

Humanism



During the Middle Ages art and learning were centered on the church and religion.

At the start of the 14th century, people became more interested in thinking about themselves and what they were capable of doing.

Part of this change was influenced by the study of ancient Greek and Roman writings.

The values and ideals popular during the European Renaissance were given the term **secular humanism**

The interests of Renaissance scholars began to turn away from traditional areas of study such as religion, medicine, and the law.

Humanist educators sought to create a citizenry able to speak and write with eloquence and clarity, capable of engaging in the civic life of their communities and persuading others to virtuous and prudent actions. This was to be accomplished through the study of the *studia humanitatis*, today known as the humanities: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy.



Humanist Literature and Art



The Italian poet Petrarch (1304-1374) studied the works of Roman writers Cicero and Virgil and modeled some of his own writings on their works. Petrarch became known as the “Father of Humanism.”



His best known work is a collection of love sonnets to Laura, a married woman with whom he'd become infatuated.

“Breeze, blowing that blonde curling hair, stirring it, and being softly stirred in turn, scattering that sweet gold about, then gathering it, in a lovely knot of curls again...”



During the Middle Ages, saints in paintings wore halos and were larger in scale than ordinary or less important figures.

As Humanism became more popular during the Renaissance, ordinary people grew to be the same size as saints in paintings and saints began to look more like ordinary people.



The central figures of the Madonna and child in this Middle Ages painting are larger than others to help viewers understand that they are the most important figures in the painting.

The holy family of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus are joined here by shepherds and an angel in the center playing a lute. The landscape around them is earthly rather than heavenly.