

# THE ELIZABETHAN AGE AND RENAISSANCE

1485-1625 or 1485-1660

# Renaissance

- ▣ A rebirth of learning
- ▣ Society became more “man-centered” than God-centered (like Medieval Period had been)
- ▣ Education focused on the “whole man” and all men rather than just the clergy
- ▣ Renaissance Man = man who was skilled in many different areas and who strived to be more skilled in these areas
  - A well-rounded and educated man

# Events Bringing About the Renaissance

1. Capture of Constantinople (1483) by Turks of Eastern Europe
  - drove Greek scholars to take refuge in Italy
  - revived classical learning with renewed interest in Greek and Roman civilization
2. Discovery of printing by movable metal types
  - Increased production and spread of books
3. Development of banking
  - Made trading easier
  - Created wealthy merchant class
4. Great voyages of discovery
  - Explored the globe

# 3 Things Brought about by Renaissance

- ▣ 1. Desire for worldly power
- ▣ 2. Search of knowledge
  - Art, music, drama, theater, architecture, etc.
  - Language of scholarship became the vernacular rather than Latin
- ▣ 3. Seeking after human perfection

# Reformation

- ▣ Religious movement in which England broke away from Catholicism
- ▣ Movement began as a protest against various practices of Roman Catholic Church
  - Challenged corruption and doctrines of church

# Humanism

- ▣ Movement centering on man where man set out to perfect all human possibilities.
- ▣ Humanists considered individuals more important than institutions and believed men had the right to think and act for themselves
- ▣ Renewal of interest in many areas of human endeavor
  - Science – Harvey, Galileo, Boyle, Francis Bacon
  - Philosophy
  - History (now recent history not just Biblical history)

# Modern England vs. Medieval England

- ▣ Feudalism and chivalry supplanted by Parliament and government
- ▣ Education moved from monasteries to universities
- ▣ Drama moved from churches and religious ideas (miracle and morality plays) to theaters and playhouses (non-religious topics)
- ▣ Science and new technology developed
- ▣ Protestant religions were set up after break with Roman Catholic Church
- ▣ Literature flourished – “the golden age of literature”

# Sonnets

- ▣ Sonnet = a poem of 14 lines with set rhyming patterns
- ▣ 2 types of sonnets
  - Italian (Petrarchan)
    - ▣ Rhyme scheme – abba abba cde cde
    - ▣ Octave (8 lines bound by rhyme scheme) and sestet (6 lines bound by rhyme scheme)
  - Elizabethan or Shakespearean
    - ▣ Rhyme scheme – abab cdcd efef gg
    - ▣ 3 quatrains (4 lines bound by rhyme scheme) and rhymed couplet (2 lines bound by rhyme scheme)



# 4 Reasons for Shakespeare's Popularity

- ▣ 1. Good storyteller
  - Knows the elements of a good story
- ▣ 2. His philosophies of life
  - Shows universal truths
- ▣ 3. His poetry
  - Used blank verse (iambic pentameter)
  - His lines say something better than anyone else
- ▣ 4. His character creations
  - Characters have flaws, weaknesses, motives, emotions, actions that are expected
  - Characters remain memorable as a result

# 3 Marks of Shakespeare's Works

- ▣ 1. Power over words
  - Coined phrases and said things very concisely
  - Least number of words, greatest impact
  - Made words work for him
- ▣ 2. Versatility
  - Wrote sonnets and plays – excelled at both
  - Wrote comedies, tragedies, and histories
  - Wrote contrasting characters in same play
- ▣ 3. Understanding of human nature
  - Knows weaknesses and strengths of people
  - Knows motivations of people
  - Allows characters to act and react in ways with which people can identify

# Difficulties of Acting in Elizabethan Age

- ▣ Repertory system for performing plays
  - Performed different play each day on rotating basis
  - May play major roles back-to-back
  - Requires good memory
- ▣ Physical prowess required
  - Acrobatic skills needed – take falls without injury
  - Skills in battles – danger of swords
  - Dancing

# Difficulties of Acting in Elizabethan Age

- ▣ Good voices necessary
  - Had no sound systems
  - Project lines over noise of pit all the way to back row
  - Must deliver lines well – clearly and distinctly
  - Must enunciate clearly
- ▣ Words create story
  - Words indicated love without touching
  - Words set the stage – no scenery
  - Audience had to use imagination
- ▣ Males played female parts

