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Dear Future AP Modern European History Student,

As we prepare for another school year we are so excited to present you with a course that will be both fascinating and engaging. Advanced Placement Modern European History is a course that will provide you with a strong foundation of knowledge; not only in history, but in politics, religion, philosophy, art and economics. The AP MEH curriculum not only allows you the opportunity to earn college credit, but will prepare you for many of your future college courses. As the content covers the detailed history of an entire continent over the course of six centuries, it is essential that we begin our preparation of the material over the summer. Our first unit examines the Renaissance and the concept of "Rebirth." Because of the accelerated pace, you must come into class prepared with an understanding of both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The foundational ideas that will be studied and discussed in our Renaissance unit will provide context and focus for the rest of the course.

Task:

1. Read **Chapters 11, 12, and p. 432-438 (from Chapter 14) in your textbook: A History of Western Society**; McKay, Crowston, Wiesner-Hanks and Perry. The book may be picked up from the library before you leave for the summer. You will be assessed on both chapters through both a **multiple choice test and essay format** during the first session of the course. You will not be able to use notes on this test, but we suggest to you take notes on the reading to study from in preparation for the exam.
2. Read the **Primary Source Packet** on the Renaissance. For each of the sources you must complete the assigned questions, including the Comparative and Discussion Questions at the end of the Packet.
3. Use your assigned chapters and Primary Source Packet to compose an **Essay Outline** that responds to the following prompt:

To what extent and in what ways may the Italian and Northern Renaissance be regarded as a turning point in the Western intellectual and cultural tradition?

Be sure to include an introductory paragraph with a clear thesis statement, a *minimum* of three body paragraphs (with a main idea sentence and 15-20 bullets of specific and developed support EACH), and a brief synthesis conclusion paragraph. You must be sure to address both the Italian and Northern Renaissance specifically. You will be submitting your typed responses to turnitin.com, as well as handing it in on the first day of class. Your teacher will give you the turnitin.com login and password on the first day of school when class periods are determined. Please note that a well-developed and thorough outline is the best way to prepare for the test on the first day. You may **not exceed 2 pages single-spaced Times New Roman.**

**SUGGESTED OPTIONAL READING:** We encourage you to add the following books to your summer reading list in order to enhance your understanding of the content/add to future class discussions.

**FLHS:** *Inferno* by Dan Brown & *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr

We look forward to seeing you in class next year. Have a great summer!

*Sincerely,* Dr. C. Samuelson *FLHS AP Modern European History Teacher*

of young men capable of achievements unmatched in Europe for a thousand years. Petrarch and his followers came to be known as humanists, and their intellectual agenda had a profound influence on the art and ideas of their age. We get a sense of the intensity of Petrarch's regard for Classical culture in a letter addressed to the ancient Roman historian Livy. As you read it, think about what it tells you about the aspirations of Petrarch and his fellow humanists.

I should wish (if it were permitted from on high) either that I had been born in thine age or thou in ours; in the latter case our age itself, and in the former I personally should have been the better for it. I should surely have been one of those pilgrims who visited thee. For the sake of seeing thee I should have gone not merely to Rome, but indeed, from either Gaul or Spain I should have found my way to thee as far as India. . . . We know that thou didst write one hundred and forty-two books on Roman affairs. With what fervor, with what unflagging zeal must thou have labored; and of that entire number there are now extant scarcely thirty. . . . It is over these small remains that I toil whenever I wish to forget these regions, these times, and these customs. Often I am filled with bitter indignation against the morals of today, when men value nothing except gold and silver, and desire nothing except sensual, physical pleasures. If these are to be considered the goal of mankind, then not only the dumb beasts of the field, but even insensible and inert matter has a richer, a higher goal than that proposed to itself by a thinking man. But of this elsewhere.

It is now fitter that I should render thee thanks, for many reasons indeed, but for this in especial: that thou didst so frequently cause me to forget the present evils, and transfer me to happier times. . . .

