

DBQ 1: Middle Ages or Early Renaissance?**Differing Interpretations*****Historical Context:***

According to the humanist writers and thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Middle Ages were a thousand years of ignorance and superstition. These Renaissance men who saw themselves as leaders in an era of rebirth and learning looked to the ancient Greeks and Romans for models in literature and art as their view of man and his world. Some historians questioned this interpretation, with its sharp division between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Instead they pointed out evidence of increased intellectual activity starting in the medieval universities. The debate centers around whether the Renaissance was a unique age or a continuation of the Middle Ages.

- ◆ **Directions:** The following question is based on the accompanying documents in Part A. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and the author's point of view. Be sure to:
1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
 2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes. Answer the questions which follow each document.
 3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the question.
 4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
 5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and from your own knowledge outside of the documents.

Question: *Was the Renaissance, with its unique advances, a period distinct from the Middle Ages or was it a continuation—the high point—of the Middle Ages?*

- ◆ **Part A:** Examine each document carefully, and answer the questions that follow.

Document 1

This excerpt is from *The Renaissance* by Wassace K. Ferguson (New York: Holt, 1940, pp. 1–3).

The idea that there was a great revival or rebirth of literature and the arts, after a thousand years of cultural sterility, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries originated with the Italian writers of the Renaissance themselves. Finding the feudal and ecclesiastical literature and Gothic art of the Middle Ages uncongenial to their taste, they turned for inspiration to the civilization of Roman and Greek antiquity. . . . Thus, from the beginning, the double conception of medieval darkness and subsequent cultural rebirth was colored by the acceptance of classical standards.

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According to Ferguson, how did writers and thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries view themselves? Were they part of the Middle Ages or a different era—the Renaissance?

Document 2

This excerpt is from *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, (1878) by Jacob Burchhardt.

In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession. . . . Man was conscious of himself only as member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air . . . ; man became a spiritual individual, and recognized himself as such. In the same way the Greek had once distinguished himself from barbarian. . . .

When this impulse to the highest individual development was combined with a powerful and varied nature, . . . then arose the “all-sided man”. . . . in Italy at the time of the Renaissance we find artists who in every branch created new and perfect works, and who also made the greatest impression as men.

According to historian Jacob Burchhardt, was there a difference between the people of the Middle Ages and people of the Renaissance? Explain.

Document 3

This excerpt is from *A History of Europe from 1378 to 1494* written by W. T. Waugh.

It has become evident that there was no suspension of intellectual life in medieval Europe. If there was a Revival of Learning, it occurred about the year A.D. 1000, since when human knowledge has never ceased to advance. It cannot even be said that the Humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries revived the study of the classics. Scholars had been nourished on the classics for centuries. . . . In the first place, the classical writer most studied in the Middle Ages was a Greek, Aristotle. . . . And actually the medieval scholars of western Europe were acquainted with most of the Latin authors familiar to us. . . .

The merits of the artists and the influence of the Humanist scholars must be acknowledged. But one must beware of exaggerating the practical results of their work. It is undeniable that very few people knew or cared anything about the sayings or doings of the Humanists. . . . [and] the plain fact remains that the masterpieces of Renaissance sculpture can have been seen by few, those of Renaissance painting by fewer. And in those days, unless you actually saw them, you could not tell what they were like. . . .

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According to historian W. T. Waugh, when did modern culture and the work of the humanists begin? Was there a renaissance? What evidence does he cite for his point of view?

Document 4

The following is an excerpt from *Petrarch's Secret*, translated by W. H. Draper, 1911.

My principle is that, as concerning the glory from which we may hope for here below [on earth], it is right for us to seek it while we are here below. One may expect to enjoy that other more radiant glory in heaven, when we shall have there arrived, and when one will have no more care or wish for the glory of earth. Therefore, as I think, it is in the true order that mortal men should first care for mortal things. . . .

According to Petrarch, a humanist, with what should man be concerned? Is this similar or different from the interests of medieval man? Explain.

Document 5

This excerpt is from *Life and Letters of Erasmus* by A. J. Froude, 1894.

The world is waking out of a long deep sleep. The old ignorance is still defended. Time was when learning was only found in the religious orders. The religious orders nowadays care only for money and sensuality [indulgence of the appetites], while learning has passed to secular princes and peers and courtiers. Where in school or monastery will you find so many distinguished and accomplished men as form your English Court? Shame on us all! The tables of priests and divines run with wine and echo with drunken noise and scurrilous jest, while in princes' halls is heard only grave and modest conversation on points of morals or knowledge. . . . That king of yours [Henry VIII of England] may bring back the golden age, though I shall not live to enjoy it, as my tale draws to an end. .

