Unit 5 – Modern Times.
Humanism and the Renaissance

INDEX

1. A Short Introduction

Modern Times correspond to the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Modern Times started with the **discovery of America in 1492**. This date marks the beginning of a new period characterised by the desire of knowledge, the importance of human being (Humanism), the appearance of a new artistic style, the Renaissance, the discovery of a new world, and the creation of modern states all over Europe. (Other important events that happened during this period and that will be decisive for history were the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation).

Modern Age can be divided in three phases:

- ⊙ 16th century that corresponds to Humanism and Renaissance,
- ⊙ 17th century that corresponds to the Baroque age and
- ⊙ 18th century that is the century of the Enlightenment.

Modern history finished with the French Revolution in 1789. This important event marks the beginning of Contemporary History.

2. Humanism

Humanism was a cultural and philosophical movement that began in Italy in the 15th century (1400-1499) and spread through Europe.

It's most important characteristics were:
- Importance of the Human Being that is considered superior to other species thanks to his intelligence and reason.
- Importance of science and technology as a product of human intelligence and as a help for progress.
- Importance of Greek and Latin cultures. In this period many Greek and Latin authors were translated and studied. (Here we need to have in mind that many classical texts arrived to Europe thanks to the Arab culture and to "La Escuela de Traductores de Toledo" that translated classical texts from Arab to Latin).
- The use of vernacular[1] (vernáculas) languages instead of Latin. The vernacular languages are going to be used in the Universities instead of Latin. Also the first grammars will appear in this period.

2.1. Humanist philosophers

Many humanist philosophers contributed to the spread of this cultural movement all over Europe. Here we will know more about some of them:

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[1] Vernacular language is the native language of a particular area. (Lengua vernácula)

➢ Antonio Nebrija (1441-1522): author of the first grammar of the Castilian language.

➢ Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) (The Netherlands): he was considered "the Prince of the Humanists". He translated the New Testament. He also criticised the abuses of the Catholic Church and asked for a reform, but he never denied the authority of the Pope and remained a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

➢ Beatriz Galindo (1464 – 1534): one of the first European women that studied in the university. She became the teacher of Queen Isabella and her children and she also was her personal counsellor and friend. She studied Latin, Theology and Medicine.

➢ Francisco de Vitoria (1483 – 1546): Jurist and theologist. He is considered the father of International Law. He was a defender of the rights of the Amerindians based upon the dignity of all human beings.

➢ Luis Vives (1492 – 1540): Valencian scholar and humanist. He lived most of his life in Southern Netherlands. He is considered the father of modern psychology.

➢ The School of Salamanca (Escuela de Salmanca): this school is very appreciated nowadays because of their humanist and modern ideas in concepts such as natural law, international law and economy.

I hope that with all this information you can realise the importance and dimension of this cultural movement. We have focused on Humanist from Castile and Aragon, but there were humanists in all the European countries such as Thomas More (England), Francesco Petrarca (Italy), Leon Battista Alberti (Italy), Robert Estienne (France), Guillaume Boudé (France), etc.

2.2. How was Humanism spread?

Humanism was spread thanks to the creation of **Universities**, to the prolific activity of **scholars** that translated Greek and Latin books and to an increasing **appreciation of culture** by the nobility and the bourgeoisie.

However the most important contribution for the expansion of Humanism comes from the **printing press**, invented by Gutenberg around 1440.

2.3. The Printing Press
Johannes Gutenberg is considered the inventor of the printing press. The great contribution of Gutenberg is the **movable types**.

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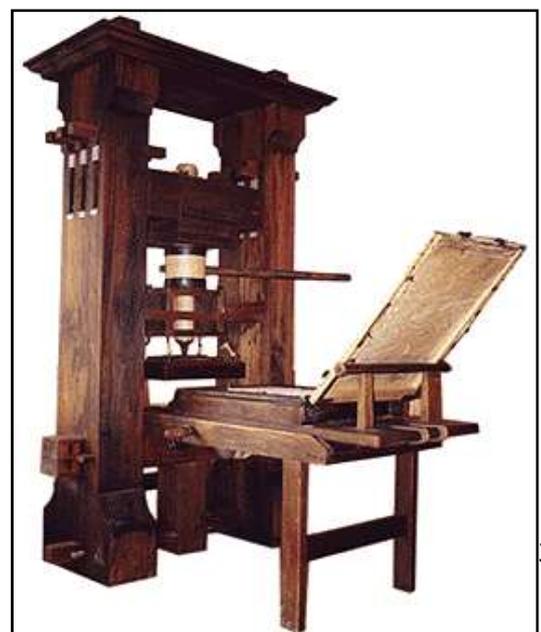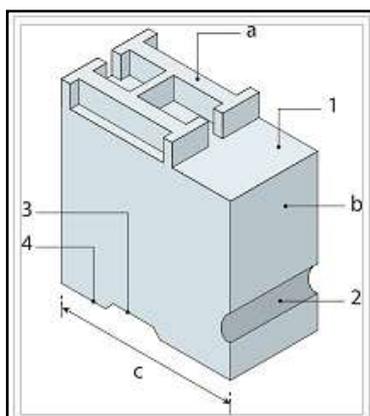
Thanks to the **movable types** different letters could be combined and a full page could be created more easily; finally you could print that page as many times as you wanted. The first book that Gutenberg printed was the Bible and it was printed in 1455.

