

RENAISSANCE DBQ

THE QUESTION: The period known as the Renaissance witnessed a change in the nature of man. Compare and contrast the views held by the Renaissance thinkers documented in the following quotations.

DOCUMENT 1

Here the question arises: whether it is better to be loved than feared or feared than loved. The answer is that it would be desirable to be both but, since that is difficult, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved, if one must choose. For on men in general this observation may be made: they are ungrateful, fickle, and deceitful, eager to avoid dangers and avid for gain and while you are useful to them they are all with you, offering you their blood, their property, their lives, and their sons so long as danger is remote, as we noted above, but when it approaches they turn on you. Any prince, trusting only in their words and having no other preparations made, will fall to his ruin.

Machiavelli, *The Prince* 1513

DOCUMENT 2

As man is born, the Father has planted in him seeds of every sort, shoots of every life; those which each man cultivates will grow, and bear their fruits in him. If these are vegetables, he will become a plant; if sensual, a brute; if rational, a heavenly being; if intellectual, an angel and son of God. But if Man, not contented with any creature's lot, betakes himself into the center of his oneness, then, made one with God, in the solidary darkness of the Father he who was created above all things will excel all things. Who would not admire this chameleon of ours?

Giovanni Pico, the Count of Mirandola. "The Oration on the Dignity of Man"
1486

DOCUMENT 3

The richest gifts are occasionally seen to be showered,, as by celestial influence, upon certain human beings; nay they sometimes supernaturally and marvelously gather in a single person--beauty, grace, and talent united in such a manner that to whatever the man thus favored may turn himself, his every action is so divine as to leave all other men far behind...This was...the case of Leonardo de Vinci...who had...so rare a gift of talent and ability that to whatever subject he turned his attention...he presently made himself absolute master of it...

He would without a doubt have made great progress in the learning and knowledge of the sciences had he not been so versatile and changeful...the instability of his character led him to undertake many things, which, having commenced, he afterwards abandoned.

Giorgio Vasari. "Lives of the Painters" 1568

DOCUMENT 4

Just as it is disgraceful and sinful to be unmindful of God so it is reprehensible and dishonorable for any man of discerning judgement not to honour you as a brilliant and venerable artist whom the very stars use as a target at which to shoot the rival arrows of their favour. You are so accomplished, therefore, that hidden in your hands lives the idea of a new king of creation, whereby the most challenging and subtle problem of all in the art of painting, namely that of outlines, has been mastered by you that in the contours of the human body you express and contain the purpose of art...And it is surely my duty to honour you with this salutation since the world has many kings but only one Michelangelo.

Pietro Aetino. "Letter to Michelangelo" 1537

DOCUMENT 5

I have always possessed extreme contempt for wealth...I have on the contrary led a happier existence with plain living and ordinary fare...the pleasure of dining with one's friends is so great that nothing has ever given me more delight than their unexpected arrival.

I possess a well-balanced rather than a keen intellect--one prone to all kinds of good and wholesome study, but especially to moral philosophy and the art of poetry. The later I neglected as time went on, and took delight in sacred literature...Among the many subjects that interested me, I dwelt especially on antiquity, for our own age always repelled me, so that, had it not been for the love of those dear to me, I should have preferred to have been born in any other period than our own. In order to forget my own time, I have constantly striven to place myself in spirit in other ages, and consequently I delighted in history...

Francesco Petrarch. "Letter to Posterity" 1372

DOCUMENT 6

I am not so much in love with my conclusions as not to weigh what others will think about them, and although I know that the meditations of a philosopher are far removed from the judgement of the laity, because his endeavor is to seek out the truth in all things, so far as this is permitted by God to the human reason, I still believe that one must avoid theories altogether foreign to orthodoxy.

Nicholas Copernicus. "Dedication of the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies" 1543

THE TASK OF ANSWERING THE QUESTION

The Question: The period known as the Renaissance witnessed a change in the nature of man. Compare and contrast the views held by the Renaissance thinkers documented in the following quotations.

THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

DEFINE THE TERMS OF THE QUESTION

The Period

The Renaissance began in Italy during the 1300's, other countries at later times joined in. The Renaissance extends into the early 1600's if we accept the view that there was a renaissance in Russia under Czar Peter the Great (d. 1725).

Renaissance

Jacob Burckhardt, the noted 19th century Swiss historian, believed that the Renaissance meant "rebirth" and that it could have only begun in Italy in the 14th century.

Rebirth of Classical Civilization (modified to meet contemporary needs)

The western world undertook a rebirth of sorts after the Medieval period. The qualities of the modern world which developed during the renaissance period included: power centered in urban areas, social mobility, status dependent upon talent rather than birth (meritocracy), and secularization. The belief developed that "this world" was the most important as opposed to the medieval view that the most important world was the one entered after death.

Thesis:

In order to construct a good thesis, you must read the documents carefully and note similarities and differences. Then try to group similarities and differences into three broad categories. Your thesis should indicate the three categories in which you have found similarities and differences. You will then be able to write a paragraph for each category for the body of your essay.

How do you determine categories?

One easy way is to think about the qualities of the Renaissance. You know that the Renaissance was a rebirth (with modifications). Therefore, interest in the Classical World, humanism, artistic expression, and individualism all dominated the age. Can you determine in what ways the view of man was expressed within these categories?

Example:

A similarity between all the writers chosen is that they were all interested in the classical world. You can easily support this similarity in regard to each writer's view of the nature of man with reference to the documents. However, each writer expressed this interest in a unique way and came up with different ideas about the nature of man.

IF YOU WILL TAKE THE TIME TO OUTLINE YOUR THOUGHTS AND DEVELOP A GOOD WORKABLE THESIS, THE ESSAY WILL ALMOST WRITE ITSELF.

Notes for the Body

Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that extends the thesis. end each paragraph with a sentence that summarizes the paragraph and ties the summary back to the thesis. For this particular essay, your summary sentence

would note the ways in which the writers were similar and the ways in which the writers were different. If you can't do this, your information is irrelevant to the question and you should rewrite the paragraph.

Identify and critique each source: the documents were selected to present you with a variety of types: funeral oration (speech), carnival song, preface to a longer work, a political treatise, a scientific/personal notebook, and a biography. Each type of writing has a unique bias and unique validity. You should be discussing these as you summarize the information. Each author is someone you should know--if not, you aren't studying!!!

Change Over Time:

This DBQ covers a relatively short period of time, but you should be able to see both changes and continuities over time. This "time element" seems to be a usual consideration in writing DBQ's.

Interpretations of the Documents:

Briefly, here are some of the things you should have noted. The following are not definitive abstracts and I am sure you will have additional ideas.

Document 1

Machiavelli--The Prince

The nature of man is evil. a prince cannot afford to risk the welfare of the state by being a "good" man.

Document 2

Pico--Oration on the Dignity of Man

Man is a chameleon who can mold himself into anything he desires. Humanism, Neoplatonism and Individualism.

Document 3

Vasari--Lives of the Artists

Man possesses talent and intelligence.

Document 4

Pietri--Letter

Michelangelo is a unique talent, which Pietri is talented enough in his own right to recognize. Individualism, Humanism, Rationalism

Document 5

Francesco Petrarch--Letter to Posterity

Petrarch sees the ancient past as a better time. He is not concerned about storing treasures for the future but rather on improving himself. Humanism, Individualism, Rationalism

Document 6

Nicholas Copernicus--Dedication of the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies

Sure of himself, he knows what he can prove. Rationalism, Individualism

See what other ideas you can pull out of the documents. Remember that all similarities and all differences must relate to the NATURE OF MAN.

CONCLUSION

Summarize the important points made in each paragraph. A quick way is to rewrite the last sentence in each paragraph. State how these points support the thesis. Then restate the thesis.