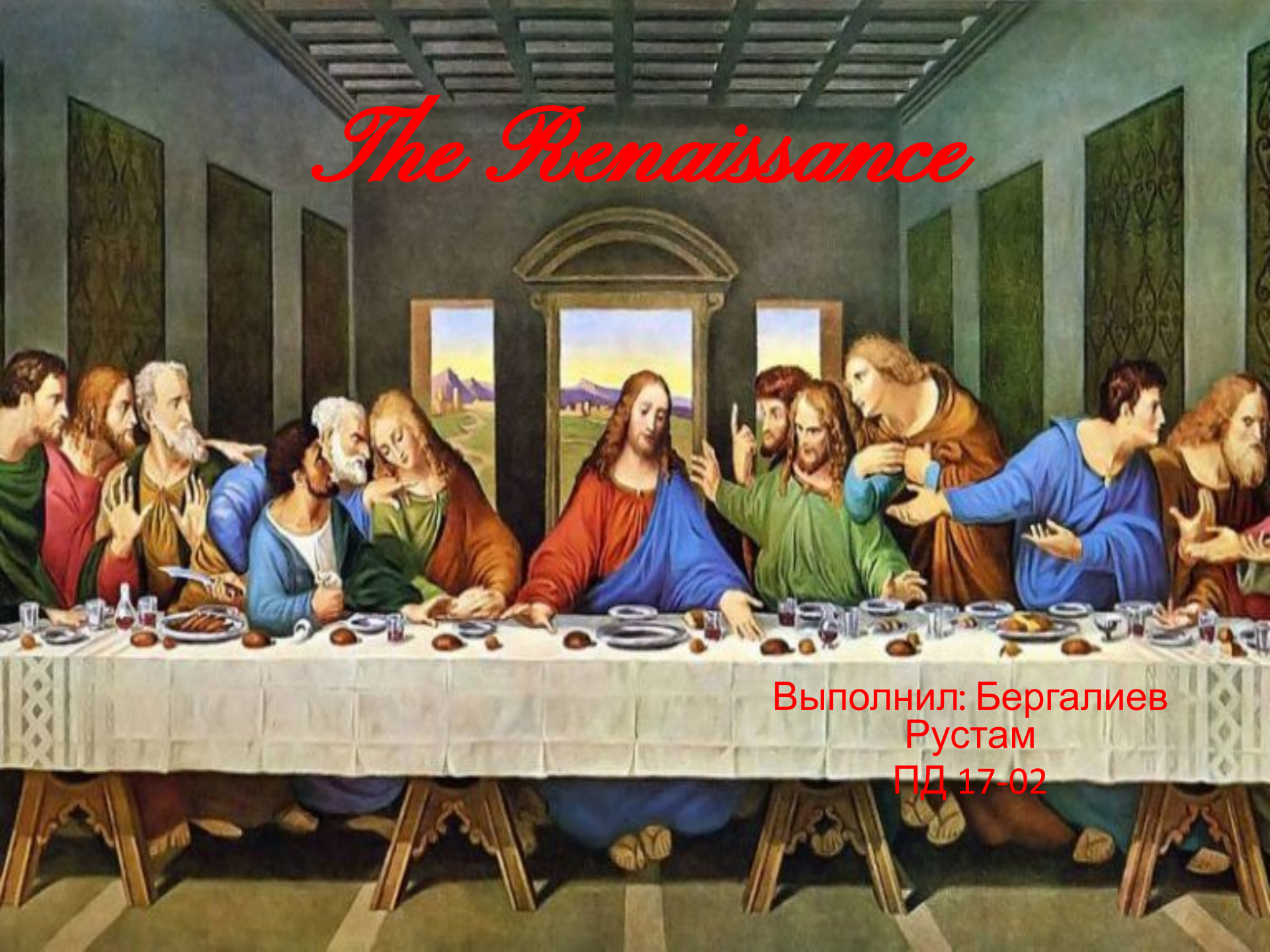
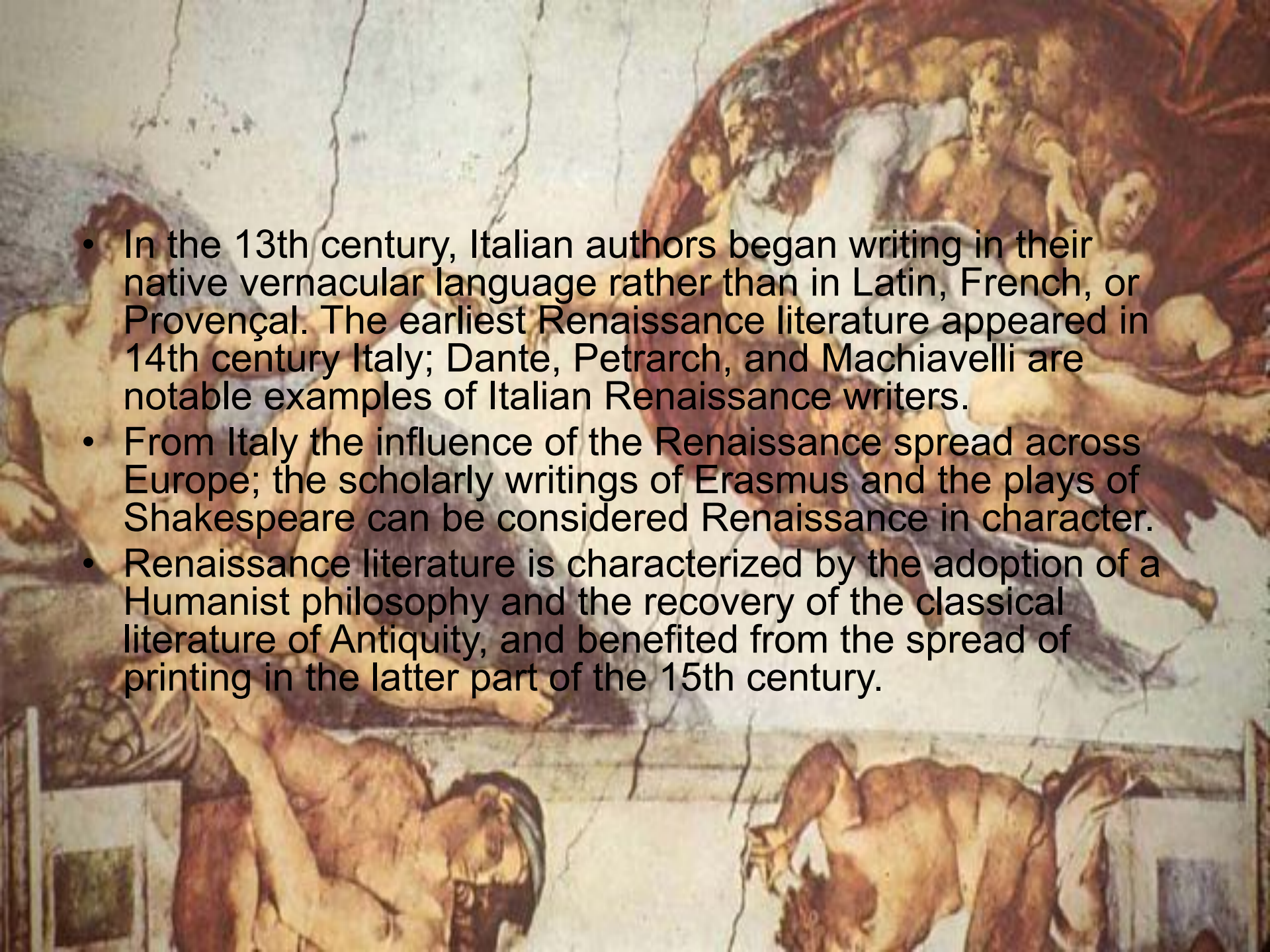


