

*The English
Renaissance*



Introducing The English Renaissance [1485-1660]

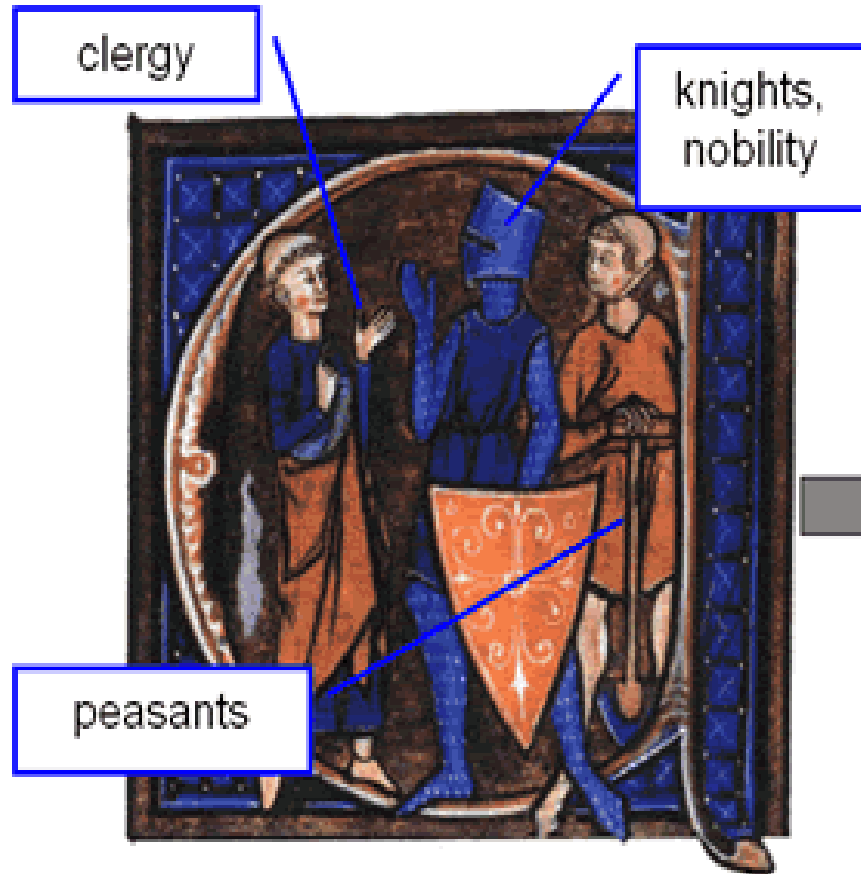


Renaissance?

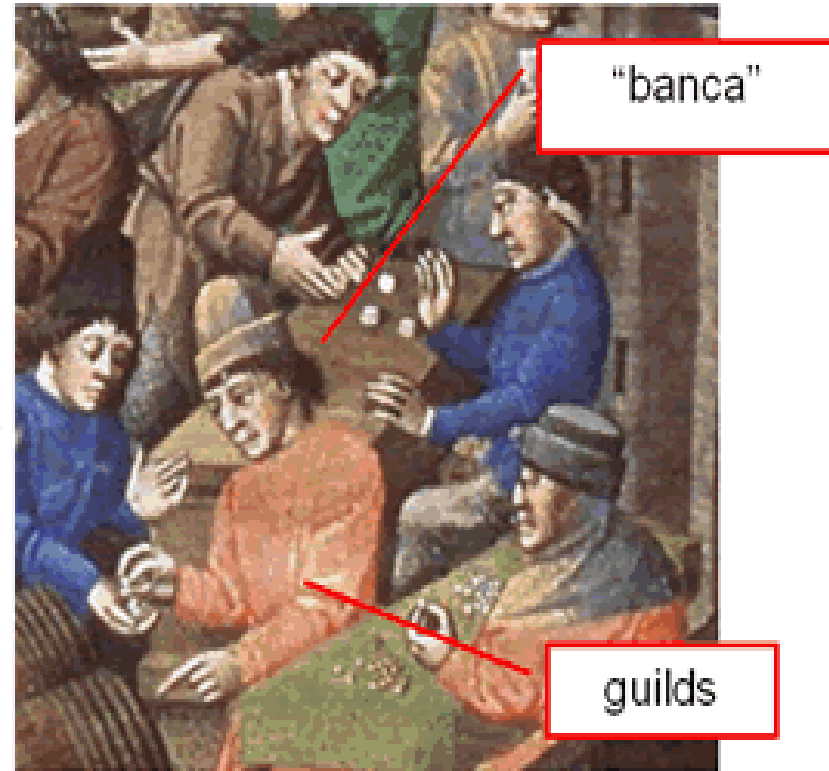
- The notion of *rebirth* tries to capture the fact that the cultural and political ideas that shaped this period were fundamentally influenced by a new interest in the classical cultures and civilizations of ancient Rome and Greece.
- This conceptual rebirth triggered a great number of cultural and political changes that mark the transition from medieval to modern life.

