**Venice—Queen of the Adriatic**

**DIRECTIONS: As you read about the city-state Venice and why it was important to the Renaissance, highlight/underline important information below as well as circle words/phrases you don’t understand.**

*For over two centuries, from the early 1300’s to the early 1500’s the city states of Italy had led the rest of Europe into the Renaissance, by creating new forms and styles of painting, sculpture, architecture, and decorative arts.*

* How did Italy come to be such a leader and source of change in Europe by the 14th century? Unlike the kingdoms of most of Europe, Italy was divided into many small city-states. Unlike most European countries, Each Italian city-state was not controlled by nobles that owned land instead they were controlled by powerful families and dominated by a wealthy and powerful merchant class. These merchant families exerted both political and economic leadership. They stressed education and individual achievement which was the main point of the Italian Renaissance.*

“Desponsamuste, mare” (We wed thee, O sea), exclaimed the Duke of Venice, standing at the front of the state ship and throwing a gold ring into the Adriatic Sea. In Renaissance Venice, this symbolic marriage of the city to the sea was performed each year in a splendid water festival that included choirs, trumpets, banners, and a flotilla of gondolas (many small boats). How did Venice become Queen of the Adriatic Sea?

The city of Venice reached its commercial (business, trading, money) and political power and glory as a trading center during the 1300’s and 1400’s. The French ambassador, Philippe de Comines, in 1495 called Venice’s Grand Canal the “handsome avenue… in the whole world.” Venetian merchants crowded the canals with their gondolas filled with all manner of goods. “There were so many boats it seemed as if all the gardens of the world must be there”, remarked a merchant from Milan when he saw the maze of market boats loaded with produce from the mainland. Far more valuable goods than vegetables, however, were traded on the Venetian canals. Venice was the center of commercial activity for the whole Mediterranean area. Nearly the entire population was involved in some way with the Asian trade. Venetian traders served as the European source for such rare and prized goods as spices , silk, teak wood, and exotic fruits. Even if one was not a merchant of Venice, he or she worked as a banker, sailor, dock worker, manufacturer, shipper, and was connected with trade. Fleets of merchant ships set out from the northern Adriatic, in the heart of Europe to move large quantities of diverse products throughout the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Sailors loaded tons of precious East Indian spices onto their ships in Alexandria to be sold in places as far away as England. Some fleets loaded furs, silks, and dyes from Black Sea ports. Others carried wool and leather from Spain, and others transported enslaved people, gold, and ivory from Africa. Christian pilgrims boarded Venetian ships to sail to the Holy Land. Venetian trade routes began and ended in Venice—the center of the wealthiest trading networking Europe. A Christian monk complained that St. Mark’s Square “always seemed filled with Turks, Libyans, and Parthians,” evidence of Venice’s diverse and tolerant character. As Venetians moved goods and people across the Mediterranean Sea, cultural and political ideas traveled with them and spread throughout the region.

Human movement, started by human needs and wants, can create patterns and centers of activity. Located on the Mediterranean Sea and also midway between the markets of Asia and Western Europe, Venice used its location as an advantage to establish Mediterranean trade routes linking these markets. Trade movement brought goods as well as money to Venice, making the city a great commercial center where banking, shipbuilding and maritime (sea) supply businesses prospered.

**Define the following words:**

**City-state:**

**Commercial:**

**How did the geographic context of Venice encourage the growth of the Renaissance?**  \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

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