

THE WESTERN HUMANITIES

THIRD EDITION

ings through the Renaissance

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 ROY T. MATTHEWS F. DEWITT PLATT

THIRD EDITION
Volume I: Beginnings
through the Renaissance

THE
WESTERN
HUMANITIES



Roy T. Matthews & F. DeWitt Platt
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



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PREFACE

This first volume of the two-volume version of *The Western Humanities* covers the periods from prehistory through the Renaissance. The second volume covers the Renaissance to the present. Together, they are identical in coverage to the single-volume version. The division into two volumes offers flexibility for instructors whose teaching circumstances make separate volumes more convenient.

THE AIMS OF THE WESTERN HUMANITIES

Anyone teaching the Western humanities today faces an imposing challenge: overcoming the present-mindedness of the contemporary world. Most students, mirroring society at large, demonstrate little knowledge or even concern about the great artistic and literary monuments and movements of the Western tradition or about the political, economic, and social milestones of Western history. They seem caught up in the popular culture of the moment, forgetful of even the recent past. Very often, when they do recognize a work of art or literature, they still cannot relate it to a specific time or place or to other artistic works. In *The Western Humanities*, we address this problem by placing the cultural achievements of the Western tradition in their historical context. We discuss not only the works that were produced in successive periods but the prevailing historical and material conditions that so powerfully influenced their form and content. Our intention is to demystify the cultural record by showing that literature and the arts do not spring forth spontaneously and independently of each other but reflect a set of specific historical circumstances. By

providing this substantial context, out of which both ideas and artifacts emerge, we hope to give students a deeper understanding of the meaning of cultural works and a broader basis for appreciating the humanities.

At the same time that we point out the linkages between cultural expression and historical conditions, we also emphasize the universal aspects of creativity and expression. People everywhere have the impulse to seek answers to the mysteries of human existence; to discover or invent order in the universe; to respond creatively to nature, both inner and outer; to delight the senses and the mind with beauty and truth; to communicate their thoughts and share their visions with others. Thus, another of our intentions is to demonstrate that the desire to express oneself and to create lasting monuments has been a compelling drive in human beings since before the dawn of civilized life. We believe that this emphasis will help students see that they, along with their ideas, questions, and aspirations, are not isolated from the past but belong to a tradition that began thousands of years ago.

Our third aim is to help students prepare themselves for the uncertainties of the future. When they examine the past and learn how earlier generations confronted and overcame crises—and managed to leave enduring legacies—students will discover that the human spirit is irrepressible. In the humanities—in philosophy, religion, art, music, literature—human beings have found answers to their deepest needs and most perplexing questions. We hope that students will be encouraged by this record as they begin to shape the world of the twenty-first century.

In its origin *The Western Humanities* was an outgrowth of our careers as university teachers. Instructing

thousands of undergraduate students through the years had left us dissatisfied with available texts. In our eyes the existing books failed in one of two ways: They either ignored material developments and focused exclusively on cultural artifacts without context or perspective, or they stressed political, social, and economic changes with too little or too disjointed a discussion of literature and the arts. Our goal in writing this book was to balance and integrate these two elements—that is, to provide an analysis and an appreciation of cultural expression and artifacts within an interpretive historical framework.

We have been pleasantly surprised by the success of the first two editions of our textbook. Its adoption at numerous colleges and universities nationwide has confirmed the accuracy of our initial vision. With the publication of this third edition, we have welcomed the opportunity to revise and expand both the text and the art program, thereby strengthening the quality of the book. It is our hope that the third edition of *The Western Humanities* will continue to assist instructors in meeting today's teaching challenges as well as help the next generation of students understand and claim their cultural heritage.

ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT

The Western Humanities is organized chronologically, in twenty-one chapters, around successive historical periods, from prehistory to the present. In our introduction for students we distinguish three sweeping historical periods—ancient, medieval, and modern—although we do not formally divide our study into parts. We explain that the first of these periods extends from about 3000 B.C. to A.D. 500 and includes the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome (covered in Chapters 1–7). The second period extends from about 500 to 1500, when Western civilization became centered in Europe and was largely dominated by the Christian church (Chapters 8–10). The third period, beginning in about 1400 and extending to the present, witnessed the gradual birth of the modern world (Chapters 11–21). Time lines are provided in the introduction to support these distinctions and to give students a basic framework for the study of the humanities.

In the body of the book, the first part of every chapter covers the material conditions of the era—the historical, political, economic, and social developments. From the mass of available historical information we have distilled what we consider the crucial points, always aiming to capture the essence of complex periods and to fashion a coherent narrative framework for the story of Western culture. In this discussion many

of the major themes, issues, and problems of the period come into view.

