**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Band: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Why Italy?**

**DIRECTIONS: Actively read the information below. Label where you see the following enduring issues this best associates with is (check all that apply):**

* **CHANGE (CH)**
* **CONFLICT (CON)**
* **POWER (P)**
* **TECHNOLOGY (T)**

**Then, explain how the geographic context of Italy contributed to the beginning of the Renaissance era.**

Italy differed from the rest of Europe in other ways that led it to be the birthplace of the Renaissance. One reason was that Italy had always been different than other places in their medieval culture, thought and politics. Italy had never had a strong monarch (king) and did not rely on the lord-serf model of feudalism (land for loyalty). Therefore, making the change from the Middle Ages to a new era of progress and rebirth was a natural one for Italy. The Italian peninsula (land surround by water on 3 sides) was the birthplace of the Renaissance for several reasons. One major reason the Renaissance began in Italy is because of geography. Italy was at the crossroads (intersection) of trade, where the major trade routes like the Silk Road began and ended. Overseas trade, spurred by the Crusades, had led to the growth of large city-states in northern Italy. The region also had many sizable towns. Thus, northern Italy was urban (city) while the rest of Europe was still mostly rural (country/farm). This was particularly true of the Italian city, Venice. 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, which resulted in an intellectual revolution. Muslims trading with the Italians brought new ideas in medicine, art, and astronomy. People began to embrace these new ideas, which helped give rise to the Renaissance. Secondly, since Italy was the location main capital of the former Roman Empire and the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453. It became the refuge (escape) for the intellectuals of Constantinople who brought with them many of the great works of the ancient Greeks and Romans, works that had been lost to the West during the Dark Ages. Prior to this, scholars in Italy had been examining the works of the ancients, but they were of poor quality and often incomplete. The Renaissance was marked by a new interest in the culture of ancient Rome; it was a logical place for this reawakening (rebirth) to begin. Architectural remains, like the coliseum, statues, coins, and inscriptions (writing) –all were visible throughout Italy and acted as reminders of Roman greatness.

**1. How did Venice’s *geographic context* contribute to the beginning of the Renaissance? (Minimum of 7 sentences)** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**The enduring issue this best associates with is (check all that apply):**

* **CHANGE**
* **CONFLICT**
* **POWER**
* **TECHNOLOGY**