

Writing pre-test

This test is a diagnostic tool; it will not count toward your course grade. Your answers will help to focus the exercises and reading assignments for the course.

1. Circle the sentence that you think is clearer:
 - a. Professor Kristeller has demonstrated conclusively that the interpretation of humanism as a new system of thought locked in mortal combat with scholasticism cannot be maintained.
 - b. Professor Kristeller has conclusively disproven the belief that humanism was a new system of thought locked in mortal combat with scholasticism.
2. Circle the sentence that you think is clearer:
 - a. With the elevation of status of the humanist manuscript as an object of patronage went an increasing elaborateness of production.
 - b. As humanist manuscripts became more valued by literary patrons, they grew more elaborate.
3. Circle the passage that you think hangs together better:
 - a. One side of humanism's modernization took the form of an increasing attention to material objects, both as found in nature and as reworked by man. Classical texts were one source of this interest. From the fifteenth century on, Pliny's *Natural History* fascinated the humanists more than any other text.
 - b. One side of humanism's modernization took the form of an increasing attention to material objects, both as found in nature and as reworked by man. This interest grew in part from classical texts. No text fascinated the humanists more, from the fifteenth century onwards, than Pliny's *Natural History*.
4. Cross out any words that you think are unnecessary in the following passage:

The difficulties and dangers of reducing Renaissance humanism to some single, unitary formula have become, in recent years, increasingly apparent. Renaissance humanism contained many different schools of thought, and it is clear that the differences and changes within humanism must be examined by scholars both in themselves and in their relation to particular historical situations in the past in order to gain a true and valid appreciation of the humanist movement.

(Please turn over)

5. Some of the sentences in the following passage from a research paper require footnotes. Others do not. Put a checkmark in the box *after* each sentence that requires a footnote.

Renaissance natural history emerged out of the humanist movement. But the study of nature was not originally part of the humanist program. In *De sui ipsius et multorum aliorum ignorantia*, Petrarch had dismissed knowledge of nature as useless to salvation: “What is the use—I beseech you—of knowing the nature of quadrupeds, fowls, fishes, and serpents and not knowing or even neglecting man’s nature, the purpose for which we are born, and whence and whereto we travel?” Fifteenth-century humanist pedagogues did not share Petrarch’s contempt for the knowledge of natural things, but neither did they give it a prominent place in their ideal curricula. Pier Paolo Vergerio did note (ca. 1402-3), “Knowledge of nature [*scientia de natura*] is especially suited to the human intellect; through it we know the principles and passions of things animate and inanimate, as well as the causes and effects of the motion and change of things in heaven and earth.” But Vergerio thought of this knowledge chiefly in terms of heavenly bodies and things “that have effects in the air and near the earth.” He admitted that medicine was “a fine thing to know” but said little about it. Leonardo Bruni did not mention natural history or natural philosophy in his letter to Battista Malatesta on study and letters, written in the 1420s. Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (1450) urged boys to study geometry and astronomy, but he passed over other sciences in silence.

6. Define the following words:

primary source

secondary source

novel

essay

historiography

7. In terms of literary style, who is your favorite writer?