

The Prince by Niccolò Machiavelli

Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) served in the government as a diplomat for fourteen years before becoming a full-time writer and scholar. In 1513, he used his experience in politics and his studies of ancient Roman history to write a book called *The Prince*. In this book, Machiavelli combined his personal experience of politics with his knowledge of the past to offer a guide to rulers on how to gain and maintain power.

Here the question arises: is it better to be loved than feared, or vice versa? I don't doubt that every prince would like to be both; but since it is hard to accommodate these qualities, if you have to make a choice, to be feared is much safer than to be loved. For it is a good general rule about men, that they are ungrateful, fickle¹, liars and deceivers, fearful of danger and greedy for gain. While you serve their welfare, they are all yours, offering their blood, their belongings, their lives, and their children's lives, as we noted above—so long as the danger is remote. But when the danger is close at hand, they turn against you. Then, any prince who has relied on their words and has made no other preparations will come to grief; because friendships that are bought at a price, and not with greatness and nobility of soul, may be paid for but they are not acquired, and they cannot be used in time of need. People are less concerned with offending a man who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared: the reason is that love is a link of obligation which men, because they are rotten, will break any time they think doing so serves their advantage; but fear involves dread of punishment, from which they can never escape.

Still, a prince should make himself feared in such a way that, even if he gets no love, he gets no hate either; because it is perfectly possible to be feared and not hated, and this will be the result if only the prince will keep his hands off the property of his subjects or citizens, and off their women. When he does have to shed blood, he should be sure to have a strong justification and manifest² cause; but above all, he should not confiscate³ people's property, because men are quicker to forget the death of a father than the loss of a patrimony⁴. Besides, pretexts⁵ for confiscation are always plentiful; it never fails that a prince who starts living by plunder can find reasons to rob someone else. . . . Returning to the question of being feared or loved, I conclude that since men love at their own inclination but can be made to fear at the inclination of the prince, a shrewd prince will lay his foundations on what is under his own control, not on what is controlled by others.

1. **fickle** (FIK ul) *adj.* changeable

4. **patrimony** (PA truh moh nee) *n.* property or inheritance

2. **manifest** (MAN uh fest) *adj.* clear; plain to see

5. **pretexts** (PREE teksts) *n.* excuses; false reasons

3. **confiscate** (KAHN fis kayt) *v.* to seize or take



A portrait of Niccolò Machiavelli painted in the late 1500s

WITNESS HISTORY VIDEO

Watch *Machiavelli's The Prince* to explore the world of an important "Renaissance man" on the **Witness History Discovery School™** video program.



Thinking Critically

- Summarize Information** Why does Machiavelli believe that it is better for a prince to be feared than to be loved?
- Make Comparisons** Reread the section of the text titled Castiglione's Ideal Courtier. Is Machiavelli's description of an ideal prince consistent with that of Castiglione's courtier? Why or why not?

arts by financially supporting artists. Renaissance merchants and wealthy families also were patrons of the arts. By having their portraits painted or by donating art to the city to place in public squares, the wealthy demonstrated their own importance.

The Renaissance Man Renaissance writers introduced the idea that all educated people were expected to create art. In fact, the ideal individual strove to master almost every area of study. A man who excelled in many fields was praised as a “universal man.” Later ages called such people “Renaissance men.”

Baldassare Castiglione (KAHS•teel•YOH•nay) wrote a book called *The Courtier* (1528) that taught how to become such a person. A young man should be charming, witty, and well educated in the classics. He should dance, sing, play music, and write poetry. In addition, he should be a skilled rider, wrestler, and swordsman.

The Renaissance Woman According to *The Courtier*, upper-class women also should know the classics and be charming. Yet they were not expected to seek fame. They were expected to inspire art but rarely to create it. Upper-class Renaissance women were better educated than medieval women. However, most Renaissance women had little influence in politics.