The remaining part of each chapter is devoted to cultural expression, both in the realm of attitude and idea—philosophy, history, religion, science—and in the realm of cultural artifact—art, music, drama, literature, and film. In this part we describe and analyze the significant cultural achievements of the age, focusing on pervasive themes, choices, and elements of style. We examine how intellectuals, artists, writers, and other creative individuals responded to the challenges presented to them by their society and how they chose values and forms by which to live. Included among these individuals are those whom the Western tradition has often neglected or discounted, namely, women and members of racial and ethnic minorities. Their experiences, roles, and rich contributions are given their rightful place alongside those of the more conventionally favored artists, thinkers, and writers.

The Western Humanities strives to balance the historical background with cultural and artistic achievements. We believe that the clearest and most effective way to present this closely woven web of experience and expression is to untangle the various realms and discuss them separately. Thus, our treatment of cultural achievements is broken down into sections on art, architecture, music, literature, and so on. These sections vary in length, order, and focus from chapter to chapter, just as preferred or more developed forms of expression vary from one period to another. This approach gives students an unobstructed view of each form and reveals the continuities—as well as the strains and disruptions—in that form from one period to the next.

At the same time, we work from a unified perspective and stress the integrated nature of the humanities. We emphasize that the creative works of a particular period represent a coherent response to the unique character and deepest urges of that period. By pointing out linkages and reverberations, we show that the various areas of expression are tied together by shared stylistic elements and by the themes and issues that inform and shape the era. Rather than weave our own synthesis so tightly into this discussion that instructors would have to spend their class time sorting out our point of view from the true subject of the book, we prefer to present the material in as direct a way as possible. We believe this approach gives instructors the flexibility to teach from their own strengths and perspectives, and we invite them to do so. We have paid special attention to sorting out and explaining complex ideas and sequences of events carefully and clearly, to make the study of the humanities accessible to a broad range of students.

Each chapter ends with a brief section describing the cultural legacy of that era. Here we show what

achievements proved to be of lasting value and endured into succeeding periods, even to the present day. Students will find that some ideas, movements, or artistic methods with which they are familiar have a very long history indeed. They will also discover that the meaning and ascribed value of cultural objects and texts can change from one time and place to another. Our goal here is not only to help students establish a context for their culture but to show that the humanities have developed as a dynamic series of choices made by individuals in one era and transformed by individuals in other eras. We hope to convey both the richness and the energy of the Western tradition, to which so many have contributed and from which so many have drawn.

SPECIAL FEATURES

In addition to the overall distinctive features of *The Western Humanities*—its interpretive context for the humanities, its balanced treatment of history and culture, its focus on the cultural legacy of each period—the book has some special features that we believe contribute to its usefulness and appeal. Chapter 8 includes an extended discussion and analysis of Islamic history and culture, broadening the horizons of the Western tradition to cover this important area. Chapter 15 presents a concise discussion of the seventeenth-century revolutions in science and political philosophy that laid the foundations for what we consider modern thinking. Chapter 21 extends the narrative of Western history and culture to the present day and includes expanded coverage of the global style known as Post-Modernism. Throughout the book, we consider not just art, literature, and music but also less commonly covered topics such as history, theology, and technology.

CHANGES TO THE THIRD EDITION

Substantial changes have been made to this third edition of *The Western Humanities*. To highlight significant trends and events, we have streamlined the opening sections of chapters, where historical, political, economic, and social developments are discussed. We have eliminated some of the detail without changing the overall historical framework of the book. Additionally, time lines have been streamlined; in most chapters, multiple time lines have been collapsed into one. Our goal here has been to fine-tune our presentation in order to facilitate learning.

New to this edition are Personal Perspective boxes—eyewitness accounts of important events of the day, written both by ordinary citizens and well-known fig-

ures. These short excerpts, drawn from private correspondence, diaries, and literary works, give students an opportunity to hear the voice of an individual from a past era as he or she comments on a dramatic personal or historical situation, such as facing exile or execution, encountering a foreign culture, or being caught up in revolutionary fervor. Personal Perspective boxes appear in every chapter of the third edition; some of the better-known writers include Sappho, Flavius Josephus, Anna Comnena, Giorgio Vasari, Madame de Sévigné, Gustave Flaubert, and Feodor Dostoevsky.

