

# **The Stones of Florence Study Guide**

## **The Stones of Florence by Mary McCarthy**

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# Plot Summary

The Stones of Florence by Mary McCarthy is a book about ancient Florence and how it thrived from the days of its beginning along the shore of the river Arno. McCarthy's book is the story of the art, architecture and culture of Florence. It is mostly the story of the patronage of the de Medici family and the artists of the area. Most of the great art of the city was done under the patronage of the de Medici family and this is the story Mary McCarthy is telling in this book.

The book opens with a look at modern Florence as it is in 1959, the time the book was written. The city is noisy with the sounds of autos, trucks, motorcycles, scooters, not to mention the bicycles and tourists. Tourists go to Florence because it is the epitome of culture for tourists. It is rich in architecture and art history, its main attractions. At the time it is not well known for its restaurants or its catering to tourists.

The remainder of the book is a look at the past. Whether or not the city was founded by Catiline or not is immaterial. Once the city came into being, it was inhabited by one of the most prosperous people in Europe. The Medicis were world famous bankers and extensive patrons of the arts. Many of the great masterpieces are the result of the de Medici patronage. Many of the great names in art—Giotto, da Vinci, Michelangelo, Donatello and others—were all Florentines and at one time or another worked for the de Medicis on various projects. Florence was not only the center of the Renaissance, it is where the Renaissance began. The arts would not have flourished the way they did if it had not been for the Florentines. Many of the great masterpieces would not have been created.

One characteristic of the Florentines was the desire to be first in many respects. They were the innovators of Italy and the world in not only art, but also in mathematics and science. They developed many of the maps used in navigation as well as much of the equipment. They composed the first opera, organized the first library. They were the first literary critics. They were the first to study the role of power in politics. This desire to be first resulted in their role as innovators, as with Brunelleschi and the dome of the Duomo.

Any disaster that hit the city resulted in the city being rebuilt largely under the sponsorship of the de Medicis. Florence thrived as the art center of the world under the de Medicis. Many of the great masterpieces were commissioned and executed under the de Medici patronage. When the de Medicis were expelled from Florence for the final time, the patronage of the arts basically ended and Florence ceased to be the big center of art that it had been earlier.

After World War II and the end of fascism, free institutions were re-established in Florence and small craftsmen reappeared and Florence is still known for its crafts throughout the world.

# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Every visitor to Florence wants to know how the natives tolerate the heat, the noise and the traffic. Florence in many ways appears to be drab and dull to foreigners with many banks, insurance companies, loan companies and gift shops selling things like place mats. It does not seem to be thrilling and exciting. There have been too many copies of the famous artworks floating around the world and many people associate the architecture with a schoolroom. The city is like an academic study to them and because of this it is a hard city for foreigners to understand.

"'Nobody comes here any more', says the old Berenson, wryly, in his villa at Settignano, and the echoing sculpture gallery of the Bargello bears him out; almost nobody comes here. The big vaulted main hall seems full of marble wraiths: San Giorgio, San Giovanni, San Giovannino, the dead gods and guardians of the city. The uniformed modern guards standing sentinel over the creations of Donatello, Desiderio, Michelezzo, Luca della Robbia, Agostino di Duccio have grown garrulous from solitude, like people confined in prison: they fall on the rare visitor (usually an art historian) and will scarcely let him go. The Uffizi, on the contrary, is invaded by barbarian hordes from the North, squadrons of tourists in shorts, wearing sandals or hiking shoes, carrying metal canteens and cameras, smelling of sweat and sun-tan oil, who have been hustled in here by their guides to contemplate 'Venus on the Half-Shell'" (Chapter 1, p. 2).

Florence does not have as many selective tourists. These are the kind that come to see certain things. They have the tourists that are part of tours now. They are not the art historians or art connoisseurs of the past. The town they are visiting does not have the color palette of Rome or Venice. Florence is done in beiges, creams and yellows and all of the great artists and architects who created the city were bachelors. The Florentines are known for their frugality and the city is known for its heat in the summer. It does not have the sea or the breezes other cities have and this makes many tourists uncomfortable in Florence. There is also the traffic hazard. Many people run the risk of being hit by a car when they try to view some of the city's historic buildings from distant vantage points.

The typical street in Florence with historical sites on it is also a major traffic thoroughfare. This means there are bound to be clashes between tourists and traffic. The sidewalks are usually narrow and jammed with tourists. Interspersed with them are the native population, old ladies, baby carriages, grocery carts, and bikes. The traffic includes expensive luxury cars, trucks, and motorcycles. Needless to say, Florence is a very noisy city with the noise continuing around the clock. The suburbs of Florence are also noisy and there are complaints about the noise just as there are complaints about the heat. Keeping the windows open at night means that no one sleeps. Because of this, hotel guests are constantly switching rooms with the hotel staff, who try to

accommodate the complaining guests—if the guests feel they will be more comfortable in a different part of the hotel, let them try to be comfortable there.

The city also has a law which prohibits horn honking. How do you prevent drivers from honking their horns in busy city traffic? There is nothing that can be done to keep car and truck engines quite. How do you stop motor scooters and motorcycles? Readers send their suggestions to the newspapers, but they also know there is no way to keep traffic quiet. The locals complain of being awakened at all hours during the night by the traffic noises.

There have been plans over the years to try to solve the traffic problem in various ways. Some have included building residences for all workers in the suburbs and busing them to work. The satellite city was to be called Sorgane but the planned city was defeated. Time has meant that some modernization has occurred but Florence still has its traffic and housing problem even though it is a modern and expanding city, like most urban centers throughout the world. Many people do not like this because they believe that Florence should always stay the same and retain its Old World flavor. Even though Florence is a tourist Mecca, it is still a working city in terms of being a transportation junction and a marketing and manufacturing center.

The city does not cater to tourists in terms of food either. The food of Florence is the food that the natives prefer. The Florence of this time is not known for its restaurants or its cuisine. Most of the restaurants are expensive and do not cater to tourist tastes. Many tourists file complaints against the pensiones and restaurants claiming they have been cheated. These complaints are usually listed in the morning newspapers for people to read. The Florentines themselves are not usually friendly to the tourists—they will not go out of their way to help tourists with directions or advice on what to see. This is why most tourists miss many of the smaller churches. They see the bigger ones and feel lost in the bigness.

Time also has not treated Florence kindly. In other ruins are a part of the civilization, as in Venice and Rome. In Florence, decay does not result in historical ruins sought after by artists: they are just buildings which need to be repaired continually and represent mounting debt. Yet at the same time, Florence is changing. It is being taken over by the Milanesi who are modernizing the residences. Always known as a city of extremes, Florence is the city where the Fascists held on after being liberated by the Allies. The city had been the intellectual center of the anti-Fascist movement and active in the Resistance.

# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Florence was founded by an individual named Catiline who fled from Rome. He found a small hill town called Fiesole where he settled until a Roman expedition came and forced him out. Catiline and a warrior called Fiorino fled and built a camp on the river Arno. This becomes the city of Florence after Caesar finds them and starts to build a city there. There are still signs of the Roman occupation in the city if one knows what to look for and where to look. There are various stories about the founding of Florence but this is the most common. Another story has the city being rebuilt by Charlemagne.

Florence has many underground locations just as many other cities do. There are crypts, temples, pillars and other ruins. There is a statute of the Florentine heraldic lion that figures prominently in Florentine history because it represents the god Mars. The statute was broken and headless when, after some building improvements in 1300, it was placed the wrong way, facing north instead of east. In 1330 it fell into the Arno during a flood which swept away a bridge where the statute was. The war god was then replaced by a lion and it is believed that during the Middle Ages, lions were kept in the dungeons of the palace in the city.

There is a temple to the Egyptian goddess of floods and rivers, Isis. There were priests who were devoted to Isis and the Magma Mater. The Mourning Mother provided a link to the seasons and the calendar which stated the new year on March 25th. This is the day of the Annunciation. Mercato Vecchio, the marketplace, has statues of the emperors and magistrates around it and even with all of the churches there are many who complain about the lack of religious feeling. There are many statues, even in the churches. "The statuary of Florence is its genius or attendant spirit, compelling awe not only because it is better than any other statuary done since ancient Greece, a categorical statement, but because, good and bad alike, it is part of the very fabric of the city - the republica or public thing. It belongs to a citizenry, stubborn and independent, and to geography, like that of Athens, of towering rock and stone" (Chapter 2, p. 34).

The hills around Florence were rich in marble. The marble was used for carving sculptures more than three hundred years before Michelangelo, even though he did a lot of his work in marble from the region. The marble block Michelangelo used to make the statute David was laying around for more than forty years in the workshop of the Cathedral. Agostino di Duccio had been using it and ruined it for his purposes so the block sat there until Michelangelo found it. The Piazza della Signoria is full of ancient statutes, more than any other in ancient Florence. This was the center of the city. The religious center of the city was located in the Piazza of the Duomo.

The civic center had Donatello's Judith and Holofernes set up in it on a base called the aringhiera. This used to be used to deliver political speeches and to sign decrees on. At

this time the de Medicis had an on again off again relationship with Florence. They would be chased out and then would return to the city. The statues were examples of what people wanted government to be - permanent and durable. The marble and stone are indestructible and governments try to associate with this. Whenever other Italian cities wanted some kind of sculpture, they sent to Florence for the artist and the material.

The outer walls of the Bargello were decorated with paintings of criminals. This was also true with the Bonfire of the Vanities. These and all of the statues created an eerie effect. The religious and the civic were more or less identical as in ancient times in that the saints were more or less civic heroes yet they had no fear of the Pope. They had been known to excommunicate him in the past. Private feelings were expressed in artwork in tombs and in bas-reliefs. Much of the artwork appears to be classical, but this has nothing to do with the classical model, and the Florentines drew the line between public and private. Mourning was confined to the family and was private and individuals were not allowed to be glorified. Many Florentine rulers and wealthy citizens preferred plain looking residences so they appeared to be more private. Pope Clement VII, a de Medici, broke this rule when he commissioned Michelangelo to design tombs for two members of his family.

Then came the reaction to nude statues, even among the private collectors. The Florentines became embarrassed by the nudity of the statues and even David had a fig leaf. Eventually the passion and need for artwork diminished. People still collected for themselves but not like before. For a while during this time, Baccio Bandinelli was the most popular sculptor in Florence, even more popular than Michelangelo. His sculptures imitated the classics. It is said that Donatello produced finer sculpture than Michelangelo even though Michelangelo's were bigger. However, Michelangelo created the last big public sculpture.

The Santa Trinita bridge is an example of public sculpture which has been described as the most beautiful bridge in the world. It was destroyed by the Germans during World War II and was rebuilt. Speculation abounded about the design of a curve which seemed to be a free-hand design. The curve was eventually attributed to Michelangelo since it was found in the di Medici tombs. The dispute still continues about the bridge and its design. The Santa Trinita bridge was built with stone from the river Arno.

# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Modern day Pistoia still exists and is about a thirty minute autostrada ride from Florence. The Black and White division rivalry begins in Pistoia over a game involving children. One family will not accept the other's apology and the rivalry is born. This leads to different groups forming behind each family and taking up arms in the names of Guelphs and Ghibellines. The word pistole is a derivative of the city's name and means a dagger. This is one of the things made in the city beginning in the sixteenth century as there are a large number of forges located in the city.

There is a town hall in Pistoia with a large head on it. Rumor has it that it is the head of a traitor since the town was betrayed. The keys on the building are said to be the keys to the city the traitor gave away. Across from this building is the Palace of the Podesta with its court. The nobility were hated in this town and treated as felons. "To those who know its history, however, the most striking fact about Pistoia is that so much of it is, literally, black and white" (Chapter 3, pg. 59). The town has numerous churches made of black and white marble. Using marble stripes apparently originates in Pisa and is popular in the various regions of Italy.

In Florence the designs on the cathedrals and buildings are not in stripes but in various kinds of geometric patterns. Some are diamond or rectangular shaped as well as a variety of other shapes used in the design of the buildings. The churches of Florence do not have the kinds of monster statues some of the churches of other areas have. Florence stays more or less insulated from the outside in its choice of architecture, unlike other areas like Pisa. The Florentines require straight broad streets in the thirteenth century.

The Baptistery and churches like San Miniato are done in black and white mosaics and octagonal in shape. Their design follows the early Christian basilica design. There are also mosaic designs of doves and lions. Other churches follow other simple designs along these lines. Most towns either followed the Ghibelline which is the striped styles of Pisa or the Guelph with its geometric patterns. The architecture also represents the way in which the ancient Tuscans perceive things.

