Renaissance

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Introduction

*Renaissance* is part of Mark Twain Media’s *Civilizations of the Past* series. It is a valuable resource that can be used to supplement the social studies curriculum for middle-school students. The word *Renaissance* is used to describe the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1860, the Swiss historian, Jacob Burkhardt, began to popularize the idea that those two centuries made up an important and identifiable era in the history of Western civilization. Renaissance means “rebirth.” The culture and ideas of the classical age were being reborn in Europe. However, new ideas in art, architecture, music, science, politics, and exploration were also being developed.

The selection of topics was based on three objectives. First, this book introduces students to subjects not normally covered in a traditional textbook, like fashion, hygiene, alchemy, education, food, art, music, dancing, and even a little philosophy. Second, these topics give the reader a basic understanding of the themes seen as important by professional historians. Finally, the stimulating activities will persuade students to go more deeply into the study of history.

This book is specifically designed to facilitate planning for the diverse learning styles and skill levels of middle-school students. The special features of the book provide the teacher with alternative methods of instruction. A modified version of the text is available for download for struggling readers.

**Book Features:**

- **Reading Selection** introduces facts and information as a reading exercise.
- **Knowledge Check** assesses student understanding of the reading exercise using selected response and constructed response questioning strategies.
- **Map Follow-Up** provides opportunities for students to report information from a spatial perspective.
- **Explore** allows student to expand learning by participating in high interest, hands-on and research activities.

**Online Resources:**

**Reluctant Reader Text:** A modified version of the reading exercise pages can be downloaded from the website at www.carsondellosa.com. In the Search box, enter the product code CD-404158. When you reach the *Renaissance* product page, click the icon for the Reluctant Reader Text download.

The readability level of the text has been modified to facilitate struggling readers. The Flesch-Kincaid Readability formula, which is built into Microsoft Word™, was used to determine the readability level. The formula calculates the number of words, syllables, and sentences in each paragraph, producing a reading level.

**Acknowledgement:**

Although a number of people have assisted me in the writing of this book, two people deserve special thanks. Donna Calvert offered valuable advice on Renaissance dance. Mary Oatman, in addition to constant encouragement and support, spent many hours editing my prose and making it more accessible to middle schoolers. I also benefited from her extensive knowledge of art and art history. Any errors or misjudgments, however, are my own.

—The Author—
Time Line of the Renaissance

410 Rome falls to the Visigoths
711 Muslim warriors invade Spain
1099 Crusaders take Jerusalem
1194 Chartres Cathedral completed
1275 Marco Polo serves at the court of Kublai Khan in China
1341 Petrarch is crowned poet laureate in Rome
1348 Black Death strikes Florence
1353 Giovanni Boccaccio completes the Decameron
1397 Medici Bank founded in Florence
1402 Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, dies
1403 Brunelleschi and Donatello go to Rome
1419 Brunelleschi designs dome of Florence Cathedral
1427 Masaccio paints The Tribute Money
1430 Donatello casts the statue David
1434 Cosimo de' Medici begins 30-year domination of Florence
1455 Gutenberg prints a Bible
1469 Lorenzo de' Medici dominates Florence
1483 Louis XI of France dies
1487 Bartholomeu Dias rounds the southern tip of Africa
1492 Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain capture Granada
1492 Columbus reaches the Americas
1493 Paracelsus born
1494 Lorenzo de' Medici dies
1494 The French invade Italy
1495 Leonardo da Vinci paints the Last Supper
1498 Dürer publishes The Apocalypse
1498 Vasco Da Gama arrives in India
1504 Michelangelo finishes his David
1512 Michelangelo finishes the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel
1513 Machiavelli writes The Prince
1516 Erasmus issues his New Testament
1517 Luther posts his 95 theses against indulgences
1521 Hernando Cortés conquers Mexico
1525 Peasant's Revolt in southern Germany is crushed
1527 Castiglione publishes The Courtier
1533 Henry VIII weds Anne Boleyn
1535 Death of Isabella d'Este
1536 John Calvin arrives in Geneva
1543 Copernicus publishes his book on the solar system
1547 Edward VI is crowned king of England
1553 Mary I is crowned queen of England
1558 Elizabeth I is crowned queen of England
1563 Council of Trent ends (begun in 1545)
1587 Raleigh founds first English colony in North America
1588 Defeat of the Spanish Armada
1607 Jamestown founded
1608 Galileo constructs telescope to study the heavens
1616 Shakespeare dies
1620 Pilgrims establish Plymouth
Good News for the City of Florence, The Late Middle Ages