In the second edition, we increased our coverage of the cultural achievements of racial and ethnic minorities since the eighteenth century and of women beginning with the Early Middle Ages. In this edition we have made further additions. Discussions of a number of individual women writers, artists, and intellectuals have been added, including Hildegard of Bingen, Laura Cereta, Gaspara Stampa, Angela Merici, Marguerite of Navarre, Judith Leyster, and George Sand. The status, conditions, and special interests of women are also discussed in each era, from ancient Greece to the present. Women's voices can be heard in many of the Personal Perspectives, and several newly included artworks are by women. Expanded coverage of women, like expanded coverage of minority groups, allows us to present a more balanced and inclusive view of history and culture.

The art program has also been revised for this edition. Approximately 65 new artworks are included, either replacing works previously illustrated or adding to the overall art program. Each newly included artwork is discussed both in a detailed caption and in the text. Additionally, captions have been revised throughout the book to provide more guidance on viewing and appreciating art. Captions also now include the physical dimensions and material of artworks, where that information is available. Finally, a number of photographs of artworks have been replaced with better versions or views. The new illustrations came from sculpture, painting, photography, and other media, including *Herd of Rhinoceroses* from the Chauvet Cave, *Boy Struggling with a Goose*, the "Ardebil" carpet, Judith Leyster's *Self Portrait*, Rosa Bonheur's *The Horse Fair*, Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series, No. 3*, and Peter Blake's *The Meeting or "Have a Nice Day, Mr. Hockney."*

Among the specific changes to the text are a substantial revision of Chapter 12, where we have clarified our discussion of Northern Renaissance style and Mannerism. Chapter 16 has been reworked to more accurately define the phases and variations of the Baroque style. Chapter 21 has been revised to focus on the response of Western civilization to the concerns of the new global order.

Available with this edition is a new supplement on music, described in detail in the section below on ancillaries.

LEARNING AIDS

Several types of learning aids are incorporated in the text to help students grasp and remember information. Maps appear in every chapter, providing visual orientation, and numerous time lines graphically represent the progression of events and their relation to each other. The judicious use of color in both maps and time lines increases their usefulness. Diagrams and line drawings are provided where careful visual explication is necessary, as in identifying the elements of an architectural style. Tables throughout the text organize historical and cultural information in a succinct and memorable way.

Because the study of the humanities entails the use of many concepts and terms that may be unfamiliar to students, key terms appear in bold type when they are introduced in the text. They are also defined at the end of the book in an extensive Glossary. Pronunciation guidelines are given in the Glossary where necessary. New terms are listed at the end of each chapter as a review and study aid. In-text pronunciation guides for difficult names of artists and humanists are placed at the point in the text where the individual's contribution is discussed. The Index identifies the page locations for these pronunciations.

The domains of the humanities are so vast that no book can pretend to hold them all. To extend the boundaries of the book, we provide annotated suggestions for further reading at the ends of all the chapters. Here we identify and briefly discuss recommended editions or translations of all the primary materials mentioned in the text. Beginning in Chapter 11 we also include annotated suggestions for listening. These sections direct students who are interested in broadening their musical experience to the major or representative works of the composers treated in the text.

A growing concern today is how to help college students become more skillful writers. In response to this need, we have included an appendix on writing research papers and examination essays in the humanities. Here we give general guidelines on writing and more specific suggestions about choosing and researching a topic in the humanities, writing an acceptable college paper, and preparing for exams.

The Western Humanities is published both as a single text and as an alternative two-volume version. Chapters 1 to 12 are included in Volume I, *Beginnings through the Renaissance*, and Chapters 11 to 21 are included in Volume II, *The Renaissance to the Present*. For instructors who teach only one part of the course, this

offers flexibility and convenience. Since some schools with two-term courses include the Renaissance in the first term and others in the second, we have included coverage of the Renaissance period in both volumes.

ANCILLARY PACKAGE

As instructors, we are keenly aware of the problems encountered in teaching the humanities, especially to large, diverse classes. We have therefore created an Instructor's Manual, as well as a comprehensive package of ancillary resource materials, designed to help solve those problems.

We believe these supplementary materials will be particularly useful to instructors who must manage large classes. Our Instructor's Manual identifies both general teaching strategies and specific lecture suggestions that can be used to create a lively classroom environment. Each chapter of the manual includes teaching strategies and suggestions, test items, film and music selections, and a detailed outline revised to accompany this edition of *The Western Humanities*. The unique teaching device adopted in the manual's second edition—a list of significant developments in non-Western cultures that parallel the events described in the text—has been reorganized, expanded, and updated. Instructors can draw on this information to relate events in Western history and culture to global events.

