

How the Medici Shaped the Renaissance

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Synopsis

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The extraordinary Medici family, through a singular exercise of wealth, political ingenuity, and dynastic power, ruled the city-state of Florence for three centuries. Hugely controversial, both in their own time and among later historians and commentators, the list of what they accomplished is nothing short of astonishing.

- The Medici were entrepreneurs who achieved extravagant success in commerce, and essentially invented the modern banking system, founding an immensely powerful family bank with branches across the Italian peninsula.
- Over the centuries, they amassed a staggering treasure trove of paintings, Egyptian and Etruscan statuary, Renaissance sculptures, furniture, tapestries, books and manuscripts, jewels, and luxury objects of every kind, housed within imposing palaces, villas, country estates, and libraries.
- They built political alliances, patronage networks, and structures of family power that allowed them to dominate Florentine politics, civics, and cultural life, earning Florence international influence and a status as the cultural capital of Europe.
- They occupied and dominated offices of power, both political and religious, including producing a succession of grand dukes of Tuscany, two queens of France, and the elevation of four members of the Medici family to the papacy.

But even beyond their familial prowess and power, their positioning within Florentine society and politics led them to play a key role in the world-changing phenomenon of the Renaissance - the cultural movement following the Middle Ages that saw a "rebirth" in scholarship, art, architecture, politics and philosophy rooted in the rediscovery of classical texts and culture, which famously began in Florence. Through their wealth, influence, and patronage, the Medici were instrumental in encouraging humanistic scholarship, and commissioning iconic works of architecture and countless artistic masterpieces that emblemize the Italian Renaissance.

Encounter a Dazzling Story of Dynastic Influence

In *How the Medici*

Shaped the Renaissance

, you'll study the remarkable trajectory of the Medici from the late 14th century to 1737, when the Medici dynasty ended. Across that span of time, you'll witness the birth of the Italian Renaissance, and the rise of the Medici as an economic powerhouse under founder Giovanni de' Medici. You'll learn how the Medici came to dominate Florence and how they played diverse roles in politics, religion, and culture. See how they remained in power, and you'll study the political upheavals, treachery, assassinations, intrigue, and military actions that characterized the Medici's dramatic history.

Grasp the Rich Contours of a World-Changing Era

In charting the arc of the Medici dynasty and its far-reaching impact, you'll investigate core subject matter such as:

- The Rise of the Medici: Trace the founding of the Medici family bank by Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici; observe how Cosimo de' Medici built on Giovanni's foundations to amass vast wealth and power, ultimately bringing the nascent Florentine Republic under Medici domination.
- The Medici, the Humanities, and Art: Learn how the Medici played key roles in the preserving of classical texts and the creation of iconic works of art and architecture, such as Florence's fabulous Duomo Cathedral and masterworks by artists such as Botticelli, Donatello, and Michelangelo.
- A Family of Towering Personalities: Take the measure of many of the Medici family's outstanding members, from Lorenzo the Magnificent, a political genius of the highest order, to the reviled Alessandro de' Medici, the "Black Prince", and Catherine de' Medici, cultural influencer and queen of France.
- The Trials and Triumphs of Medici Rule: Witness how the Medici built and rebuilt factions of citizens that supported their rule and follow the reversals through which the Medici were exiled from Florence and returned to power numerous times, ultimately becoming hereditary rulers.

William's multifaceted knowledge of the era and nuanced insights into the Medici bring the story alive in compelling detail, enhanced by vivid photos, artworks, drawings, and maps that evoke an extraordinary era. In *How the Medici Shaped the Renaissance*, you'll explore a richly intriguing historical saga that reveals a pivotal moment in Western civilization.

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