

SECTION
2

A modern artist depicts Gutenberg and his printing press; at top right is a Bible Gutenberg printed *circa* 1455.

WITNESS HISTORY  AUDIO

An Expanding World

“All the world is full of knowing men, of most learned schoolmasters, and vast libraries; and it appears to me as a truth, that neither in Plato’s time, nor Cicero’s . . . there was ever such convenience for studying, as we see at this day there is.”

—François Rabelais, 1532

Scholars and artists throughout northern Europe in the 1500s lived in an exciting time. The newly invented printing press made the world seem smaller. All over Europe, the world of knowledge was expanding in ways that would have been unthinkable in medieval times.

Focus Question How did the Renaissance develop in northern Europe?

The Renaissance in the North

Objectives

- Explain how the printing revolution shaped European society.
- Describe the themes that northern European artists, humanists, and writers explored.

Terms, People, and Places

Johann Gutenberg	Erasmus
Flanders	Thomas More
Albrecht Dürer	utopian
engraving	Shakespeare
vernacular	

Note Taking

Reading Strategy: Identify Main Ideas

Keep track of the main ideas of the section by creating a chart like the one below. Add boxes to complete the chart.


Renaissance in the North		
Printing Revolution	Artists and Writers	Humanists

As the Renaissance began to flower in Italy, northern Europe was still recovering from the ravages of the Black Death. But by the 1400s, the cities of the north began to enjoy the economic growth—and the wealth—needed to develop their own Renaissance.

The Printing Revolution

An astounding invention aided the spread of the Renaissance. In about 1455, **Johann Gutenberg** (GOOT un burg) of Mainz, Germany, printed the first complete edition of the Bible using a printing press with movable type. A printing revolution had begun that would transform Europe. Before the printing press, there were only a few thousand books in all of Europe. These books had been slowly copied out by hand. By 1500, according to some estimates, 15 to 20 million volumes had been produced on printing presses.

The printing revolution brought immense changes. Printed books were cheaper and easier to produce than hand-copied works. With books more readily available, more people learned to read. Readers gained access to a broad range of knowledge, from medicine and law to mining. As printing presses were established in Italy and other parts of Europe, printed books exposed educated Europeans to new ideas and new places.

 **Checkpoint** What was the impact of the printing press?

Northern Renaissance Artists

The northern Renaissance began in the prosperous cities of **Flanders**, a region that included parts of present-day northern France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Flanders was a thriving center of trade for northern Europe. From Flanders, the Renaissance spread to Spain, France, Germany, and England.

Flemish Painters In the 1400s, Jan van Eyck was one of the most important Flemish painters. Van Eyck's portrayals of townspeople as well as religious scenes abound in rich, realistic details. In the 1500s, Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel (BROY gul) used vibrant colors to portray lively scenes of peasant life, earning him the nickname "Peasant Bruegel." Bruegel also addressed religious and classical themes, but he set them against a background of common people.

In the 1600s, Peter Paul Rubens blended the realistic tradition of Flemish painters like Bruegel with the classical themes and artistic freedom of the Italian Renaissance. As a scholar and humanist, Rubens had a wide knowledge of mythology, the Bible, and classical history. Many of his enormous paintings portray these themes.

Dürer: "Leonardo of the North" German painter **Albrecht Dürer** (DYOOR ur) was one of the first northern artists to be profoundly affected by Renaissance Italy. In 1494, he traveled to Italy to study the Italian masters. He soon became a pioneer in spreading Renaissance ideas to northern Europe. At the same time, his own methods influenced artists in Italy. Because of his wide-ranging interests, which extended far beyond art, he is sometimes called the "Leonardo of the North."

Dürer's important innovation was to apply the painting techniques he had learned in Italy to **engraving**. In engraving, an artist etches a design on a metal plate with acid. The artist then uses the plate to make prints. Dürer had studied engraving in his goldsmith father's workshop and perfected the technique. Many of Dürer's engravings and paintings portray religious upheaval, one of the northern Renaissance's most powerful themes.

✓ **Checkpoint** What themes did northern Renaissance artists explore?

Northern Humanists and Writers

Northern European humanists and writers also helped spread Renaissance ideas. Humanist scholars stressed education and classical learning, hoping to bring about religious and moral reform. Though humanist scholars wrote mainly in Latin, other writers began writing in the **vernacular**, or everyday language of ordinary people. This appealed to a new, middle class audience who lived in northern towns and cities.

Erasmus: Making Humanism Popular The Dutch priest and humanist Desiderius **Erasmus** (ih RAZ mus), born in 1466, was one of the most important scholars of the age. He wrote texts on a number of subjects and used his knowledge of classical languages to produce a new Greek edition of the Bible.