Society of the Renaissance

Class Structure



Three estates system =
feudal



New middle class =
economic

*The Renaissance: Science & World
View*

Changing World View

- The transformation of medieval society was accompanied by a transformation of world-view. In the Middle Ages, education and world-view was dominated by scholasticism (derived from Latin *schola*, 'school'). This school of thought was characterized by its combination of medieval theology with classical philosophy.

- The astronomers [Nicolaus Copernicus](#) and [Galileo Galilei](#) falsified the idea of earth being the centre of the universe. In France, [René Descartes](#) established *rationalist philosophy*.
- All of these approaches shift the interest of learning from comprehending the world as the kingdom of God to understanding it as a rule-governed natural universe.
- In England, this movement towards modern science was fuelled by the highly influential works of the philosopher and empiricist [Francis Bacon](#), the physician [William Harvey](#), or the physicist [Isaac Newton](#).

From scholastic to scientific view



Francis Bacon

*Political
philosophy*



William Harvey

Medicine



Isaac Newton

*Physics,
rationalism*

World View Shaped by Commerce

Sea Trade & Expansion

- Economic zeal and greed and the scientific interest in nature and the world triggered a historical development that defines our very present: the expansion of Western economy and culture into the world by sea trade and explorations.

Hanseatic League

- In the late Middle Ages, the North and East Sea were economically dominated by the Hanseatic League, a trade union whose power and influence went well beyond economic matters. London constituted one of the centers of this early form of coordinated international trade.

- More importantly, the Renaissance constituted the basis for the Spanish and Portuguese exploration and colonization of the Americas and Africa. Both of these sea powers brought enormous riches from these far-away continents to Europe.

Sir Francis Drake

- To start with, England did not play a major role in this process. However, the privateer, merchant, and seaman [Francis Drake](#) interfered with the Spanish sea dominion by pirating Spanish merchant ships coming from the Americas, which caused him to be regarded as a national hero in England. Also, he won an important sea battle against the 'invincible' Spanish armada, which earned him the favor of Queen Elizabeth I.

Portuguese and Spanish exploration & colonisation



Sir Francis Drake
1540 - 1596



Granger Collection

Privateers, not Pirates!

- Drake's achievements on sea are of great importance for the history of England. By interfering with the Spanish sea power, Drake kept the way open for the expansion of England to America and the Southern hemisphere. This defines his status as a pirate in the eyes of Spain and a hero in the eyes of England.

The Reformation

Protestant Church

- In the domain of religion, the Renaissance experienced the protestant movement and reformation.
- Unlike the fundamental religious reorientation in Germany (Luther) or Switzerland (Calvin, Zwingli), the reformation of church in England was triggered by idiosyncratic political factors.

