Learning to Write LEQ

**Thesis**

* Presents a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question. IN OTHER WORDS – ANSWER THE QUESTION.
  + **Sample prompt: Analyze ways in which the Renaissance idea of Humanism impacted changes in European religion**
    - Step 1: what type of question is this? CAUSATION   
      (how do you know? Re-write the prompt: How did Renaissance Humanism cause changes in European Religion?)
    - Step 2: brainstorm  
      humanism – what is it? Focus on individualism, achievements of humanity, led to new scholarship, new artwork…  
      changes in European religion? Oh yea, the Reformation…  
      So… how are these two connected? That’s your thesis!
  + **Humanism encouraged greater literacy and individual thought, which brought people away from a reliance on the clergy common to earlier times. This led people to question the authority of the clergy, and to be more critical of abuses of power. In the 16th century, Europeans formed new versions of Christianity that neither fell under the jurisdiction of the Pope or had a strong priesthood.**

**Argument**

* Describe your main points and provide reasons why they happened
  + **Sample prompt: Analyze ways in which the Renaissance idea of Humanism impacted changes in European religion**
    - Step 1: type of question – Causation
      * Does the prompt ask for cause AND effect? Or just one? (just cause)
    - Step 2: brainstorm  
      Main cause 1: humanism led to literacy, which led to people reading the bible for themselves and reading other reformers thoughts.  
      Main cause 2: humanism led to individualism, which led people to question authority and design a new version of Christianity without the central authority figure of the Pope.
    - Step 3: write  
      **Main cause** 1: Humanism led to literacy. This changed European religion because people start reading the bible for themselves. They lessen their reliance on priests and interpreters. As more commentaries and versions of the Bible come out, they can read these and choose between options. Other versions of Christianity develop followers, too many for the Church to ignore. Many of these followers are rich and powerful (who else could get that many books, and that much knowledge to comprehend them?), strong enough to lead rebellions. The Church is slow to respond, and Protestantism forever takes hold in Europe.  
      **Analysis 1**: Humanism focused on rediscovering antiquity, on education. Therefore it heavily emphasized the ability to read and to think logically. Without literacy, how could you further your education? The most common book at the start of the Renaissance was the Bible, so that is generally where humanists began.

**Main cause 2**: Renaissance humanism also encouraged individualism. It asked people to think for themselves. To participate in government. To question authority. To change the world. And so Renaissance humanists did – in the form of a new version of Christianity. Humanists moved away from earlier forms of learning by accepting the knowledge of previous generations. They used logic. They did experiments. They read historical examples for themselves, to form their own conclusions. They began to question to truthfulness of widely accepted beliefs and the authorities who supported them – specifically the Roman Catholic Church. These individuals then popularized their critiques, and gained support. Because the Church didn’t immediately respond with reform but instead with persecution, supporters of the new ideas rallied and formed the Protestant faiths. Europe was never again unified in a singular accepted form of Christianity, and the Pope never again held the combined spiritual and temporal power he had possessed pre-Reformation.  
**Analysis 2**: Renaissance humanists didn’t bow down to the human insignificance brought on by the Original Sin that plagued many medieval thinkers. They believed they were capable of great things, including pointing out hypocrisies committed by great powers. Their reimagined world view said that because God created them, they must be amazing creatures, each capable of rational thought.

**Evidence**

* Addresses the topic of the question with specific examples of relevant evidence AND utilizes specific examples of evidence to fully and effectively substantiate the stated thesis or relevant argument. In other words, PROVIDE EXAMPLES.
  + **Sample prompt: Analyze ways in which the Renaissance idea of Humanism impacted changes in European religion**
    - Brainstorm…  
      **Argument 1:** literacy: Gutenberg’s printing press, Humanist writers like Petrarch and his Letters to Posterity and writing to Cicero. Growing middle class of bankers, growing universities led to educated populations. Christian humanists like Erasmus. Rich and powerful supporters of new religions like the German Princes who support Martin Luther. Rediscovering antiquity – art like Michelangelo’s Sistine Ceiling, showing Greek Sibyls, works brought over by conquered Byzantine Empire.  
      **Argument 2**: individualism: Pico’s essay that talks about how great man is, even above Angels. Castiglione, Petrarch and Bruni asking people to contribute to their government. Lorenzo Valla questioning the Church by proving anachronisms in Donation of Constantine. A gradual change in education suggested by humanists like Petrarch to move away from scholasticism. Comparing St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas. Petrarch questioning Cicero, his hero and an ancient authority. Criticizing hypocrisy in the Church like indulgences, clergy having sex. Thomas More’s Utopia, imagining a world without religious strife. Church’s slow response – called Luther to defend beliefs at Diet of Worms, then tried to arrest him. Didn’t begin process of reform until 1545, almost 30 years after Luther’s 95 theses. Europe not unified – Peace of Augsburg allows rulers in HRE to pick their religion, later Thirty Years War opens that choice up to the rest of Europe.

