

## Architecture The Duomo



The Duomo  
Florence, Italy

One building, more than any other, marks the arrival of the Renaissance to Europe. Did you know that “naissance” means “birth” in French and that the Renaissance was the rebirth of classical learning in Italy? Art and architecture took off during the Renaissance. Many new ideas influenced design. The Duomo, with its grand dome, is a perfect example of new ideas and **innovation**.<sup>1</sup>

Work on the Duomo cathedral, in Florence, Italy, actually started before the Renaissance, in 1296. But the building took 140 years to complete. The **plague**<sup>2</sup> and many wars prevented construction from continuing on the building as planned. By 1420, the building was almost finished, but there was one serious problem. The plans for the building called for a huge cupola, or dome—bigger than anything built up to that point. No one knew how to build such a dome.

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<sup>1</sup> **innovation** - a new invention or idea

<sup>2</sup> **plague** – terrible sickness

Church officials were worried that the task of constructing a huge dome might be impossible. What would support the weight of the dome? How would they keep it from caving in and damaging the rest of the church? They decided to hold a contest to see who could come up with a plan to make the dome.

One of the architects who entered the contest was Filippo Brunelleschi. Although church officials were **skeptical**,<sup>3</sup> they let him proceed with his plans. He used many innovative architectural ideas to build the dome. One of these ideas was a double shell design. This meant that a lighter dome was added outside to protect the heavier inner dome. Ribs and rings were used between the two domes for support. The shape of the dome was very much like the top half of an egg.

The dome of the Duomo was much more like the older structures on the Greek Acropolis than the cathedrals around Europe at the time. The shape of the dome itself symbolized the Renaissance's return to the ideals of the Greek and Roman empires.

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<sup>3</sup> **skeptical** – having doubts, not believing

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where was the Duomo built?
  - a. Paris
  - b. Florence
  - c. London
  - d. Rome
  
2. The author describes the idea for the double shell design because
  - a. it required innovation, an important part of the Renaissance.
  - b. all Renaissance buildings were made with that design.
  - c. it is a perfect example of architecture in the Middle Ages.
  - d. it is how Brunelleschi got the idea to start building the Duomo.
  
3. Why were the church officials skeptical of Brunelleschi's plans?
  - a. He offered to do the work for free.
  - b. He wanted to try things that had not been done.
  - c. Many others had built domes that had collapsed.
  - d. He was unable to explain why the plans would work.
  
4. Read the following sentence: "Although church officials were skeptical, they let him **proceed** with his plans."

The word **proceed** means

  - a. to start over from the beginning
  - b. to stop doing something suddenly
  - c. to write something down
  - d. to go ahead and do something
  
5. What is the main idea of this passage?
  - a. "Naissance" means "birth" in French.
  - b. The Duomo took many years to complete.
  - c. The Duomo is an excellent example Renaissance thinking.
  - d. Nobody knows how the Duomo was really built.

6. The church officials had a problem because they thought constructing a huge dome for the Duomo might be impossible. Who solved the problem?

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7. Why do you think the Renaissance is an important time period in history?

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

First someone had to figure out how to build a huge dome \_\_\_\_\_ the Duomo could be completed.

- a. when
- b. because
- c. after
- d. before

9. Read the following sentence.

**Filippo Brunelleschi figured out a way to finish building the Duomo, in Florence, Italy.**

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

- 1. Who? Filippo Brunelleschi
- 2. What did Brunelleschi do? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Where? \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Vocabulary Word:** innovation: a new invention or idea.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher Guide and Answers**

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 760

**Featured Text Structure:** Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

**Passage Summary:** The author points to the Duomo cathedral in Florence, Italy as a superb example of the Renaissance. It is then explained how Filippo Brunelleschi solved the problem of creating a huge dome to complete the construction of the cathedral.

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5. What is the main idea of this passage?

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6. The church officials had a problem because they thought constructing a huge dome for the Duomo might be impossible. Who solved the problem?

**Suggested answer:** Filippo Brunelleschi

7. Why do you think the Renaissance is an important time period in history?

**Suggested answer:** Answers will vary but students could say the Renaissance was important because of the creation of art and architecture during the period.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

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- 1. Who? Filippo Brunelleschi
- 2. What did Brunelleschi do? **figured out a way to finish building the Duomo**
- 3. Where? **in Florence, Italy**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** innovation: a new invention or idea.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.