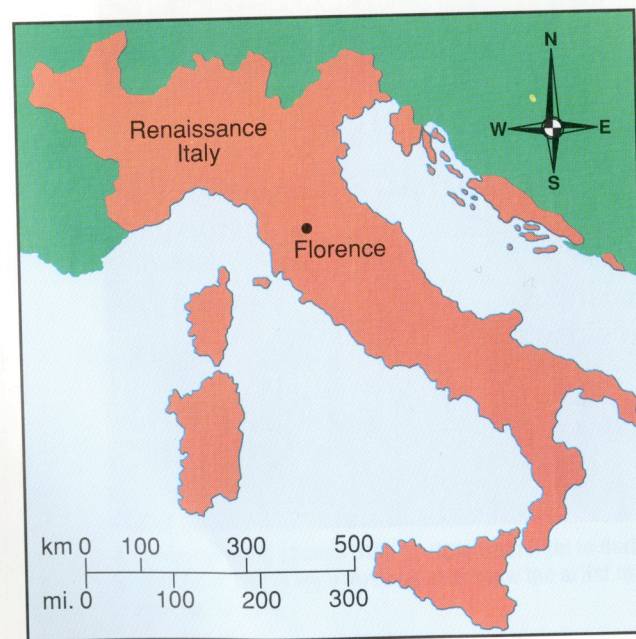


Art of the Italian Renaissance

During the Middle Ages the teachings of the Catholic Church were the focus of much of the art work. By the beginning of the 1400s, however, artists gradually began to change their style. After centuries of creating religious works, artists began to paint pictures to look as realistic as possible. The emphasis was not always on religious subjects. This time is known as the **Renaissance** (ren-uh-sahns), a period of great awakening. The word renaissance means "rebirth."

THE RENAISSANCE IN ITALY

The shift in interests that took place during the Renaissance was especially noticeable in Italy. There, a number of cities grew into trading and business centers. One of these, Florence, became the capital of Europe's cloth trade and home to its richest bank. Find Florence on the map in Figure 11-1.



Florence also became a center for art during the Renaissance. In this lesson you will read about the contributions of its artists.

Painting

Among the people living in Florence during the early 1400s was a young artist named Masaccio (muh-zahch-ee-oh). Masaccio continued where Giotto had left off a century earlier. He made the figures in his works seem solid and real. (See Figure 11-2.)

Masaccio also sought to add a true-to-life, three-dimensional quality using a technique called linear perspective (puhr-spek-tiv). **Linear perspective** is the use of slanted lines to make objects appear to extend back into space. (See Figure 11-3.) The technique was discovered by an architect and friend of Masaccio named Filippo Brunelleschi (fi-leep-oh broon-uhl-ess-kee).

The artist adds to this realistic appearance by giving the subject an expression of genuine grief. This combination of three-dimensional form and emotion became a trademark of Renaissance art.

Masaccio died suddenly at the age of 27. Some believe he may have been poisoned by a jealous rival. Luckily, there were other artists with the talent to build upon Masaccio's discoveries. One of these was a man whose talents were not limited to art. He was also skilled in science, literature, and music. The name of this gifted man was Leonardo da Vinci (lee-uh-nard-oh duh vin-chee).

Figure 11-1 Renaissance Italy.

