Secular Humanism

Learning Target: Students will be able define and explain humanism by reading background information and documents and using both to create a relevant TIED paragraph.

Task: Read the passage below and answer the questions. Then read the two documents and answer the question below each. When all of this is done, write a TIED paragraph about the topic of Secular Humanism in the Renaissance. This is NOT group or pair work.

Part 1 – Background
During the Middle Ages, art and learning were centered on the church and religion. But at the start of the Renaissance, people became less interested in thinking about God, heaven and the saints, and more interested in thinking about themselves, their surroundings and their everyday lives.

1. How did people's thinking change from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance?

Part of this change was influenced by the study of ancient Greek and Roman writings on scientific matters, government, philosophy, and art. When scholars during the Renaissance began to study these writings, their interests turned away from traditional areas of study such as religion, medicine and the law. The people of the Renaissance became interested in other areas of science, the natural world, biology and astronomy. People now studied mathematics, engineering, and architecture. Artists, writers, musicians and composers began creating works unrelated to the Church. Artists signed their work—something they had never done (because it made their work about the *artist* and not about *the church*—and authors wrote autobiographies and memoirs —stories about *themselves*.

2. What new fields did people begin to study during the Renaissance?

3. Who did artists and thinkers begin to concentrate on more instead of God during the Renaissance? Why?

The values and ideals popular during the European Renaissance can be described by the term **secular humanism**. Secular means not religious and humanism means placing the study and progress of *human* nature, and not the Church, as peoples' main concern.

4. Explain the idea of secular humanism in your own words (What is secular humanism? What does that term mean?):

Part 2 – Document 1

> Of all the practices of Renaissance Europe, nothing is used to distinguish the Renaissance from the Middle Ages more than humanism as both a way of doing things and a philosophy…the humanists of the Renaissance rediscovered the Latin and Greek classics (think: the "rebirth" or "renaissance" of the classical world). The humanist philosophy stressed the dignity [respect] of humanity, and humanists shifted their studies from purely religion and logic to studying human beings. In working toward this goal, the argument goes, the humanists literally created the European Renaissance and paved the way for the modern, secular world.
>
> -http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/REN/HUMANISM.HTM

According to the document, what was a major effect of humanism on history?

Part 3 - Multiple Choice

1. In the Renaissance period, which factor was emphasized by the philosophy of humanism?
    1. superiority of medieval thought
    2. devotion to religion
    3. value of the individual
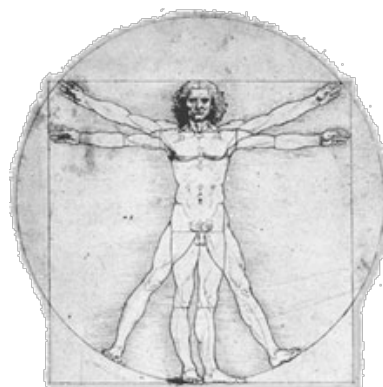   4. obedience to government officials

2. In Europe, a major characteristic of humanism was
    1. a belief in the supremacy of the state in relation to individual rights
    2. a rejection of ancient civilizations and their cultures
    3. an emphasis on social control and obedience to national rulers
    4. an appreciation for the basic worth of individual achievement

Part 4 – TIED Paragraph

On your own paper, write a TIED paragraph about the role that humanism played during the Renaissance.
- Be sure to use evidence from the documents in your paragraph.
- You *may* write an outline on the same paper before you write your complete paragraph. This is up to you.

TIED – Quick Review:
T – Topic Sentence (What is this paragraph about?)
I – Introduce Evidence (Where did your proof come from?)
E – Evidence (Quote or paraphrase your proof of the topic sentence)
D – Discuss Evidence (What does the evidence mean? Why is it important?)