Pray greet in my behalf thy predecessors Polybius and Quintus Claudius and Valerius Antias, and all those whose glory thine own greater light has dimmed; and of the later historians, give greeting to Pliny the Younger, of Verona, a neighbor of thine, and also to thy former rival Crispus Sallustius. . . . Farewell forever, thou matchless historian!

*Written in the land of the living, in that part of Italy and in that city in which I am now living and where thou were once born and buried. . . . and in view of thy very tombstone; on the twenty-second of February, in the thirteen hundred and fiftieth year from the birth of Him whom thou wouldst have seen, or of whose birth thou couldst have heard, hadst thou lived a little longer.*

### READING QUESTIONS

1. Why did Petrarch admire Livy?
2. What implicit contrast did Petrarch draw between Livy's time and his own?
3. In what ways does Petrarch's wish to bring Livy into his world encapsulate the humanist program?

# 12

## European Society in the Age of the Renaissance

1350–1550

The Renaissance began in the Italian city-states of the fourteenth century and spread throughout Europe. Renaissance scholars, artists, and philosophers articulated a new vision of human possibility inspired by the Classical past. Standing on the shoulders of the giants of Greco-Roman culture, they believed that their own society could match, or even exceed, the achievements of their ancestors. The commercial and political dynamism of the Italian city-states played a key role in fostering the Renaissance. Italian cities were primary beneficiaries of the commercial revival of the High Middle Ages, and competition, both within cities and between cities, spurred individuals and communities to pour their resources into cultural activity. Competition between city-states had a darker side, however, and often escalated into conflict; endemic warfare left Italy weak and divided. As you explore the sources, consider what the Renaissance meant to these authors and artists. How would they describe the movement in which they were participants? What hopes and fears did they have for their own society?

### 12-1 | An Italian Admirer of the Classical Past

PETRARCH, Letter to Livy (1350)

Around 1350, Italian scholar and poet Francesco Petrarca, or Petrarch (1304–1374), proposed a new kind of education that centered on the study and emulation of the works of ancient Roman authors. In his view, the implementation of this program would produce a generation

man ever had a more effective manner of asseverating, or made promises with more solemn protestations, or observed them less. And yet, because he understood this side of human nature, his frauds always succeeded. . . .

In his efforts to aggrandize his son the duke [Cesare Borgia], Alexander VI had to face many difficulties, both immediate and remote. In the first place, he saw no way to make him ruler of any state which did not belong to the Church. Yet, if he sought to take for him a state of the Church, he knew that the duke of Milan and the Venetians would withhold their consent, Faenza and Rimini [towns in the province of Romagna] being already under the protection of the latter. Further, he saw that the forces of Italy, and those more especially of which he might have availed himself, were in the hands of men who had reason to fear his aggrandizement,—that is, of the Orsini, the Colonna, the Colonnaesi [Roman noble families] and their followers. These, therefore, he could not trust. . . .

And since this part of his [Cesare Borgia's] conduct merits both attention and imitation, I shall not pass it over in silence. After the duke had taken Romagna, finding that it had been ruled by feeble lords, who thought more of plundering than of governing their subjects,—which gave them more cause for division than for union, so that the country was overrun with robbery, tumult, and every kind of outrage,—he judged it necessary, with a view to rendering it peaceful, and obedient to his authority, to provide it with a good government. Accordingly he set over it Messer Remiro d'Orco, a stern and prompt ruler, who, being entrusted with the fullest powers, in a very short time, and with much credit to himself, restored it to tranquility and order. But afterwards the duke, apprehending that such unlimited authority might become odious, decided that it was no longer needed, and established [at] the center of the province a civil tribunal, with an excellent president, in which every town was represented by its advocate. And knowing that past severities had generated ill feeling against himself, in order to purge the minds of the people and gain their good will, he sought to show them that any cruelty which had been done had not originated with him, but in the harsh disposition of this minister. Availing himself of the pretext which this afforded, he one morning caused Remiro to be beheaded, and exposed in the market place of Cesena with a block and bloody ax by his side. The barbarity of this spectacle at once astounded and satisfied the populace.