The black and white of Guelph or Ghibelline marked the geography around Florence and had political implications. The black and white were basically politically opposed to one another. The black and white groups schemed and plotted against one another. As soon as one came into power in a city, they burned the houses of their opposition and forced them from the area. There was always a danger that they would return or that others would betray the conquerors. They always lived with the fear and danger that someone inside the city would open the gates to the opposition. "The road to treason, moreover, was paved with good intentions, and the doubleness of treachery was made easier by a double standard" (Chapter 3, p. 65). The Ghibellines were associated with



the Holy Roman Emperor. The Guelph was the party of the popes and a strong pope usually meant that the Guelphs were strong but there is too much regional rivalry and factors for this to be true across the board. The crooked policies of both sides contributed to the confusion of the situation.

Nobles lived in castles around Florence. If these nobles were defeated by the Florence merchants in a battle, the castles of the nobles were burned and the noble had to spend part of the year living within the city. This was practice followed by other cities also. This behavior dates back to the eleventh century. Many of the ruins do not exist any longer since they were not rebuilt. Many hermits and holy persons lived in caves or founded monasteries. The blood feud and the vendetta came down from the hills to the city. There were no towers in Florence during the eleventh century. There were more than a hundred by the next century with most of them centered in the Mercato Vecchio.

Eventually it was decided that the height of the towers could not exceed 96 feet. Today, most of them are all gone and the city appears more or less level.

These towers were the marks of powerful families since they all had one by their chief's house. They connected to the house by a little bridge. Some families had more than one tower with the more powerful families having multiple towers. The towers represented a place of refuge. Those in the tower could fight those below by throwing things down on them. This is why the towers and houses were often burned. Many of the combatants were members of religious sects.

Florence had its own brand of religion since it is the center of the reform movement, called the Patarene movement. There were many different sects in Florence during medieval times including their own bishops and clergy. Two lay groups were hired to do away with the Patarene movement, which resulted in fighting in the streets. This resulted in a massacre which is marked by a cross called the Croce al Trebbio. There is another marker for a massacre that occurs near the Ponte Vecchio. Whoever was in control was considered treasonous. The Ghibellines were called Patarenes and the Guelphs were called traitors. There are numerous uprisings during this period no matter what form of government they try.

The Florentines were fond of speeches. It was their custom to verbally insult their enemies after a war. This practice spreads to other Tuscan towns. Some of these orations resulted in violence in the piazza in which they were held. Traitors used to be planted; this meant buried alive upside down. It is well known that there were only ten years of peace in Florence during the Middle Ages.

# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

The cupola of the Duomo contains a device which determines the summer solstice. It uses the sun's rays that fall onto the dial on the floor made out of marble flags. This is under the dome of the cupola. Lorenzo de-Medici had a clock made. This clock not only told the time but gave the signs of the zodiac and the actions of the planets and the sun. Many of the people in Florence had an interest in astronomy and in optics. Both are evident in the exhibits at the Museum of the History of Science. The well known mathematicians, Toscanelli and Brunelleschi also helped develop the navigational instruments of the time. These instruments and the improved maps made travel by sea safer. This was the time of the invention of the camera obscura attributed to Alberti.

Many of the artists were active in the mathematics of design. Spatial science was a new field and they were all interested in it. They were all looking for the vanishing point, the point on which every painting rested. This is what gave the painting its stability. All of the artists were interested in perspective. Lorenzo de Medici has a series of panels painted and put together for a scene that decorated his bedroom in Cosimo's palace. The art is now in three different places: the Uffizi, the National Gallery of London and the Louvre. The artwork is named "The Rout of San Romano" and is a battle scene of sorts, a fantasy scene.

Uccello was the artist fascinated by animals and beasts of all kinds. This is quite evident in his artwork. His best known work is "The Rout of San Romano" mentioned above. By Uccello's time, soldiers were paid to fight with little risk of being hurt. Machiavelli, at this time, was promoting an army consisting of citizens, not paid mercenaries. The lives of the people of Florence were never really affected by war until 1530 when they lost to the Spanish and the Republic fell.

There were also a lot of fatalists at this time. This was the time of the great floods that wiped out many of the bridges in Florence. Many thought these floods represented punishment for sin and the coming of the end of the world. "The great flood of 1178, already mentioned, had been attended by two devastating fires and a famine, which was general throughout Tuscany. Earlier in that century, a Florentine bishop, Ranieri, had been preaching the end of the world; he based his prediction on a comet. The cataclysms of Nature, throughout the Middle Ages, were apocalyptic visions, for the Florentines, of what lay in store; prophecy was rampant" (Chapter 4, p. 100).

In 1304, people were told that a representation of hell would occur. Spectators overloaded the Carraia bridge in order to see the representation. The overloaded bridge collapsed, killing everyone on it. It was then said that all those who went to see hell found it on the bridge. Savonarola was preaching the end of the world message to the people in 1494 when the troops of the French King Charles VIII landed in Italy.

Uccello's best known work is in the Green Cloister of the Santa Maria Novella. The work is a fresco of the judgment and hell. There are two parts to it, with the wooden ark shown in both parts depicting the flood. Man is shown as damned for eternity since he is cut off from the safety of the ark. A man stands on a small dry island, his hands raised in prayer. Some say the figure is Noah, preparing to enter the ark. However, there is disagreement on this. This is one of a series of frescos that Uccello completed for the Green Cloister.

The Florentine Renaissance joined science, magic and art together in a way unparalleled for five centuries. The French Impressionists started playing around with theories of light in their paintings. Cezanne and the cubists played around with geometry and angles and shapes. Florentine painters sought stability and balance in their paintings.

Painters were able to be more deceptive than sculptors could be. In many ways, oil painting was associated with witchcraft and the devil. Painting was, more or less, a black art.

Piero di Cosimo was known for his paintings with dragons and other monsters and beasts. It is said he also lived in very unkempt surroundings. He would find faces in the clouds and would always look for the marvelous and never let anyone see him at work. This was one of his oddities. Leonardo was more like Cosimo than he was like Uccello. He also liked to paint birds and beasts. He was also interested in science and math and experimentation with different kinds of media and colors. Many of his works were destroyed because of his experimentation. "Everything is in a state of slow metamorphosis or creeping transformation, and the subject of his most celebrated painting, the Mona Lisa, smiling her enigmatic smile, is certainly a witch. That is why people are tempted to slash her, to draw moustaches on her, to steal her; she is the most famous painting in the world, because all the deceptions and mystifications of painting are summed up in her, to produce a kind of fear" (Chapter 4, p. 119).

# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

The Florentines were innovators. They were responsible for a lot of firsts. They were responsible for writing the first work, *Divina Commedia*, in what is referred to as the vulgar tongue. The Florentines were responsible for designing and building the first dome. They also made the first nude during the Renaissance period. They were the composers of the first opera. Some claim they were the first to gather statistics while others attribute that accomplishment to Venice. The Florentines were the first to engage in literary criticism. Dante was considered vulgar. Other firsts originating in Florence were descriptive medicine and the studying of power in politics and government. They were also the site of the first chair of Greek study and the first library.