A new section in each chapter, Personal Perspective Background, provides further information about the people and events showcased in the Personal Perspective boxes. These sections offer supplementary information to help instructors interpret the passages in the text for their students. The lists of suggested films and music selections in each chapter have been updated for this edition, and the annotated lists of recommended books for students have been extensively revised.

The test items—identification, discussion/essay, and multiple-choice—have been revised to reflect the additions and changes in the text. Additionally, a set of five comparative questions has been added at the end of Chapters 7, 14, and 21; each of these question sets can be used by instructors preparing tests that cover more than a single chapter.

Following the chapter-by-chapter material is a section containing forty-five Listening Guides, written by Jack Boyd of Abilene Christian College. These guides offer students an introduction to the listening experience by discussing and interpreting specific musical selections, which are available on accompanying CDs or audio tapes to instructors who have adopted the text. The Listening Guides may be photocopied and distributed to the students. The manual concludes with an Appendix providing biographical data on the

major cultural figures mentioned in the text, including their social, economic, and religious backgrounds.

Available with this edition is a new 60-page supplement entitled *Music in the Western Tradition*, written by Claire Detels of the University of Arkansas. This supplement introduces students to basic musical concepts and key developments in the history of Western music, referencing numerous selections from the CDs/audio cassettes. It concludes with an appendix on writing about music.

Also available are computerized test banks for Macintosh and IBM-compatible computers; a set of 100 art slides; a set of 25 map slides; the CD/audio cassette recordings of music; and videotapes.

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Preparing the third edition of this text has been a rewarding experience for us. The task has been made more enjoyable by the participation and support of many people, some of whom we want to single out and thank. First, we acknowledge and express gratitude for the help of former students over the years. Their questions and insights have affected the way we address certain issues and frame particular arguments. Second, our heartfelt gratitude to Pat Thompson, head of the MSU Art Library, who, as always, has willingly and with a smile aided us with the art and architecture, answering questions and locating relevant materials.

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editor Julianna Scott Fein shepherded the manuscript through the production process with care and grace. Brian Pecko's hard work as photo researcher ensured that the art reproductions would be of the highest quality. Credit for the beautiful cover and text designs goes to Mayfield's talented art director, Jeanne Schreiber, and for the handsome time lines and maps to designer Jean Mailander. Manufacturing manager Randy Hurst is responsible for the printing and paper that make *The Western Humanities* so attractive. The efforts of Marty Granahan, permissions editor, ensured the integrity of the work. To all, we express our thanks.

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INTRODUCTION

Why Study Cultural History?

To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child.

—CICERO, FIRST CENTURY B.C.

Anyone who cannot give an account to oneself of the past three thousand years remains in darkness, without experience, living from day to day.

—GOETHE, NINETEENTH CENTURY A.D.

The underlying premise of this book is that some basic knowledge of the Western cultural heritage is necessary for those who want to become educated human beings in charge of their own destinies. If people are not educated into their place in human history—five thousand years of relatively uninterrupted though sometimes topsy-turvy developments—then they are rendered powerless, subject to passing fads and outlandish beliefs. They become vulnerable to the flattery of demagogues who promise heaven on earth, or they fall prey to the misconception that present-day events are unique, without precedent in history, or superior to everything that has gone before.

Perhaps the worst that can happen is to exist in a limbo of ignorance—in Goethe's words, "living from day to day." Without knowledge of the past and the perspective it brings, people may come to believe that their contemporary world will last forever, when in reality much of it is doomed to be forgotten. In contrast to the instant obsolescence of popular culture, the study of Western culture offers an alternative that has passed the unforgiving test of time. Long after today's heroes and celebrities have fallen into oblivion, the achievements of our artistic and literary ancestors—those who have forged the Western tradition—

will remain. Their works echo down the ages and seem fresh in every period. The ancient Roman writer Seneca put it well when he wrote, in the first century A.D., "Life is short but art is long."

When people realize that the rich legacy of Western culture is their own, their view of themselves and the times they live in can expand beyond the present moment. They find that they need not be confined by the limits of today but can draw on the creative insights of people who lived hundreds and even thousands of years ago. They discover that their own culture has a history and a context that give it meaning and shape. Studying and experiencing their cultural legacy can help them understand their place in today's world.

THE BOUNDARIES OF THE WEST

The subject of this text is Western culture, but what exactly do we mean, first, by "culture" and, second, by the "West"? *Culture* is a term with several meanings, but we use it here to mean the artistic and intellectual expressions of a people, their creative achievements. By the *West* we mean that part of the globe that lies west of Asia and Asia Minor and north of Africa, especially Europe—the geographical framework for much of this study.

