Chapter 11.1
I. Origins of the Renaissance

• The growth of wealthy trading cities in Italy led to a new era called the Renaissance.
A. European trade with Asia increased in the 1300s.

- After the end of the Black Death, the economy of Europe began to grow again. Goods became available, people bought more, and trade increased.
B. Trade with Asia

1. In 120, the Mongols took over China. They made roads safe again, including the Silk Road, a trade route between Europe and China.

2. Traders and travelers began to use the routes again. One famous trader was Marco Polo and his family. Some of their journeys went over the Silk Road.

3. When the Polos arrived in China, they met the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan.

4. Marco Polo and his family gained favor in the Chinese court and took fabulous stories back to Italy.
**Major Trading Cities in Renaissance Italy**

1. **Milan**
   - This castle in Milan was built in the mid-1400s. It shows the wealth and power of Italy’s trading cities.

2. **Genoa**
   - Genoa is on the Mediterranean. This location enabled Genoa to become rich through overseas trade.

3. **Venice**
   - Venice is an island city. Like Genoa, Venice grew rich from its sea trade.

4. **Florence**
   - Florence was a banking and trade center. The city’s wealthy leaders used their money to beautify the city with impressive buildings and art.

**Interpreting Maps**

- **Location**
  - In what part of Italy are all four major trading cities located?
C. Trade cities in Italy grew wealthy and competed against each other.

- By the 1300s northern Italy and its cities had become trading centers. These cities played very important roles in trade.
D. The Trading Cities of Italy

1. Four northern Italian cities became trading centers.  
   - Florence  
   - Genoa  
   - Milan  
   - Venice  

2. The cities of Milan and Florence were manufacturing centers. Port cities on the Mediterranean Sea, where the goods and services flowed, were Venice and Genoa.  

3. Milan produced weapons and silk. Florence was a center for weaving wool into cloth.  

4. Wealthy families controlled the important cities of Italy.
Florence

A market in Florence buzzes with activity in this scene showing what Florence may have looked like in the 1400s.

- Merchants traded goods from Europe and Asia in the city’s markets.
- Cloth was a major trade good in Florence.
- Bankers kept detailed records of their investments.
- Visitors to Florence helped spread Renaissance ideas throughout Europe.
- City leaders hired architects and artists to create beautiful buildings like this famous church called the Duomo.

**History Close-up**

**What can you see in this illustration that shows the wealth of Florence?**
E. As Florence became a center for arts and learning, the Renaissance began.

1. Trade goods from Asia poured into Europe. The merchant families in Italy became very wealthy. The families wanted everyone to see what they could buy with their wealth.

2. Florence, Italy, helped begin the Renaissance because Cosimo de’ Medici wanted it to be the most beautiful city in the world.

3. The love of art and education was a key feature of a time we call the Renaissance, which means “rebirth.”
F. The Medici Family

1. Florence, Italy, was a trading town, and banking brought even more money to the economy.

2. The greatest bankers in Florence were the Medici family.

3. The head of the family wanted Florence to be the most beautiful city in the world, so he hired artists to decorate his palace and architects to redo the buildings.

4. He also improved education by building libraries and collecting books.

5. During the time the Medici family held power, Florence became the center for Italian art, literature, and culture.