The Renaissance began in Florence; it was a Florentine creation. They believed something went wrong somewhere between Giotto and Michelangelo and that this something had to do with human nature and power. "But the invention of the modern world could not be halted, at Giotto's bell tower or Donatello's 'San Giorgio' or the Pazzi Chapel or Masaccio's 'Trinity.' The Florentines introduced dynamism into the arts, and this meant a continuous process of acceleration, a speed-up, which created obsolescence around it, as new methods do in industry. The last word, throughout the Renaissance, always came from Florence" (Chapter 5, p. 122). This is how important Florence was.

The Florentines were always disturbing the status quo wherever they went with their new way of doing things. They brought about changes wherever they went and people in other cities commissioned artwork from the Florentines. The Florentines were always characterized as independent and difficult to get along with. Giotto, asked by the Pope to submit samples of his work in order to be considered for a commission, submitted nothing but a free-hand drawing of a circle, his point being that if an artist could draw a perfect circle free-hand, samples of his work were not required.

Many of the Florentine artists served double duty as engineers. They were very involved in helping to defend the city against enemies. Brunelleschi tried to alter the course of a river to flood an enemy city. The plan did not work. Michelangelo helped build the walls near San Miniato to protect the Republic. Leonardo did some engineering projects for the Duke of Milan. Many Florentine artists were demanded by other cities for public works projects. Many of the artists served high-placed people in other cities or countries, in addition to popes. They did not work exclusively for the Florentines.

The Florentine artists would travel to other cities where works of art were located. They would measure and study the works of art to learn how the masters had created them. Passers-by thought they were looking for buried treasure or trying to copy the works of art. When the Duomo was authorized in 1296, it was to replace an earlier church. The

necessary requirements were publicized. The new church had to surpass anything the Greeks or Romans had done so there was a lot of interest in the Duomo.

The Duomo is stunning to look at for those who go to see it. Its size is out of proportion to the streets around it and it looks colossal. The beautiful marble structure is topped by Brunelleschi's dome. Arnolfo is the architect who designed and built the duomo with its membratura, or frame, which is compared to the body with its anatomy. He died while working on the cupola which left the dome uncovered. It took architects more than a hundred years to figure out a way to cover the dome. There had never been a dome of such size as the duomo so they did not know how to complete it. They solicited ideas on how to complete the dome and in 1418 held a competition. The competition was won by Brunelleschi who had left Florence after losing the competition for the doors to Ghiberti. He was not too happy with the Florentines for this purpose. Brunelleschi's dome is a pure wonder and magnificent. He paid attention to detail and Michelangelo had the Duomo dome in mind then he did the dome of St. Peter's. Michelangelo was a big fan of Brunelleschi.

Brunelleschi designed churches of all sizes in Florence. He designed the Santi Apostoli church which is a very small church attributed to Charlemagne. He also designed the San Lorenzo, the church of the de Medici family and a very large church. Additions made at later times were not consistent with the original architecture and look like botched jobs. The later architects could not match the architecture and genius of Brunelleschi.

Brunelleschi's artwork is balanced. Balance was always a feature Florentine artists strove for and Brunelleschi achieved it. This sense of balance is evident in all of the artist's work and he is well-known for it. Many of these churches are not the usual stops for the tourists so they exist for the people of Florence. Many are located in working class neighborhoods and are not on the typical tourist path. Florentine art is described as beautiful and truthful. It is said that Florentine art cannot be compared to anything. People are still impressed by the detail involved in Florentine art.

Florence also had women who were held in high regard. Some of these women, like Sister Domenica, functioned as seers. Many women played important roles in Florentine history such as the Countess Matilda of Tuscany. She tamed the Emperor Henry IV. Others, like the mothers of Lorenzo de Medici and Gracchi, taught their sons about government.

# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

September is a favorite time in Florence because the figs are harvested and available to eat and because flowers appear throughout the city. May is also a favorite time except for all of the rain, which can make May cold and wintry. Many foreigners dream of spending May or spring in Florence because of what they see in artwork. In June and July there are flower shows and flower markets. The window boxes in the various buildings are decorated with flowers.

Florence also had its painters who gave many people their ideas of Florence. "In Florentine painting, there were two distinct strains, just as there were Guelphs and Ghibellines, Blacks and Whites, in politics. One is stern, majestic, autumnal, sometimes harsh or livid - the Guelphish painting, you might say, that started with Giotto and continued with Orcagna, Masaccio, Uccello, Andrea del Castagno, Antonio Pollaiuolo, Leonardo, Michelangelo; the other is sweet, flowery, spring like - Ghibelline painting that seeded in from Siena and blossomed first in Bernardo Daddi, then in Fra Angelico and the little masters who followed him, next in Fra Filippo, Verocchio, and, finally, Botticelli" (Chapter 6, p. 155). These were basically the two sides of Florentine painting and there is a large separation between the two sides. One side, the Guelph, represents the city and the other side, the Ghibelline, represents the country.

Spring in Tuscany contains a myriad of colors and scenes that are captured by painters.

The spring time painters are characterized by golds and blondes since there is a lot of each in their paintings. There are also other pastel colors that characterize this style of painting. There are only a few Madonnas who are brunettes. After the period of Fra Angelico and Gozzoli, the colors begin to pale and by the time of Botticelli, they appear greenish and sickly looking. Angelico's period is characterized by love and youth. The late quattrocento Florentine painters are characterized by voluptuous women.

There are many legends surrounding Florence but few have to do with love. The story of the cult of the Holy Girdle has to do with a love story. During the Assumption, the Madonna threw her girdle to Saint Thomas who gave it to a priest. He made it a part of his daughter Maria's dowry. A plan to steal the holy girdle and sell it to the Florentines resulted in the capture and death of the perpetrator in 1312. The daughter and her boyfriend ran away and eloped, taking the dowry with them. The cult of the Holy Girdle became popular in Italy because of the story and it is one of the few legends that centers around a love story.

Florence was always preoccupied with politics but that did not rule out love. According to *The Divine Comedy*, love made a good Florentine. Their poetry became the European standard for poetry until the sixteenth century. Much of the oratory taking

place in the forums and on the piazzas was sexually explicit. This was something Florence had in common with Athens.

