



Speaker: Petrarch is sometimes referred to as the "Father of Humanism". Although he died in the late 1300s before the Medici family came to power, his legacy continued, and his work was highly influential, leading eventually to Neoplatonism. Petrarch was a Latin scholar who was enamored with the elegance and grace of Latin literature, particularly the works of Virgil and Cicero. He claimed to converse with these long-dead great writers, metaphorically speaking. He championed the ideal that the culture and learning of ancient Greece and Rome were to be emulated as a model and measure of achievement.

Petrarch's extensive writing excited others to study classical antiquities. By the middle of the '1300s, humanist scholars were combing Dustin monastery libraries under the mini neglected Greek texts, which were then translated into Latin and Italian. The rise of the printing press helped to spread the works of Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, and others. Petrarch's writings are extremely virtuous, and champion learning and the quest for truth, as key elements in living a virtuous life and improving humanity.

This included the appreciation of beauty as a spiritual pursuit. The perfection of beauty was a reflection of God's divine love and could be found in both nature and in humans. In Petrarch sonnets, he was known for glorifying the physical beauty of a woman whom he called Laura, who was apparently a complete stranger to him. His sonnets are noted for their extended metaphors and were widely imitated throughout Western Europe. Again, thanks to the development of the printing press, and the greater availability of books in print.

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