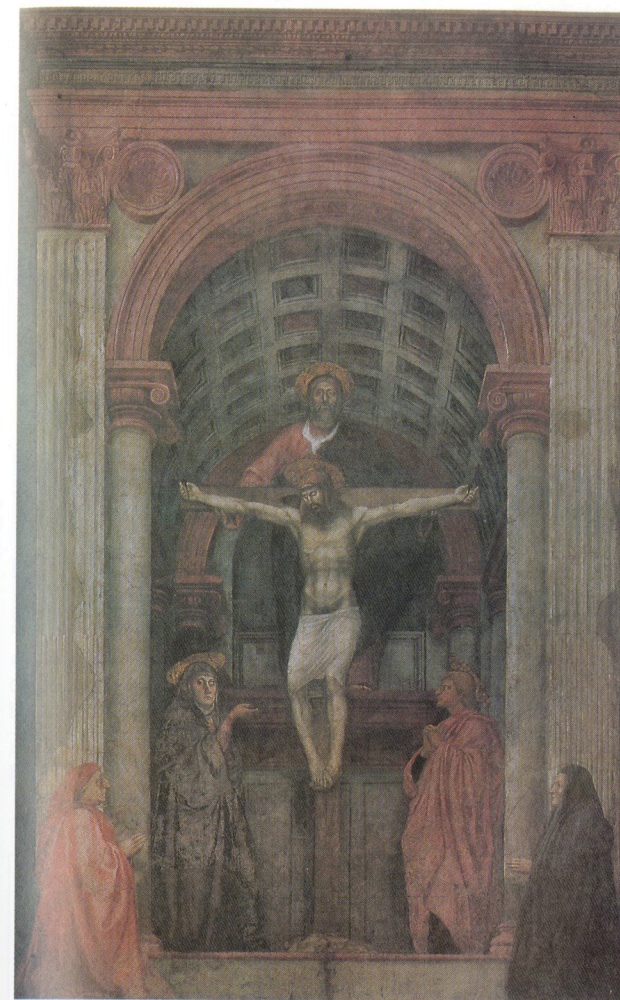
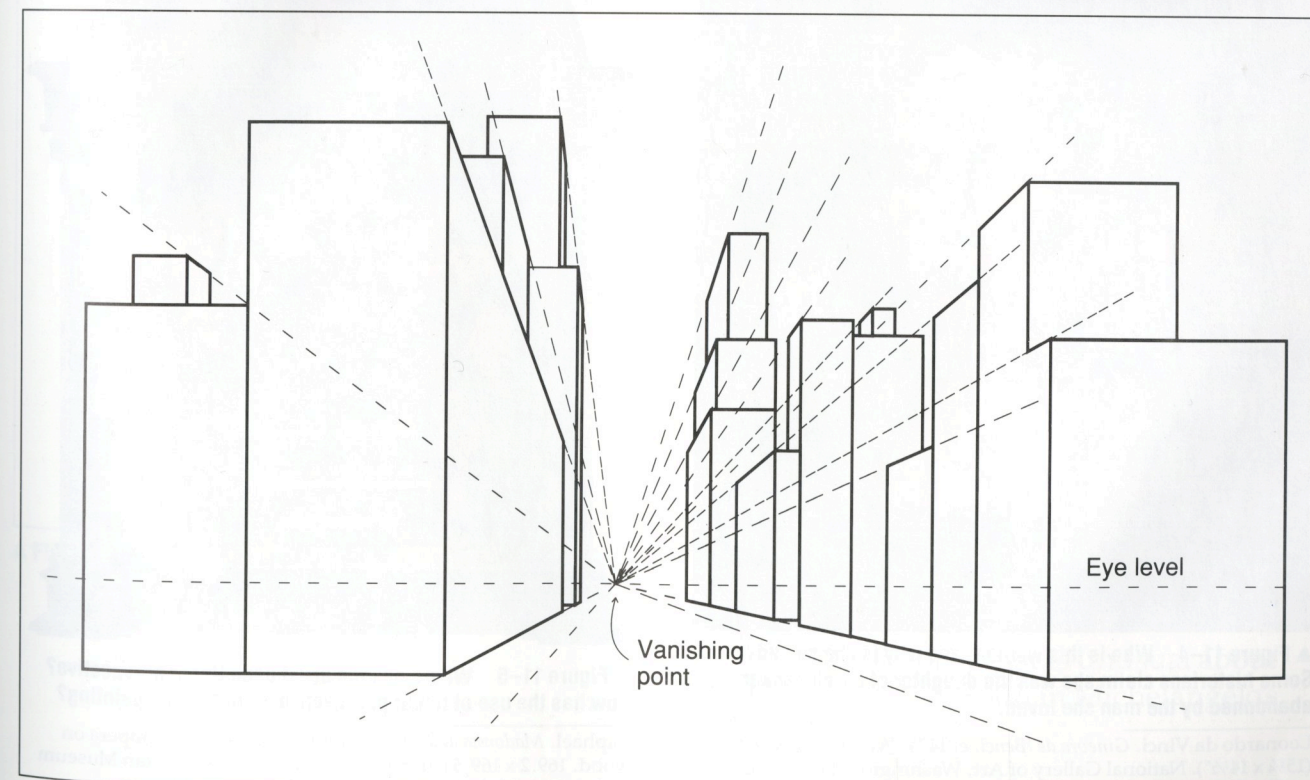


Figure 11-2 Look at this painting and identify where Masaccio has used slanted lines to produce a three-dimensional quality.

Masaccio. *The Holy Trinity*. c. 1428. Fresco. Church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy.

