

## Humanities I

## Part II

Unit I: A Tour of Renaissance Florence

Discussion questions and study notes:

- 1) From your reading, what differences do you see between Renaissance and ancient Athens? What similarities?
- 2) How do you think the Florentine conception of the good life would be reflected in the physical surroundings? What would you look for as you walked through the city?
- 3) (Filmstrip: slides and class hand-out F.I.)

From your viewing of the filmstrip and slides try to discuss and answer the following questions.

Could the good life, as the Florentines saw it, be lived outside the city? Do you think that the good life can be lived outside the city?

- 4) Do you think that Florence provided for the good life better than our cities do?
- 5) Florence was a great medieval trading center - what kinds of business activities would you suppose flourished at this time? What is the importance of churches and the spiritual life in Renaissance Florence?
- 6) Discuss features of architecture and design - from viewing the filmstrip and the slides.

## Humanities I

### Part II

### Unit 2. The Magnificent: Lorenzo de' Medici

#### Affective Objectives of the reading:

To begin to develop reasons for valuing leisure, and to begin to determine what leisure-time pursuits should be valued.

#### Knowledge Objectives:

To know that as an adult, Lorenzo had a zest for life, was a many-sided man, patronized the arts, was an able leader, was gentle, kind, and humane towards his friends and those who might help him, was ruthless and deceitful toward those who opposed him, was shrewd and calculating when it came to his self-interest, and was religious. (Lorenzo de' Medici seems, most satisfactorily, to be the epitome of the beneficent despot.)

#### Discussion questions and study notes:

1) From the description of Lorenzo's education, what kind of a man do you think his family wanted him to be?

2) Do you think this type of education would be adequate today?

3) What aspects of it would you discard? What would you add?

What adjectives or phrases would you use to describe Lorenzo as an adult? (make reference to the article by Schevill and the assessment by Guicciardini)

4) Do you think that Lorenzo's life style represents a model of good life for a twentieth century man?

5) Do you think that Lorenzo was a good man? Why or why not? Can a man have a good life and not be a good man? (In other words, what are the moral values attached to being a "good man" as well as the aesthetic values.)

## Humanities I

Part II.

Unit 3. The Artist as Individual.  
Benvenuto Cellini.

Knowledge Objectives:

- A. To know that Cellini was a self-centered, vengeful, passionate, and individualistic man, who wished to excel over all others and who enriched his society with great works of art.
- B. To know that in pursuit of his individual goals, Cellini did not recognize responsibility toward others.

Test your reaction to the character of Cellini:

- 1) What kind of a man was Cellini?
- 2) What did Cellini value?
- 3) What did Cellini's society value?

Discussion questions and study notes:

- 1) Do you agree with the Pope that "men like Cellini are above the law"? Shouldn't especially creative people like Cellini be given some privileges and freedoms that others do not have? Don't the restraints of society curb creativity?
- 2) Do you think there are any aspects of modern society that unduly restrain creative individuals? Do you think modern society is at times too permissive toward creative individuals in its midst?
- 3) Include in your discussion the particular demonstration of permissive conduct in respect of drug abuse by pop musicians - and experimenting with drugs? What about "serial marriage" in the film colony, and irresponsibility toward parenthood among movie stars?
- 4) How may we compare the "Hippie" artist or the radical nonconformist such as Andy Warhol or Allen Ginsberg, with the Cellini-type character?
- 5) What exactly, does this type of artist offer to society?

## Humanities I

### Part II

#### Unit 4. Women in Renaissance Florence

Renaissance painters depicted woman's beauty in terms of grace and charm as well as sexual attractiveness. The Renaissance woman was expected to be graceful, charming, beautiful, intellectual, and aesthetic - an accomplished companion for the Renaissance man.

Discussion questions and study notes:

- 1) Did Renaissance painters have an image of women that was different from your own?
- 2) According to your reading, what were women's major roles during the Renaissance? How did Cellini regard women?
- 3) Do your conclusions apply to all Renaissance social groups?
- 4) Do modern conceptions of women lack any of the Renaissance ideas? Did the Renaissance omit any of our ideas?

Supplemental reading for entertainment:

#### The Taming of the Shrew: Shakespeare

This lusty, bawdy play is at times interpreted as a study of brutal treatment and humiliation of a woman. But this was never the author's intention. Shakespeare, who knew well how to pen the dark comedy (Measure for Measure and A Winter's Tale, for example) and to soar to searing extravagances of tragic drama in the psychological philosophic vein, wrote in this instance, a merry, jesting play within a play, which in its final mood brings order from disorder and declares a joyous affirmative spirit.

Discuss your reaction to Petruchio's method of taming his shrew, Katharine. Would it work only for a Renaissance woman? Are there psychological insights into this relationship that reveal man and woman of all ages? How would an average modern shrew be tamed? What changes and compromises were made in, and by, Petruchio? What are your reactions to the fact that, in this play, among the realities of love and laughter are wealth and the prudent alliance of property, all seen in the natural order of life? Is this strictly a materialistic over-view of the romantic, or is Shakespeare making a comment on the psychology of love and mating which is applicable to all eras?

What are your opinions of Katherine's final declaration? 11.137-80  
Fie, fie, unknit that threatening unkind brow--  
My hand is ready, may it do him him ease.

## Humanities I

### Part II

#### Unit 5. Workers, Slaves, and Servants

Slaves and hired servants provided domestic help, freeing merchants and their wives from menial chores. Renaissance Florentines justified slavery by arguing that slaves were non-Christians and, therefore, lower forms of human beings. (This is Class distinction.)

Discussion notes and questions.

- 1) How would you compare the life of a woolworker with the lives of Florentines you have studied so far?
- 2) To what extent do you think the lives of the elite depended on the woolworkers?
- 3) Why did a man of Francesco Datini's standing require servants?
- 4) Why did not Francesco use servants or members of his own family instead of slaves? Had he no moral reservations about slavery?
- 5) Does a rich cultural outpouring always depend upon the labor of workers to some extent?
- 6) Should we consider this condition to be an example of exploitation? How do we balance our desire for social justice with our desire for a rich cultural experience?

Gather all the information you can on the working class of Renaissance times. (Builders: tradesmen: guildsmen: of particular interest should be information concerning the building of the great cathedrals.)