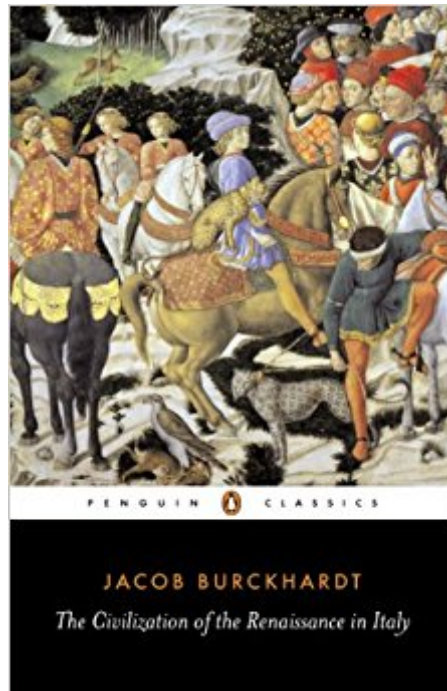




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The Civilization Of The Renaissance In Italy (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

For nineteenth-century Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, the Italian Renaissance was nothing less than the beginning of the modern world - a world in which flourishing individualism and the competition for fame radically transformed science, the arts, and politics. In this landmark work he depicts the Italian city-states of Florence, Venice and Rome as providing the seeds of a new form of society, and traces the rise of the creative individual, from Dante to Michelangelo. A fascinating description of an era of cultural transition, this nineteenth-century masterpiece was to become the most influential interpretation of the Italian Renaissance, and anticipated ideas such as Nietzsche's concept of the 'Übermensch' in its portrayal of an age of genius. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Burckhardt's 'Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy' is fundamental to our understanding of the Renaissance, even though it has long since ceased to be definitive. For Burckhardt (who wrote 'Civilization' in the 1850s), the Italian Renaissance represented the punctuated end of the middle ages and the beginning of the modern world. He placed particular emphasis on the idea that for the

first time in history, the Renaissance gave us "individuality": the idea that a person could separate themselves from the crowd by their creative genius (in art, politics, science, etc.). Contemporary scholarship, however, takes a more nuanced approach: while Burckhardt did indeed identify in the Renaissance new cultural, political, and artistic trends, it is now argued that the Renaissance nevertheless retained many aspects of medieval civilization while the Italians, and later other Europeans, revived classical art, architecture, and science and created a new economic and political order. Two different publishers of this book each offer introductions by two excellent contemporary historians: the Penguin Classics version is introduced by Peter Burke, and the Random House Modern Library version is introduced by Peter Gay. In the Penguin version (reviewed here) Burke (as elsewhere) argues that the Renaissance was not the clean break with the medieval past that Burckhardt suggests, although he readily acknowledges Burckhardt's foundational contribution to early Renaissance scholarship: "Burckhardt's view of the Renaissance may be easy to criticize, but it is also difficult to replace.

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