The Renaissance was a time of learning, but it wasn't a time of schools as we know them today. Public schools for everyone were still a long way off. In Renaissance Europe, schooling was for those who could afford it. Some people were well educated, while others never attended school.

Education for Renaissance boys was of two sorts. There was classical education based on the Latin language for boys who planned to go on to a university. There was also education through apprenticeships for boys who planned to pursue a trade.

Girls received less education than boys during the Renaissance. Some girls did become well educated in the classics, and some also became apprentices. Many more were educated mainly in practical matters at home.

In England, boys who were being prepared for college began with petty school. This was the earliest school for very young boys, and it was often taught in the teacher's home. Soon, these boys progressed to grammar school, where they learned Latin vocabulary and grammar. Classics of Latin literature were used as the texts for their lessons.

In grammar school, the boys were taught by a Latin master. The master instructed the boys from his raised desk. The boys at their benches took notes with their quill pens, keeping a record of sayings and vocabulary words that might be useful later on.

In these Renaissance grammar schools, boys were strictly punished when they misbehaved. Just like boys today, they were punished for offenses that included swearing and fighting. Their punishment was a number of "stripes" with a birch rod or a flat stick like a ruler.

Schools then did not have organized sports teams, but the boys enjoyed a game on their own whenever they had time. Their school day was long, lasting around twelve hours.

Boys who completed their grammar school studies were ready to go on to a university. There they would continue to receive a classical education by studying the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Hippocrates, and others. Some students would prepare for a career in law, others would study theology, and still others would take up medicine. Whatever their chosen field, however, all of the university students were expected to become educated in the seven liberal arts. They studied grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

At the University of Padua in Italy, science was considered very important. Boys there received a liberal education, but they were also encouraged to have a spirit of scientific curiosity and experimentation. They were taught to observe the world for themselves in addition to reading what the classics had to say about it.

Not everyone who wanted to learn more chose the classical university education. Many boys became apprentices to a master craftsman in order to learn a trade. They began their apprenticeships at a very young age. The master craftsman was not only in charge of teaching his trade. He was also responsible for feeding and clothing his apprentices and for teaching them good character traits.

An apprenticeship was on-the-job training, so apprentices worked on real projects in their master's shop. Several apprentices might work on different parts of one project. For this reason, it was important for each apprentice to copy his master's style well.

After an apprenticeship of about seven years, a young man would produce a work of his own, known as his masterwork. If it was good enough, he was ready to continue his education by spending several years as a journeyman. Finally, after more years of training and practice, he would finally be ready to open a shop of his own.

Many young people did not have the opportunity to go to school during the Renaissance. Over half of them never learned to read or write. Many never learned a skilled trade. Members of the nobility and the newly rich merchants were the most likely to benefit from a Renaissance education.
Education in the Renaissance

Questions

1. Beginning in the Renaissance, all children were required to go to school.
   A. true
   B. false

2. Boys studied Latin in grammar school to prepare for an apprenticeship.
   A. false
   B. true

3. During the Renaissance, apprenticeships were mainly for boys, and university study was mainly for girls.
   A. false
   B. true

4. Boys who were members of the nobility or the peasant class were the most likely to receive a good education.
   A. false
   B. true

5. Masterworks were produced by apprentices.
   A. false
   B. true

6. In grammar school, boys learned ______.
   A. Latin
   B. medicine, theology, or law
   C. a trade
   D. English

7. Aristotle lived during ______.
   A. the Middle Ages
   B. modern times
   C. the Renaissance
   D. classical times

8. Apprentices spent _____ learning a trade.
   A. one year
   B. weeks
   C. years
   D. months

During the Renaissance, the type of education a young person received depended in part on what occupation he wanted to pursue. Make a list of occupations that a person might have worked at during the Renaissance. Then tell whether you think a university education, an apprenticeship, or no formal education would have been needed for each one.
Suppose that you are a master craftsman during the Renaissance and that you are in charge of two 8-year-old apprentices. First, decide what trade you will be working in. Then write about what you will do during one work day to teach and care for your apprentices.