

The **Profile** feature presents people, places, or events of the time, illustrating their viewpoints and effects on the society of the time.

PROFILE

The Medici Family

The Medici family was a powerful influence in Florence for three centuries from the mid-1400s to the mid-1700s. As well as controlling the government, the oligarchy was wealthy enough to

- pay for some of the most beautiful and innovative churches, buildings, and monuments in Florence
- employ and support many of the most famous Renaissance painters, sculptors, and architects
- study and collect the works of ancient Greek and Roman authors
- hold social events to discuss ideas and art

Cosimo de Medici was called *pater patrie*, “father of his country” (city-state), because of his support of the arts and public buildings in Florence. Some of these buildings included churches, monasteries, the Medici Library, and the Plato Academy, where scholars gathered to discuss the ideas of the Greek classics. As well as being a generous patron of the arts, he was also an excellent statesman and led the negotiations for the Treaty of Lodi (1454), which brought peace to the city-states of Florence, Venice, Milan, Rome, and Naples.

Cosimo’s grandson, Lorenzo de Medici, (1449–1492) was called Lorenzo the Magnificent. He succeeded his grandfather as ruler of Florence and was also a great **patron of the arts**. He supported some of the greatest artists of the

Renaissance, including Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, and was himself a poet. Unlike his grandfather, he did not use his money to fund public buildings, but used it to acquire a private collection of antiquities and art. When conspirators tried to murder him and succeeded in killing his brother, the people of Florence supported him and he maintained control of the city-state. Shortly after Lorenzo’s death, the Medici lost power when French armies invaded Italy.

patron of the arts: a person who provides financial or other support for artists



Top: *Cosimo de Medici*, portrait by Pontormo



Right: *Lorenzo de Medici*, portrait by Giorgio Vasari

The Medici were wealthy bankers who sponsored the works of many Renaissance artists, artisans, and sculptors.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. What were some of the details of the elements of worldview of the citizens of Florence — social systems, political and economic systems, and culture — that were presented in the last few pages? Use a graphic organizer to show the details of the Florentine worldview.
2. Why did Florence become an important city-state?
3. How did the Medici family reflect the values of Florentine society?