This was also the time of the Pazzi Conspiracy, the plan to murder the two young de Medici brothers, Lorenzo and Giuliano, as they attended Sunday Mass in the Duomo. The Pazzis and their friends killed Giuliano but not Lorenzo, who made it to a place of safety, even though he was injured. The perpetrators that were found were hanged. Lorenzo was the diplomat of the de Medici family. As was usual for this time, there were shifts in thinking toward public men. Sometimes they were in favor and supported; other times they were not.

The de Medicis were the most famous family of Florence. The family consisted of many different types over the years. Most supported the arts and the Church, which is why so many were popes. Cosimo I was the individual who restored the dynasty of the de Medicis after the fall of the Republic. Cosimo did not trust the Florentines and based his court of the principle of fidelity. He presented himself as human and had a pleasant personality. Cosimo is the ruler who collected the works of Cellini and Bandinelli. These works were basically sculptures and can still be viewed in Florence at the Bargello.

Cosimo had rules against homosexuality and bisexuality, which seemed to be an affliction of the de Medici family. This eventually led to the extinction of the de Medici line. They liked their "Greek ways", or love of boys. Many artists suffered from these kinds of afflictions also during the quattrocento as many of the legs seen in the paintings are the legs of men and not women.

Benozzo Gozzoli is the painter who represented the youth and beauty of Florence. He studied with Fra Angelico and was commissioned by the de Medici to do the chapel in their palace. He did a series of frescos representing the schism between the Eastern and Western churches. His frescos contain a large variety of characters who might have been present in the attempt to heal the schism.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

Goethe visited Italy in 1786, fulfilling a lifelong dream of his. He viewed Florence as a prosperous town based on the generations that built the city. He also correctly perceived that there was a long succession of wise rulers in the city. "Still, the poet's perception, if not his inference, was right. Anyone coming to Florence and knowing nothing of its actual history would jump to the same conclusion. Only its intemperate climate betrays its inward character; on its 'good' days, in spring and through-out the autumn, it appears the spit and image of the ideally governed city, an architectural representation of justice, equity, proportion, order and balance" (Chapter 7, p. 189).

Florence was rebuilt every time a flood or whatever wiped it out and today there are not many ruins in the city. The Republic was threatened by foreigners many times in its history and survived each time. Many of its lower class citizens were not allowed to bear arms or vote. Alessandro was named Duke of the Florentine Republic by his father after the Siege. He was assassinated within six years. When Cosimo I became the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Florence ceased to be a viable political entity. Most of the Italian peninsula was under the control of foreigners by the time Cosimo took his position.

After Cosimo came a variety of grand dukes. Some were tyrannical but most just functioned as landlords. Tuscany sunk into a decadence under these rulers that it did not begin to recover from until the rule of the Austrians and Francis of Lorraine, the husband of Maria Theresa. The last years of the de Medici rule were characterized by shops closed most of the year due to numerous holidays and a series of boys who were the favorites of the rulers. There were also many artists during the final years of the Republic. The great artists all departed from Florence in the end. Leonardo went to France, Michelangelo went to Rome. The others also left for foreign places. They were happier abroad because they led much better lives. The art patronage of the de Medicis ended in 1527 when they were driven from Florence for the last time. The plague hit Florence at this same time and accounted for more than 30,000 deaths in the city. Most of the wealthy fled the city at this time.

After the expulsion of the Medicis, people were questioned about their loyalty and works of art were attacked. The Medici emblems were removed from the churches and other buildings in Florence. Pope Leo X commissioned a fresco to honor his father Lorenzo. The fresco shows the farm life of the villa with cheese making and livestock. A group known as the Mannerists were characterized by their use of light and shade to achieve a religious effect. They also used two-tone effects in their works. The style of the Mannerists became the semi-official style of Florence.

"The rest were 'School of Florence', as one might say a school of small fish.



This sad ending of the story of a great people has a curious epilogue. Florentine painting and sculpture never recovered from their collapse in the mid-sixteenth century, and it was not until the Risorgimento that Florence once again became a centre if only a small one, of literary men, political figures, and historians, like Gino Capponi and Bettino Ricasoli of Brolio (called 'the iron baron'), liberals of ancient blood, and the Swiss G.P. Vieusseux, who founded the reading room now called the Vieusseux Library" (Chapter 7, p. 219).

The other Italians always considered the Florentines to be the most civilized people in Italy. They also consider the Tuscan peasants to be the most skilled of peasants. They felt sorry for the other peasants for their lack of skills. They were not good at working with their hands as the Tuscans were. This is evident today with the works of Gucci, Ferragamo and others. There are many craftsmen in Florence today, just as there are farmers and men of other occupations. Their children are attending the University. Today's Florentines are much like the earlier Florentines with the revival of small crafts and the reestablishment of free institutions after the Fascists.



# Characters

## Catiline

Catiline was an individual who had to flee from Rome. The man threatened to return to Rome and to burn the city, but he never did. He instead fled to a small hill town in Euria called Fiesole where he was made welcome by the local people until a Roman expedition came and expelled him. The attack on Fiesole was led by a warrior named Fiorino. Catiline had been making a name for himself in Fiesole by becoming their self-proclaimed consul and had found a home for himself in the city. The expelled group fled from Fiesole and built a camp on the river Arno which eventually became Florence. Caesar attacked them there and started to build a city on the site. This is the beginning of the city of Florence. Eventually, Catiline and his group escaped to the hills of Pistoria where they hid. They were found and slain during the battle of Pistoria. Catiline's story is only one of the versions of the founding of Florence, but probably the most popular. It is a matter of historical record that there was a Catiline who was in Fiesole, a battle of Pistoria and the city of Florence was founded on the banks of the river Arno.

## Michelangelo

Michelangelo, the famous artist, spent many years in Florence. He also did a lot of work with the marble from the region as well as experiments with mathematics. He traveled to other cities to work for other people but Florence was his home. He was born in Florence and did a great deal of his work in Florence. He was mostly commissioned by the de Medicis, like many other famous artists of the time. The de Medicis did not believe in glorifying humans so most of the work done by Michelangelo and others was public and religious, though he was commissioned to do the famous de Medici tombs for Cosimo. These are the tombs where the famous curve was found when they were trying to figure out how the Ammannati bridge was designed. Michelangelo, creator of the famous David, the statue still in Florence, also did paintings and other works of art. Michelangelo eventually left Florence after spending many years of his life working in the city. He stayed in Florence as long as the de Medicis had work for him. He also traveled to Rome and other cities to work. Michelangelo is probably one of the most famous artists of this period.

## Pope Clement VII

Pope Clement VII is known as the bastard Medici. He broke with the tradition of glorifying members of the family by authorizing Michelangelo to build the de Medici tombs in the church of San Lorenzo.