Gian Galeazzo Visconti

The messenger choked on the clouds of dust blown in his face. The red and gold colors of Florence that he wore were covered with a coat of dirt and grime. Yet the good news that he bore to his home city made him smile despite the grit in his teeth. The Duke of Milan, Gian Galeazzo Visconti, was dead. For 17 years, the Duke had used the great wealth of his territories to maintain diplomats, spy networks, and armies in order to conquer the independent Italian city-states. First, all of Lombardy yielded to him, then Genoa, Pisa, Perugia, Siena, and finally, Bologna. Now, only one important independent republic remained: Florence. Unfortunately for Visconti, as he advanced on Florence at the very height of his power, with most of Italy lying at his feet, he suddenly became ill and died. Florence was saved, it seemed, by a miracle. The Duke’s vision of a united Italy under his control was shattered. With such joyful news, the dust-covered messenger clattered onto the bridge over the Arno River and into the red-roofed city.

Italian City-States

Italy at the beginning of the fifteenth century was made up of many tiny, independent city-states. City-states were similar to small countries. Some, like Milan, were ruled by ruthless men who seized power by treachery and bloodshed. Others, like Florence, were republics proud of their freedoms. Italy’s social and political structure was different from the rest of Europe at the time. Elsewhere, kings were gaining strength and expanding their control over larger territories. Louis XII, known as the Spider King because of the webs he wove to trap his enemies, created a powerful French kingdom. The Italians, however, had no king to unite them and resisted men like Visconti who tried. Why was Italy different?

The Feudal System in the Rest of Europe

In the Middle Ages (the sixth to fifteenth centuries), most Europeans were part of the feudal system. The feudal system was a society based on the common person's need for protection. Wealthy and powerful men known as feudal lords provided that security. The feudal structure took shape after the Roman Empire collapsed in the fifth century. Earlier, Europeans had enjoyed peace and prosperity thanks to Roman military might and administration. However, as the empire weakened and fell, war became a constant problem. In this time of danger, the feudal system evolved to give people protection. Europeans exchanged their land, livestock, and freedoms in return for the right to flee into the local feudal lord’s castle when marauders attacked. They were also obliged to serve their noble lord as soldiers.
The Italians responded to the collapse of Roman government differently from other Europeans. Rather than exchange their freedoms and properties for feudal protection, they formed themselves into tiny, self-ruling, independent city-states. Because Italy was more urbanized than the rest of Europe, these states centered on the important city in the region rather than a lord's castle. This meant that feudalism did not take root in Italy.

**Italian Trade With the East and Europe**

The Italians were also more active in trade than the rest of Europe. City-states like Venice, Pisa, and Genoa sent fleets of merchant ships to the more sophisticated Islamic and Byzantine civilizations of the Middle East. There they traded for spices, medicines, and luxurious cloth. At the same time, new ideas in art, technology, science, and philosophy flowed back to Italy through the trade routes.

In addition to having a different social and political structure than the rest of Europe, the Italians were also well-positioned to economically exploit the kingdoms to the north, like France and England. By the late Middle Ages, these kingdoms were gaining power. Warfare had become more costly as powerful monarchs needed bigger armies. The arrival of gunpowder in Europe from China also meant that professional soldiers called mercenarys were needed to fire complex new weapons like the cannon and the arquebus, an early gun that was portable but heavy. Kings needed money, and the only place to find it was in Italy. Due to their trade with the Middle East, the Italians had money to lend to their northern neighbors at high interest.

Italian city-states were successful in trade because of their close proximity to the Middle East, but also because they lived in the most well-developed urban environments in Europe. The Roman Empire was an urban empire and believed that civilization needed cities to prosper. Long after Roman government was gone from Italy, the well-planned and fortified cities remained where goods could be safely bought and sold. Along with the city walls and streets, the Romans also left important ideals. Before Rome had become an empire, it had been a republic where parts of the population had a voice in government. Democratic ideals survived the fall of the empire and continued to prosper in the Italian city-states. Citizenship, freedom, and duty were still prized by many Italians in the fifteenth century.