Figure 11-3 Diagram showing linear perspective. Linear perspective is based on a trick the eyes play on us. This trick causes the sides of a highway, for example, to seem to come together in the distance. The point at which such lines appear to meet at the horizon is called the vanishing point.



Leonardo's most famous work is a portrait, the *Mona Lisa*. Figure 11-4 shows another of his haunting portraits. In this painting Leonardo uses light and dark values in the manner developed by Giotto and Masaccio. The blending is so precise, however, that it is impossible to tell where one value ends and the next begins. Notice how these gently changing values help make the sad face seem three-dimensional. Notice how the figure of the woman stands out dramatically against the dark background.

Leonardo was recognized as a great artist even in his own day. Artists from all over flocked to Florence in the hopes of learning from him. One of these was a young painter named Raphael (raf-ee-el). Figure 11-5 is one of over 300 Madonnas that Raphael painted. A **Madonna** is a work showing the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child. In this one, Leonardo's influence can be seen in the soft change from light to dark values. Notice the expressions of the faces of the different people. How would you describe each one?



▲ Figure 11-4 Who is this woman, and why is she so sad? Some historians claim she was the daughter of a rich banker abandoned by the man she loved.

Leonardo da Vinci. *Ginevra de' Benci*. c. 1474. Wood. 38.8 x 36.7 cm (15¼ x 14½"). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund.

Sculpture

Like Leonardo, Michelangelo Buonarroti (my-kuh-lan-juh-loh bwon-nar-roe-tee) excelled in many fields, including poetry, painting, and architecture. As an artist, however, he thought of himself as a sculptor first. One of Michelangelo's greatest and best-known works is his *Pietà* (pee-ay-tah), pictured in Figure 11-6. A **Pietà** is a work showing Mary mourning over the body of Christ. Michelangelo carved his *Pietà* when he was 24 years old.

Study this work. Can you find anything unusual about the proportion of the two figures? Did you notice that Mary is much larger than her son, a full-grown man? In fact, if the figure were to stand, she would be nearly 9 feet (3 m) tall! Michelangelo purposely planned the sculpture this way. He wanted the viewer to focus on the work's mood—not on Mary's struggle to support the weight of Jesus' body. How would you describe the mood of Michelangelo's *Pietà*?



▲ Figure 11-5 Where has the artist used linear perspective? How has the use of linear perspective added to this painting?

Raphael. *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints*. Tempera on wood. 169.2 x 169.5 cm (66⅝ x 66¾"). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan.



▲ Figure 11-6 Notice that the two figures—one horizontal, the other vertical—seem almost to form a pyramid. Can you trace the lines of that pyramid with your finger?

Michelangelo. *Pietà*. c. 1501. Marble. St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, Italy.



▲ Figure 11-7 Triangles and pyramids used for balance.

STUDIO EXPERIENCE

Many Renaissance artists followed a triangular or pyramid plan to balance their work. This was used to organize the main figures in their works. This triangle plan can be found in the *Pietà*. (See Figure 11-7.) Can you find a similar plan in any other works seen in this lesson?

Using pencil and ruler, draw a large triangle on a sheet of white paper. Within this shape, fit one or more of the letters that make up your initials. Fill as much of the space inside the triangle as you can. Use only straight, ruled lines for your letters.

Now continue some of the lines beyond the triangle to the edge of the paper. This will divide the rest of your composition into various shapes. Paint the shapes within the triangle with different values of a single hue. Paint the outside shapes with different values of the complementary hue.

✓ CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. How did the art in Europe at the beginning of the 1400s differ from that of the Middle Ages?
2. What was the Renaissance? What city was its center in Italy?
3. What is linear perspective? Who discovered it? Who was one of the first artists to use it in a painting?
4. What is remarkable about the portraits painted by Leonardo da Vinci?
5. What is a Madonna? What Renaissance artist was influenced by Leonardo in his painting of Madonnas?
6. What is a Pietà? What is unusual about the use of proportion in Michelangelo's *Pietà*?