The Renaissance



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- In the 13th century, Italian authors began writing in their native vernacular language rather than in Latin, French, or Provençal. The earliest Renaissance literature appeared in 14th century Italy; Dante, Petrarch, and Machiavelli are notable examples of Italian Renaissance writers.
- From Italy the influence of the Renaissance spread across Europe; the scholarly writings of Erasmus and the plays of Shakespeare can be considered Renaissance in character.
- Renaissance literature is characterized by the adoption of a Humanist philosophy and the recovery of the classical literature of Antiquity, and benefited from the spread of printing in the latter part of the 15th century.

Renaissance Literature

- The earliest Renaissance literature appeared in 14th century Italy; Dante, Petrarch, and Machiavelli are notable examples of Italian Renaissance writers. From Italy the influence of the Renaissance spread at different rates to other countries, and continued to spread throughout Europe through the 17th century. The English Renaissance and the Renaissance in Scotland date from the late 15th century to the early 17th century. In northern Europe the scholarly writings of Erasmus, the plays of Shakespeare, the poems of Edmund Spenser, and the writings of Sir Philip Sidney may be considered Renaissance in character.
- The literature of the Renaissance was written within the general movement of the Renaissance that arose in 13th century Italy and continued until the 16th century while being diffused into the western world. It is characterized by the adoption of a Humanist philosophy and the recovery of the classical literature of Antiquity and benefited from the spread of printing in the latter part of the 15th century. For the writers of the Renaissance, Greco-Roman inspiration was shown both in the themes of their writing and in the literary forms they used. The world was considered from an anthropocentric perspective. Platonic ideas were revived and put to the service of Christianity. The search for pleasures of the senses and a critical and rational spirit completed the ideological panorama of the period. New literary genres such as the essay and new metrical forms such as the sonnet and Spenserian stanza made their appearance.
- The creation of the printing press (using movable type) by Johannes Gutenberg in the 1450s encouraged authors to write in their local vernacular rather than in Greek or Latin classical languages, widening the reading audience and