The protestant reformation

Supreme Head of the Church of England



Henry VIII



Catherine of Aragon



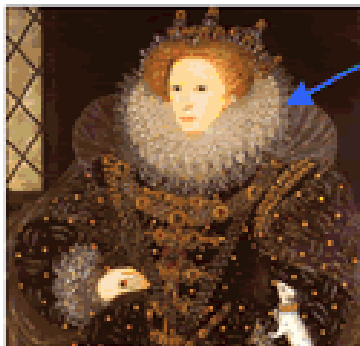
Anne Boleyn



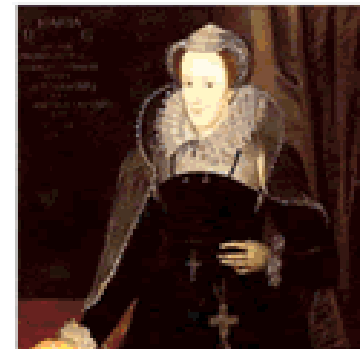
Pope Clement VII

Protestant

Catholic



Elizabeth I



Mary Stuart



I'm Henry VIII, I AM!

- [King Henry VIII](#), who was married to Catherine of Aragon, wanted to divorce his wife and marry Anne Boleyn instead because the queen of Spanish origin did not give birth to a male successor.
- Since divorce was illegal by Catholic law, Henry asked pope Clement VII to annul the marriage. The pope, however, did not give in. As a consequence, Henry chose to break with the Catholic church by declaring himself *Supreme Head of the Church of England*.

A Bloody Price...

- Disputes and fights between Protestants and Catholics continued with Henry's successors to the throne. During her reign, [Elizabeth I](#) – the protestant daughter of Henry and Boleyn fought against the Catholic Spaniards (Remember Francis Drake?) and eliminated her Catholic archrival Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. Thus, the bloody quarrels between Protestants and Catholics defined this period.

*Elizabethan England—the golden
age of the arts*

Elizabethan England



Architecture

Literary achievement



William Shakespeare



Edmund Spenser



Christopher Marlowe



Ben Jonson



Golden Age of English Music

A Golden Age of Literature

- Under the leadership of the queen - Elizabeth herself was a very well-read queen in her speeches were highly acclaimed - England experienced a golden age of literature and poetry, music, and architecture: the [Elizabethan Age](#).

The Bard & his Buddies

- It is this period where the studies of modern English literature usually start.
- The period was shaped by authors such as Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe, and Jonson, who all established landmarks in English literature.
- Shakespeare, obviously the most celebrated of these authors had a considerable impact on the English language.

Development of a National Identity

The Growth of the United Kingdom



King James I

- Renaissance people started to focus on their own national identity.
- The social, scientific, and religious changes supported this growing sense of national individuality.
- Thus, the Renaissance established the cultural and political basis for the development of modern nation states.

Who commissioned a Holy Book?

- In England, this development was furthered during the reign of [King James I](#). James was the first king of the four countries of the British Isles.



- This first political union formed the basis for the future British Empire, and it was during this phase that England started to become an international power. The development was shattered by two civil wars – both being symptoms of the quarrels underlying the search for a unified kingdom. However, in 1707 the United Kingdom was finally established.

The Growing Status of English

- During the Early Modern English period, the status of English was extended dramatically. After the decline of French in the mid-14th century, English became the language of administration and government. Latin, however, remained the high-prestige *lingua franca* of learning and wisdom.
- By the end of the Early Modern English period, English pushed Latin out of the sociolinguistic scene becoming itself the language of science.

English—a world language?

- This increase in status, along with the political development of England establishing trade and colonies all over the globe, constitutes the historical basis for English becoming a world-wide language and a lingua franca of business and science.

The Influence of Printing



- The introduction of the technique of printing must be regarded as a landmark in the spread of written English.
- In the 150 years following the introduction of the printing press, nearly 20'000 books appeared. Thanks to the printing press, books could be produced more efficiently, and thus more people got access to written texts.

Books take money....