The result of all of these factors at the beginning of the fifteenth century meant that cities like Florence were wealthy, sophisticated, and fiercely independent. They were also deeply religious, another legacy of Rome. The death of the Duke of Milan, just as he seemed poised to conquer Florence, was seen as a sign that God approved of the Florentines. It was with tremendous self-confidence, then, that the citizens of Florence embarked on the new century.
Knowledge Check

Matching

1. city-states   a. an early gun that was portable but heavy
2. republic      b. a way of life centered around a city
3. feudal system c. a fee charged for money that is borrowed
4. marauders    d. independent cities that govern themselves
5. urbanized    e. those who attack or raid
6. mercenaries  f. society based on the common person’s need for protection
7. arquebus     g. professional soldiers who fight for whoever pays them
8. interest     h. a government where citizens have the supreme power and they vote for officials to represent them

Multiple Choice

9. What item below was NOT something Italian traders brought back from the Middle East?
   a. spices    b. ideas
   c. luxury cloth d. chocolate

10. What was the center of most communities in Europe’s feudal system?
    a. the river  b. the castle
    c. the city   d. the fields

Constructed Response

11. What advantages did Italy have over the rest of Europe at this time? Use details from the reading selection to support your answer.

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Map Follow-Up

Use a classroom atlas or a map from the Internet and the blank map of Italy on page 5 to complete the following activities.

A. On the blank map, locate with a dot and label the following cities:
   1. Florence
   2. Siena
   3. Genoa
   4. Pisa
   5. Perugia
   6. Milan
   7. Rome
   8. Ferrara
   9. Naples
  10. Bologna
  11. Venice
  12. Mantua

B. On the blank map, draw in and label these rivers, mountain ranges, and seas:
   1. Arno River
   2. Tiber River
   3. Po River
   4. The Alps
   5. The Apennines
   6. The Adriatic Sea
   7. The Mediterranean Sea
   8. The Tyrrhenian Sea

C. On the blank map, label these islands and countries:
   1. Sicily
   2. Corsica
   3. Sardinia
   4. Elba
   5. The kingdom of France
   6. Switzerland

D. Underline the names of those city-states captured by Visconti.

E. Circle those city-states that sent fleets of merchant ships to the Middle East.

F. List on the bottom of your map modern-day countries that share borders with Italy.
Map Follow-Up: Map of Italy
The Pazzi Conspiracy

The only way for the Pazzi family to regain control of Florence was to destroy the Medici family. By April of 1478, they were ready to strike. The signal was to be the ringing of the bell during mass. Just as Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici bowed their heads in prayer, the assassin was to strike his dagger into their backs.

Yet everything seemed to be going wrong on the appointed day. That morning, the man hired by the Pazzi to do the deed shrank back at the idea of committing murder at the high altar of the cathedral. Two members of the Pazzi family had to take his place. Next, Giuliano de’ Medici failed to appear because of a sore knee and had to be roused from his bed and escorted to church. The moment came. As the bell rang out its deep tones, the two assassins leaped upon Giuliano and stabbed him 19 times. Lorenzo, however, escaped into a side room with only a gash on the neck.

Within minutes, the city was in arms against the conspiracy. A mob grabbed the Archbishop Salviati, one of the Pazzi’s leaders, and hanged him from a window. The murderers themselves were soon strung up beside him. For the next four days, everyone even remotely suspected of sympathizing with the Pazzi was slaughtered or exiled. The Pazzi conspiracy made it plain to all potential rivals of the Medici that the citizens of Florence would not flinch at spilling blood to protect their favorite family.

Ruling Florence

Who was this Medici family, and why were they so well-loved by the Florentines? Florence was ruled by a council called the Signory. It was made up of representatives from the four quarters of the city. However, the priors, as these men were called, held power for only brief periods. They were replaced every two months. Nevertheless, Florentine families like the Pazzi murdered, pillaged, and exiled other families year after year in order to control the Signory. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, one family with great skill and intelligence managed to scramble to the top and stay there despite opposition. They were the Medici.

