



L'ESCHERE  
EDITORE

# The Historical, Social and Literary Context

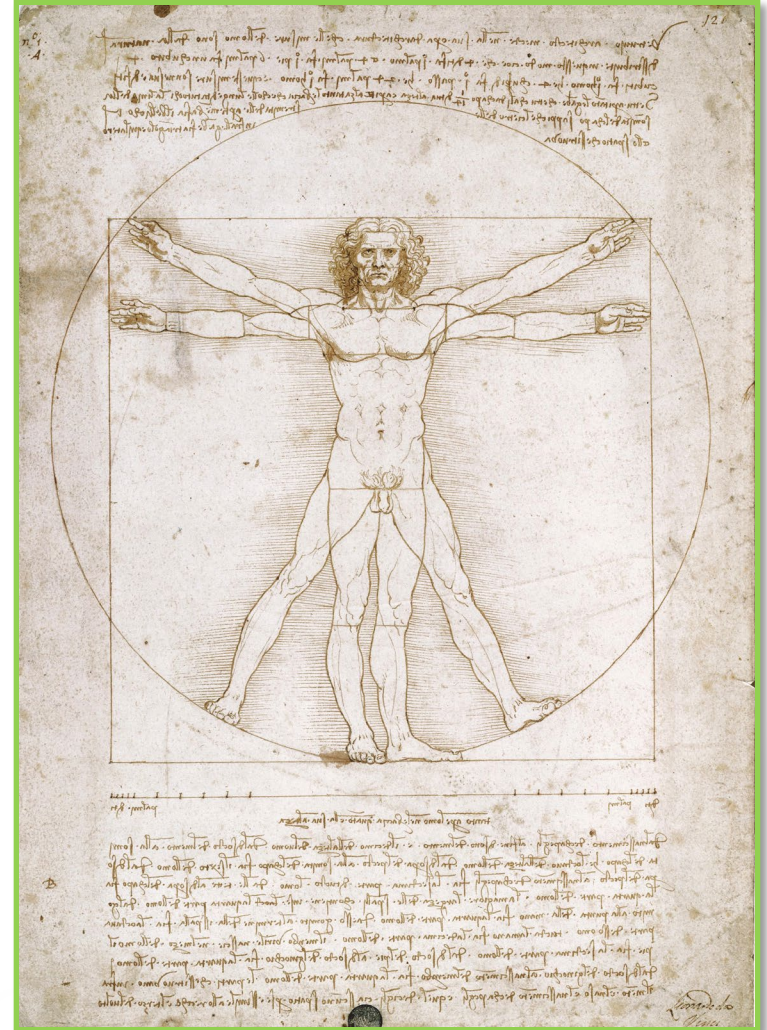
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# The Renaissance Cultural Transformation

## General Features

- **Humanism** started in Italy and its ideals brought about a rapid decline in Medieval culture.
- New learning put **man at the centre** and encouraged the reading of the Classics.
- Humanism brought about a **Renaissance** in all fields of learning and in the arts.



# The English Renaissance

## The New Learning

- The **English Renaissance** developed during the Tudor dynasty and reached its peak in the Elizabethan era.
- Humanism developed in the **universities** of Oxford and Cambridge.
- The number of grammar schools increased, with both Latin and Greek being taught.
- **Education opportunities** were also provided for the poor.



# The English Renaissance

## Science and the Arts

- **Latin** was the standard language used in science, culture, and learning, but **English** was spoken and read outside universities.
- Scientific research was based on **direct observation** and mathematical measurement and was carried out in collaboration with European countries.
- The main area of artistic development in England was **literature**.



# Literary trends

## Genres

- **Poetry** was a favourite genre at court and dealt mainly with courtly love.
- After the decline of religious plays, the **genre of drama** revived during the reign of Elizabeth I.
- **Prose** was mainly written in Latin.
- Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Lyly's *Euphues* were the first important works of prose written in English.



# Drama

## Major Writers

- Renaissance **drama** was the most popular genre of the Elizabethan era and reflected the values of the new age.
- Drama was started by a group of talented playwrights called the **University Wits**.
- **Marlowe** was the outstanding member of the group.
- **Shakespeare** was the most creative playwright of the Elizabethan Age and of the age of James I.
- He wrote historical plays, comedies and tragedies, featuring a wide range of characters and dealing with universal themes.
- The most influential classical writers in the Renaissance were **Plutarch** and **Seneca**.



# Sources and references

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- Slide 1: *Queen Elizabeth I in procession with her court*, by Sarah Countess of Essex, 19th century. Private collection/Public Domain.
- Slide 2: *Vitruvian Man*, by Leonardo da Vinci, 1490. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venezia.
- Slide 3: Aerial view of Oxford University, England. © Alexey Fedorenko/Shutterstock.
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