## **Brunelleschi**

Brunelleschi was a famous mathematician in the 1400s. His mathematical skills were used to create the astronomical and optical equipment of the time. He also helped create some of the navigational instruments of the time. He studied under Toscanelli.

## **Toscanelli**

Toscanelli was also a famous mathematician of the 1400s. He taught Brunelleschi and was also did calculations for the astronomical and optical equipment of the time. He and Brunelleschi helped make the navigational instruments of the time.

## **Paolo di Dono**

This is the given name of the artist Uccello. He is the artist who was totally fascinated by the concept of perspective. Uccello means birds and he was known by this name because of the birds in his paintings. In his old age he was poor and had to apply for tax relief.

## **Giotto**

Giotto is the artist who designed the bell tower in Florence. Once when he was being considered for a commission from the pope, he was asked to submit samples of his work. All he submitted was a perfectly drawn free-hand circle.

## **Arnolfo**

Arnolfo is the artist who designed and built the Florentine duomo. It is built according to his philosophy with the building frame, or membrata, similar to the body's anatomy. Arnolfo died before completing the entire work. He was working on the drum of the cupola when he died.

## **Savonarola**

Savonarola was a writer of Florence. The Borgia pope, Alexander VL, ordered Savonarola seized and tortured since he would not commit to an ordeal by fire. The pope had him killed because he feared Savonarola was another John the Baptist.

## **Leon Battista Alberti**

Alberti is the Renaissance classical artist who designed the Santa Maria Novella church of Florence. He is a descendant of nobility not friendly to Florence.

## **Niccolo Machiavelli**

Machiavelli was also a Florentine condemned to exile. He functioned as an advisor to Lorenzo de Medici. He is considered to be a tyrant and a promoter of tyranny.

## **Cosimo I**

Cosimo was a member of the de Medici nobility and a patron of the arts.

## **Dante**

Dante is the writer who wrote the famous Inferno with its circles of hell inhabited by different people. Dante fought in the battles between the black and white factions.

## **Leonardo da Vinci**

Leonardo da Vinci is referred to as Leonardo in various places in the book. He was an artist who also experimented with science, as most others of the period did.



# **Objects/Places**

## **Ponte Vecchio**

Ponte Vecchio is a bridge over the river and a major shopping area in Florence..

## **The Baptistery**

The Baptistery is a part of the cathedral complex.

## **Piazza del Duomo**

The Piazza del Duomo is the center of the city. This is the location of the Baptistery, the Cathedrale of Santa Maria del Fiore and Giotto's Bell-tower.

## **Fiesole**

Fiesole is the small hill town that Catiline and the warrior Fiorino fled to. When the expedition forces from Rome came to expel them, they fled and established a camp on the river Arno which became the city of Florence.

## **Pistoia**

Pistoria is a town where there was a big battle in ancient times. Modern day Pistoria is about a half-hour ride from Florence by car.

## **The Louvre**

The Louvre is a famous art museum in Paris.

## **The Uffizi**

The Uffizi is a famous art gallery in Florence housing the collections of the Florentine and Tuscan school of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries.

## **The National Gallery of London**

The National Gallery of London is a world famous art museum housing many collections from this era.

## **Venice**

Venice is another city in Italy which is mentioned a great deal. It was flourishing at the same time Florence was.

## **Tuscany**

Tuscany is the region of Italy where Florence is located.

# Themes

## How Florence Differs from Other Areas

Florence distinguished itself from the other areas of Italy. While many other areas used marble stripes, Florence and Florentine artists used geometric designs in their buildings. Florentines also did not use the pillars and columns that the Greeks and others used. This is shown by the architecture and style of the Duomo, with its membratura and its resemblance to human anatomy, and the other buildings in the city. The colors of Florence also differ from the colors used in other areas of Italy. Florence is mostly in colors of beige and creams and whites and blacks. These are the colors of stone and metal. This also made Florence stand out from the others and allowed the Florentines to develop their own cultural heritage. The Florentines were not followers; they were leaders. This is one of the reasons they were different from the other areas.

The Florentines also believed they differed in their skills as craftsmen. They believe that all of the peasants of Tuscany are talented at working with their hands. The Tuscans pity other peasants because they are not as talented. Modern day Florence is characterized by the small craftsmen of the area, like the Guccis who became famous for their work with leather.

Another way Florence is different from other cities is in calling for straight broad streets during the Renaissance. All of the other cities had narrow winding streets at this time. Florence wanted its streets to be broad and beautiful.

## The Independence of the Florentines

The Florentines of this period are seen as very independent. They basically did their own thing. In many ways they were the leaders in science and thinking and were responsible for many firsts in the world. They were the known innovators of the time. They built the first dome since ancient times. They were responsible for beginning the painting of nudes during the Renaissance and they composed the first opera. The Florentines were also the first literary critics and the first to establish a chair in Greek studies. They also established the first library. The Florentines did not like to conform to the mold; they were too independent.

They were also independent in their architecture, choosing various geometric designs and shapes instead of the two color stripes that most of the rest of the country used. They were also independent in the fact that they did not condone the glorifying of individuals. This is evident in their artwork. The Florentines did things their way and, for the most part, their way worked. They were too independent to mimic other areas which is why so many of the early inventors were Florentine.

The independence and individuality of the early Florentines is one of the reasons for their success. They lived according to their own beliefs and followed their own

consciences. They were not afraid to learn or try new things and they were not afraid to explain new concepts to the rest of the world. This is a fact evident in the architecture and artwork of Florence. The fact that the Florentines always had to be first is a sign of their independence and a tribute to their greatness.

## **The Talent of the Florentines**

The talent of the Florentines is well known. They were innovators in areas of art as well as in science and mathematics. They were the first to use mathematic principles in their art. Their artists traveled to other cities and measured and studied the art there to try to figure out how they were done. They were not trying to copy the treasures or steal them; they were trying to learn from them. The genius of the Florentines is evident in the art treasures of the city and of the period, such as the famous Duomo with its cupola and dome. When the original architect died, a competition had to be held for the completion of the dome. Nobody knew how to cover it.

Many of the world's most famous artists were Florentine. Artists like da Vinci, Giotto, Machiavelli, Michelangelo, Donatello and others all had their roots in Florence even if they did not remain in Florence. Many of them were commissioned by the de Medicis to create their masterpieces in Florence and other cities.