**Synthesis**

* Extends the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and ONE of the following:  
  A development in a different historical period, situation, era or geographic area (global context)  
  A course theme and or approach to history that is not the focus of the essay (such as political, economic, social, cultural or intellectual history)  
  A different discipline or field of inquiry (such as economics, government and politics, art history or anthropology)
  + **Sample prompt: Analyze ways in which the Renaissance idea of Humanism impacted changes in European religion**
    - **Global context example** – While the Catholic Church was being challenged in Europe, the Catholic Church was also expanding all over the world during the coinciding period of exploration and colonization. The Church sent out missionaries to spread their version of Christianity to Japan, China and the Americas. The new Protestant religions were much less focused on proselytizing, so the Catholics made great gains in these territories. It was in a large part because of humanism and the subsequent Reformation that the Catholic Church spread all around the globe – a new clerical order called the Jesuits started to combat the Reformation. They were one of the most significant groups involved as missionaries around the world.
    - **Theme/Discipline example** – Although this essay focuses on intellectual causes of the Reformation, specifically Renaissance humanism, there were economic causes as well. Belonging to the Roman Catholic Church was very expensive. Princes had to pay tribute to the Church. They couldn’t collect taxes from church lands in their realm. The people gave money to the church, limiting the amount they had left to pay taxes, consume products or grow their business. So while some Europeans did follow humanist intellectuals into the new religion because of beliefs in individualism or new interpretations of the Bible, many also became Protestants for less idealistic reasons – they wanted to save money.

Put it all together…

Humanism encouraged greater literacy and individual thought, which brought people away from a reliance on the clergy common to earlier times. This led people to question the authority of the clergy, and to be more critical of abuses of power. In the 16th century, Europeans formed new versions of Christianity that neither fell under the jurisdiction of the Pope nor had a strong priesthood.

Humanism led to literacy. Humanist writers like Petrarch focused on words and rhetoric in his Letters to Posterity and his writing to the Shade of Cicero. This changed European religion because people start reading the bible for themselves. More bibles were available because of Gutenberg’s recent invention of the printing press. More people learned to read at universities and for the new middle class jobs available like banking and trade. People lessened their reliance on priests and interpreters. As more commentaries and versions of the Bible come out, they can read these and choose between options. These commentaries include the work of Christian Humanist, Erasmus, who criticized abuses of the Church. Other versions of Christianity develop followers, too many for the Church to ignore. Many of these followers are rich and powerful (who else could get that many books, and that much knowledge to comprehend them?), strong enough to lead rebellions. These include the German princes who hid and supported Martin Luther after he wrote his 95 Theses. The Church was slow to respond, and Protestantism forever took hold in Europe. Humanism focused on rediscovering antiquity (shown for example in art through Michelangelo’s inclusion of the Greek Sibyls on the Sistine Ceiling) and on education. Therefore it heavily emphasized the ability to read and to think logically. Without literacy, how could you further your education? The most common book at the start of the Renaissance was the Bible, so that is generally where humanists began.

Renaissance humanism also encouraged individualism. It asked people to think for themselves. To participate in government (evident in the works of Castiglione, Petrarch and Bruni). To question authority. To change the world. And so Renaissance humanists did – in the form of a new version of Christianity. Humanists moved away from earlier forms of learning by accepting the knowledge of previous generations, as they stopped using scholasticism. Humanists like Petrarch even questioned their own greatest heroes, as evidenced in his writings to Cicero. They used logic. They did experiments. They read historical examples for themselves, to form their own conclusions. They began to question to truthfulness of widely accepted beliefs and the authorities who supported them – specifically the Roman Catholic Church. Lorenzo Valla did this when he analyzed the Donation of Constantine, the entire basis for Papal control of Rome, and proved it false through anachronisms. These individuals then popularized their critiques, and gained support. Because the Church didn’t immediately respond with reform but instead with persecution (like the attempted arrest of Martin Luther after the Diet of Worms), supporters of the new ideas rallied and formed the Protestant faiths. Europe was never again unified in a singular accepted form of Christianity, and the Pope never again held the combined spiritual and temporal power he had possessed pre-Reformation. The Peace of Augsburg assured the continued existence of Protestantism after 1555, and the Thirty Years War solidified religions divisions in the seventeenth century. Renaissance humanists didn’t bow down to the human insignificance brought on by the Original Sin that plagued many medieval thinkers. They believed they were capable of great things, including pointing out hypocrisies committed by great powers. Their reimagined world view said that because God created them, they must be amazing creatures, each capable of rational thought. This is evident in Pico della Mirandola’s essay, On the Dignity of Man, where he states that man are above even angels because God designed them with free will.

Although this essay focuses on intellectual causes of the Reformation, specifically Renaissance humanism, there were economic causes as well. Belonging to the Roman Catholic Church was very expensive. Princes had to pay tribute to the Church. They couldn’t collect taxes from church lands in their realm. The people gave money to the church, limiting the amount they had left to pay taxes, consume products or grow their business. So while some Europeans did follow humanist intellectuals into the new religion because of beliefs in individualism or new interpretations of the Bible, many also became Protestants for less idealistic reasons – they wanted to save money.

It’s your turn to write

Analyze the ways in which the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reformation affected the culture of Europe in the period 1500-1700.  (Skill: causation)

Rubric