Vocabulary Builder

prosperous—(PRAHS pur us) *adj.*
successful; wealthy



Dürer, Artist and Gentleman

In Germany artists were viewed merely as skilled craftsmen, prompting Dürer to comment that "[In Italy] I am a gentleman, at home I am a parasite." He worked hard to change that view, learning languages and court manners to promote himself. Dürer painted this self-portrait in 1498 when he was 26 years old. *Judging from the painting, how did Dürer view his own importance?*

Northern European artists eagerly pursued realism in their art. The new technique of oil painting allowed them to produce strong colors and a hard surface that could survive the centuries. They also used oils to achieve depth and to create realistic details. Artists placed a new emphasis on nature, recording in their art what they actually saw. Landscapes became a major theme, not just the backdrop to human activities.



▲ Pieter Bruegel the Elder is best known for his scenes of daily life. In *Winter Landscape With Skaters and a Bird Trap*, every detail—from the bare trees to the people walking on ice—conveys the white and frozen reality of northern Europe in winter.

Erasmus helped spread Renaissance humanism to a wider public. He called for a translation of the Bible into the vernacular. He scorned those who “. . . don’t want the holy scriptures to be read in translation by the unlearned . . . as if the chief strength of the Christian religion lay in people’s ignorance of it. . . .” To Erasmus, an individual’s chief duties were to be open-minded and to show good will toward others. As a priest, he was disturbed by corruption in the Church and called for reform.

Sir Thomas More’s Ideal Society Erasmus’s friend, the English humanist Sir **Thomas More**, also pressed for social reform. In *Utopia*, More describes an ideal society in which men and women live in peace and harmony. No one is idle, all are educated, and justice is used to end crime rather than to eliminate the criminal. Today, the word **utopian** has come to describe any ideal society often with the implication that such a society is ultimately impractical.

Rabelais’s Comic Masterpiece The French humanist François Rabelais (rab uh LAY) had a varied career as a monk, physician, Greek scholar, and author. In *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, he chronicles the adventures of two gentle giants. On the surface, the novel is a comic tale of travel and war. But Rabelais uses his characters to offer opinions on religion, education, and other serious subjects. Like More and Erasmus, Rabelais was deeply religious, but had doubts about the organized church.

Shakespeare Writes for All Time The towering figure of Renaissance literature was the English poet and playwright William **Shakespeare**. Between 1590 and 1613, he wrote 37 plays that are still performed around the world. Fellow playwright and poet Ben Jonson correctly predicted at the time that Shakespeare “. . . was not of an age, but for all time.”



▲ Jan van Eyck refined and spread the technique of oil painting. In *Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife*, van Eyck layered oil paints to create the shimmering fabrics the couple wore.



▲ Albrecht Dürer kept extensive notebooks on nature. He used his avid curiosity and his keen powers of observation to paint amazingly realistic pictures of plants and animals.



◀ Oils made from linseed, walnuts, or poppies were mixed with colored pigments to make oil paint. Oil paints have two qualities that allow them to achieve realism—they can blend together, thus creating more realistic colors, and they reflect light, adding depth and glow.

Thinking Critically

1. **Analyze Images** What realistic details appear in van Eyck's painting?
2. **Compare and Contrast** Compare these paintings with the Cranach woodcut in Section 3. How do the artists' intentions differ?

Shakespeare's genius was in expressing universal themes in everyday, realistic settings. His work explores Renaissance ideals such as the complexity of the individual and the importance of the classics. At the same time, his characters speak in language that common people can understand and appreciate. Shakespeare's love of words also vastly enriched the English language. More than 1,700 words appeared for the first time in his works.

- ✓ **Checkpoint** What Renaissance ideas did Shakespeare's work address?

SECTION 2 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-1321

Terms, People, and Places

1. What do the key people listed at the beginning of the section have in common? Explain.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas** Use your completed chart to answer the Focus Question: How did the Renaissance develop in northern Europe?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Predict Consequences** What impact would the printing press have on religious reform movements of the 1500s?
4. **Analyze Information** How did northern Renaissance artists blend Italian Renaissance ideas with their own?
5. **Identify Point of View** How did Erasmus's training as a priest sharpen his critique of the Church?
6. **Synthesize Information** What factors encouraged the use of the vernacular in literature in Renaissance society?