Dante Alighieri



- *A generation before Petrarch and Boccaccio, Dante Alighieri set the stage for Renaissance literature. His Divine Comedy, originally called Comedia and later christened Divina by Boccaccio, is widely considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language and a masterpiece of world literature.*
- *In the late Middle Ages, the overwhelming majority of poetry was written in Latin, and therefore was accessible only to affluent and educated audiences. In *De vulgari eloquentia* (On Eloquence in the Vernacular), however, Dante defended use of the vernacular in literature. He himself would even write in the Tuscan dialect for works such as *The New Life* (1295) and the aforementioned *Divine Comedy*; this choice, though highly unorthodox, set a hugely important precedent that later Italian writers such as Petrarch and Boccaccio would follow. As a result, Dante played an instrumental role in establishing the national language of Italy. Dante's significance also extends past his home country; his depictions of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven have provided inspiration for a large body of Western art, and are cited as an influence on the works of John Milton, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Lord Alfred Tennyson, among many others.*
- *Dante, like most Florentines of his day, was embroiled in the Guelph-Ghibelline conflict. He fought in the Battle of Campaldino (June 11, 1289) with the Florentine Guelphs against the Arezzo Ghibellines. After defeating the Ghibellines, the Guelphs divided into two factions: the White Guelphs—Dante's party, led by Vieri dei Cerchi—and the Black Guelphs, led by Corso Donati. Although the split was along family lines at first, ideological differences arose based on opposing views of the papal role in Florentine affairs, with the Blacks supporting the pope and the Whites wanting more freedom from Rome. Dante was accused of corruption and financial wrongdoing by the Black Guelphs for the time that he was serving as city prior (Florence's highest position) for two months in 1300. He was condemned to perpetual exile; if he returned to Florence without paying a fine, he could be burned at the stake.*
- *At some point during his exile he conceived of the *Divine Comedy*, but the date is uncertain. The work is much more assured and on a larger scale than anything he had produced in Florence; it is likely he would have undertaken such a work only after he realized his political ambitions, which had been central to him up to his banishment, had been halted for some time, possibly forever. Mixing religion and private concerns in his writings, he invoked the worst anger of God against his city and suggested several particular targets that were also his personal enemies.*



Leonardo Da Vinci

Leonardo was a polymath, someone whose level of genius encompassed many fields including invention, painting, sculpture, architecture, science, music, mathematics, engineering, literature, anatomy, geology, astronomy, botany, writing, history, and cartography. He is known to have said, "Learning never exhausts the mind."

Despite his exhaustive explorations into multiple areas of expertise, Leonardo is primarily celebrated as a painter. Some of his works have consistently been regarded with a timeless, universal fame such as his enigmatic portrait *The Mona Lisa*, his most reproduced religious work of all time, *The Last Supper*, and his *the Vitruvian Man*, an early instructive drawing of precise spatial and anatomical symmetry. Leonardo's contribution to the aesthetic and techniques of High Renaissance art evolved Early Renaissance forebears such as linear perspective, chiaroscuro, naturalism, and emotional expressionism. Yet he exceeded many prior artists through his particular meticulous precision and the introduction of new methods such as his *sfumato* technique, a new way to blend glazes that resulted in works that appeared so realistic, it was as if his subjects lived and breathed from within the pictorial plane. Working at full capacity with both left and right sides of his brain, Leonardo's unquenchable curiosity and inventive imagination produced many contributions to society that were ahead of his time. He is credited with making the first drawings that preordained the parachute, helicopter, and military tank. His notebooks are nearly as esteemed as his artworks. Within, they represent a culmination of his life's work and his genius mind, containing drawings, scientific diagrams, and his philosophies on painting. They continue to be studied today by artists, scholars, and scientists worldwide.

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

- *Niccolò Machiavelli was an Italian Renaissance historian, politician, diplomat, philosopher, Humanist, and writer, often called the founder of modern political science.*
- *His writings were innovative because of his emphasis on practical and pragmatic strategies over philosophical ideals, exemplified by such phrases as "He who neglects what is done for what ought to be done, sooner effects his ruin than his preservation."*
- *His most famous text, *The Prince*, has been profoundly influential, from the time of his life up to the present day, both on politicians and philosophers.*
- *The Prince describes strategies to be an effective statesman and infamously includes justifications for*



*Where the spirit does not work with the hand,
there is no art.*