Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

UNIT 9

Primary Source Reading 1



Proper manners and behavior were very important to Renaissance people. Probably the most famous book of advice for the ambitious court gentleman was *The Book of the Courtier,* published in 1528 by Baldassare Castiglione. As the selections here show, Castiglione emphasized that gentlemen should have many qualities and skills.

Directions **Read the selection below and answer the questions that follow. Use another sheet of paper if necessary.**

Renaissance Manners

Besides his noble birth, then I would have the Courtier . . . endowed by nature not only with talent and beauty of person and feature, but with a certain grace and (as we say) air that shall make him at first sight pleasing and agreeable to all who see him; . . .

. . . It is fitting also [for the Courtier] to know how to swim, to leap, to run, to throw stones, for besides the use that may be made of this in war, a man often has occasion to show what he can do in such matters; whence good esteem is to be won, especially with the multitude, . . . Another admirable exercise, and one very befitting a man at court, is the game of tennis, in which are well shown the . . . quickness and suppleness of every [part of the body], and all those qualities that are seen in nearly every other exercise. . . .

I would have him more than passably accomplished in letters, at least in those studies that are called the humanities, . . . Let him be versed in the poets, and not less in the orators and historians, and also proficient in writing verse and prose, especially in this vulgar tongue [common language] of ours; for besides the enjoyment he will find in it, he will by this means never lack agreeable entertainment with ladies, who are usually fond of such things. . . .

. . . I am not content with the Courtier unless he be also a musician and unless, besides understanding and being able to read notes [music], he can play upon [various] instruments. For if we consider rightly, there is to be found no rest from toil or medicine for the troubled spirit more becoming and praiseworthy in time of leisure, than this; and especially in courts, where . . . many things are done to please the

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ladies, whose tender and gentle spirit is easily penetrated by harmony and filled with sweetness. . . .

. . . when dancing in the presence of many and in a place full of people, it seems to me that he should preserve a certain dignity, [even if] tempered with a [flexible] and airy grace of movement; and although he may feel himself to be very nimble and a master of time and measure, let him not attempt those [quick movements] of foot and double steps which . . . perhaps would be little suited to a gentleman. . . .

Therefore in my opinion the way that the Courtier ought to take to make his love known to the Lady, seems to me to be by showing it to her in manner rather than in works;—for verily more of love's affection is sometimes revealed in a sigh, in reverence, in timidity, than in a thousand words; . . .

From *The Book of the Courtier*, by Baldassare Castiglione, translation by Leonard Eckstein Opdycke. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901).

Reviewing the Reading

1. According to Castiglione, what does the Courtier need in addition to good looks?

2. What kind of education in literature and music should a gentleman have?

3. What athletic skills does the writer recommend?

4. What does he criticize about some noblemen's style of dancing?

5. **Critical Thinking** Do you think you would enjoy knowing the kind of person Castiglione describes? Why or why not?