The Medici Family

Medici power relied upon banking. The family had 16 branches in European capitals, which made it one of the richest families in Florence. They were also masterful in earning the support of those less wealthy. The founder of the business, Giovanni, spent large amounts of money on churches and hospitals. When he was a member of the Signory, he supported tax reform that helped the poor at the expense of the rich. Because of his generosity, most of the citizens of Florence mourned his passing. His son, Cosimo, was even more successful at politics and business than his father. He established behind-the-scenes control of the Signory. The council made him banker to Florence and special advisor to the government. With these offices, he was in a position to run the city for
30 years. It is important to note that Cosimo could not have stayed in power so long if he had not identified his own interests with the happiness of Florence. He did this well by patronizing the arts.

In addition to financing churches and hospitals like his father, Cosimo also spent money on magnificent palaces, costly furniture, and exquisite works of art, both ancient and modern. He employed the greatest craftsmen, artists, and architects of his day to beautify the city and make it famous throughout Italy. The Medici family also entertained on a grand scale and paid for elaborate celebrations. During the yearly festival of St. John, Florentines were treated to a procession of brightly painted chariots, giants on stilts, people dressed up like pagan gods, Roman generals, and mounted knights dressed in fantastical armor. On one occasion, Florence’s greatest architect, Brunelleschi, designed a gigantic float that included a heavenly sphere surrounded by flying angels, which eventually opened up to allow an image of the Angel Gabriel to fly to earth.

**Patronage**

Cosimo was only unique in the scale of his patronage. Throughout fifteenth-century Italy, wealthy families and princes used patronage of the arts to earn the allegiance of citizens and the awe of rivals. In fact, generosity was seen as a duty of the wealthy in all countries. It was especially expected from families like the Medici, who had earned their wealth from usury. Usury means lending money with interest, and in the fifteenth century, usury was considered a sin by the church. Therefore, banking families in particular felt that they owed a debt to God, which could only be repaid by spending lavishly for the public good. Of course, like Cosimo, they were often encouraged to be generous by the fact that patronage enhanced their power as well.

Cosimo established the Medici so securely that his grandson, Lorenzo, could continue the family’s domination of Florence without being challenged. Although being involved in politics was always dangerous in the fifteenth century, as the Pazzi conspiracy showed, Lorenzo enjoyed the power if not the title of a prince. He ruled skillfully and was well loved. The toothy grins of Pazzi skulls decorating the main gate of Florence were a reminder to all that the power of the Medici family remained unchallenged.
Knowledge Check

Matching

____ 1. Pazzi family  a. a person who kills someone, especially a politically important person; may be hired by others to do the killing
____ 2. Medici family  b. lending money with interest; considered a sin by the church
____ 3. assassin  c. powerful banking family who ruled Florence
____ 4. conspiracy  d. spending money for the public good on art and architecture
____ 5. Signory  e. family who wanted to regain control of Florence
____ 6. priors  f. the ruling council of Florence
____ 7. patronage  g. representatives from the four quarters of the city
____ 8. usury  h. a secret agreement to do a wrong or illegal act

Multiple Choice

9. Who was the founder of the Medici business?
   a. Cosimo  b. Lorenzo  c. Giuliano  d. Giovanni
10. What was Cosimo de’ Medici’s office in the Florence government?
    a. banker  b. king  c. president  d. judge
11. One reason the Medici spent their wealth for the public good was because they felt they owed a debt to God for what?
    a. killing the Pazzi  b. being so rich  c. charging interest  d. raising taxes

Critical Thinking

12. How are modern corporations similar to the Medici family? Use details from the reading selection to help support your answer.

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Explore

1. Pretend that the town or city where you live is a modern-day, independent city-state. Imagine yourself to be a rich and powerful person. Also imagine that you have rivals for the domination of the city-state. Using the Medici family as an example, make a list of the ways you would spend your money and the things that you would do to earn the support of the city-state. Explain your choices.

2. Research Renaissance palaces and churches on the Internet or look in your school library for some of the books on the Renaissance listed in the bibliography (page 90). Using the pictures you find as models, design your own palace or church. Make a drawing on your own paper. You might also want to make a three-dimensional model with materials you can find around your house.

