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Dedication

To Martha, Jordan, and Allison.

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From Everyday Life: The Renaissance © 2005 Good Year Books.



Introduction

probably think of achievements in art, literature, and science. The names of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, William Shakespeare, and others quickly come to mind. This is the Renaissance with which most people are familiar. The Renaissance was a time when actors, writers, sculptors, inventors, and many other talented individuals flourished. As with every period of history, the Renaissance was also a time of everyday life—a time when people went about their daily routines much as we do today. What these people thought and felt is every bit as important as the contributions they made.

Everyday Life: The Renaissance, introduces students to the achievements of the most talented artists and writers of the day. They are also given a brief survey of important scientific breakthroughs and major explorations that led to the discovery of a New World. The religious upheaval of the 1500s that resulted in the founding of the world's various Protestant churches is also presented. The focus of the book, however, remains the same as with previous Everyday Life books. Primary coverage is given to how people thought and behaved, how they dressed and what they ate, what they did for fun and amusement, and how they viewed marriage and home life.

Each chapter of this book is followed by four pages of activities. Some test a student's ability to think creatively; others measure skills in math, vocabulary, and other subject areas. There are also numerous arts-and-crafts activities that provide further insight into the Renaissance way of life. There are even a few puzzles for enjoyment. Students should find *Everyday Life: The Renaissance* engaging and informative.

Walter A. Hazen



CHAPTER I

The Background

or about 500 years after the fall of the Roman Empire (30 B.C.–A.D. 476) in the West, European civilization passed through a period when little human progress was made. Learning and organized government came to a virtual halt. Historians called this period the *Dark Ages*.

The Dark Ages resulted from barbarian invasions into lands once ruled by Rome. The German tribes that overran Rome had little respect for either culture or law and order. They destroyed magnificent buildings and precious



A Viking ship under sail.

works of art. Roads that united the vast expanses of the Empire fell into disrepair, and trade declined as a result. With no central authority to keep order, travel became dangerous. People were afraid to venture outside their own villages or towns. Society as the Romans knew it ceased to exist.

One German king, Charlemagne, temporarily restored law and order over much of Europe in the late 700s and early 800s. The empire he founded did not endure, however. After its breakup, invaders swept across Europe. Beginning in the 800s, the Vikings stormed out of

Scandinavia, and chaos prevailed once more. The Vikings were fierce warriors who struck terror in the hearts of people everywhere. They came from what are now the countries of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Raiding and killing at will, the invaders forced peasants in the countryside to enter into agreements with powerful lords for protection.

For the guarantee of safety inside the walls of a lord's castle or manor house during dangerous times, peasants willingly became serfs. This meant that they were bound to the soil and were a part of the lord's land. They were property; no different from the buildings and fields that made up a manor. If a manor was sold, the serfs were handed over to the new owner as part of the sale. The arrangement between serf and lord, along with agreements reached between lords and knights, became the basis of the feudal system.

