

Chapter Thirteen Terms

Oligarchy:

An oligarchy is a small group of people who have control over the government of a place. By the middle of the fourteenth century, oligarchies made up many of the governments of Italian city-states. Merchant aristocracies and powerful families, like the Medici, were the oligarchs. These prominent families supported many Renaissance artists in order to glorify themselves and their families. While oligarchies possessed constitutions, they were manipulated to give power to a specific group of people. As times and attitudes changed, the prominent families refused to let go of their power and tried to maintain authority; the Medici once again being an example. Oligarchies are important because the oligarchies slowed Italian unification and symbolized the government that the Italian city-states did have during the Renaissance.

Humanism:

Humanism was an idea that began to pick up speed in the late fifteenth century. People began to focus on human beings and their achievements and began to study Latin texts in order to learn more about the human condition- not about God. Humanism was prevalent in both the Italian Renaissance and Northern Renaissance. Prominent individualists included Erasmus and More. Humanists like Erasmus and More emphasized education as a means of reform and also urged for church reform, believing that Christianity was more a matter of the heart. Humanism is important because it signified a major break from the Middle Ages and stressed the importance of education as a mechanism for reform.

Secularism:

Secularism focused on the material world and less on the spiritual world and was an idea that grew in popularity beginning in the fourteenth century. Those living during this time were still religious and the idea of secularism even spread to the churches as Renaissance popes spent more money on elaborate houses of worship. Commerce and trade during this time increased, leading to economic change and rising prosperity. Secularism is important because it symbolized the weakening of the Catholic church and the strengthening of economic advances in European society. Commerce and trade increased, which also signified that society was changing and becoming more materialistic, much like a more modern society.

Desiderius Erasmus:

Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam was a Dutch humanist who grew up in a monastery during the late fifteenth century, where he learned an appreciation for Latin classics. Erasmus was influenced more by humanism after meeting Englishman John Colet in 1499. He became known for his studying of the Bible and for his extensive knowledge of Greek. Erasmus believed that everyone should read the Bible and stressed that education was the means to reform and Christianity was an inner attitude of the heart. He is known for publishing many works, notably *The Education of a Christian Prince* and *The Praise of Folly*, both created in the early sixteenth century. Erasmus is important because he symbolized northern humanists and their ideas, including the urging of church reform and the importance of education.

Thomas More:

Thomas More was an English humanist during the sixteenth century who practiced law before taking an interest to the classic stories. He entered government service under Henry VIII and became an ambassador to Flanders. There, he worked on *Utopia* and stressed his ideas that the reform of social institutions could bring about more peace and prosperity for society. As More gained more influence in English government, he ran into trouble with the king. Henry VIII wished to divorce Catherine of Aragon, but More would not approve of it and soon resigned from the House of Commons. He was protected by lords after accusations of affiliating with Elizabeth Barton were brought against him; however, after refusing to see Henry VIII as the head of the English Church he was executed on charges of treason. Thomas More is important because he represents northern humanists and their ideas, including the urging of church reform and the importance of education. He was also seen as a martyr of the Catholic Church because of his execution by the Anglican Henry VIII.

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Niccolò Machiavelli:

Machiavelli was an Italian diplomat and humanist in Italy's Florentine Republic during the Medici family's exile in the early sixteenth century. He is known for writing *The Prince*, which discussed that a leader should be feared before loved and may need to be manipulative. He claimed that a good government had to be effective and the leader had to increase in power. The word *Machiavellian* refers today to a devious and corrupt leader because of this political treatise. Machiavelli is important because of the main ideas that come out of his work: permanent social order reflecting God's will cannot be established, politics follows its own set of laws- or lack of laws- and politics is a science.

Henry VII:

Henry VII was the King of England after the War of the Roses ended in the late fifteenth century. The war had ended after Richard III was killed in battle and he united the families by marrying Elizabeth of York. He rebuilt royal finances by promoting trade and enforcing taxes. He ruled largely without Parliament, using men with lower-level social origins as his advisors. His Court of the Star Chamber tried cases involving aristocrats, using methods contradicting common law, including torture. The Tudors relied on the support of the justices of the peace to enforce laws and punish criminals, as England had no standing army. . Henry VII also signed treaties, including one with the Dutch, and built up England's navy and merchant marine. He also urged his sons Arthur and Henry to have male heirs in order to prevent another English civil war. Henry VII is important because he ended the War of the Roses and unified England once again. He started the Tudor dynasty and pushed his sons to have male heirs. He also increased England's merchant marine and brought a time of peace and prosperity for the country.