### READING QUESTIONS

1. Why must a prince be both a lion and a fox? What qualities do these animals represent?
2. What light does *The Prince* shed on the realities of Italian politics?
3. How might a Renaissance critic of Machiavelli have responded to his work? What objections might such a person have raised to *The Prince*? How might Machiavelli have countered his critics' arguments?

## 12-2 | Power Politics During the Italian Renaissance

### NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI, *The Prince* (1513)

Niccolò Machiavelli (Nee-koh-LOH mah-key-ah-VEL-ee) (1469–1527) was a political philosopher and diplomat who had represented the Italian republic of Florence on numerous diplomatic missions. In 1512, when the powerful Medici family regained control of Florence, the anti-Medici Machiavelli was arrested and tortured. In 1513, he wrote *The Prince*, a guide to gaining and consolidating political power, and dedicated it to Lorenzo de Medici, perhaps as a way to curry favor with the new rulers. The cynicism of *The Prince* stands in stark contrast to the idealism exhibited in the excerpt from Petrarch included in this chapter. Here, Machiavelli argued that a willingness to engage in deception and violence were critical to a ruler's success.

Every one understands how praiseworthy it is in a prince to keep faith, and to live uprightly and not craftily. Nevertheless we see, from what has taken place in our own days, that princes who have set little store by their word, but have known how to overreach men by their cunning, have accomplished great things, and in the end got the better of those who trusted to honest dealing.

Be it known, then, that there are two ways of contending,—one in accordance with the laws, the other by force; the first of which is proper to men, the second to beasts. But since the first method is often ineffectual, it becomes necessary to resort to the second. A prince should, therefore, understand how to use well both the man and the beast. . . . But inasmuch as a prince should know how to use the beast's nature wisely, he ought of beasts to choose both the lion and the fox: for the lion cannot guard himself from the toils, nor the fox from wolves. He must therefore be a fox to discern toils, and a lion to drive off wolves.

To rely wholly on the lion is unwise; and for this reason a prudent prince neither can nor ought to keep his word when to keep it is hurtful to him and the causes which led him to pledge it are removed. If all men were good, this would not be good advice, but since they are dishonest and do not keep faith with you, you in return need not keep faith with them; and no prince was ever at a loss for plausible reasons to cloak a breach of faith. Of this numberless recent instances could be given, and it might be shown how many solemn treaties and engagements have been rendered inoperative and idle through want of faith among princes, and that he who has best known how to play the fox has had the best success.

It is necessary, indeed, to put a good color on this nature, and to be skilled in simulating and dissembling. But men are so simple, and governed so absolutely by their present needs, that he who wishes to deceive will never fail in finding willing dupes. One recent example I will not omit. Pope Alexander VI had no care or thought but how to deceive, and always found material to work on. No

## 12-3 | A Description of the Ideal Courtier

### BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528)

Baldassare Castiglione (ball-duh-SAH-ray kahs-teel-YOH-nay) (1478–1529) was an Italian diplomat who spent many years traveling through the courts of Europe. Based on his experiences, he wrote *The Book of the Courtier* as a manual on the proper education, manners, dress, and skills of a companion to and defender of royalty. The book was written in the form of a conversation among some of the leading nobility in Italy and was a bestseller in its time. As you read this excerpt, think about the models upon which Castiglione might have drawn. To what extent does his courtier resemble the ideal medieval knight? To what extent does he seem to be a product of humanist education and training?

I wish then, that this Courtier of ours should be nobly born. I am of the opinion that the principal and true profession of the courtier ought to be that of arms;<sup>1</sup> which I would have him follow actively above all else, and be known among others as bold and strong, and loyal to whomsoever he serves. . . .

