The West & The World

Intro: The Middle Ages to Renaissance & Reformation

Overview of West & World

Place yourself in the Middle Ages

A world without background noise: no factories, no engines, no traffic… nature in the countryside along with the church bells were the "noise makers".
The Holy Roman Empire could not control its own subjects, let alone exercise leadership over others. The World was ruled by feudalism, superstition... and the plague.

The Course of the Black Death in Fourteenth-Century Europe

- Began in Asia... spread with speed due to increasing trade and travel.
- Social impact in many cases was panic, to wild debauchery as the end neared.
- There was widespread fear of loss of food, and death and disillusionment.

It is argued that 1 in 3 people died in Europe.

Blame ranged from God to Jews to lepers.
**Sophistication**

- Medieval interest in the human body was minimal. The internal organs were not differentiated.
- Medieval people lived in an environment of fear and insecurity that limited their awareness and potential for independent thinking.
- Challenged by bandits, Viking raids, plague, famine, anarchy... man was feeble, God was great.

**Gothic Architecture**

The Gothic interpretation of this point of view was a monument that seems to dwarf the man who enters it, for space, light, structure and the plastic effects of the masonry are organized to produce a visionary scale.

**Philosophy of Middle Ages**

- Built on theology
- New ideas were quashed
- i.e. Duns Scotus ("Dunce")
- William of Ockham
- "Ockham's Razor" - "the principle that facts should be interpreted with a minimum of explanatory causes"... separates reason from faith... opening the door to science
- Period of witchcraft
Medieval Times
- Social structure dictated by hierarchical order... Serfs run by masters... Men rule women, Church rules people
- Punishment of crimes: hanging, mutilation, amputation.
- Historiography was dictated by males, often priests or monks... most events explained by the “will of God”.

“Vlad the Impaler” or “Dracula”
- Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia (Romania)
- During the Crusade of Varna

Transition from Medieval to Renaissance
- 15th Century considered the transition period
- Western Europe broke free of Muslim blockades
- Not necessarily a “rebirth” for everyone
The essence of the Renaissance lay not in any sudden rediscovery of classical civilization but rather in the use which was made of classical models to test the authority underlying conventional taste and wisdom”

- Europe, by Norman Davies

Renaissance c.1450-1670

- A period from the early 1300’s to roughly 1600 when there was a renewed interest in history literature and art.
- Renaissance = “Rebirth”
- Europe’s economic recovery
- Renewed study of ancient Greece and Rome

The Renaissance

- The term is used to describe a MOBILIZATION OF IDEAS which is primarily
- ARTISTIC
- LITERARY
- CULTURAL
- The Renaissance as an “INTELLECTUAL” reality, not as a “PHYSICAL” one
Renaissance Man
- "independence of mind"
- A Person who mastered all areas of arts and thought... becoming a “complete man”.
- Humanity was mastering the world they lived in.
- “man’s fate could me controlled and improved”
The work that distinguishes the Baroque period is stylistically complex, even contradictory. In general, however, the desire to evoke emotional states by appealing to the senses, often in dramatic ways, underlies its manifestations. Some of the qualities most frequently associated with the Baroque are grandeur, sensuous richness, drama, vitality, movement, tension, emotional exuberance, and a tendency to blur distinctions between the various arts.
Humanism

- Salutati
  - Man is responsible for his good or bad deeds
  - God does not control a man's will or morality
  - It is better to benefit others by living an active public life than to live as a monk, which does not benefit anyone other than the monk

- Rejected medieval view of humanity and focused on the goodness of mankind

Humanism

- Bruni
  - Medieval values of piety, humility, and poverty not important
  - Attitudes about wealth, credit finances, and usury modified
  - Pagan elements introduced into Christian culture

- Emphasized the dignity and worth of the individual
- People are rational beings who possess within themselves the capacity for truth and goodness
- Emphasized the value of the Greek and Latin classics for their own sake, rather than for their relevance to Christianity
- Collection and translation of classical manuscripts
- Inspired by Plato (Aristotle inspired medieval scholarship)
- Centered around education
- Attempted to develop the character and intelligence of pupils by a general literary study of the ancient classics
Movable Type

- Invented in 1440 by Johannes Gutenberg
- Led to a great demand for books in the mid 15th century
  - Printers met the high demand by printing an overabundance of books.
  - Prices plummeted (20% less than a manuscript)

Gutenberg’s Printing Press

Printing Press

- Aided in political and religious revolution
- Humanist movement fueled its success.
  - Canterbury Tales and Dante’s Divine Comedy were some of the first printed
- Led to the rise of the vernacular (non-Latin) literary text
Works Cited

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