**History 1.1 Introduction**

**Exploration** European explorers travelled further than ever before in the late 15th and 16th centuries. They were helped by better ship design and new navigational instruments. European rulers paid for these expeditions. They wanted to find new lands to colonise and exotic goods to trade. By about 1530, the speed of exploration had begun to slow, but its effects lasted.

**The Renaissance** is the name given to the change in people’s world view and way of thinking that began in the 15th century in Italy and spread all over Europe. Renaissance thinking, widespread by 1560, meant rediscovering **classical** ideas. These included valuing learning and investigation; greater **literacy** and spreading ideas by the **printing press** (which made book production much faster and books far cheaper).

**The Reformation** began as a push to reform the Catholic Church. It led to a split that tore the Church apart forever. People had been unhappy about corruption in the Church for many years. Renaissance thinking led to a greater desire for reform and these ideas were spread in printed books. 1517 is the date often given for the start of the Reformation. By 1563, the differences between Catholic and Protestant worship made reuniting impossible. This unit then focuses on a topic in which all these themes interact.

Historians often divide changes into different kinds. Here, the most useful kinds to consider are:

* **Economic:** to do with trade and making money
* **Political:** to do with the way countries are run and interact
* **Religious:** to do with faith
* **Technological:** new machinery or equipment
* **World view:** how people look at the world

**Renaissance**

**History 1.2 Holland in the 1500s**

In the 1500s, what is now the Netherlands was part of the Low Countries. These were a number of **provinces**, each with its own ruler. They were all ruled by the Habsburgs, a powerful family that ruled a great deal of Western Europe. The Low Countries were not the most important part of the Habsburg Empire. They treated the northern provinces of the Low Countries as even less important than their richer, more central neighbours.

**History 1.3 What was The Renaissance?**

‘Renaissance’ means ‘re-birth’. Many historians use the phrase ‘the Renaissance’ to talk about a time when ideas from **classical** Greece and Rome were re-discovered. The Renaissance began in Florence in the 15th century and spread across Europe over the next 100 years. **Education and scholarship** became more important. The Renaissance happened when it did for many reasons. People could not write, paint and build using new ideas without payment. From the 15th century, rulers, **churchmen** and merchants wanted to encourage art and **scholarship** and had the money to become patrons.

**History 1.4 Renaissance in the Low Countries**

European countries adopted the most important idea behind the Renaissance: respect for learning and education. They set up universities and scholars explored new ideas. The Low Countries was the publishing centre of Europe (7 printing presses). There were also artists like Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Brueghel.

Pieter Brueghel used ordinary people and the landscape of the Low Countries in his art.

**History 1.5 Printing**

For ages books were copied by hand onto vellum made from animal skins. However, in the 15th century the printing press was invented. Needed for printing was: Paper, Moveable, re-useable type and the printing press. In 100 AD the Chinese invented a way of making paper. In 751 AD the Arabs learned the secret from some Chinese papermakers captured at the Battle of Talas River, in the 12th century the Arabs started trading paper with Europeans. There were many impacts of printing. Books became cheaper, more people could afford books, more people learned to read and many books were sold in Europe. The first printed book is usually said to be a Bible printed by Gutenberg in 1455. In 1585 many printers moved from Antwerp to Amsterdam.

**History 1.6 Erasmus: religious revolutionary?**

Erasmus lived from 1469 to 1536 and he was born in Rotterdam. He was accused of ‘laying the egg that hatched into the Reformation’. Erasmus was someone who believed the benefits of education, he studied the Bible. If you were catholic you had to believe in saints and go on pelgrimages. Only God could pardon your sins, not the Church. Erasmus was the first to stress how responsible people were for finding their own religion by studying as much as they could, this belief made literacy important.

Everybody in Europe could read Erasmus his ideas because of the **printing press**.

Erasmus wanted to reform the Catholic Church, he rejected the idea of setting up a new reformed church, but he didn’t want to split the church.

**History 1.10 Problems of the Church**

From 1346-53, the black death swept across much of the known world. Many Christians thought it was god’s punishment for sinfulness. They became more **pious**: more serious about religion and behaving the way god wanted. The pope was a ruler, as well as Head of the Church.

The Church made money in several ways:

* It sold jobs in the Church
* It sold **indulgences**. These were said to shorten (or even remove) time spent in **purgatory**. Purgatory was where the Church said the souls of the dead were punished for sinful things they did while alive. The idea of buying forgiveness for sins isn’t in the bible. The Church invented it.
* It made some people into **saints**.
* People left money and land to various churches in their wills.