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Petrarch Teacher Page

Overview:

Francesco Petrarch was one of the leaders of what was known as the “humanist” movement, considered by many to be a forerunner of the Renaissance. Typical of the humanist movement, Petrarch wrote frequently of classical figures in Greek and Roman history, literature, and philosophy.

Objectives:

Students will:

- investigate an autobiographical statement written by a leading humanist
- make conclusions about the statement
- critically analyze the statement

Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

Petrarch’s *To Posterity*

<http://history.hanover.edu/early/petrarch/pet01.htm> contains the selected reading for this lesson.

More of Petrarch’s letters and writings can be found at <http://history.hanover.edu/early/petrarch.htm>. These selections are part of the Hanover (Indiana) College Historical Texts Project (<http://history.hanover.edu/project.html>).

Strategies:

Open the lesson with a short overview of the humanist movement, especially its reliance on works and authors from the Greek and Roman eras.

Next, send students to <http://history.hanover.edu/early/petrarch/pet01.htm>, or hand out photocopies of the *To Posterity* essay and the question sheet. Allow sufficient time to complete the activity.

Answers to questions one through six will take a few sentences to a paragraph. Answers to question seven may take a few paragraphs to an entire page, depending on time allotted for the activity.

Wrap-Up:

After students have answered the questions, have a discussion regarding the impact of the humanist movement on Renaissance-era society. Have the class discuss how Greek and Roman culture influenced the start of the Renaissance movement.

Extension Activity:

Have students review other writings of Petrarch (such as his two letters to Cicero, which can be found at <http://history.hanover.edu/early/petrarch/pet09.htm> and <http://history.hanover.edu/early/petrarch/pet11.htm> respectively). In the students' review, have them discuss how Petrarch critically views the writings and philosophy of classical philosophers and writers.

Petrarch Student Worksheet

Introduction:

One of the most well-known authors of the Humanist period was Petrarch, whose writings earned him the title of *Poet Laureate* of Rome. He is best known for a series of poems addressed to “Laura,” as well as many letters, including an autobiography entitled *To Posterity*.

Directions:

Francis Petrarch: Letters “To Posterity”

Go to <http://history.hanover.edu/early/petrarch/pet01.htm>. Read the selection, then answer the following questions.

1. Petrarch claims that he is “in truth, a poor mortal like yourself” then, quoting Augustus Caesar, mentions that he belongs “to an ancient family.” Based on this information, how does Petrarch demonstrate his admiration for ancient Roman culture?
2. How does Petrarch describe his parents and their situation? How does Petrarch describe his views on wealth?
3. What terms does Petrarch use to describe himself physically?
4. Petrarch became a celebrity in his later years. How does he describe his own importance and influence in this reading?
5. Describe how Petrarch views himself intellectually.

