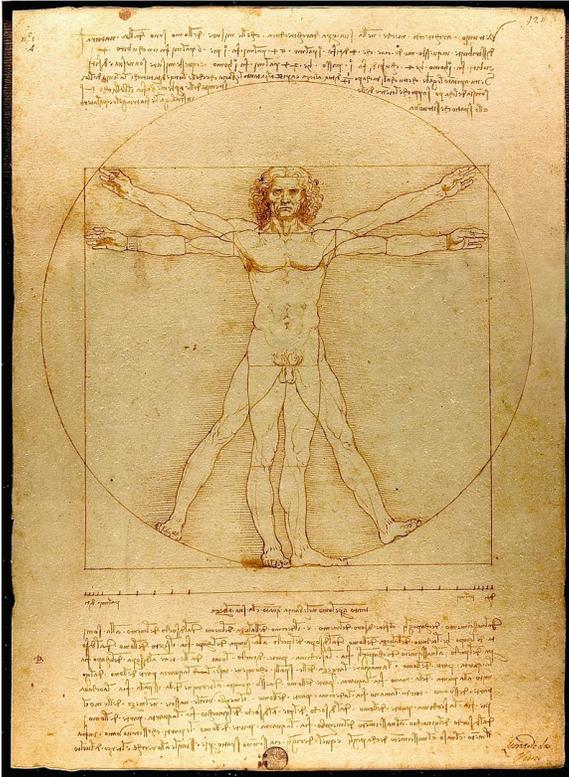


# Humanist Themes in Renaissance Art

**Directions:** Examine each of the following works of art and architecture, read the descriptions, and using the information about Humanism in your notes, identify as many aspects of Humanism as you can for each!

## *The Vitruvian Man - Leonardo Da Vinci*



The drawing, which is in pen and ink on paper, depicts a man in two superimposed positions with his arms and legs apart and inscribed in a circle and square. The drawing is based on the correlations of ideal human proportions with geometry described by the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius in Book III of his treatise *De Architectura*. Vitruvius described the human figure as being the principal source of proportion among the Classical orders of architecture. Vitruvius determined that the ideal body should be eight heads high. Leonardo's drawing is traditionally named in honor of the architect. (1490)

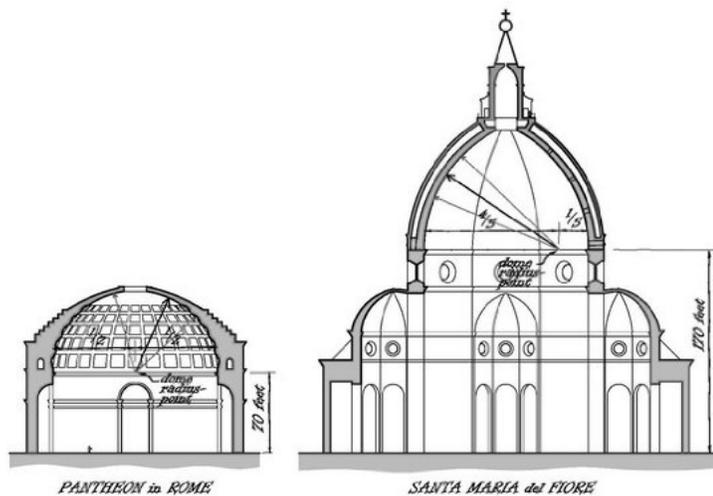
This famous work of art depicts the body of Jesus on the lap of his mother Mary after the Crucifixion. Michelangelo's interpretation of the Pietà is unprecedented in Italian sculpture. It is an important work as it balances the Renaissance ideals of classical beauty with naturalism. Christ's face does not reveal signs of The Passion. Michelangelo did not want his version of the Pietà to represent death, but rather to show the "religious vision of abandonment and a serene face of the Son", thus the representation of the communion between man and God by the sanctification through Christ. (1499)

## *The Pietà - Michelangelo Buonarroti*



# The Vitruvian Man - Leonardo Da Vinci

By the beginning of the 15th century, after a hundred years of construction, the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore (Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Flowers) was still missing its dome. The plans called for an octagonal dome higher and wider than any that had ever been built, without flying buttresses to keep it from falling under its own weight, as many Italians found them to be ugly. That architectural choice, in 1367, was one of the first events of the Italian Renaissance, marking a break with the Medieval Gothic style and a return to the classic Mediterranean dome. The architect's model depicted a massive inner dome, open at the top to admit light, like Rome's Pantheon, but covered by an outer shell to keep out the weather.



The building of such a masonry dome posed many technical problems. The architect tasked with engineering the dome, Filippo Brunelleschi, looked to the great dome of the Pantheon in Rome for solutions. However, the dome of the Pantheon is a single shell of concrete, the formula for which had long since been forgotten. Brunelleschi decided to build the dome out of brick, due to its light weight compared to stone and being easier to form. Another problem was finding a way to support the dome while it was being built. In the building of the Roman Pantheon, soil filled with silver coins had held up the dome while its concrete set. This could not be the solution in the case of Brunelleschi's dome because would put the church

out of use. He thought of building a temporary wooden scaffold for support, but there was not enough timber in all of Tuscany to build it. Ultimately, Brunelleschi decided to build the dome with nothing under it during construction. To provide support, he used a set of chains made of iron, stone, and wood wrapped around the base of the dome, which allowed it to hold its shape. Brunelleschi's famous dome became a symbol of the Renaissance and it remains the largest brick dome ever constructed.