

WARM UP

1 Think about your idea of the 'ideal city' and answer the following questions.

- 1 What kind of materials would you expect buildings in a modern ideal city to be made of?
- 2 How would facilities be different in an ideal city compared to an existing city in Italy?
- 3 What leisure activities would be available to people in an ideal city?
- 4 How would problems related to smog be eliminated in an ideal city?

GLOSSARY

flock: *si recavano in massa*

entablatures: *trabeazioni*

domes: *cupole*

goldsmith: *orafo*

cloister: *chostro*

patterns: *disegni*

Italian Renaissance and the Ideal City

Italian Renaissance

During the Italian Renaissance, architects flocked to Rome to study the ancient buildings and ruins to be found there, above all the Coliseum and Pantheon, as their theories were based on these Classical Roman examples. Renaissance architects moved away from late Italian Gothic and Medieval themes, towards geometric order and regularity.

Renaissance buildings in fact are characterised by columns, pilasters, pediments, entablatures, arches and domes, in a harmonious mathematically proportioned form. The best examples of this style can be found in Florence. Architects of the Renaissance period were trained humanists, and architecture began to be considered as an artistic profession rather than a skilled job. Structures were created not only for their practical appeal, but also for the emotions they would evoke. Two of the most important figures in Italian Renaissance architecture are Filippo Brunelleschi and Leon Battista Alberti. Brunelleschi, originally a goldsmith from Florence, created structures which apparently seemed simple but which were built according to an underlying system of proportion, giving a sense of harmony to his works. The Church of San Lorenzo in Florence was the first church designed by him, and was commissioned by the powerful Medici family who instructed Brunelleschi to update the original building dating to about the 4th century, to the new style of Renaissance architecture. This new style can be seen in the symmetry and geometric balance of its design. Although Brunelleschi designed this church, he died before work was completed. Later, Michelangelo designed the Laurentian Library in the cloister of San Lorenzo which, with its geometric patterns, harmony and symmetry, is considered one of the best representations of Renaissance architecture. Alberti, a trained humanist, tried to recreate the glories of ancient times through architecture which he considered as a way to create meaning. He is famous for the façade he added to the basilica Santa Maria Novella in Florence, originally a church built in the High Gothic architectural style of the 13th and 14th centuries.



Santa Maria Novella, Florence

READING COMPREHENSION

2 **PET** Read the text and decide if the statements below are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 During the Renaissance period, architects created most of their designs for construction in Rome.
- 2 Renaissance buildings are easily recognisable for their well-proportioned shape.
- 3 Architects of this period were skilled workers trained by humanist scholars.
- 4 To the naked eye Brunelleschi's designs looked simple but they weren't really.
- 5 The Medici family paid Brunelleschi to construct a new church from scratch.
- 6 Only the façade of Santa Maria Novella is in Renaissance style.

T	F
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LISTENING

3 **13** Listen to an expert talking about the concept of the 'ideal city' and complete the text with the correct information.



Città ideale, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino

An 'ideal city' should be conceived according to the (1) _____ objectives of its inhabitants. This encompasses the choice of (2) _____ to be included in the plan as well as (3) _____. Like Roman town planning, the (4) _____ of ideal cities are often based on (5) _____. During the Renaissance period the (6) _____ in their quest to imitate the qualities of (7) _____, tried to construct ideal cities. The city of 'Sforzinda' is the first ideal city plan of this period, designed by Filarete, a Florentine Renaissance architect and (8) _____. Although it was never actually built, its layout is famous, based on an (9) _____ which was then inscribed within a (10) _____.

EXAM PRACTICE – WRITTEN EXAM

4 **A** Write a short essay (150-200 words) on the following topic: 'The Birth of Renaissance and its influence on English architecture'.