A few women, such as Isabella d’Este, did exercise power. Born into the ruling family of the city-state of Ferrara, she married the ruler of another city-state, Mantua. She brought many Renaissance artists to her court and built a famous art collection. She was also skilled in politics. When her husband was taken captive in war, she defended Mantua and won his release. **B**

Comparing

How were expectations for Renaissance men and Renaissance women similar?

Analyzing Primary Sources

The Renaissance Man

In *The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione described the type of accomplished person who later came to be called the Renaissance man.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Let the man we are seeking be very bold, stern, and always among the first, where the enemy are to be seen; and in every other place, gentle, modest, reserved, above all things avoiding ostentation [showiness] and that impudent [bold] self-praise by which men ever excite hatred and disgust in all who hear them. . . .

I would have him more than passably accomplished in letters, at least in those studies that are called the humanities, and conversant not only with the Latin language but with Greek, for the sake of the many different things that have been admirably written therein. Let him be well versed in the poets, and not less in the orators and historians, and also proficient in writing verse and prose.

BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE, *The Courtier*

The Renaissance Woman

Although Renaissance women were not expected to create art, wealthy women often were patrons of artists, as this letter by Isabella d’Este demonstrates.

PRIMARY SOURCE

To Master Leonardo da Vinci, the painter:
Hearing that you are settled at Florence, we have begun to hope that our cherished desire to obtain a work by your hand might be at length realized. When you were in this city and drew our portrait in carbon, you promised us that you would some day paint it in colors. But because this would be almost impossible, since you are unable to come here, we beg you to keep your promise by converting our portrait into another figure, which would be still more acceptable to us; that is to say, a youthful Christ of about twelve years . . . executed with all that sweetness and charm of atmosphere which is the peculiar excellence of your art.
Mantua, May 14, 1504

ISABELLA D’ESTE, *Letters*



DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

- Drawing Conclusions** Do the qualities called for in the ideal Renaissance man and woman seem to emphasize the individual or the group?
- Making Inferences** Isabella d’Este’s portrait was painted by Titian, and Castiglione’s by Raphael, two famous painters. What does this tell you about the subjects’ social status?

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

In his play *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare wrote that “all the world’s a stage.” When it came to showcasing his own work, however, the playwright chose the Globe Theatre. In 1599, when the English people were increasingly eager for plays and other sorts of entertainment, Shakespeare and his company of actors built the Globe on the south bank of London’s Thames River. The three-story, open-air theater could seat 3,000 people and had a stage more than 40 feet wide. Shakespeare wrote many of his plays—including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*—specifically to be performed at the Globe Theatre. Twenty of Shakespeare’s plays were performed there during his lifetime. During a performance of his play *Henry VII* in 1613, onstage cannon fire ignited the theater’s thatched roof and destroyed the building.