- Printing, however, would not have been influential, if no market had existed for the dissemination of printed books. Printing was, of course, subject to economic constraints: the books had to be sold to make printing a flourishing business. Printers found a great number of customers in the new merchant middle class, people who were interested in learning and had the money to buy books.

Who read? What?

- The potential readership for books thus included the upper and middle classes – the classes that were literate or increasingly became so. Illiteracy was very high among the lower classes and women.
- The new middle class were not learned people and had no knowledge of Latin. They spoke vernacular English and thus also wanted to read English books.

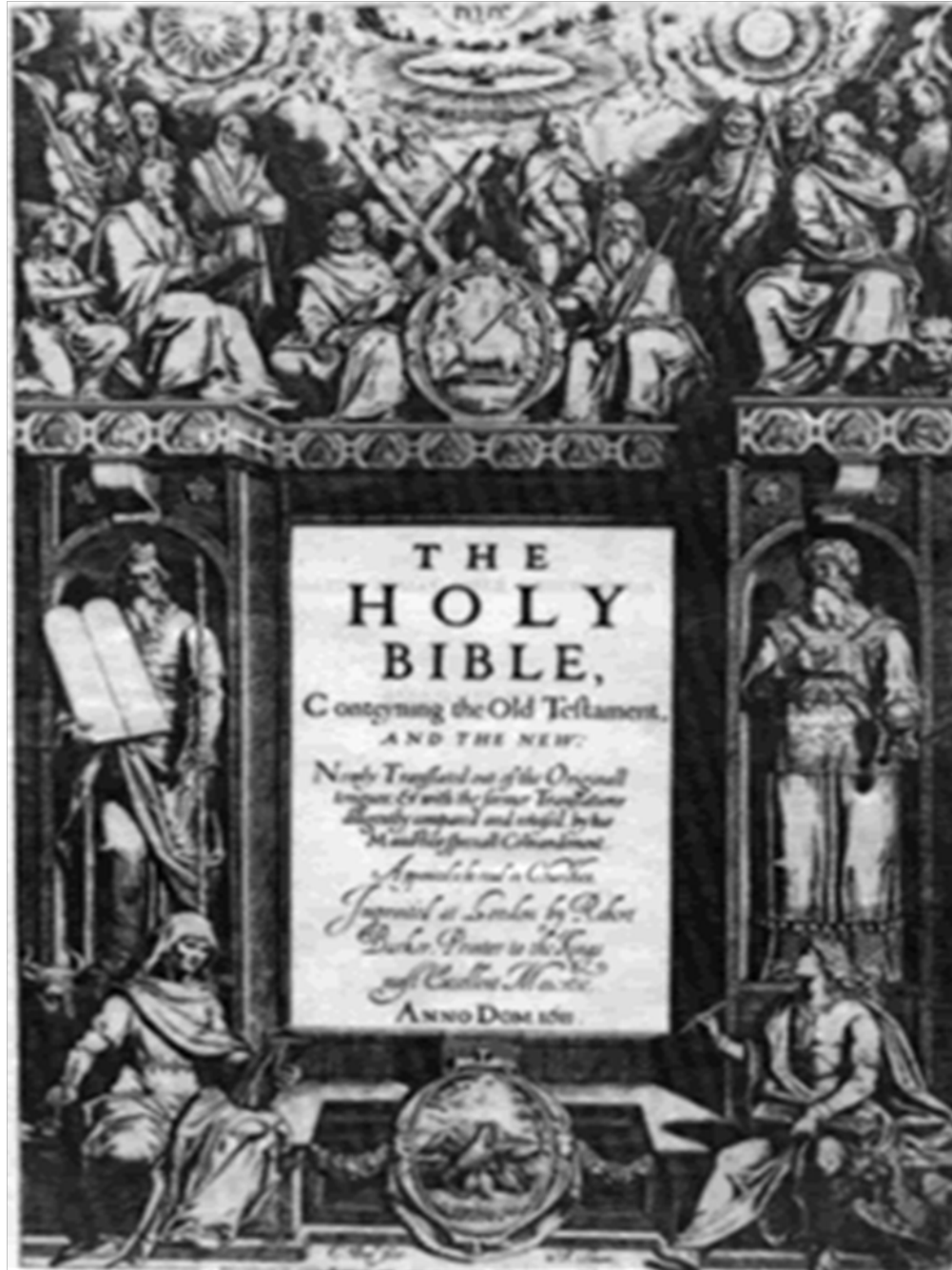
Printing Enhanced Learning

- The increased availability of affordable English books further increased the readership of these books, which, consequently, increased the demand for further books. In other words, printing enhanced learning, which, in reverse enhanced printing and the spread of written English. Moreover, in the 16th century, pamphlets emerged as an early form of mass media and around 1620, the first newspapers appeared.

Rules, who needs them?

- Printing promoted the standardization process since books had to be written in a style that made them accessible to a large audience from different dialect backgrounds. Thus, a number of spelling rules had to be established by mutual convention. As a result, a rudimentary orthographic system emerged.

The Age of Bibles



1611 - King James Bible
Authorised Version of the Bible

Why an English Bible?

- Most people attracted by Protestantism were of humble origin and did not have classical education in Latin. They spoke English only. Consequently, Bible translations were needed. English Bibles raised the prestige of English in general, whereas Latin was despised by many as the language of the Pope.

The Language of the Bible

- Among others, influential English Bibles such as the Tyndale Bible, the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, or the Bishops' Bible were written. In 1611, the [King James Bible](#) – also known as the Authorised Bible - was issued. This official translation was worked out by 54 translators who followed strict translation guidelines. The translators aimed at a dignified and somewhat archaic style. Therefore, the language represented in this Bible is conservative.

The Influence
of....



William Shakespeare

