____

HUMANISM

Beginning in the late 1300s, a group of scholars centered in the Italian city-state of Florence began to look to the past for inspiration. These scholars were later called humanists because they stressed human innovation instead of spiritualism. The humanists studied the classics – the works of the ancient Greeks and Romans. In the works of the classics, Renaissance scholars found a way of thinking similar to their own time. They believed this outlook had not been explored since the fall of Greece and Rome. The humanists recreated classical styles in art, literature, and architecture. Humanists believed that by studying the classics, they could better understand people and the world.

The humanists believed in reason. Reason is the ability to think logically. The scholars promoted the investigation of nature, they sought to be clear and articulate in their speaking and writing, and they promoted the responsibility every citizen has to his or her

community. In 1459, Battista Guarino wrote, “To each species of creature has been allotted a peculiar and instinctive gift. To horses galloping, to birds flying, comes naturally. To man only is given the desire to learn.” The Renaissance humanists valued human experience and believed in the dignity and worth of the individual.

The humanists emphasized the importance of human values instead of religious beliefs. Renaissance humanists were often devout Christians, but their promotion of secular, or non-religious values, often put them at odds with the church. Today we refer to the study of literature, philosophy and art as the humanities. The civilizations of Greece and Rome ended long ago, but those civilizations continue to influence us through the humanities.

Answer in complete sentences

1. What were the classics? Who were the humanists?
- *2. Do you agree or disagree with the quote, “To each species of creature has been allotted a peculiar and instinctive gift. To horses galloping, to birds flying, comes naturally. To man only is given the desire to learn.” Defend your answer.
3. Why were the humanists often at odds with the church?
4. What are the humanities?

