**European Literature: Renaissance and Reformation**

**This six-week unit introduces students to the literature of the Renaissance and Reformation, exploring its continuity with and departure from the literature of the Middle Ages.**

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**Overview**

* + Students consider Renaissance writers’ interest in ancient Greek and Latin literature and myth; their preoccupation with human concerns and life on earth; their aesthetic principles of harmony, balance, and divine proportion; and exceptions to all of these. This leads to a discussion of how literary forms themselves reflect religious, philosophical, and aesthetic principles. As students compare the works of the Renaissance with those of the Middle Ages, students recognize the overlap and continuity of these periods. In addition, they consider how the outstanding works of the era transcend their time and continue to inspire readers and writers. The English Renaissance of the seventeenth century includes additional works by William Shakespeare. In their essays, students may analyze the ideas, principles, and form of a literary work; discuss how a work bears attributes of both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; discuss convergences of Renaissance literature and arts; or pursue a related topic of interest.

*Note: More works have been listed than can be covered; the teacher is encouraged to select from the list so that students may analyze certain works closely while gaining a broad sense of the era. It is possible, for instance, to focus entirely on Rabelais or Boccaccio, with only a few additional short works for contrast; to consider a philosophical work in relation to a literary work; to focus on the idea of divine proportion as expressed in literature, art, and mathematics; or to consider a variety of Renaissance works. The unit should include close readings so that students may observe how Renaissance literary forms find parallels in art and reflect religious, philosophical, and aesthetic views.*

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**Focus Standards**

* + These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.
    - **RL.11-12.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
    - **RL.11-12.6:**Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
    - **RI.11-12.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
    - **RI.11-12.2(a-f):** Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
    - **W.11-12.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
    - **SL.11-12.4:**Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range or formal and informal tasks.
    - **L.11-12.4(a-d):**Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11–12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

[Common Core State Standards, ELA](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/CCSSI_ELA_Standards.pdf) (1.5 MB)

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**Suggested Student Objectives**

* + - Read novels, literary nonfiction, stories, plays, and poetry from the Renaissance era, observing the continuity from the Middle Ages as well as the departures.
    - Identify and investigate allusions to classical literature in Renaissance texts.
    - Explore how a concept such as symmetry or divine proportion is expressed both in literature and in art.
    - Discuss Renaissance conceptions of beauty and their literary manifestations.
    - Explore how Renaissance writers took interest in human life and the individual person.
    - Explore the playful, satirical, irreverent aspects of Renaissance literature—in particular, the writing of Rabelais, Boccaccio, and Shakespeare.
    - Consider how literary forms and devices reflect the author’s philosophical, aesthetic, or religious views.
    - Write an essay in which they (a) compare a literary work with a work of art; (b) compare a Renaissance work with a medieval work; or (c) relate a literary work to a philosophical work.
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**Suggested Works**

* + (E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

**Literary Texts**

**Novel**

* + - *The Life of Gargantua and the Heroic Deeds of Pantagruel* (François Rabelais) (Books 1 and 2)

**Stories**

* + - *The Decameron* (Giovanni Boccaccio) (continued from unit one)

**Plays**

* + - *The Jewish Women (Les Juifves)* (Robert Garnier)
    - *Nine Carnival Plays* (Hans Sachs)
    - *Henry IV, Part I* (William Shakespeare)
    - *The Tragedy of Macbeth*(William Shakespeare)

**Poems**

* + - *Dark Night of the Soul* (Saint John of the Cross) (selections)
    - “The Nightingale of Wittenberg” (Hans Sachs)
    - *The Faerie Queene* (Edmund Spenser) (selections)
    - Sonnets 29, 30, 40, 116, 128, 130, 143, and 146 (William Shakespeare)
    - “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” (Christopher Marlowe)
    - “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” (Sir Walter Raleigh)

**Informational Texts**

**Historical Nonfiction**

* + - *Rabelais and His World* (Mikhail Bakhtin)

**Essays**

* + - “Of Cannibals” (Michel de Montaigne)
    - *On the Divine Proportion (De divina proportione)* (illustrations only) (Luca Pacioli)
    - *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (Giorgio Vasari)

**Historical Nonfiction**

* + - *The Prince*(Niccolo Machiavelli) (selections)

**Art, Music, and Media**

*Prompt:  How is man's humanity depicted in Renaissance art?*

**Art**

* + - Sandro Botticelli, [*Primavera*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primavera_%28painting%29) (1482)
    - Leonardo da Vinci, [*Vitruvian Man*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Uomo_Vitruviano.jpg) (1487)
    - Leonardo da Vinci, [*Mona Lisa*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mona_Lisa.jpg) (1503-1505)
    - Michelangelo, [*David*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelos_David.jpg) (1505)
    - Leonardo da Vinci, [The Virgin and Child with St. Anne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Virgin_and_Child_with_St._Anne_%28Leonardo_da_Vinci%29) (1508)
    - Michelangelo, [*Sistine Chapel*](http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/CSN/CSN_Volta.html), ceiling (1508-1512)
    - Raphael, [The Niccolini-Cowper Madonna](http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg20/gg20-27.html) (1508)
    - Jacopo da Pontormo, [*Desposition from the Cross (Entombment)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Entombment_%28Pontormo%29) (1525-28)
    - Michelangelo, [*The Last Judgment*](http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/x-Schede/CSNs/CSNs_G_Giud.html), Sistine Chapel altar wall (1536-1541)
    - Caravaggio, [*The Entombment of Christ*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Caravaggio_-_La_Deposizione_di_Cristo.jpg) (1602-1603)
    - Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini, [*Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Estasi_di_Santa_Teresa.jpg) (1647–1652)
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**Sample Activities and Assessments**

