

RENAISSANCE MAN. The term is used to describe a person who is well educated, who excels in a variety of subjects and whose erudition in sciences, philosophy and art is profound. In Renaissance Italy, spreading from Florence to all of Europe, the idea developed that a man can do anything, if he wants to. It embodied the tenets of Renaissance Humanism, which considered man empowered and unlimited in his capacity for growth. This led to the notion that people should embrace all knowledge. Thus the gifted men of the Renaissance sought to develop skills in diverse scientific fields, in social accomplishments and the arts. The terms Universal Genius and Polymath are also used - these expressions derive from the ideal that it is desirable to acquire a universal learning in order to develop one's humanist potential. But this ideal now is elusive; in-depth knowledge in multiple fields nowadays may just be too complex for a single person to master.

Examples for Renaissance Man

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 - 1519) Italian painter, sculptor, architect, stage designer, writer, engineer, astronomer, mathematician, anatomist, biologist, geologist, physicist, inventor, philosopher, actor, singer, musician, humanist

Michelangelo (1475 - 1564) Italian painter, sculptor, architect, poet, engineer

Galileo Galilei (1564 - 1642) Italian astronomer, scientist, physicist, philosopher, mathematician

Blaise Pascal (1623 - 1662) French inventor of the mechanical calculator, mathematician, theologian, philosopher, physicist

Isaac Newton (1643 - 1727) English physicist, mathematician, natural philosopher, alchemist, astronomer, theologian

Gottfried Leibniz (1646 - 1716) German physicist, logician, mathematician, historian, librarian, philosopher, theologian, linguist, inventor of mechanical clocks and mining machinery

Benjamin Franklin (1706 - 1790) American author, political theorist, politician, printer, scientist, inventor, postmaster, publisher, civic activist, musician, satirist, diplomat

Mikhail V. Lomonosov (1711 - 1765) Russian scientist, writer, educator, chemist, physicist, historian, artist, philologist

Thomas Jefferson (1743 - 1826) American 3rd president of the United States, statesman, political theorist, diplomat, philosopher, author, lawyer, architect, musician, naturalist, botanist, inventor, engineer

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 - 1832) German, novelist, playwright, civil servant, theologian, natural philosopher, diplomat, humanist, scientist, mystic, poet

Jules Henri Poincaré (1854 - 1912) French theoretical physicist, philosopher of science, mathematician, astronomer

Rabindranath Tagore (1861 - 1941) Indian visual artist, playwright, novelist, educationist, social reformer, business-manager, poet, composer

Stephen Fry (born 1957) actor of film, stage and tv, author, playwright, radio & quiz-show host, comedian ... educator on humanism and humanity, LGBT rights, history, mental health concerns and the effortless superiority that comes with being English (Nick Little, CFI)

Renaissance (French for 'rebirth') 14th - 17th centuries

The period in European history that marks the end of the Middle (or Dark) Ages, when cultural, artistic and political changes resulted in the rise of humanism. Renaissance is often defined as the rebirth of learning and civilisation - with man and the arts at the centre.

The era is viewed as a bridge between the Middle Ages and Modern Times, with extensive education reform, the start of modern science and geographic exploration. The Renaissance is perhaps best known for the artistic feats of painters Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.