- In contrast to the many Bible translations, Shakespeare's writing supplied English with a great number of innovations.
- Shakespeare was one of the central figures to promote the new genre of drama, which developed out of medieval mystery and miracle plays. These play were originally performed during church festivities and dramatized Biblical stories. In the 14th and 15th centuries these plays came to be performed in front of churches on the marketplace.

The Theatre of the Renaissance

- On the basis of these older forms of performance, a new form of drama was established during the reign of Elizabeth I. The plays written by Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson were performed by professional actors in public theatres, which were built in the late sixties and seventies of the sixteenth century. Of course, Shakespeare's *Globe Theatre* was the most important and celebrated venue.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre



Globe Theatre

Piracy on the Stage

- Shakespeare wrote his plays as a basis for the performance, but not to be published for readers. The plays belonged to the drama company, which did not want them written down because it wanted people come to the performance. Therefore, pirated versions were often produced by competing actors.

“Folio” Edition

- But, the plays were not jazzy improvisation but the performance of Shakespeare's writing. Unfortunately, none of these manuscripts have survived. Later his plays were published as a 'quarto' edition. However, this edition was not edited by Shakespeare himself but by company actors after the performance. Only seven years after Shakespeare's death the plays appeared as more carefully prepared 'folio' edition.

Shakespeare's Linguistic "Firsts"

- The editions show that the language used by Shakespeare was highly innovative. Through the celebrated status of his works, a great deal of this innovation flowed into the lexicon of present day English. These Shakespearean influences are known as *Shakespearean Firsts*.

Shakespearean Firsts

Lexemes:

- a) Borrowed: *assassination, bandit, denote, obscene*
- b) Adaptations: *appearer, countless, ceremoniously*

Conversions:

champion, drug, hand, muddy (verbs); essay (noun)

Idioms:

in my mind's eye, cold comfort, a foregone conclusion

The Renaissance

- Or “rebirth” marks the transition from the Middle Ages [Dark Ages] to the Early Modern period.
- Changes in society, science & world view, religious beliefs, literature & art, and national identity