

Renaissance Worldviews: Then and Now

30 minutes, 3 stages

During the Renaissance, Europeans developed new ways of thinking about the world, knowledge, and human possibility. These ideas shaped the worldview of the Western world for centuries to come ([Outcome](#)). Understanding how Renaissance thinkers saw the world helps you recognize that beliefs and values are shaped by the time, place, and society people live in ([Outcome](#)). This homework asks you to identify key Renaissance ideas and compare them to how people think today.

Stage 1: What Was the Renaissance Worldview? (10 min)

Read or recall what you learned about the Renaissance. Then complete the chart below by writing one or two sentences for each row. Use what you know about how Renaissance thinkers viewed the world.

Aspect of worldview	What Renaissance thinkers believed or valued
Knowledge and learning	
The role of human beings	
Art and beauty	
Exploration and discovery	
The importance of trade and cities	

Example for the first row: Renaissance thinkers believed that studying ancient Greek and Roman texts would unlock new knowledge about the world and human nature.

Stage 2: How Geography and Trade Shaped Ideas (10 min)

The physical geography of Renaissance Europe affected trade and competition among European countries ([Outcome](#)). This trade helped powerful city-states like Florence, Venice, and Genoa grow rich and powerful. Wealth allowed these cities to support artists, thinkers, and scholars.

Write a short paragraph (4 to 6 sentences) answering this question: How did living near the Mediterranean Sea and having access to trade routes help Renaissance cities become centers of learning and art? Think about what goods and ideas could move between cities, and why a wealthy city would want to pay artists and thinkers.

Stage 3: Renaissance Ideas in Your World (10 min)

One key Renaissance idea was humanism: the belief that human beings have potential, that learning matters, and that we should study the world around us carefully ([Outcome](#)). This worldview was shaped by the time and place Renaissance thinkers lived in ([Outcome](#)).

Choose one Renaissance example from the list below. Write two or three sentences explaining how that example reflects a humanist worldview or how it shows that beliefs and values change over time and place.

- The printing press, a Renaissance invention that sparked the growth and exchange of ideas and knowledge across Europe in astronomy, mathematics, science, politics, religion, and the arts
- A Renaissance city-state, such as Florence, Venice, or Genoa, that grew rich and powerful through increased trade

- A Renaissance thinker or philosopher who helped develop a humanist worldview and influenced society
- The spread of Renaissance ideas, which enabled the growth and exchange of knowledge across Europe
- A European government during the Age of Discovery that expanded through imperialism, seizing land and resources and causing serious, long-lasting harm to the Indigenous peoples and cultures it colonized, including loss of life, land, and self-governance

Self-check

Answer these questions to confirm your understanding:

1. Name one way that Renaissance thinkers' worldview was different from the worldview of people in medieval Europe. (Hint: Think about what they valued or how they saw human potential.)
2. Explain how geography helped shape the Renaissance worldview in cities like Venice and Florence. What did location make possible?
3. What does it mean to say that beliefs and values are shaped by time, place, and society? Give one example from the Renaissance or from today.