**Medici Family History**

The Medici family ruled the city of Florence throughout the Renaissance. They had a major influence on the growth of the Italian Renaissance through their patronage of the arts and humanism.

 

 Cosimo de Medici

 **Rulers of Florence**

The Medici family were wool merchants and bankers. Both businesses were very profitable and the family became extremely wealthy. Giovanni de Medici first brought the family to prominence in Florence by starting the Medici bank. He also was the leader of the Florence merchants. His son, Cosimo de Medici became the Gran maestro (leader) of the Florence city-state in 1434. The Medici family ruled Florence for the next 200 years until 1737.

**Leaders of the Renaissance**

The Medici are most famous for their patronage of the arts. Patronage is where a wealthy person or family sponsors artists. They would pay artists commissions for major works of art. The Medici patronage had a huge impact on the Renaissance, allowing artists to focus on their work without having to worry about money.

A significant amount of the art and architecture that was produced in Florence at the beginning of the Renaissance was due to the Medici. Early on they supported the painter Masaccio and helped pay the architect Brunelleschi to rebuild the Basilica of San Lorenzo. Other famous artists that the Medici supported include Michelangelo, Raphael, Donatello, and Leonardo da Vinci.

The Medici didn't just support the arts and architecture. They also supported science. They supported the famous scientist Galileo Galilei in his scientific efforts. Galileo also worked as a tutor for the Medici children.

**Bankers**

The Medici owed much of their wealth and power to the Medici Bank. It made them one of the richest families in all of Europe. It was the largest bank in Europe at its peak and was very well respected. The bank made notable improvements in accounting procedures including the development of the double-entry bookkeeping system.

**Interesting Facts about the Medici Family**

* Although the names were later changed, Galileo initially named four of the moons of Jupiter he discovered after children of the Medici family.
* The Medici Family produced four popes in total including Pope Leo X, Pope Clement VII, Pope Pius IV, and Pope Leo XI.
* The Medici Family is sometimes called the Godfathers of the Renaissance. In 1478 Giuliano Medici was assassinated by the Pazzi family in front of 10,000 people at the Easter church service.
* Ferdinando de Medici was a patron of music. He helped to fund the invention of the piano.

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* **Questions, *answer each question in full sentences. (Site which section you found your answer in)***
1. Where did the Medici Family rule?
2. Why were they so wealthy?
3. The Medici Family is sometimes called the Godfathers of the Renaissance. Why do you think this is so?

**Renaissance**

The Renaissance was a period of time from the 14th to the 17th century in Europe. This era bridged the time between the Middle Ages and modern times. The word "Renaissance" means "rebirth".

**Coming out of the Dark**

The Middle Ages began with the fall of the Roman Empire. Much of the advances in science, art, and government that had been made by the Greeks and Romans were lost during this time. Part of the Middle Ages is actually called the Dark Ages because so much of what was learned earlier was lost.

The Renaissance was a time of "coming out of the dark". It was a rebirth of education, science, art, literature, music, and a better life for people in general.

**A Cultural Movement**

A big part of the Renaissance was a cultural movement called humanism. Humanism was a philosophy that all people should strive to be educated and learned in the classical arts, literature, and science. It looked for realism and human emotion in art. It also said that it was okay for people to pursue comfort, riches, and beauty.

 

*The Mona Lisa - perhaps the world's most famous painting - was painted during the Renaissance by Leonardo da Vinci*

**It began in Italy**

The Renaissance started in Florence, Italy and spread to other city-states in Italy. Part of the reason it began in Italy was because of the history of Rome and the Roman Empire. Another reason it began in Italy was because Italy had become very wealthy and the wealthy were willing to spend their money supporting artists and geniuses.

City-states played a big role in the rule of Italy at the time. They were often ruled by a powerful family. Some important city-states included Florence, Milan, Venice, and Ferrara.

**The Renaissance Man**

The term Renaissance Man refers to a person that is an expert and talented in many areas. The true geniuses of the Renaissance were great examples of this. Leonardo da Vinci was a master painter, sculptor, scientist, inventor, architect, engineer, and writer. Michelangelo was also a superb painter, sculptor, and architect.

**Fun Facts about the Renaissance**

* One of the most popular Greek philosophers was Plato. Many men studied Plato's writings at the Academy in Florence.
* Venice was famous for its glass work, while Milan was famous for its iron smiths.
* Francis I, King of France, was patron of the arts and helped Renaissance art spread from Italy to France.
* Artists were initially thought of as craftsmen. They worked in workshops and belonged to a guild.
* Two of the biggest changes to art from the Middle Ages were the concepts of proportion and perspective.
* Michelangelo and Leonardo became rivals when Michelangelo mocked da Vinci for not finishing a statue of a horse.
* Hunting was a popular form of entertainment for the wealthy.
* Artists and architects would often compete for a job, or commission, to create a piece of art.

**Questions, *answer each question in full sentences. (Cite which section you found your answer in)***

1. What is the Renaissance?
2. What is Humanism?
3. What is a Renaissance man?
4. Why did the Renaissance start in Italy?