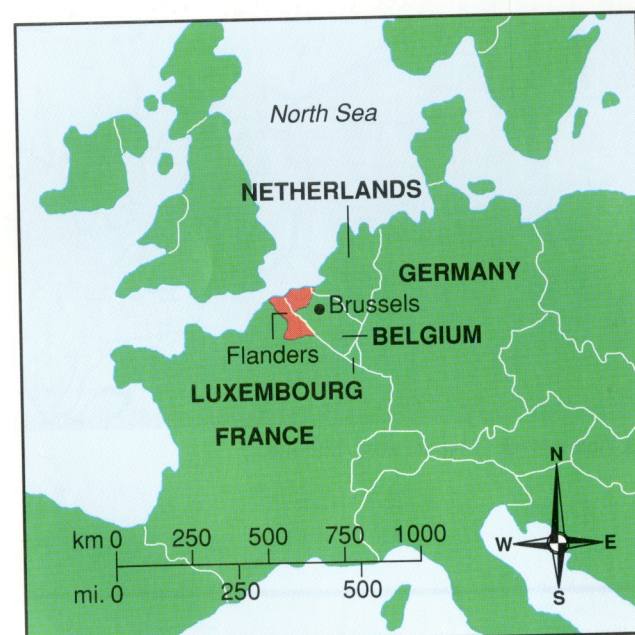
Art of the Northern Renaissance

The shift from a Gothic to a Renaissance art style happened in northern Europe later than in Italy. The changes were also slower to develop and found different forms of expression.

In this lesson you will read about the contributions of Renaissance artists of northern Europe.

THE RENAISSANCE IN THE NORTH

The Northern Renaissance was concentrated in the area of Europe known as Flanders. It had as its center the modern Belgian capital of Brussels. Find Flanders and the city of Brussels on the map in Figure 11-10.



▲ Figure 11-10 Renaissance Europe.

The art of the Northern Renaissance continued to make use of several Gothic techniques and features. One of these was symbolism. **Symbolism** is the use of an image to stand for a quality or an idea. A dog, for example, was a symbol of loyalty; a lily could mean purity.

In other ways Northern Renaissance artists experimented with new ideas. This was especially true in the area of painting.

Painting

The most important contribution of the Northern Renaissance was a new painting technique. Artists discovered that **oil paint**, a mixture of pigment, linseed oil, and turpentine, gave them a slow-drying paint. This oil-based paint was far easier to use than tempera. It allowed the artist to work more slowly and add more details. Colors, moreover, could be mixed right on the canvas.