The Western tradition is not confined exclusively to Europe as defined today, however. The contributions of peoples who lived beyond the boundaries of present-day Europe are also included in Western culture, either because they were forerunners of the West, such as those who created the first civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt, or because they were part of the West for periods of time, such as those who lived

in the North African and Near Eastern lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea during the Roman and early Christian eras. Regardless of geography, Western culture draws deeply from ideals forged in these lands.

When areas that had been part of the Western tradition at one time were absorbed into other cultural traditions, as happened in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and North Africa in the seventh century when the people embraced the Muslim faith, then they are generally no longer included in Western cultural history. Because of the enormous influence of Islamic civilization on Western civilization, however, we do include in this volume both an account of Islamic history and a description and appreciation of Islamic culture. Different in many ways from our own, the rich tradition of Islam has an important place in today's world.

After about 1500, with voyages and explorations reaching the farthest parts of the globe, the European focus of Western culture that had held for centuries began to dissolve. Starting from this time, the almost exclusive European mold was broken and Western values and ideals began to be exported throughout the world, largely through the efforts of missionaries, soldiers, colonists, and merchants. Coinciding with this development and further complicating the pattern of change were the actions of those who imported and enslaved countless numbers of black Africans to work on plantations in North and South America. The interplay of Western culture with many previously isolated cultures, whether desired or not, forever changed all who were touched by the process.

The Westernization of the globe that has been going on ever since 1500 is perhaps the dominant theme of the twentieth century. What human greed, missionary zeal, and dreams of empire failed to accomplish before 1900 has been achieved in this century by modern technology, the media, and popular culture. The world today is a global village, much of it dominated by Western values and styles of life. In our time, Westernization has become a two-way interchange. When artists and writers from other cultures adopt Western forms or ideas, they are not only Westernizing their own traditions but also injecting fresh sensibilities and habits of thought into the Western tradition. The globalization of culture means that a South American novel or a Japanese film can be as accessible to Western audiences as a European painting and yet carry with it an intriguingly new vocabulary of cultural symbols and meanings.

HISTORICAL PERIODS AND CULTURAL STYLES

In cultural history the past is often divided into historical periods and cultural styles. A historical period

is an interval of time that has a certain unity because it is characterized by the prevalence of a unique culture, ideology, or technology or because it is bounded by defining historical events, such as the death of a military leader like Alexander the Great or a political upheaval like the fall of Rome. A cultural style is a combination of features of artistic or literary expression, execution, or performance that define a particular school or era. A historical period may have the identical time frame as a cultural style, or it may embrace more than one style simultaneously or two styles successively. Each chapter of this survey focuses on a historical period and includes significant aspects of culture—usually the arts, architecture, literature, religion, music, and philosophy—organized around a discussion of the relevant style or styles appropriate to that time.

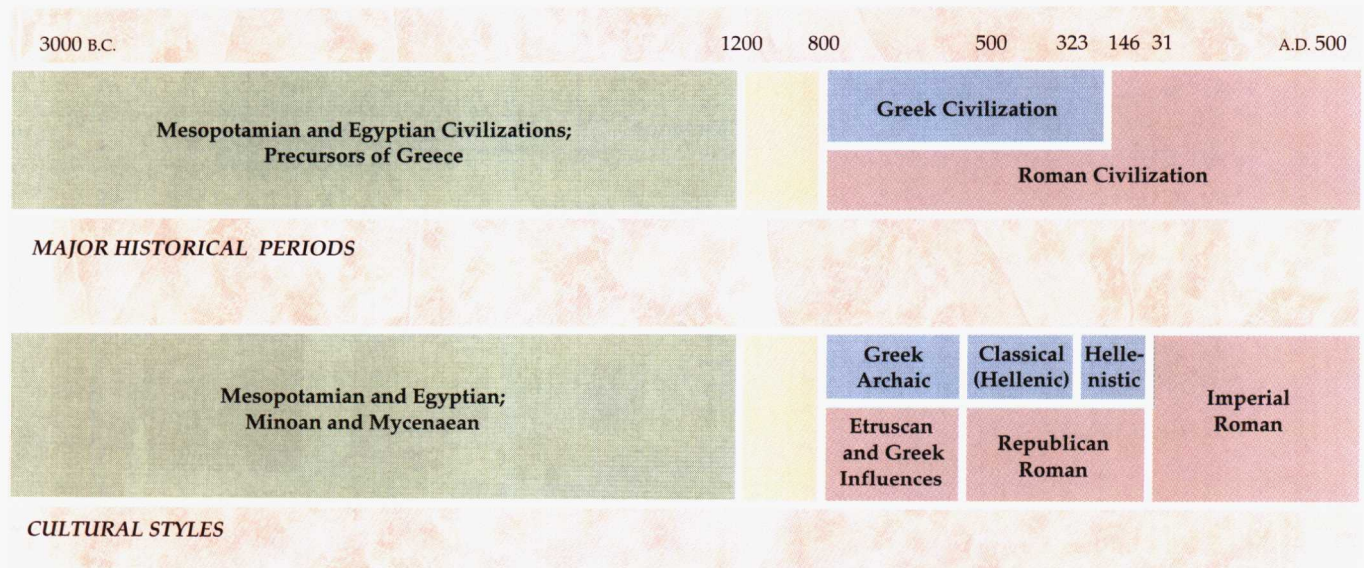
The survey begins with prehistory, the era before writing was invented, setting forth the emergence of human beings from an obscure past. After the appearance of writing in about 3000 B.C., the Western cultural heritage is divided into three sweeping historical periods: ancient, medieval, and modern.