Therefore let the man we are seeking be very bold, stern, and always among the first, where the enemy are to be seen; and in every other place, gentle, modest, reserved, above all things avoiding ostentation and that impudent self-praise by which men ever excite hatred and disgust in all who hear him. . . .

And so I would have him well built and shapely of limb, and would have him show strength and lightness and suppleness, and know all bodily exercises that befit a man of war: whereof I think the first should be to handle every sort of weapon well on foot and on horse. . . .

There are also many other exercises, which although not immediately dependent upon arms, yet are closely connected therewith, and greatly foster manly sturdiness; and one of the chief among these seems to me to be the chase,<sup>2</sup> because it bears a certain likeness to war; and truly it is an amusement for great lords and befitting a man at court, and furthermore it is seen to have been much cultivated among the ancients. It is fitting also to know how to swim, to leap, to run, to throw stones, for besides the use that may be made of this in war, a man often has occasion to show what he can do in such matters; whence good esteem is to be won, especially with the multitude, who must be taken into account withal. Another admirable exercise, and one fitting a man at court, is the game of tennis, in which are well shown the disposition of the body. . . .

I think that the conversation, which the Courtier ought most to try in every way to make acceptable, is that which he holds with his prince; and although this word “conversation” implies a certain equality that seems impossible between a

From Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Leonard Opdycke (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906), pp. 22, 26, 29, 31, 93–94.

<sup>1</sup>arms: Weaponry.

<sup>2</sup>chase: Hunting.

lord and his inferior, yet we will call it so for the moment. Therefore, besides daily showing everyone that he possesses the worth we have already described, I would have the Courtier strive, with all the thoughts and forces of his mind, to love and almost adore the prince whom he serves, above every other thing, and mold his ways to his prince’s liking. . . .

Moreover it is possible without flattery to obey and further the wishes of him we serve, for I am speaking of those wishes that are reasonable and right, or of those that in themselves are neither good nor evil, such as would be a liking for a play or devotion to one kind of exercise above another. And I would have the Courtier bend himself to this even if he be by nature alien to it, so that on seeing him his lord shall always feel that he will have something agreeable to say. . . . He will not be an idle or untruthful tattler, nor a boaster nor pointless flatterer, but modest and reserved, always and especially in public showing the reverence and respect which befit the servant towards the master.

### READING QUESTIONS

1. What are the characteristics of a good courtier? How would you explain the stress Castiglione places on military aptitude and training?
2. What role does the courtier play in royal government? How does he facilitate his master’s success?
3. Would you describe Castiglione’s courtier as a medieval or a Renaissance figure? Why?

## 12-4 | A Humanist Prescription for the Education of Princes

### DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516)

Desiderius Erasmus (1462–1536) of Rotterdam was the foremost northern humanist. A priest, theologian, and teacher, Erasmus placed humanist scholarship in the service of religious reform. His work combines a humanist’s respect for reason and the value of the individual with an equally profound commitment to his faith. In this excerpt from *The Education of a Christian Prince*, Erasmus begins by discussing a classical metaphor for the relationship of a ruler to the state, and then uses this as a starting point for exploring the relationship between a Christian prince, his subjects, and God. As you read it, pay particular attention to the way in which he mixes classical and Christian concepts.

[R]emember this idea also, which was known and handed down by the pagan philosophers, that the rule of a prince over his people is no different from that of the mind over the body. The mind dominates the body because it knows more than

From Desiderius Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, trans. Lester K. Born (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), pp. 175–178.



