



AP[®] European History (Operational) 2004 Sample Student Responses

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5 C-1

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C1

Humanism ~~is~~^{is} a philosophy based on looking to the past, particularly Greek and Roman histories. Focusing on the individual, humanist scholars sought the betterment of themselves and their pupils through an understanding of classical ideas. The influence of humanism on the visual arts in the Italian Renaissance is seen in the emphasis of the individual as well as classical Greek and Roman themes.

Individualism becomes apparent in the works of many Italian artists including Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo. In Leonardo da Vinci's Madonna on the Rocks, Mary is shown as a loving mother caressing her infant son, who, unlike in pre-Renaissance artists' recreation of the scene, looks like a baby instead of a small adult. Mary is a mother in this painting, not a saint, or religious icon, but a person who feels love for her child because he is her child and not because he is Jesus. Mary is in this painting clearly an individual. In Michelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel he gives each of his

over 100 figures a distinct face. In earlier artists scenes of groups, people would often have generic faces copied from ~~person~~ figure to figure, but Michelangelo goes out of his way to personalize, and individualize each figure, going so far as to portray God as Pope Julius who commissioned the painting, to his lover as Jesus. The individualistic nature of humanism is repeatedly seen in Renaissance Italian artists' works.

The influence of humanism is also seen in the use of traditionally Greek and Roman figures and themes. In Raphael's *The School of Athens*, he portrays classical Greek thinkers, including Aristotle as a main figure in the painting. ~~He~~ Michelangelo's *David* also pays homage to the Greco-Roman style by showing the biblical hero as a supreme athlete, standing in a nonchalant pose with rippling muscles.

Many Italian artists were effected by the humanism of the great thinkers of their time, such as Petrarch and Boccaccio, and used their ideas to further their art. Interestingly

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as Southern (Italian) Humanists were more secular, ^{but} not without ties to the Catholic Church, so were their contemporaries in the visual arts.

Humanism developed during the Renaissance, and is essentially the belief that the arts should focus more on the individual person than on the church. ~~and~~ During the Renaissance, Italy became the capital of the artistic world, and ~~two~~^{three} of Italy's most famous artists, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo led the way.

With the rising popularity of humanism in the visual arts, the works became more about people than about Christianity.

Leonardo Da Vinci, a true renaissance man by all accounts, painted his famous *Mona Lisa* in a humanistic style.

~~It is~~ The woman in the painting is not holy or biblical, has no religious significance at all. Her faint smirk makes her just like any other woman and unlike the Virgin Mary - the most popular female subject in pre-humanistic paintings.

Raphael's *School of Athens* is classic humanistic Renaissance. The painting is of ancient Greeks communicating and learning.

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5 A-2

in a clearly intellectual setting. This stresses the humanistic and Renaissance values of education, classic cultures, and secularism.

An additional piece of artwork from the Italian Renaissance is Michelangelo's David. This sculpture of the ~~King~~ ancient Israelite King depicts the tone, muscles, and depth of King David. David is not a celebrated Catholic icon, and the attention to detail make this sculpture truly humanistic.

Humanism changed the Italian Renaissance for the best, allowing artists to think outside the paradigm which was Christian-inspired art. Giotto, the father of the Renaissance, could never have imagined such an artistic world - but all of humanity is better off because of the humanist movement.