The ancient period dates from 3000 B.C. to A.D. 500 (Time Line 1). During these thirty-five hundred years the light of Western civilization begins to shine in Mesopotamia and Egypt, shines more brightly still in eighth-century B.C. Greece and Rome, loses some of its luster when Greece succumbs to Rome in 146 B.C., and finally is snuffed out when the Roman empire collapses in the fifth century A.D. Coinciding with these historical periods are the cultural styles of Mesopotamia; Egypt; Greece, including Archaic, Classical (or Hellenic), and Hellenistic styles; and Rome, including Republican and Imperial styles.

The medieval period, or the Middle Ages, covers events between A.D. 500 and 1500, a one-thousand-year span that is further divided into three subperiods (Time Line 2). The Early Middle Ages (500–1000) is typified by frequent barbarian invasions and political chaos so that civilization itself is threatened and barely survives. No single international style characterizes this turbulent period, though several regional styles flourish. The High Middle Ages (1000–1300) is a period of stability and the zenith of medieval culture. Two successive styles appear, the Romanesque and the Gothic, with the latter dominating culture for the rest of the medieval period. The Late Middle Ages (1300–1500) is a transitional period in which the medieval age is dying and the modern age is struggling to be born.

The modern period begins about 1400 (there is often overlap between historical periods) and continues today (Time Line 3). With the advent of the modern period a new way of defining historical changes starts

Time Line 1 THE ANCIENT WORLD



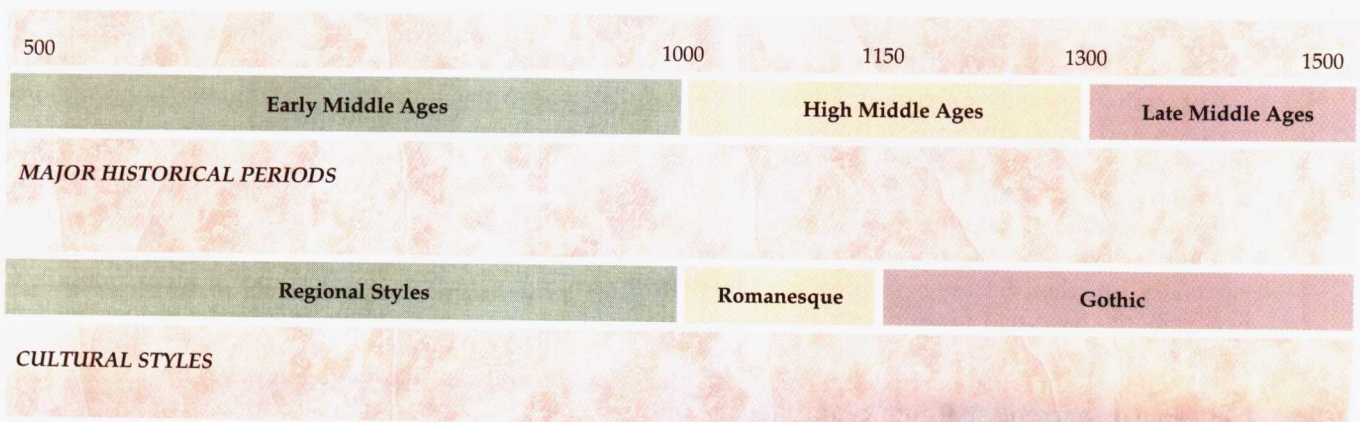
to make more sense—the division of history into movements, the activities of large groups of people united to achieve a common goal. The modern period consists of waves of movements that aim to change the world in some specific way