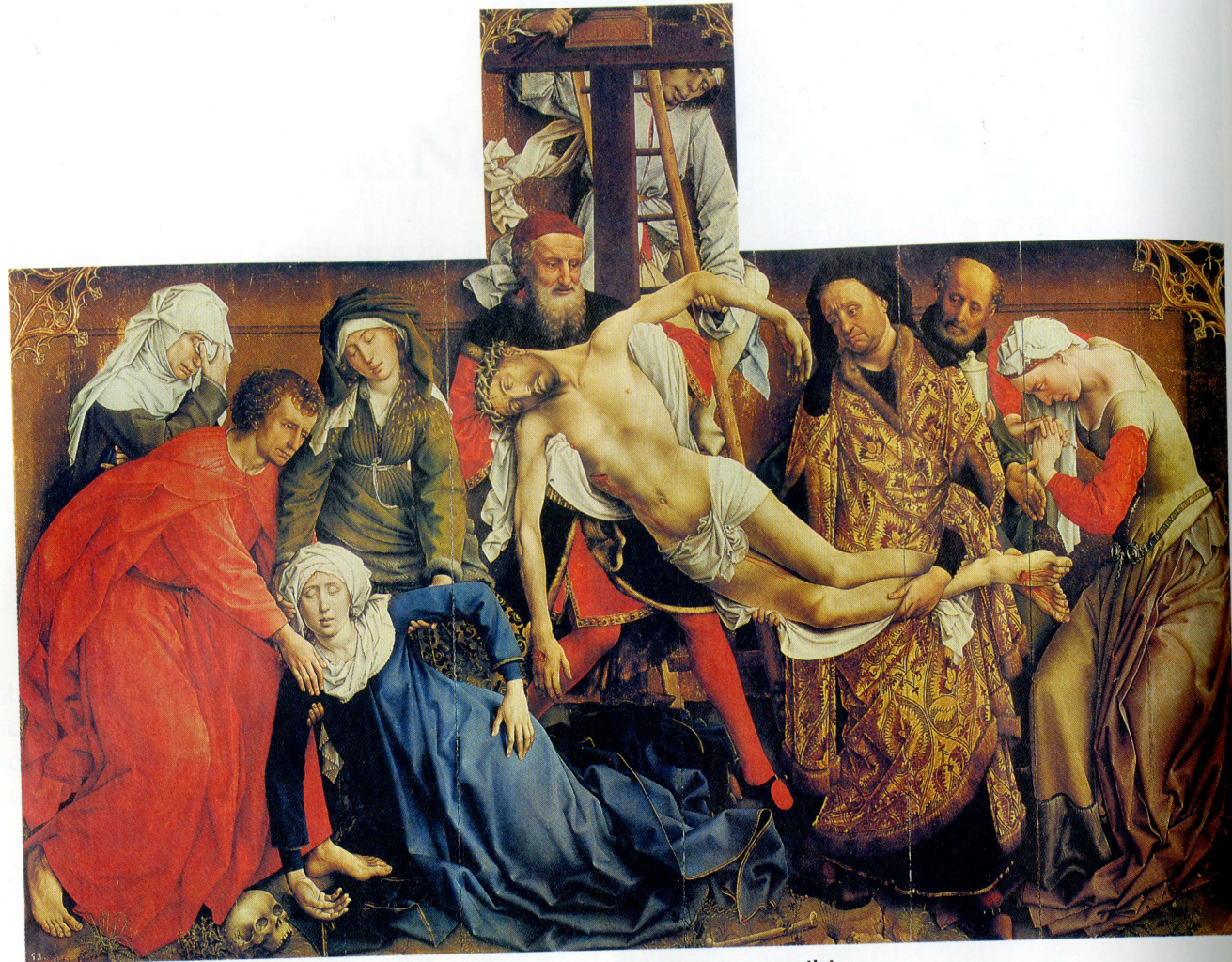
Jan van Eyck

The person often credited with discovering the oil painting technique was a Flemish artist named Jan van Eyck (**yahn van ike**). Like painters working in Italy, those in the North were fascinated with precision. Van Eyck was no exception. He would spend hours using the smallest brushes he could find to paint patterns of bark on a tree or the blades of grass in a meadow. Notice the attention to detail in the brilliantly colored work in Figure 11-11. Look especially at the textures of the robe and jeweled crown on the figure at the left. The paint is applied so skillfully that not a single brush stroke can be seen. Do you know what Bible story this work illustrates? Do you recall where you saw this event before?



◀ Figure 11-11 The work is rich with symbolism. The tiles on the floor show scenes from the Old Testament telling of the coming of the Messiah. A dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, follows a path of light streaming through an open window. The light stands for Christ.

Jan van Eyck. *The Annunciation*. 1434-1436. Oil on wood transferred to canvas. 90.2 x 34.1 cm (35 3/8 x 13 3/8"). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Andrew W. Mellon Collection.



▲ Figure 11-12 How is the artist's treatment of the Crucifixion different from how an artist of the Romanesque period would have treated it?

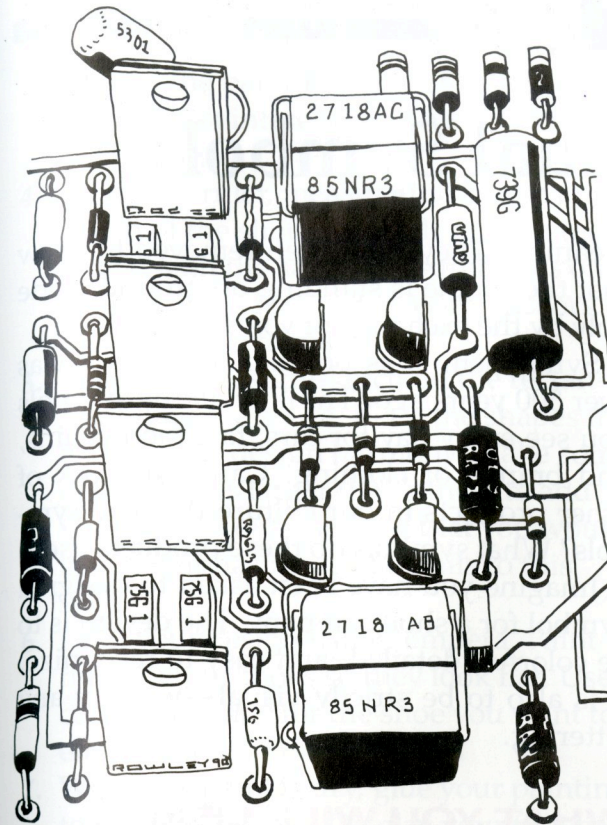
Rogier van der Weyden. *Descent from the Cross*. c. 1435. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Rogier van der Weyden

Another important Northern Renaissance painter is Rogier van der Weyden (roh-jehr van duhr vyd-uhn). Van der Weyden was greatly influenced by van Eyck. Like van Eyck, he was able to reproduce each hair, each stitch in his paintings. Unlike van Eyck, whose pictures are calm and quiet, van der Weyden painted powerful, emotional scenes.