3. Pretend you are a newspaper reporter. Write a news article about the Pazzi conspiracy. (Remember, however, that newspapers as we know them did not yet exist.) Write the article on your own paper.

4. Your teacher may show you excerpts of Franco Zeffirelli’s movie, *Romeo and Juliet*. It does an excellent job of capturing the look and feel of life in a Renaissance city-state.
In the Courtyard of the Medici Palace, The Early Renaissance

The Medici Palace

Within the courtyard of the Medici palace, only the sound of water could be heard. The splash of the fountain and the cool shadows of the classical colonnade that surrounded the courtyard was a welcome respite from the dust, noise, and heat of the city outside. Lorenzo de’ Medici laughed heartily at the wit of one of his guests as he conducted them across the courtyard and into the main gallery. Here, lifelike, ancient statues of Roman emperors and Greek philosophers stood beside a modern sculpture of the biblical story of Judith slaying Holofernes.

Let’s join Lorenzo’s party and amble through the library. It will tell us a great deal about the Renaissance. You will notice that most of the statues, coins, and cameos were made in ancient Greece and Rome. Historians call that period in history the classical age. Lorenzo was deeply interested in classical art and architecture. As we move on through the library, notice also the beautifully bound books of ancient authors and the tapestries of Greek mythology. Lorenzo loved classical literature as much as art and architecture.

Humanism

People like Lorenzo de’ Medici who were passionately interested in the ancient world were called humanists. The word itself reveals what it was that the humanists found so attractive in the ancient world. The classical writers believed that humans had great potential for growth in all areas at the same time. They were concerned with living this life to the fullest. A well-lived life should be active in the affairs of the world, yet scholarly and creative. They also believed that the human body, like so much else about humans, was beautiful. This could be seen in the ancient statuary of human figures that found their way into Lorenzo’s collection.

Art

So immersed were humanists in the ancient world that they tried to emulate it. As we continue our stroll through the library, notice the bronze sculpture of the biblical story of Judith and Holofernes. It was done by Donatello, a contemporary of Lorenzo. Obviously, the sculptor looked closely at the surviving statues from the classical world. See how graceful and true to life it is. Observe closely the round painting on the opposite wall by Fra Filippo Lippi, who was another contemporary of Lorenzo. This is called Adoration of the Magi. This painter learned how
to create life-like images also by studying Roman art work. He built on the Roman artistic traditions to create something new.

**Literature**

Stop and consider the fact that similar things had been happening in literature for a long time. One hundred years before the birth of Lorenzo, the Florentine, Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374) was already living the model of a Renaissance humanist life. He perfected his Latin, collected ancient manuscripts, and even published a book called *Letters to the Ancient Dead*, in which he wrote to the long-deceased classical authors, Homer, Virgil, and Cicero, lamenting the ignorance of his own day. Petrarch also created some of the most beautiful love poetry ever written. It honored the charms of Laura, a married woman he could only love from afar. In addition to creative endeavors, the Renaissance man was to be active in the affairs of the world. Petrarch was sent on diplomatic missions as far away as the Netherlands.

Another gifted literary figure of early Renaissance Florence was Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375). Abandoning his life as a banker, he turned to literature and wrote the *Decameron*. The book is a collection of 100 folk tales, often comic, that describe life in the fourteenth century. Most books of the day were written in Latin. The *Decameron* was unique because it was crafted in Italian. Influenced by his contemporary and teacher, Petrarch, he turned to the classics, collected ancient manuscripts, and wrote essays on famous men and women from the ancient world.

**Philosophy**

You will note as you walk by the walls of leather-bound books in Lorenzo’s library that the creative seeds planted in the fourteenth century by men like Petrarch and Boccaccio established the growth of the Renaissance in fifteenth-century Florence. Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444) translated the two great Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, into Latin. Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) translated all of Plato’s works and founded the Platonic Academy as a place to study philosophy. Without the patronage of Lorenzo’s powerful and wealthy family, the Medici, and other families like them, artists and writers would not have been able to continue to cultivate the creativity that thrived in the Renaissance. For example, Bruni began as a tutor in the Medici household, and Ficino was given the use of the Medici summer villa to meet with students.

