

Renaissance

The Renaissance is a European movement of thought, art and literature. The ‘Renaissance’ is a French word that means rebirth or revival. In literature it means the revival of classical learning and the emergence of the human mind from superstitious Middle Ages. It began in Italy with the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Its influence was felt in England towards the end of fifteenth century and towards the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Due to the translation of Greek and Latin literature into the Italian literature and the development of the printing press in 1440, the ancient culture, thought and philosophy was reveal to the people. The Renaissance challenged the power of religion and the church. The focus shifted from the God to the image of man.

Many historical and social happenings inspired the optimistic approach to life. The discoveries in the natural sciences, astronomy and geography changed the traditional picture of the world. The exploration of Christopher Columbus revealed new terrestrial world. The Reformation of the church by Martin Luther King challenged the authority of the Pope. All these events had their impact on human civilization, art and thought.

The renaissance thinkers were inspired by the broad humanistic ideal and human action and inspired art and

writing in England. Thomas More in his Utopia attacks the major institutions and depicts an ideal society. Francis Bacon cultivated critical method of thinking. The close study of the classics discovered the ancient wisdom. The Bible was translated into English from Hebrew and Greek. It became a rich source of inspiration in form, symbol and subject matter.

English poetry was in a transition period in the early years of sixteenth century. New poetic resources from the Continent introduced new genre, themes and conventions. The English poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey was of high quality.

- 1) What does the term ‘Renaissance’ literally mean?