Renaissance Secularism, Humanism and Individualism in Literature & Art

Take notes in chart for Notebook Packet
New Patterns of Renaissance Thought

**Secularism** comes from the word secular, meaning “of this world”. Before the Renaissance, medieval Christian civilization had been largely concerned with faith and salvation in the afterlife. The new economic and political opportunities opening up for Western Europe in the Late Middle Ages encouraged more people to take an interest in this world. During the Renaissance people started to see life on Earth as worth living for its own sake, not just as an ordeal to endure before going to heaven. The art of the period in particular exhibited this secular spirit, showing detailed and accurate scenery, anatomy, and nature. Medieval artists generally ignored such realistic aspects in their paintings which focused only on the glory of God. This is not to say that Renaissance people had lost faith in God. Religion was still the most popular theme for paintings during the Renaissance, but people were finding other things worth living for.

**Humanism** relates to secularism in that it is the concept that places human beings, not God or faith, as the center of attention in life. Renaissance art, which portrayed the human body as a thing of beauty in its own right, not like some medieval "comic strip" character whose only reason to exist was for the glory of God. Along those lines, Renaissance philosophers and writers saw humans as intelligent creatures capable of reason (and questioning authority) rather than mindless pawns helplessly manipulated by God. Even the term for Renaissance philosophers, "humanists" shows how the focus of peoples' attention had shifted from Heaven and God to this world and human beings. It also described the group of scholars who drew upon the more secular Greek and Roman civilizations for inspiration.
Renaissance Literature Illustrates New Patterns of Thought

Machiavelli & Castiglione
Examples of Medieval Art

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0GSxSansbl
Italian Renaissance Art

Rafael
Botticelli
Michelangelo
Northern Renaissance Art

Van Eyck
Dürer
Holbein