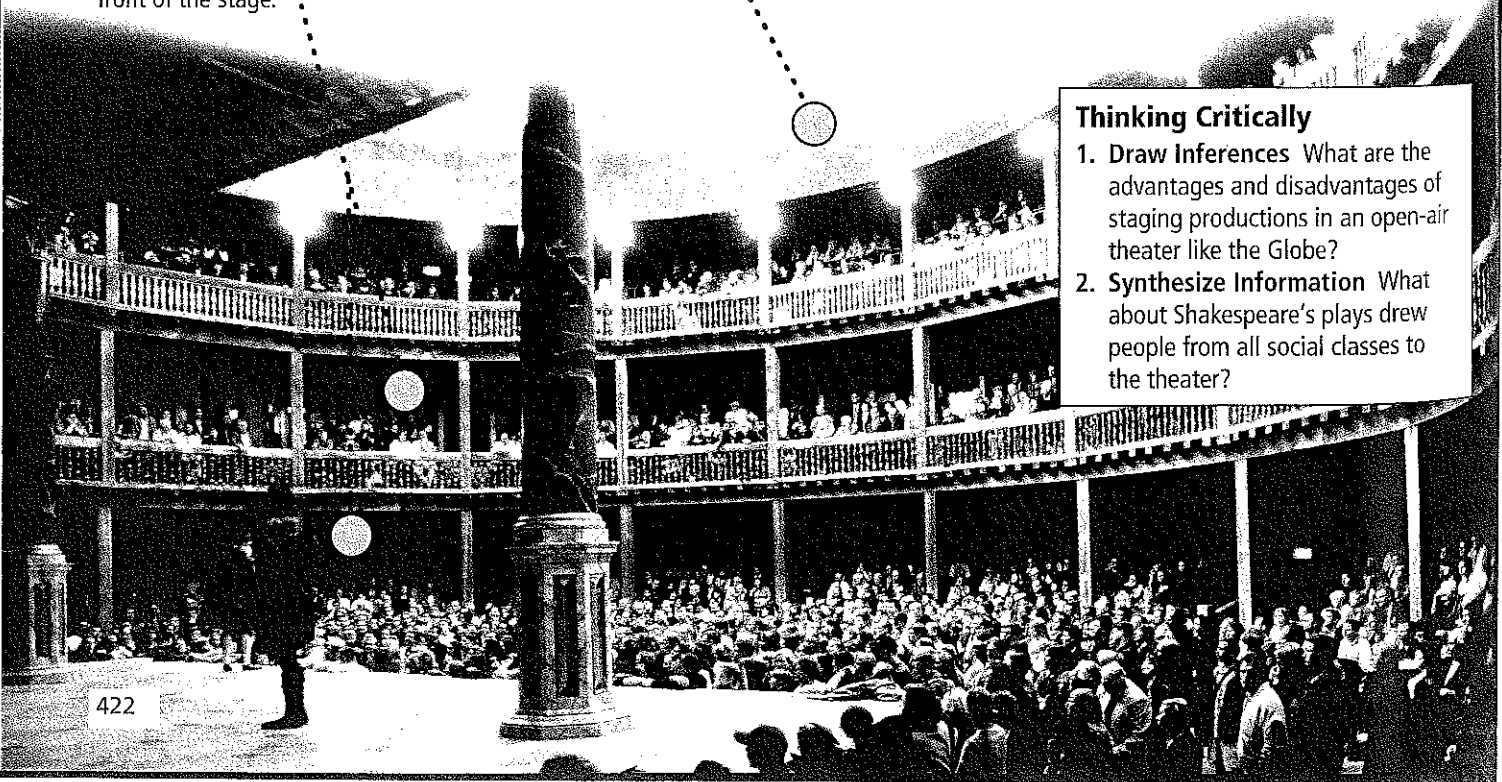
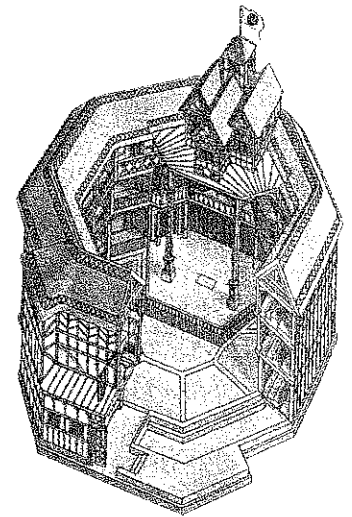


▲ William Shakespeare

The 1997 reconstruction of the Globe Theatre (below) is faithful to the original. Wealthy theatergoers in the seventeenth century sat in galleries along the theater’s walls. Poorer people bought cheap seats on the ground in front of the stage.

The center of the theater was open to the sky. Because the theater had no interior lights, plays were performed in the afternoon to let in as much light as possible.

The theater’s round shape meant that the audience surrounded the stage on three sides. The stage was not curtained off, further drawing the audience into the action. ►



Thinking Critically

1. **Draw Inferences** What are the advantages and disadvantages of staging productions in an open-air theater like the Globe?
2. **Synthesize Information** What about Shakespeare’s plays drew people from all social classes to the theater?

Document-Based Assessment

The Impact of the Printing Press

In a time when new ideas and discoveries were commonplace, the invention of the printing press was no less than astonishing in its impact. Documents A, B, and D describe the spread of printing during the Renaissance. Document C, written by a historian in the 1500s, describes its impact at the time.