Before Gutenberg's creation all the books were copied by hand. Because of this the books were very expensive and only very rich people could afford them.

The **consequences** are going to be decisive for history. Common people began to have access to information, the number of books increased drastically, more people became literate, and people began to question traditional powers (monarchy and church). This will lead to the Reformation when Luther (Lutero) criticised the abuses of the Church and a new religion started.

For more information you can see these videos. After seeing the videos do the activity that is in your dossier of activities.

- www.goo.gl/NycWf7 (Video, long version, 13'41'')
- www.goo.gl/fAe5vD (short version, 4'04'')
- https://goo.gl/VVJqEl (animation, 2'14'')
- www.goo.gl/ACSsuG (written texts about contribution of printing press, 4'21'')

3. The Reformation and the Counter-Reformation

The Reformation was a historical event that took place in the 16th century and transformed Europe in political, social and religious aspects. The consequences of this event can be observed even nowadays.

3.1. Origin, causes and consequences of the Reformation

Luther was not the first person that criticised the Church. Other personalities such as Jan Hus, Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, Erasmus of Rotterdam and Cardenal Cisneros (who reformed some bad uses of the Church in Toledo) observed many abuses and asked for a reformation.

However Luther succeeded and was able to put into practice a real reformation that will finally imply a division inside the Catholic Church.

The abuses of the Church

The abuses that Luther observed and criticised in his famous 95 theses were:

➢ The luxurious lifestyle of the high clergy.

➢ The buying and selling of ecclesiastical positions, as if they were a business and not a matter of faith.

➢ The indulgences; they were documents sold by the Church for pardoning sins.

➤ The lack of education of the low clergy. Many of them were illiterate and couldn't read the Bible.

Luther denounced all these abuses in his 95 theses in 1517; this date marks the beginning of the Reformation.

The Pope asked Luther to retract from his ideas and as he didn't the Pope finally excommunicated him. The ideas of Luther spread rapidly thanks to the use of the printing press and the support of some German princes.

Also a series of wars started; the Catholic Church supported by the emperor Charles V and the Protestants supported by some German princes will confront in a series of battles. Finally the Protestant German princes won their right to follow the Protestant religion.

Protestant religion

After many difficulties the new Protestant religion was finally established.

The principles and differences with the Catholic Church were mainly the following ones:

o Salvation through faith. (Thanks to this idea there was no necessity of indulgences and confession for pardoning sins).

o Any person could interpret the Bible.

o Only two sacraments were accepted: Baptism and Eucharist.

o They didn't accept the cult of the Virgin and the Saints.

o Priests could get married.

Spreading of Protestant religion

- **Lutheranism** spread to Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland (Scandinavia).

Also other Protestant religions appeared, such as Calvinism and Anglicanism.

- **Calvinism** appeared in **Switzerland** and spread to the **Low Countries** (The Netherlands), **Scotland** (here they were called puritans) and **France** (here they were called Huguenots).

- **Anglicanism** appeared in England. Henry VIII established Anglicanism so that he could divorce Catherine of Aragon, and also to be the chief of the Church instead of the Pope.

Some consequences of the Reformation

Some consequences of the Reformation were:

- The unity of the Catholic Church was broken.

- The authority of the Pope was questioned and weakened.

- A period of confrontation and war started. In these wars Charles V confronted the Protestant German princes.

- Reformation spread all over Europe and other protestant religions appeared.

- The Catholic Church will start his own process of reformation called "The Counter-Reformation" (Contrarreforma).

3.2.   The Catholic Counter-Reformation

The Catholic Counter-Reformation began in 1545 with the Council of Trent (1545-1563).
This council was celebrated in the city of Trent and many representatives of the high clergy, the Pope and the emperor Charles V attended.
After many meetings and discussions the Catholic Church decided to put into practice his own Catholic reform that consisted in:

- ❖ Affirming the validity of the Catholic religion as the true and only one.

- ❖ Defending the certainty of the Catholic dogmas[2] that are the seven Sacraments, the worshipping of the Virgin and the Saints, and the sanctity of Mass.

- ❖ The denial and persecution of Protestantism.

4. The Renaissance and Flemish painting

Renaissance is a type of artistic style practiced in Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries.
It started in Italy thanks to an economic prosperity and the existence of patrons (or commissioners) who promoted art as a tool for social prestige.