the physical body, but it does so to the great advantage of the latter rather than to itself. The blessed fortune of the physical form is this rule of the mind. What the heart is in the body of a living creature, that the prince is in the state. If the heart is sound, it imparts life to the whole body, since it is the fountain of the blood and life spirit; but if it has been infected, it brings utter collapse to every part of the body. The heart is the last part of a living body to be broken down, and the very last traces of life are thought to survive in it. Consequently the prince should keep himself clean and undefiled from all corrupting folly whenever any such disease lays hold of the people. In a man it is the finely organized part (namely, the mind) that exercises the control. Likewise, in the mind it is its finest element, reason, that asserts itself. And God, who rules the universe, is the very essence of all things. Therefore, whosoever assumes the functions of rule in a state, as in a sort of great body, should excel all others in goodness, wisdom, and watchfulness. The prince should be superior to his officers in the same degree that they are to the common people. If there is any evil in the mind it springs from infection, and contact with the body, which is subject to the passions. Any good that the body possesses is drawn from the mind as from a fountain. How unbelievable it would be and how contrary to nature, if ills should spread from the mind down into the body, and the health of the body be corrupted by the vicious habits of the mind. It would be just as absurd for wars, seditious uprisings, profligate morals, debased laws, corrupt officials, and every similar curse to a state, to spring from the prince whose wisdom should lay the storms stirred up by the folly of the common folk. But we often see states (*civitates*), well established and flourishing under the diligent activity of the people, overthrown by mismanagement of the princes. How unlike a Christian it is to take pleasure in the title "Master," which many who were not in the fold of Christ have shunned; that which in their ambition they desire to be but do not want to be called because of the odium attached to the name. Yet will a Christian prince think it just in the eyes of God for him to be the same [sort of man] and be called "The Magnificent"? The emperor Augustus, even though he had gained the imperial throne through foul intrigue, considered it an insult to be called "Master;" and when this title was used by an actor before all the people, he showed his disapproval by his facial expression and his remarks, as if it were a term of reproach applied to tyrants. And shall the Christian prince not imitate this propriety of the pagan? If you are master of all your subjects, they must of necessity be your slaves. Then have a care that you do not fulfill the ancient proverb: "You have as many enemies as you have slaves."

Nature created all men equal, and slavery was superimposed on nature, which fact the laws of even the pagans recognized. Now stop and think how out of proportion it is for a Christian to usurp full power over other Christians, whom the laws did not design to be slaves, and whom Christ redeemed from all slavery. Recall the instance when Paul called Onesimus (who was born a slave) the brother of his former master Philemon, from the time of his baptism. How incongruous it is to consider them slaves whom Christ redeemed with the same blood [as He did you]; whom He declared free along with all others; whom He

fostered with the same sacraments as He did you; whom He calls to the same heritage of immortality! And over them, who have the same Master as you, the Prince, Jesus Christ, will you impose the yoke of slavery?

There is only one Master of Christian men. Why, then, do those who assume His functions, prefer to take their pattern of government from anyone except Him, who alone is in all ways to be imitated? It is proper enough to gather from others whatever virtues they have; but in Him is the perfect example of all virtue and wisdom. This seems the [essence of] foolishness to those outside the faith, but to us, if we are really faithful, He is the goodness of God and the wisdom of God. Now I do not want you to think that this means that you should be a slave, not a ruler. On the contrary, it illustrates the finest way to rule, unless, of course, you think God is only a bondsman because He governs the whole universe without recompense, because everyone and everything has felt His kindness, although they give Him nothing in return, and unless the mind seems a slave because it looks out so zealously for the welfare of the body, which it does not need, or unless you think the eye is a slave to all the other parts of the body because it sees for them all. You may well consider this: if someone should turn all these men whom you call your own into swine and asses by the art of Circe, would you not say your ruling power had been reduced to a lower level? I think you would. And yet you may exercise more authority over swine and asses than over men. You may treat them as you please, divide them off as you will, and even kill them. Surely he who has reduced his free subjects to slaves has put his power on a meaner level. The loftier the ideal to which you fashion your authority, the more magnificently and splendidly will you rule. Whoever protects the liberty and standing of your subjects is the one that helps your sovereign power. God gave the angels and men free will so that He would not be ruling over bondsmen, and so that He might glorify and add further grandeur to His kingdom. And who, now, would swell with pride because he rules over men cowed down by fear, like so many cattle?