The first modern movement is the Renaissance (1400–1600), or “rebirth,” which attempts to revive the cultural values of ancient Greece and Rome. It is accompanied by two successive styles, Renaissance style and Mannerism. The next significant movement is the Reformation (1500–1600), which is dedicated to restoring Christianity to the ideals of the early church set forth in the Bible. Although it does not spawn a specific style, this religious upheaval does have a pro-

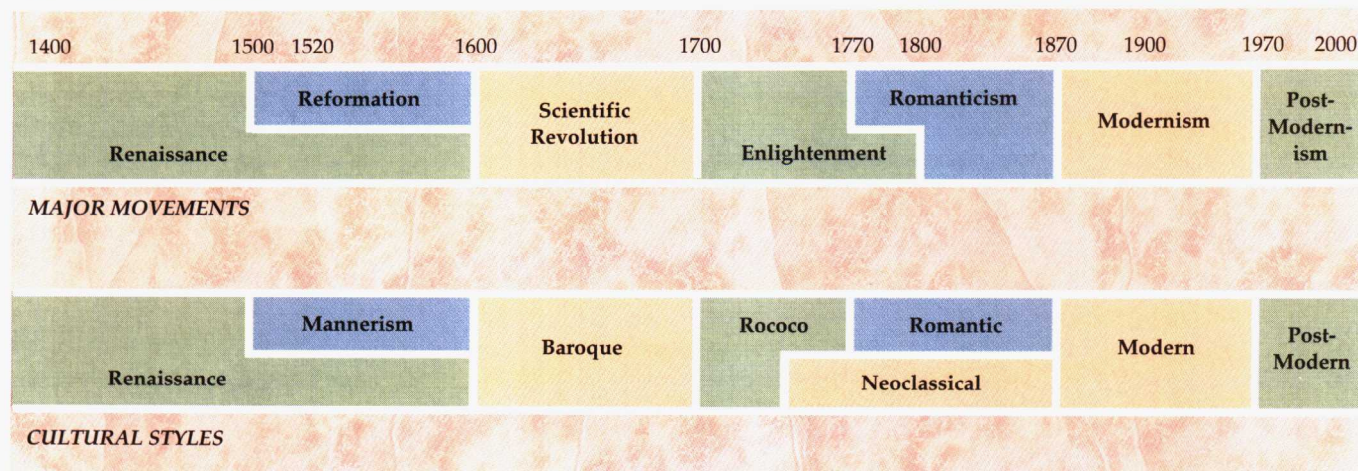
found impact on the subjects of the arts and literature and the way they are expressed, especially in the Mannerist style.

The Reformation is followed by the Scientific Revolution (1600–1700), a movement that results in the abandonment of ancient science and the birth of modern science. Radical in its conclusions, the Scientific Revolution is somewhat out of touch with the style of its age, which is known as the Baroque. This magnificent style is devoted to overwhelming the senses through theatrical and sensuous effects and is associated with the attempts of the Roman Catholic Church to reassert its authority in the world.

Time Line 2 THE MEDIEVAL WORLD



Time Line 3
THE MODERN WORLD



The Scientific Revolution gives impetus to the Enlightenment (1700–1800), a movement that pledges to reform politics and society according to the principles of the new science. In stylistic terms the eighteenth century is schizophrenic, dominated first by the Rococo, an extravagant and fanciful style that represents the last phase of the Baroque, and then by the Neoclassical, a style inspired by the works of ancient Greece and Rome and reflective of the principles of the Scientific Revolution. Before the eighteenth century is over, the Enlightenment calls forth its antithesis, Romanticism (1770–1870), a movement centered on feeling, fantasy, and everything that cannot be proven scientifically. The Romantic style, marked by a revived taste for the Gothic and a love of nature, is the perfect accompaniment to this movement.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century Modernism (1870–1970) arises, bent on destroying every vestige of both the Greco-Roman tradition and the Christian faith and on fashioning new ways of understanding that are independent of the past. Since 1970 Post-Modernism has emerged, a movement that tries to make peace with the past by embracing old forms of expression while at the same time adopting a global and multivoiced perspective.