One of these is shown in Figure 11-12. In this picture, 10 life-size figures are placed in

a shallow nook. The nook is just wide enough to hold them. The wall behind pushes the figures forward, bringing them closer to the viewer. In this way the artist forces the viewer to look at and experience this emotional scene from the Bible. Notice how the different people are reacting to the death of Christ. What has just happened to the woman in the blue dress in the foreground?



▲ Figure 11-13 Student work. Detail drawing.

STUDIO EXPERIENCE

Look again at the paintings by van Eyck and van der Weyden in Figures 11-11 and 11-12. Notice how every last detail is captured in sharp focus.

Using your imagination, do a detailed drawing of a new, complicated electronic gadget. The item might be a new type of hand-held computer, a compact disc player, or other device. In your drawing include all the features and parts, such as dials and speakers. These should be drawn in sharp focus. Fill a whole sheet of paper with your drawing. (See Figure 11-13.)

✓ CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What area became the center of the Northern Renaissance?
2. What Gothic feature continued to be used by Northern Renaissance artists?
3. What was a major contribution of artists of the Northern Renaissance? Who is credited with having discovered it?
4. In what ways were the religious paintings of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden similar? In what ways were they different?

BUILDING VOCABULARY

Number a sheet of paper from 1 to 6. After each number, write the term from the box that best matches each description below.

linear perspective	Pietà
Madonna	Renaissance
oil paint	symbolism

1. A period of great awakening.
2. The use of slanted lines to make objects appear to extend back into space.
3. A work showing the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child.
4. A work showing Mary mourning over the body of Christ.
5. The use of an image to stand for a quality or an idea.
6. A mixture of pigment, linseed oil, and turpentine.

REVIEWING ART FACTS

Number a sheet of paper from 7 to 14. Answer each question in a complete sentence.

7. Name three things the city of Florence was noted for in the 1400s.
8. Who was Masaccio? What is he remembered for?
9. Name two areas besides art in which Leonardo da Vinci was skilled.
10. In what way can Leonardo's influence be seen in the works of Raphael?
11. What is unusual about the proportions of the two figures in Michelangelo's *Pietà*?
12. What geometric shape did Renaissance artists use as a way of planning their works?
13. What feature of Gothic art did Northern Renaissance artists continue to use in their works?
14. What Northern Renaissance painter is credited for discovering oil paint?

THINKING ABOUT ART

On a sheet of paper, answer each question in a sentence or two.

1. **Interpret.** Read the following statement: "Art of the present would not be possible without art of the past." Describe three facts about artists or events of the Renaissance that you would use to support this statement.
2. **Analyze.** Look once again at the two paintings by Jan van Eyck (Figures 11–11 and 11–14). Which has the most lifelike details? Which particular details struck you as looking most like a photograph?
3. **Compare and contrast.** In what ways were the art styles of the Renaissance in Italy and in the North similar? In what ways were they different?

MAKING ART CONNECTIONS

1. **Language Arts.** Artists of the Renaissance were greatly influenced by the art of ancient Greece and Rome. Pick a painting or sculpture that you studied in Chapter 7. Choose another from the present chapter. Write a short report noting where Greek or Roman influences were strongest in Renaissance art. Discuss how breakthroughs during the Renaissance allowed artists to expand their horizons still further.
2. **Social Studies.** Michelangelo, as you read in this chapter, was gifted in many fields. Two of these were painting and architecture. In an art history book or encyclopedia, read about his contributions in these two areas. Note names of specific projects and, if possible, make photocopies of pictures of the works. In addition, gather details of Michelangelo's life. Combine your findings with information on his sculpture into a book.

LOOKING AT THE DETAILS

The detail shown below is from Andrea del Castagno's *Portrait of a Man*. Study the detail and answering the following questions using complete sentences.

1. How does color affect the mood in this painting?
2. What details has the artist used to contribute to a mood of wealth and authority?



Andrea del Castagno. *Portrait of a Man*. c. 1450. Oil on wood. (Detail.) 54 x 40.5 cm (21¼ x 15⅞"). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Andrew W. Mellon Collection.

3. How do you, as a viewer, feel in the presence of this work?
4. Do you think Castagno involves the viewer in this work of art? Explain your answer.