Document A

"In 1455 all Europe's printed books could have been carried in a single wagon. Fifty years later, the titles ran to tens of thousands, the individual volumes to millions. Today, books pour off presses at the rate of 10,000 million *a year*. That's some 50 million tons of paper. Add in 8,000 to 9,000 daily newspapers, and the Sundays, and the magazines, and the figure rises to 130 million tons . . . It would make a pile 700 meters [2,297 feet] high—four times the height of the Great Pyramid."

—From *Gutenberg: How One Man Remade the World with Words* by John Man

Document B

"Printing spread from Mainz to Strasbourg (1458), Cologne (1465), Augsburg (1468), Nuremberg (1470), Leipzig (1481), and Vienna (1482). German printers, or their pupils, introduced the 'divine' art to Italy in 1467, Switzerland and Bohemia in 1468, France and the Netherlands in 1470, Spain, England, Hungary, and Poland between 1474 and 1476, Denmark and Sweden in 1482–1483. By 1500 the presses had issued about six million books in approximately forty thousand editions, more books, probably, than had been produced in western Europe since the fall of Rome . . . Now individuals could afford to own books, where before they had normally been owned almost exclusively by institutions—monasteries, cathedral chapters, and colleges."

—From *The Foundation of Early Modern Europe, 1460–1559* by Eugene F. Rice, Jr.

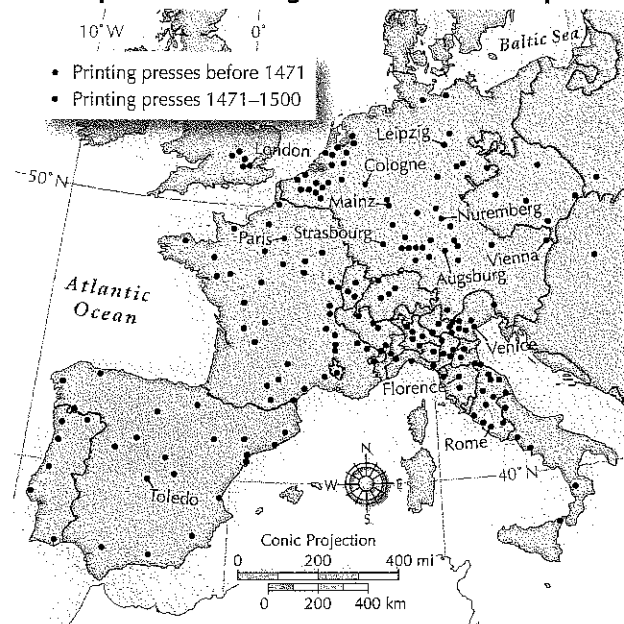
Document C

"As if to offer proof that God has chosen us to accomplish a special mission, there was invented in our land a marvelous new and subtle art, the art of printing. This opened German eyes even as it is now bringing enlightenment to other countries. Each man became eager for knowledge, not without feeling a sense of amazement at his former blindness."

—From *Address to the Estates of the Empire* by Johann Sleidan

Document D

The Spread of Printing in Renaissance Europe



Analyzing Documents

Use your knowledge of the Renaissance and Documents A, B, C, and D to answer questions 1–4.

- According to Document B, the increased supply and lower cost of books had what effect?
 - More people became teachers.
 - More people became printers.
 - More people bought books.
 - More people bought printing presses.
- What information about printing can be found only on Document D?
 - specific dates when printing presses were introduced
 - areas where the concentration of printing presses was densest
 - numbers of printing presses introduced into selected cities
 - countries where printing presses were introduced
- What does German historian Sleidan, in Document C, imply is the *most important* role of the printing press?
 - spreading the Protestant religion
 - teaching German history to other countries
 - making books cheaper
 - giving Germans more knowledge
- Writing Task** How did the invention of the printing press affect the spread of the Reformation? Use specific evidence from the documents above, along with information from this chapter, to support your answer.