Writing About History

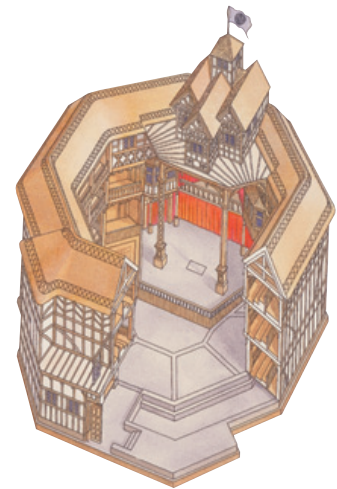
Quick Write: Generate Arguments List a number of arguments that could be used to oppose your thesis in a persuasive essay. For example, reread the thesis statement in the Section 1 Quick Write. Then use the information from Section 2 to generate arguments opposing your thesis. Be sure to cite important northern European artists and technological developments. Organizing your arguments into a pro-and-con chart can be helpful.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

In his play *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare wrote that “all the world’s a stage.” When it came to showcasing his own work, however, the playwright chose the Globe Theatre. In 1599, when the English people were increasingly eager for plays and other sorts of entertainment, Shakespeare and his company of actors built the Globe on the south bank of London’s Thames River. The three-story, open-air theater could seat 3,000 people and had a stage more than 40 feet wide. Shakespeare wrote many of his plays—including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*—specifically to be performed at the Globe Theatre. Twenty of Shakespeare’s plays were performed there during his lifetime. During a performance of his play *Henry VII* in 1613, onstage cannon fire ignited the theater’s thatched roof and destroyed the building.



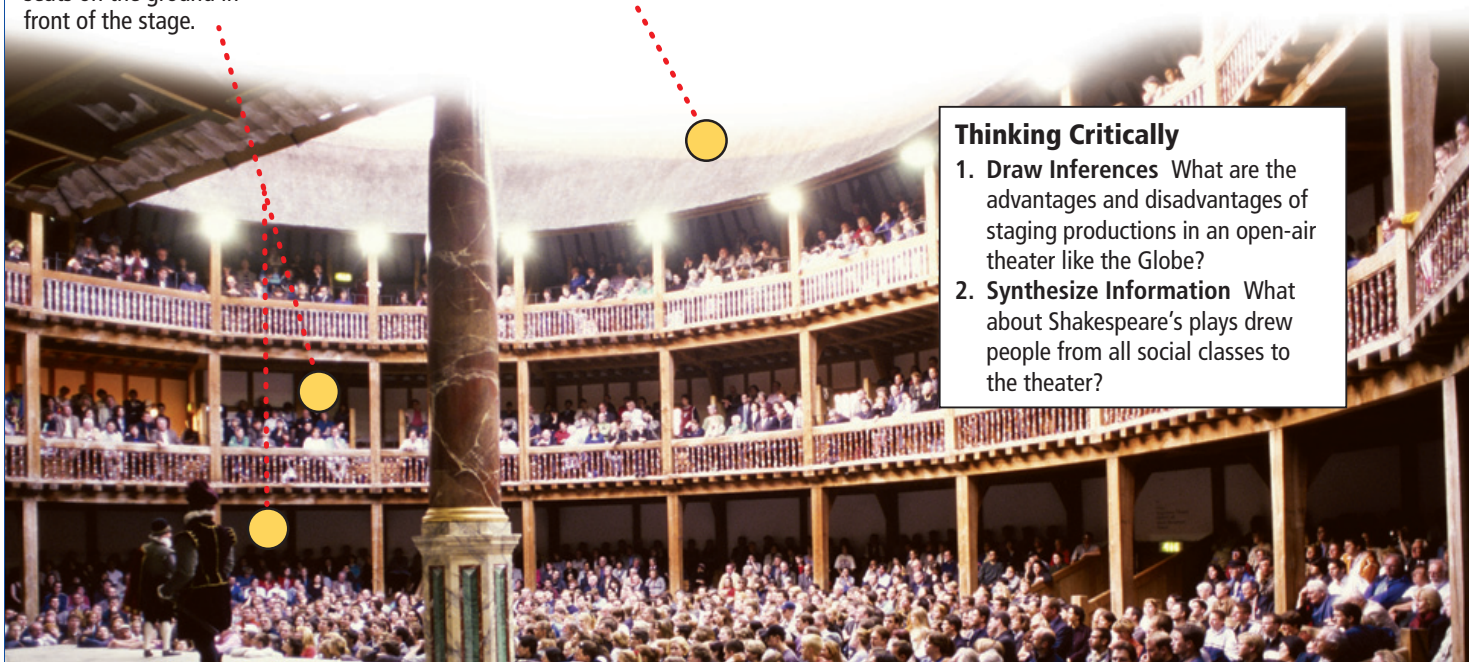
▲ William Shakespeare



The 1997 reconstruction of the Globe Theatre (below) is faithful to the original. Wealthy theatergoers in the seventeenth century sat in galleries along the theater’s walls. Poorer people bought cheap seats on the ground in front of the stage.

The center of the theater was open to the sky. Because the theater had no interior lights, plays were performed in the afternoon to let in as much light as possible.

The theater’s round shape meant that the audience surrounded the stage on three sides. The stage was not curtained off, further drawing the audience into the action. ▶



Thinking Critically

- 1. Draw Inferences** What are the advantages and disadvantages of staging productions in an open-air theater like the Globe?
- 2. Synthesize Information** What about Shakespeare’s plays drew people from all social classes to the theater?