The Tuscans' skill as craftsmen is also well known. The Tuscan peasants were known for their skill with their hands and many of them felt sorry for peasants from other places who were not as skilled in working with their hands. Florence is still known for its craftsmen today, in modern times.



# Style

## Perspective

Mary McCarthy is a well known writer who has written both fiction and non-fiction. She has worked as an academic and a literary critic. She has written other travel guides, mostly one on Venice as well as books on Viet Nam and other areas. McCarthy is well established as a writer in different areas so it is no surprise that she would take on a subject like Florence and a study of the arts and the de Medici patronage. It is obviously a subject that the author herself is interested in.

McCarthy discusses many of the great works of art in the Stones of Florence. This includes not only the architecture and the buildings, but also the sculpture and paintings. She mentions many of the famous names in the world of art and makes them human characters for the reader. The author explores the history and culture of the city through its artwork and the book includes many detailed descriptions of various frescos, buildings and other artwork which the author had to be familiar with in order to describe them in such detail.

The author's love of Florence and its artwork comes across in his book. The reader is made to appreciate the detail of the descriptions and the author's love for art and the city of Florence when reading the book. McCarthy's knowledge of history is also evident as is her interest in the Renaissance and its artists and artwork.

## Tone

The book is written in the third person and is objective in nature. Even though the book is objective, the author's love for and interest in the subject still comes through. Since the author is an academic, the objective style of writing is to be expected. McCarthy presents the facts of the history of Florence and its artwork with very little emotion. This is a strange approach to art and the discussion of artwork. The approach is appropriate though for the presentation of historical facts and the discussion of historical events.

In spite of the objective nature of the book, the author's interest in the artwork is evident, especially in terms of the detail used to describe some of it. The author also makes the characters of the time human for the reader so they are easier to relate to. Even so, the language used to describe the artwork is easily understandable English and is not flowery or overbearing.

Readers will appreciate the objectivity of the author because, in spite of the author's interest in the subject, the author is not trying to force his/her view on the reader. This is the feeling that Stones of Florence leaves with the reader. The author wants to share her interest in the subject with the reader, but is not trying to force her views on the reader. This is an important point because of the impact on the reader. The reader does not fight the author in this kind of situation because nothing is being forced. If the reader

wants to share in McCarthy's interest and love of the subject, the reader is allowed to. The choice is up to the reader.

## Structure

The structure of the book is quite simple, a little too simple. There are seven chapters with no titles. There is also no Table of Contents or Index in the book, just as there is no list of references. This, in many ways, makes the book difficult for the reader. If there were titles on the chapters it would be an indication of the subject of the chapter. The reader would know what the chapter was about in advance. The way the book is, the reader has to begin reading the chapter and then figure out what the chapter is about. A Table of Contents, even without chapter titles, would still give the chapter length. Any reader needing to know the chapter length has to go through the chapter to find that information.

As indicated above, there are no notes or Index. This also makes working with the book difficult as there is no way to look up the information. The reader may recognize the name of an artist from earlier pages but has no way of looking up the information except to fan through the book page by page. The book is not written in chronological order. There is a lot of jumping around and overlapping. The book begins and ends with modern day Florence. In between, it covers mostly the Victorian and Renaissance eras. There can be a difference in time of several hundred years in two or three sentences so the reader has to pay close attention to the time period under consideration.

The reader must pay attention to each sentence when reading the book because of all of the characters and the jumping around in time. The details of the descriptions of the art mean the reader has to try to visualize the artwork if the reader has never been to Florence or seen the art. In some ways, this is not fair to the reader who has not been to Florence.

The book would have been much easier for the reader if it had included chapter titles and an index but it does not so the reader must make do with it the way it is.

## Quotes

"'Nobody comes here any more' is simply the other side, the corollary, of the phenomenon of mass tourism—the universal deluge. The masses rush in where the selective tourist has fled." (Chapter 1, p. 2)

"For the tourist, it is too hot, after ten o'clock in the morning, to sight-see, too close, with the windows shut and the wooden blinds lowered, to sleep after lunch, too dark to read, for electricity is expensive, and the single bulb provided for reading in most Florentine hotels and households is no brighter than a votive candle. " (Chapter 1, p. 7)

"Historic Florence is an incubus on its present population. It is like a vast piece of family property whose upkeep is too much for the heirs, who nevertheless find themselves criticized by strangers for letting the old place go to rack and ruin. History in Venice, has been transmuted into legend; in Rome, the Eternal City, history is an everlasting present, an orderly perspective of arches receding from popes to Caesars with the papacy guaranteeing permanence and framing the vista of the future—decay being but an aspect of time's grandeur." (Chapter 1, pp. 22-23)

"Such divisions, such extremism, such contrasts are Firenze Come Era—a terrible city, in which many ways, uncomfortable and dangerous to live in, a city of drama, argument, and struggle." (Chapter 1, p. 25)

"Fiorino, perceiving this, built a camp at the ford on the Arno where Florence now is and where the Fiesole people used to come every week to market. Fiorino was killed during a surprise night sortie from Fiesole. Caesar arrived with reinforcements and started to build a city." (Chapter 2, p. 26)

"The statutes in the square were admonitory lessons or examples' in civics, and the durability of the material, marble or bronze, implied the conviction of the hope that the lesson would be permanent. The indestructibility of marble, stone, and bronze associated the arts of sculpture with governments, whose ideal is always stability and permanence. " (Chapter 2, p. 39)

"The sculpture galleries of the Bargello and of the Works of the Duomo create a somewhat mournful and eerie effect because a civic spirit, the ghost of the Republic, is imprisoned, like a living person, in the marble, bronze, and stone figures, which appear like isolated, lonely columns, props and pillars of a society whose roof has fallen in. As the ancient city-states, the religious and the civic were identical or nearly so in republican Florence; the saints were the civic champions, under whose protection and example the city fought." (Chapter 2, p. 40)

"But whatever the style, Florentine or Pisan, or Pisan-Lucchese, bichromatism was

prevalent throughout Tuscany in the Romanesque period, and the blacks and whites, sun and shadow, sharps and flats, recurring on the old church fronts, evoke what has been called the checkerboard of Tuscan medieval politics, the alteration of Guelph and Ghibelline, Pope and Emperor, Black and White. These were the terms, the severe basic antinomies, in which the Tuscans thought and saw." (Chapter 3, pp. 63-64)

"The swift changes of Italian politics in the Middle Ages and Renaissance make any general distinctions false at almost any particular moment of the period in question. The Guelph party, generally speaking, was the party of the pope and Italian business interests; the Ghibellines were attached to the Holy Roman Emperor, across the Alps in Germany, and represented the old feudal nobility." (Chapter 3, p. 66)