Although every cultural period is marked by innovation and creativity, our treatment of them in this book varies somewhat, with more space and greater weight given to the achievements of certain times. We make these adjustments because some periods or styles are more significant than others, especially in the defining influence that their achievements have had on our own era. For example, some styles seem to tower over the rest, such as Classicism in fifth-century-B.C. Greece, the High Renaissance of sixteenth-century Italy, and

Modernism in the mid-twentieth century, as compared with other styles, such as that of the Early Middle Ages or the seventeenth-century Baroque.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO CULTURAL HISTORY

Our approach to the Western heritage in this book is to root cultural achievements in their historical settings, showing how the material conditions—the political, social, and economic events of each period—influenced their creation. About one-third of each chapter is devoted to an interpretive discussion of material history, and the remaining two-thirds are devoted to the arts, architecture, philosophy, religion, literature, and music of the period. These two aspects of history do not occur separately, of course, and one of our aims is to show how they are intertwined.

As just one example of this integrated approach, consider the Gothic cathedral, that lofty, light-filled house of worship marked by pointed arches, towering spires, and radiant stained-glass windows. Gothic cathedrals were erected during the High Middle Ages, following a bleak period when urban life had virtually ceased. Although religion was still the dominant force in European life, trade was starting to flourish once again, town life was reviving, and urban dwellers were beginning to prosper. In part as testimonials to their new wealth, cities and towns commissioned architects and hired workers to erect these soaring churches, which dominated the landscape for miles around and proclaimed the economic well-being of their makers.

We adopt an integrated approach to Western culture not just in considering how the arts are related to material conditions but also in looking for the com-

mon themes, aspirations, and ideas that permeate the artistic and literary expressions of every individual era. The creative accomplishments of an age tend to reflect a shared perspective, even when that perspective is not explicitly recognized at the time. Thus, each period possesses a unique outlook that can be analyzed in the cultural record. A good example of this phenomenon is Classical Greece in the fifth century B.C., when the ideal of moderation, or balance in all things, played a major role in sculpture, architecture, philosophy, religion, and tragic drama. The cultural record in other periods is not always as clear as that in ancient Greece, but shared qualities can often be uncovered that distinguish the varied aspects of culture in an era to form a unifying thread.

A corollary of this idea is that creative individuals and their works are very much influenced by the times in which they live. This is not to say that incomparable geniuses—such as Shakespeare in Renaissance England—do not appear and rise above their own ages, speaking directly to the human mind and heart in every age that follows. Yet even Shakespeare reflected the political attitudes and social patterns of his time. Though a man for the ages, he still regarded monarchy as the correct form of government and women as the inferiors of men.

THE SELECTION OF CULTURAL WORKS

The Western cultural heritage is vast, and any selection of works for a survey text reflects choices made by the authors. All the works we chose to include have had a significant impact on Western culture, but for different reasons. We chose some because they blazed a new trail, such as Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (see Figure 19.21), which marked the advent of Cubism in painting, or Fielding's *Tom Jones*, one of the earliest novels. Other works were included because they seemed to embody a style to perfection, such as the regal statue called *Poseidon* (or *Zeus*) (see Figure 3.20),

executed in the Classical style of fifth-century B.C. Athens, or Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which epitomized the ideals of the High Middle Ages. On occasion, we chose works on a particular topic, such as the biblical story of David and Goliath, and demonstrated how different sculptors interpreted it, as in sculptures by Donatello (see Figure 11.11), Verrocchio (see Figure 11.12), and Michelangelo (see Figure 12.18). Still other works caught our attention because they served as links between successive styles, as is the case with Giotto's frescoes (see Figure 10.18), or because they represented the end of an age or an artistic style, as in the haunting sculpture called *The Last Pagan* (see Figure 7.15). Finally, we included some works, especially paintings, simply because of their great beauty, such as Chardin's *Little Girl Playing Shuttlecock* (see Figure 16.1).

Through all the ages of Western cultural history, through all the shifting styles and tastes embodied in painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, and song, there glows a creative spark that can be found in human beings in every period. This diversity is a hallmark of the Western experience, and we celebrate it in this book.

A CHALLENGE TO THE READER

The purpose of all education is and should be self-knowledge. This goal was first established by the ancient Greeks in their injunction to "Know thyself," the inscription carved above the entrance to Apollo's temple at Delphi. Self-knowledge means awareness of oneself and one's place in society and the world. Reaching this goal is not easy, because becoming an educated human being is a lifelong process, requiring time, energy, and commitment. But all journeys begin with a single step, and we intend this volume as a first step toward understanding and defining oneself in terms of one's historical and cultural heritage. Our challenge to the reader is to use this book to begin the long journey to self-knowledge.

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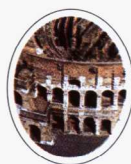
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