According to Erasmus, what change is coming? How does he feel about priests, the church, and the religious order? Why do you think he feels this way? _____

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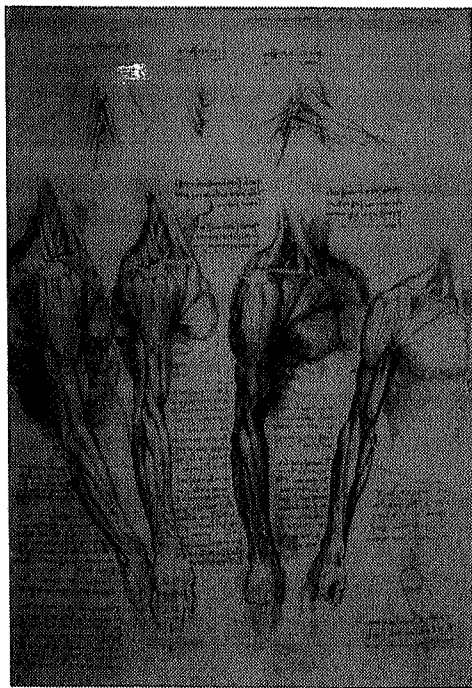
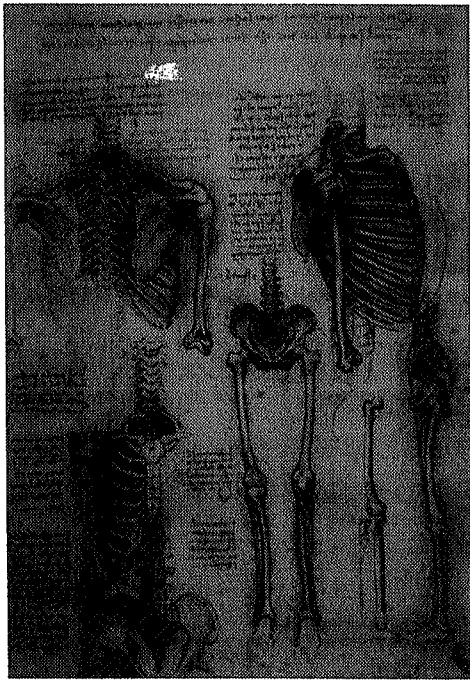


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Document 6

These sketches were done by Leonardo daVinci.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

What do these drawings tell you about the interests and abilities of daVinci? Explain.

Document 7

Johannes Kepler, a German astronomer, made this observation in 1596.

Now we shall proceed to the astronomical determination of the orbits and to geometrical considerations. If these do not confirm the thesis, then all our previous effects have doubtless been in vain.

According to Kepler, how are theories proven? Is this consistent with the attitude of a "medieval" scientist? Explain. _____

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Document 8

Universities founded in the twelfth through fifteenth centuries

12th–13th Century	14th Century	15th Century
ITALY		
Salerno Bologna Vicenza, 1204 Arezzo, 1215 Padua, 1222 Naples, 1224 Vercelli, 1228 Siena, 1246 Curia Romana, 1244–1245	Rome (Studium Urbis), 1303 Perugia, 1308 Pisa, 1343 Florence, 1349 Pavia, 1361 Ferrara, 1391	Turin, 1405 Catania, 1444
FRANCE		
Paris Orleans, <i>ante</i> 1231 Angers Toulouse, 1229, 1233	Avignon, 1303 Cahors, 1332 Grenoble, 1339 Orange, 1365	Aix, 1409 Dôle, 1422 Poitiers, 1431 Caen, 1432 Bordeaux, 1441 Valence, 1452, 1459 Nantes, 1460 Bourges, 1464 Besançon, 1485
GREAT BRITAIN		
Oxford Cambridge, 1209		S. Andrews, 1415 Glasgow, 1451 Aberdeen, 1494
SPAIN AND PORTUGAL		
Valladolid, c. 1250 Palencia, 1212–1214 Salamanca, <i>ante</i> 1230 Seville, 1254, in 1260 (Latin and Arabic) Lisbon-Coimbra, 1290	Lerida, 1300 Perpignan, 1349 Huesca, 1359	Barcelona, 1450 Saragossa, 1474 Palma (Majorca), 1483 Sigüenza, 1489 Alcalá, 1499 Valencia, 1500
GERMANY, BOHEMIA, AND THE LOW COUNTRIES		
	Prague, 1347–8 Vienna, 1365 Erfurt, 1379, 1392 Heidelberg, 1385 Cologne, 1388	Würzburg Leipzig, 1409 Rostock, 1419 Louvain, 1425 Trier, 1454, 1473 Griefswald, 1428, 1456 Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1455–1456 Basel, 1459 Ingolstadt, 1459, 1472 Mainz, 1476 Tübingen, 1476–1477

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Name _____ Date _____

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What does the chart tell you about the times and places where universities were founded? What conclusion can you draw about learning during the Middle Ages?