4.1. Characteristics
Some characteristics are:
- Inspiration on Greek and Roman Antiquity.
- Use of classical orders (Doric, Ionic and Corinthian).
- Use of linear perspective (with a vanishing point – punto de fuga).
- Importance of the human being and the human figure (studies of anatomy, proportion, portraits…)

The Renaissance is divided in two periods, the Quattrocento that corresponds to the 15th century (1400-1499) and the Cinquecento that corresponds to the 16th century (1500-1599).

4.2. Artists of the Quattrocento
Some of the artists of the Quattrocento were:

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[2] Dogma: principle or doctrine that cannot be questioned.

- **Donatello** who was an excellent sculptor. Some of his works are the statues of David, Saint George and the equestrian statue of Gattamelata.
- **Masaccio, Pierro della Francesca, Mantegna and Botticelli** that were accomplished painters.
- **Brunelleschi** that was the best architect of this period, he constructed the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore that is the Cathedral of Florence.

4.3. Artists of the Cinquecento

Some artists of the Cinquecento were:

- **Leonardo da Vinci**, (1452 – 1519) who is considered the best example of a "Renaissance Man" because he controlled many areas such as painting, architecture, sculpture, engineering, invention, botany, geology, history, literature… He painted the Mona Lisa among other famous paintings.

- **Bramante** (1444-1514), was a famous architect that worked in Rome. He constructed the Tempietto of San Pietro in Montorio and made a project for Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

- **Michelangelo**, (1475 – 1564) who was an accomplished sculptor, painter and architect. In all these areas he made incredible master pieces. Some examples are the statue of David, the Pietá, the Sistine Chapel or the dome of Saint Peter's Basilica.

- **Palladio** (1508 – 1580), architect who worked in Venice. Although he only worked in Venice he managed to influence all Europe even till nowadays thanks to the brilliance and perfection of his constructions.

- **Raphael Sanzio** (1483 – 1520), he is considered one of the best painters of all times. He worked for the Popes and decorated the rooms in the Vatican Palace now known as the Stanze di Rafaello. His works of art were appreciated because of their serenity and perfection. Raphael was also an architect although his constructions are not very well known.

- **Titian or Tiziano** (1488 – 1576), excellent painter who lived in Venice. A master in the use of colour, he will exercise a deep influence in painters of all times. He was the favourite painter of the emperor Charles V.

4.4. Flemish painting

At the same time in the region of Flanders another artistic experience is taking place. It is called Flemish painting. This style appeared in the 15th century and lasted till the 16th centuries.

It is different from the Renaissance because they were more influenced by Gothic than by Classical Antiquity.

Some of the most important **characteristics** were realism and very precise details, the use of oil painting[3] (that allowed more accuracy) and the incredible representation of the different surfaces and textures.

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[3] Oil painting in Spanish is called "pintura al óleo".

The usual topics were religious topics and portraits.

Some famous artists were **Rogier van der Weyden**, **Jan van Eyck**, **Hieronymus Bosch** (El Bosco) and **Pieter Bruegel the Elder**.

4.5. The spread of Renaissance

Renaissance spread all over Europe and reached countries such as Spain, France, and Germany.

In **France** the castles copied the elegant style of the Renaissance.

In **Germany** the artist Albert **Dürer** (Durero) introduced the Renaissance style. Other important painters were **Hans Holbein** and **Lucas Cranach.**

5. The Renaissance in Castile and Aragon

The Renaissance arrived to the Iberian Peninsula in the 16th century. At that time the most important artistic style was **Gothic** and they coexisted for a long time.

5.1. Architecture

The first examples of Renaissance consisted in just copying some **decorative elements** of the Italian **Renaissance**, like classical columns, classical capitals, grotesques[4], tondos (medallones), round arches, balustrades, bossage (almohadillado), coffers (casetones), coats of arms…

This architectural style will be called **Plateresque** (Plateresco) because it was similar to the work made by silversmiths (plateros). In this style we have a **blend** (mixture) of Mudéjar, Gothic and Renaissance decorative elements.

5.2. Sculpture

Spanish sculpture represented mainly religious topics. This happened because the main client was the Church, and they only ordered religious works of art.

The most important sculptors were **Alonso Berruguete** and **Juan de Juni**. Both studied in Italy and were influenced by Michelangelo.

5.3. Painting

In the Spanish painting religious topics were usually represented. Some important painters were **Pedro Berruguete** (father of Alonso Berruguete) that was one of the first painters that copied some characteristics of the Renaissance style, but without losing the essence of Gothic; **Juan de Juanes** and **Luis de Morales**.

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[4] The **grotesques** were decorative elements that were used in Roman Caves (grutas), that later were considered part of the Palace of the Roman emperor Nero also called "Domus Áurea". In Spanish they are called **grutescos**.