

The Protestant Reformation

Directions: Read the Terms and Names. Then read the following passage, circling terms you don't know and defining them in terms you understand. Finally, reread the passage and use the information presented here to fill in the Cornell Notes form that accompanies this article.

Origins of the Reformation

Since the fall of the Roman Empire in AD 500, the single most powerful organization in Europe was the Catholic Church. By 1500, however, the Church had begun to weaken. Why?

One reason was the Renaissance. Artists and writers from this time focused on secular subjects (not church topics) and encouraged people to think about the importance of the individual. According to the Church, religious ideas and the community were more important. So, Renaissance thinking and artwork subtly challenged Church authority.

Another cause was the printing press, a device invented (or introduced) to Europe in 1440 by German craftsman **Johann**

Gutenberg. Books and other documents became much easier to produce (and thus less expensive). Many of the documents being printed at this time helped to spread these secular, Renaissance ideas.

Also, some rulers began to challenge the Church's political power. Germany, for example, was divided into hundreds of competing kingdoms. It was difficult for the pope or anyone else to control this area.

Finally, merchants throughout Europe at this time had to pay taxes to the Roman Catholic Church. Many merchants in Northern Europe didn't feel very connected to the Church based in Rome, and they resented paying these church taxes.

All of these social, political, and economic challenges and changes added up to big problems for the Catholic Church. A new push for religious reform - **the Reformation** - was about to begin in Germany, and then sweep over the rest of Europe.

Why was the Church Criticized?

Some of the Church's problems in the 1500s were its own making. Popes at this time seemed more concerned with luxury and political power than with spiritual matters. The lower clergy had faults, too. Many local priests lacked education and were not able to teach people. Some priests lived immoral lives.

TERMS AND NAMES

Johann Gutenberg: German craftsman who developed the printing press

indulgence: Release from punishments due for a sin

Reformation: 16th-century movement for religious reform, leading to the founding of new Christian churches

Lutheran: Member of a Protestant church founded on the teachings of Martin Luther

Protestant: Member of a Christian church founded on the principles of the Reformation

Peace of Augsburg: Agreement in 1555 declaring that the religion of each German state would be decided by its ruler

Reformers urged the Church to change its ways to become more spiritual and humble. Christian humanists such as Erasmus and Thomas More added their voices to calls for change. In the early 1500s, the calls grew louder.

Luther Challenges the Church

How did the Reformation actually get started? In 1517, a German monk named Martin Luther protested the actions of a Church official. That person was selling **indulgences**. An indulgence was a kind of forgiveness. By paying money to the Church, people thought they could win salvation.

Luther challenged this practice and others. He posted a written protest on the door of a castle church. His words were printed and spread throughout Germany. This was the beginning of the Reformation, a movement for reform that led to the founding of new Christian churches.

The Response to Luther

What effects did Luther's protest have? Pope Leo X punished Luther for his views, but he refused to change them. Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, a strong Catholic, called Luther an outlaw. Luther's books were burned. But it was too late. Many of his ideas were already being practiced. The Lutheran Church started around 1522.

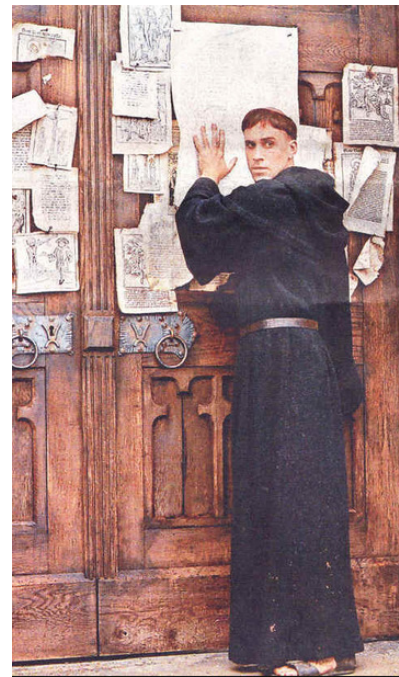
The Peasants' Revolt

In 1524, peasants in Germany hoped to use Luther's ideas about Christian freedom to change society. They demanded an end to serfdom—a condition like slavery. When it was not granted, they revolted. Luther disagreed with this revolt. German princes killed thousands in putting the revolt down.

Some nobles supported Luther's ideas. They saw a chance to weaken the emperor's power over them. Other German princes joined forces against Luther's supporters. They signed an agreement to remain loyal to the pope and the emperor. Supporters of Luther's ideas protested this agreement. They were called the **Protestants**. Eventually, the term Protestant meant Christians who belonged to non-Catholic churches.

The Peace of Augsburg

War broke out between Catholic and Protestant forces in Germany. It finally ended in 1555 with the **Peace of Augsburg**. This treaty granted each prince the right to decide whether his subjects would be Catholic or Protestant.



A scene from the film *Luther* depicting Martin Luther nailing his 95 Theses or complaints to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church.



Martin Luther
1483–1546

In one way, fear led Luther to become a monk. At the age of 21, Luther was caught in a terrible thunderstorm. Convinced he would die, he cried out, "Saint Anne, help me! I will become a monk."

Even after entering the monastery, Luther felt fearful, lost, sinful, and rejected by God. He confessed his sins regularly, fasted, and did penance. However, by studying the Bible, Luther came to the conclusion that faith alone was the key to salvation. Only then did he experience peace.

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Name	Period	Date
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Topic: The Protestant Reformation



Essential Question (EQ):
How did the Reformation help to spread democratic ideas?



Main Ideas
(In the form of a question)

Details
(In bulleted format)

What were the causes of the Reformation?

- Renaissance focus on the “secular” (rather than the _____) and on the i_____ – challenged Catholic Church authority
- Printing Press spread secular _____.
- Divided German kingdoms were too difficult for pope to g_____.
- Northern European merchants resented _____.

Secular = worldly; not-spiritual

What were the criticisms of the Church?

Church Leaders...

- _____ .
- _____ .
- _____ .

Priests...

- _____ .
- _____ .
- _____ .

Who was Martin Luther?

How did Luther challenge the Church?

What were Luther's teachings?

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-
-

-
-
-

What was the response to Luther (ordinary people, the Pope, Emperor, many German princes)?

What was the Peasants Revolt of 1524?

Why did Germany go to war?

What was the Peace of Augsburg?

Serfdom = a slavery-like situation that many poor European farmers endured during the Middle Ages.

Analysis: How did the Reformation help to spread democratic ideas?
(On a separate sheet)