"This strain of zealotry in the Florentine temperament is no doubt the reason the Florentine churches today strike the eye as 'protestant' or 'reformed', in comparison with the churches of Lucca, Siena, Venice, Rome. The Florentines have, in both senses, an iconoclastic, image-breaking nature. If Savonarola had prevailed, Luther would not have been needed." (Chapter 3, p. 75)

"The chroniclers, indeed, appear to be surprised that Florence did not perish, like Thebes, as a result of her internal dissensions, which also weakened her to outward attack. Unlike the Venetians, the Pisans, the Genoese, the Milanese, the Florentine Republic, after its early successes in subjugating the nobles of the contado and the smaller towns roundabout, was not a military nation; the Florentines' gift was for fighting with each other. In the field, they lost more battles than they won." (Chapter 3, p. 86)

"The vanishing point, towards which all the lines of a painting race to converge, as if bent on their own annihilation, exercised a spell like that of the ever-disappearing horizon towards which Columbus sailed with his mutinous crew—the brink of the world, as it was then thought to be. " (Chapter 4, g. 91)

"By Uccello's time, mercenary foreign soldiers were fighting toy battles for which they could be paid by their employers without fear or risk. It was only the countryside and the villages that bled. When out of work, these bands of mercenaries hovered in the neighbourhood of the city that had been paying them and laid waste everything in sight." (Chapter 4, p. 98)

"Dante 'explored' hell and found it full of Florentines;.... (Chapter 4, p. 102)

"Painting, with its trickery, could never master a class of subject that was forbidden ground to the sculptor; that is to say, dreams and visions—reality in its hallucinated and impalpable aspects. This class of subject had its greatest popularity in Florence and Tuscany, where the great fresco cycles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries drew chiefly on the Golden Legend of Jacopo della Voragine and the life of Saint Francis for dreams and visions that had 'made history': the Dream of the Emperor Heraclius, the Dream of Pope Honorius III, Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata (in which the Saviour appears as a winged creature or small half-human bird in the air), the Vision of Brother

Augustine, and, from the Bible, the Dram of Joachim, the Vision of Saint John on Patmos." (chapter 4, pp. 110-111)

"The Florentines, in fact, invented the Renaissance, which is the same as saying that they invented the modern world—not, of course, as unmixed good. Florence was a turning-point, and this is what often troubles the reflective sort of visitor today—the feeling that a terrible mistake was committed here, at some point between Giotto and Michelangelo, a mistake that had to do with power and megalomania, or gigantism of the human ego" (Chapter 5, p. 121)

"The Florentine attitude towards antiquity was the same as towards popes and princes. The Florentines felt themselves to be the equals of the ancients and were on democratic terms with them—that is, on terms of rivalry and competition. When Brunelleschi and Donatello took measurements in Rome of ancient temples and statuary, this was not for the purpose of copying them but to learn how the old artists had done it, what their principles had been." (Chapter 5, pg. 128)

"Simplicity of life Florence shared with Athens, and the great Florentines of the quattrocento, Donatello and Brunelleschi, lived like barefoot philosophers. Socrates traced his descent from Daedalus, the cunning craftsman, whom Brunelleschi, too, might have claimed as a mythic ancestor. Brunelleschi's architecture, moreover, is a species of wisdom, like Socratic and Platonic philosophy, in which forms are realized in their absolute integrity and essence; the squareness of square, the slenderness of slender, the roundness of round." (Chapter 5, p. 142)

"Here again the Florentines were first. This tragic, fractured group is the first known example of an artist's vandalism directed against his own work. Other sculptures have been defaced by crime or barbarian invasions or revolution or war, but here is a work slain, so to speak, by the author's own hand, as though God, in one of his fits of irascibility, had elected to destroy the created world. Only a Florentine could have done this." (Chapter 5, p. 152)

"Youth and love are the themes of these painters, whether it is celestial love in Fra Angelico or carnal love in Fra Filippo Lippi, the scabrous monk who finally, after many escapades, capped it all by running away with a nun, the black-eyed sensual Madonna whom he found in a convent at Prato." (Chapter 6, p. 161)

"This hypersensitized people, whose emotions were constantly being recharged by the oratory of the piazza and the sermon, was very strongly sexed. Here is the surprise that Florence holds behind the austere surface of its buildings and that begins to explain the mystery of the Florentines: their political fickleness, their proneness to conversion, their alternation between rationality and superstition, and, finally, most of all, those 'tactile values' Berenson discovered in Florentine painting and made the basis of his aesthetic. What distinguishes Florentine art is its extreme plasticity, and this is evidently the leading trait of Florence as a body politic, just as it was of Athens, plastic, too, ductile, malleable." (Chapter 6, p. 166)

"The family remains the basic unit for the Florentines, who are a large family themselves, with many poor relations nesting in humble quarters." (Chapter 6, p. 177)

"But the story of Florence proper, by almost universal consent, ends with the extinction of its civic life; after this, there is no history (history and story are the same word in Italian)—only the gossip of diarists." (Chapter 7, p. 193)

"The Republic that fell to the Spaniards, who took it on behalf of Pope Clement, was not a democracy in the modern sense (the lowest class of workers had no vote and until the final days of the Siege were not allowed to bear arms), and off and on, from the time of Cosimo il Vecchio, it had in fact been governed by the Medici, even though the forms and institutions of a free state had been maintained." (Chapter 7, p. 195-196)

"Up to the time of Pontormo and Il Rosso, there had been a general agreement, not restricted to connoisseurs, as to what constituted beauty and what constituted ugliness, and the judgment of the citizens of Florence was regarded as supreme. Their quick applause for the new had kept this agreement from becoming a form of philistinism—nobody complained that Giotto was not like Cimabue or that Brunelleschi had violated the plan of Arnolfo. A lively faculty of recognition was the common denominator between the artist and the public." (Chapter 7, p. 208)

"Florence today is a city of craftsmen, farmers, and professors, and every Florentine has something in him of each of these. In a sense, there is no class of unskilled workers, for every occupation is treated as a skill, with its own refinement, dignity, and status—even unemployment." (Chapter 7, p. 222)

## Topics for Discussion

Why is Florence considered a city of extremes? What does this mean?

What was the difference between public and private sculptures?

How was the city of Florence founded?

How were the different buildings of the duomo created? Why was a competition held in 1418?

What characteristics are attributed to the greatness of the Florentines?

Of what significance are the Guelphs and Ghibellines, the Blacks and Whites?

What does the term Florentine plasticity refer to?