**The Rebirth of the Classical**

By the time we emerge out into the sunny courtyard again, we have a good idea of why historians call the age in which Lorenzo lived the Renaissance. *Renaissance* means “rebirth,” and as we have seen, it was the classical age that was reborn. However, it is always important to remember that Renaissance artists, writers, and philosophers did not limit themselves to the copying of classical works. Rather, a new vision of life was being born and sculpted by classical thought. So common was this new vision of the world in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe that historians call both of these centuries the Renaissance.
Renaissance

In the Courtyard of the Medici Palace, The Early Renaissance

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Knowledge Check

Matching

____ 1. colonnade a. a rebirth of the classical age in the 15th and 16th centuries
____ 2. tapestries b. a series of columns supporting a roof
____ 3. humanists c. dealing with talks and agreements among nations
____ 4. contemporary d. a book written in Italian and containing 100 folk tales
____ 5. diplomatic e. those who were passionately interested in the ancient world
____ 6. Decameron f. someone living at the same time as someone else
____ 7. Renaissance g. heavy cloth with pictures woven in the design, used for hangings, curtains, or upholstery

Multiple Choice

8. The period of history known as the classical age focused on what two ancient civilizations?
   a. Egypt and Sumer    b. Persia and India
   c. Greece and Rome    d. Babylon and Assyria

9. The Renaissance philosopher Marsilio Ficino translated all the works of what ancient Greek philosopher?
   a. Bruni    b. Plato
   c. Aristotle d. Petrarch

10. What sculptor created the bronze sculpture Judith and Holofernes?
    a. Raphael    b. Leonardo
    c. Michelangelo d. Donatello

Critical Thinking

11. Why do you think the Renaissance began in Italy? Use details from the reading to help support your answer.
Answer Keys

Good News for the City of Florence, The Late Middle Ages
Knowledge Check (page 3)

Matching
1. d 2. h 3. f 4. e
5. b 6. g 7. a 8. c

Multiple Choice
9. d 10. b

Constructed Response
11. The Italians did not exchange their freedoms and properties for feudal protection. They formed independent city-states. They were more active in trade, especially with the Middle East. New ideas, technology, and goods came to Italy first. The Italians also had money to lend to other European kingdoms. The Romans had left the Italians with well-developed cities and democratic ideals, such as citizenship, freedom, and duty.

Map Follow-Up (page 5)
A., B., C. Teacher check map.
D. Genoa, Pisa, Perugia, Siena, and Bologna
E. Venice, Pisa, and Genoa
F. France, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Slovenia, San Marino, Vatican City

The Medici Rule, Patronage
Knowledge Check (page 8)

Matching
1. e 2. c 3. a 4. h
5. f 6. g 7. d 8. b

Multiple Choice
9. d 10. a 11. c

Critical Thinking
12. Answers will vary but may include: Modern corporations can have a powerful influence on the government of cities, states, and nations. They can be very wealthy. To create a good public image, corporations often patronize the arts, give to charities, and support local causes and organizations. They may sponsor things like race car teams, football stadiums, or hospitals to get their name out in the public. They may also spend a lot on entertainment for their employees and the public.

In the Courtyard of the Medici Palace, The Early Renaissance
Knowledge Check (page 12)

Matching
1. b 2. g 3. e 4. f
5. c 6. d 7. a

Multiple Choice
8. c 9. b 10. d

Critical Thinking
11. Answers will vary but may include: The Italians were surrounded by the remaining art, architecture, and literature of the Romans. It was easier for them to study the classical age and adapt it for their time.

The Bronze Head, The Early Renaissance
Knowledge Check (page 15)

Matching
1. d 2. a 3. f 4. g
5. e 6. c 7. b

Multiple Choice
8. b 9. c 10. a

Constructed Response
11. Answers will vary but may include: Art in the Renaissance focused on humanist ideals and creating something beautiful. Sculpture and paintings portrayed people and objects as they really appeared. They used techniques from the classical art of the Greeks and Romans. Individual artists began to be recognized for their talent. The goal of Gothic art and architecture had been to get humans to look to heaven. They used soaring towers, high roofs, and pointed arches. Humans or landscapes in paintings were portrayed as symbols to get a point across instead of as they really looked.