### READING QUESTIONS

1. What metaphors did Erasmus use to describe the relationship of a prince to his people?
2. In Erasmus's view, what qualities should a Christian prince embody? Why?
3. Erasmus argued that the ideal Christian prince ruled over a "free" people. How might he have explained this apparent contradiction? What similarities and differences do you see between his understanding of the meaning of freedom and your own?

<sup>1</sup>Circe: An enchantress who turned the legendary Greek hero Odysseus and his men into pigs.

## 12-5 | A Female Author Argues for the Education of Women

### CHRISTINE DE PIZAN, *The Book of the City of Ladies: Against Those Men Who Claim It Is Not Good for Women to Be Educated* (1404)

Christine de Pizan (ca. 1363–1434) may have been the first European woman to earn her living as a writer. The daughter of a Venetian nobleman and scholar, de Pizan grew up in the court of Charles V of France, where her father had accepted a position as royal astrologer and physician. There, de Pizan was given the opportunity to develop her intellectual interests and abilities. In 1390, when her husband died in an epidemic and left her with three children, de Pizan began her literary career. Her works were popular among the French nobility, and she even enjoyed the financial support of the French queen. Humanists were divided in their opinions on the education of women. Some thought women were simply not capable of learning. Others thought a limited form of education in good morals was sufficient. De Pizan challenged both of these ideas, and some scholars now regard her as one of the first Western feminists.

I realize that women have accomplished many good things and that even if evil women have done evil, it seems to me, nevertheless, that the benefits accrued and still accruing because of good women—particularly the wise and literary ones and those educated in the natural sciences whom I mentioned above—outweigh the evil. Therefore, I am amazed by the opinion of some men who claim that they do not want their daughters, wives, or kinswomen to be educated because their mores would be ruined as a result.

Here you can clearly see that not all opinions of men are based on reason and that these men are wrong. For it must not be presumed that mores necessarily grow worse from knowing the moral sciences, which teach the virtues; indeed, there is not the slightest doubt that moral education amends and ennobles them. How could anyone think or believe that whoever follows good teaching or doctrine is the worse for it? Such an opinion cannot be expressed or maintained: I do not mean that it would be good for a man or a woman to study the art of divination or those fields of learning which are forbidden—for the holy Church did not remove them from common use without good reason—but it should not be believed that women are the worse for knowing what is good.

Quintus Hortensius, a great rhetorician and consummately skilled orator in Rome, did not share this opinion. He had a daughter, named Hortensia, whom he greatly loved for the subtlety of her wit. He had her learn letters and study the science of rhetoric, which she mastered so thoroughly that she resembled her father. Hortensius not only in wit and lively memory but also in her excellent delivery and order of speech—in fact, he surpassed her in nothing. . . . That is, during the time when Rome was governed by three men, this Hortensia began to support the cause of women and to undertake what no man dared to undertake. There was a question whether certain taxes should be levied on women and on their jewelry during a

needy period in Rome. This woman's eloquence was so compelling that she was listened to, no less readily than her father would have been, and she won her case.

Similarly, to speak of more recent times, without searching for examples in ancient history, Giovanni Andrea, a solemn law professor in Bologna not quite sixty years ago, was not of the opinion that it was bad for women to be educated. He had a fair and good daughter, named Novella, who was educated in the law to such an advanced degree that when he was occupied by some task and not at leisure to present his lectures to his students, he would send Novella, his daughter, in his place to lecture to the students from his chair. And to prevent her beauty from distracting the concentration of her audience, she had a little curtain drawn in front of her. In this manner she could on occasion supplement and lighten her father's occupation. . . .

Thus, not all men (and especially the wisest) share the opinion that it is bad for women to be educated. But it is very true that many foolish men have claimed this because it displeased them that women knew more than they did. [My] father, who was a great scientist and philosopher, did not believe that women were worth less by knowing science; rather, as you know, he took great pleasure from seeing your inclination to learning.