* + *Note:* *After reading and discussing a work or pairing of works as a class, students prepare for seminars and essays by reflecting individually, in pairs, and/or in small groups on a given seminar/essay question. Ideas are student generated in this way. (Seminar/Essay assignments include more than one question. Teachers may choose one or all the questions to explore in the course of the seminar; students should choose one question for the essay.) Seminars should be held before students write essays so that they may explore their ideas thoroughly and refine their thinking before writing. (Click* [*here*](http://commoncore.org/free/index.php/maps/grade_12_unit_2/) *to see a sample seminar scoring rubric.) Page and word counts for essays are not provided, but teachers should consider the suggestions regarding the use of evidence, for example, to determine the likely length of good essays. In future iterations of these maps, links to samples of student work will be provided.*

**Collaborate**

Reflect on seminar questions, take notes on your responses, and note the page numbers of the textual evidence you will refer to in your seminar and/or essay answers. Share your notes with a partner for feedback and guidance. Have you interpreted the text correctly? Is your evidence convincing? (RL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.1)

**Seminar and Essay**

Read *Macbeth*. How does the play illustrate the demise of the Great Chain of Being? What does the play say about the divine right of kings? What does it reveal about fate and free will? Use textual evidence from the play to support your response in an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.1, RI.11-12.1)

**Seminar and Essay**

Read *Macbeth* and excerpts from*The Prince* by Machiavelli. How do Machiavelli’s principles apply to the play? What is Shakespeare saying about Machiavelli’s approach to attaining and maintaining political power? Consider the quote “it is better to be feared than to be loved.” Is this true for Macbeth? Use textual evidence from both texts to support an original, concise thesis statement.

**Seminar and Essay**

Read *Henry IV, Part I.* How does Falstaff reflect the new ideas of the Renaissance regarding chivalry and honor? How does the play illustrate the demise of the Great Chain of Being? What does the play say about the divine right of kings? Use textual evidence from the play to support your response in an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.1, RI.11-12.1)

**Seminar and Essay**

Relate Pacioli’s *On the Divine Proportion* to a Shakespeare sonnet.In what ways is the sonnet an expression of divine proportion (or not)? Cite specific evidence from both texts to support an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.1, RI.11-12.1)

**Seminar and Essay**

Compare one of the satirical stories of *Canterbury Tales* (from unit one) with one of the stories from Boccaccio’s *The Decameron*. What does the satire reveal about the author’s intention and message? Use textual evidence to support an original, concise thesis. (RL.11-12.2)

**Seminar and Essay**

Show how one of the plays from this unit departs from the medieval conceptions of drama. Use specific textual evidence to support an original, concise thesis statement.

**Speech**

Select a poem from this unit and recite it from memory. Include an introduction that states:

* + - Who wrote the poem;
    - Its form, meter, rhyme scheme, and key literary elements;
    - An aspect of the poem that comes through after multiple readings. (RL.11-12.4)

**Seminar and Essay**

Using works of art as textual evidence, do **one** of the following: (a) compare a literary work from this unit with a Renaissance work of art, with attention to principles of proportion and symmetry; (b) compare a Renaissance literary work with a medieval work, with attention to depiction of character; or (c) relate a literary work to a philosophical work. Include at least one critical source and one reference work to support an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, W.11-12.7)

**Research Paper**

Using texts from this unit as well as additional sources, explain how literature or works of art from the Renaissance break with or build on ideas derived from the Middle Ages. Cite specific textual evidence to support an original, concise thesis statement to answer the essential question. (RL.11-12.4, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8)

**Research Paper**

Using texts from this unit as well as additional sources, explain how literature or works of art from the Renaissance reveal this period to actually be an age of intolerance. Cite specific textual evidence to support an original, concise thesis statement to answer the essential question. (RL.11-12.4, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8)

[Scoring Rubric](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/Socratic_Seminar_Rubric_SP.doc)

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**Additional Resources**

* + - [**The English Renaissance in Context (ERIC)**](http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/index.cfm)(University of Pennsylvania Library) (RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2)  
      ERIC is a NEH-funded project designed to provide scholars and students at a variety of levels with access to major texts of the English Renaissance in their original versions. It includes tutorials and a set of scanned texts.
    - [**The Forest of Rhetoric**](http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm)(Brigham Young University) (RL.11-12.4)  
      This online rhetoric, provided by Dr. Gideon Burton of Brigham Young University, is a guide to the terms of classical and renaissance rhetoric. Sometimes it is difficult to see the forest (the big picture) of rhetoric because of the trees (the hundreds of Greek and Latin terms naming figures of speech, etc.) within rhetoric. This site is intended to help beginners, as well as experts, make sense of rhetoric, both on the small scale (definitions and examples of specific terms) and on the large scale (the purposes of rhetoric, the patterns into which it has fallen historically as it has been taught and practiced for 2000+ years).
    - [**Literary Resources—Renaissance**](http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Lit/ren.html)(Rutgers University)  
      This page is part of the [Literary Resources](http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Lit/) collection maintained by [Jack Lynch](http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/) of Rutgers—Newark.
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**Terminology**

* + - allusion
    - classicism
    - divine proportion (golden ratio, golden mean)
    - divine right of kings
    - eclogue
    - epistle
    - fate
    - free will
    - humanism
    - iambic pentameter
    - iambic tetrameter
    - idyll
    - ode
    - satire
    - sonnet
    - symmetry
    - The Great Chain of Being