### READING QUESTIONS

1. How does de Pizan defend a woman's ability to learn?
2. What examples of learned women does she provide?
3. According to de Pizan, why do some men not want to see women educated?

### SOURCES IN CONVERSATION

## A Female Painter Tells Stories About Women

Renaissance and Early Modern artists drew heavily for their inspiration on Christianity and the Classical past, but this does not mean that they were uninterested in the present. In the hands of a skilled artist, the past became a vehicle for commenting on what was important to the artist, his or her patron, and the community to which they both belonged. The work of the Roman painter Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–ca. 1656) is a case in point. The daughter of painter Orazio Gentileschi, Artemisia was perhaps the most successful female artist of her day. Her paintings *Susannah and the Elders* and *Judith and Holofernes*, both depicting scenes from the Old Testament, demonstrate how deeply personal such works could be. *Susannah and the Elders*, Artemisia's first work, was completed in 1610 when she was seventeen. Between that time and the completion of *Judith and Holofernes* in 1612, Artemisia was raped

by one of her father's colleagues, Agostino Tassi. As you examine these two works, consider the connections between the content and themes of the paintings and Gentileschi's own experiences. How did she use these paintings to comment on the power dynamics that shaped women's lives?

### 12-6 | ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI, *Susannah and the Elders* (1610)

Taken from the Book of Daniel, the story of *Susannah and the Elders* centers on a false accusation of adultery. As Susannah, a young wife, bathes in her garden, two elders of her community watch secretly. Filled with lust, the two men threaten to denounce her as an adulteress if she refuses to have sex with them. When she resists their attempts at blackmail, they follow through on their threat. Only the intervention of Daniel, who exposes inconsistencies in their story, saves Susannah from execution. As you examine the painting, pay particular attention to the way Gentileschi composed it. How does the placement of the three figures help to amplify its message?



*Susannah and the Elders*, ca. 1610 (oil on canvas), Artemisia (1597–ca. 1651) / Private Collection. / The Bridgeman Art Library.

### READING QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe Gentileschi's *Susannah*? How does the position of her arms and head help to convey her reaction to the unwanted advances of the elders?
2. How would you characterize the two elders? How does their placement in the painting reflect their power? What might explain Gentileschi's decision to depict them whispering to one another at the very moment they accost Susannah?

### 12-7 | ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI, *Judith and Holofernes* (1610)

Like *Susannah and the Elders*, *Judith and Holofernes* depicts a scene from the Old Testament, this time from the Book of Judith. In order to save Israel from Assyrian domination, Judith seduces the Assyrian general Holofernes. After he falls asleep drunk, Judith and her maid servant cut off his head. The personal importance of the story to Gentileschi is underscored by the fact that she chose to depict herself as Judith and Agostino Tassi, her rapist, as Holofernes. As you examine the painting, compare its composition to that of *Susannah and the Elders*. In what ways does this painting invert the power relationships of the earlier work?



*Judith and Holofernes* (panel), Gentileschi, Artemisia (1597–ca. 1651) / Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy / The Bridgeman Art Library.

## READING QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe Gentileschi's Judith? How would you characterize her facial expression?
2. What might explain Gentileschi's decision to focus attention on Judith's arms and those of her maid?
3. Compare this work to *Susannah and the Elders*. Taken together, what do the two paintings tell us about the connections Gentileschi made between gender, power, and violence?



## ■ COMPARATIVE AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ■

1. Compare and contrast Petrarch and Machiavelli. Should they both be considered humanists? Why or why not?
2. Compare and contrast Erasmus's depiction of the successful prince with Machiavelli's. How does each one envision the Renaissance state? What does each think is necessary for a government to function well?
3. What light do the works of Christine de Pizan and Artemisia Gentileschi shed on the challenges faced by women of their day? How would you explain the success of each in male-dominated fields?
4. What marks Erasmus's *Education of a Christian Prince* as a work of the northern Renaissance? How does it differ from some of the other works included in this chapter?