

Chapter 1 : Petrarch: Books and the Life of the Mind

Early Life Francesco Petrarca—whose anglicized name is Petrarch—was born on July 20, 1304, in Arezzo, Tuscany (now Italy). With his family, he moved to Avignon, France, as a child.

The family of Petrarch was originally of Florence, where his ancestors held employments of trust and honour. Garzo, his great-grandfather, was a notary universally respected for his integrity and judgment. Though he had never devoted himself exclusively to letters, his literary opinion was consulted by men of learning. He lived to be a hundred and four years old, and died, like Plato, in the same bed in which he had been born. Garzo left three sons, one of whom was the grandfather of Petrarch. He, like his ancestors, was a notary, and not undistinguished for sagacity. He had several important commissions from government. At last, in the increasing conflicts between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines—or, as they now called themselves, the Blacks and the Whites—Petracco, like Dante, was obliged to fly from his native city, along with the other Florentines of the White party. He was unjustly accused of having officially issued a false deed, and was condemned, on the 20th of October, 1301, to pay a fine of one thousand lire, and to have his hand cut off, if that sum was not paid within ten days from the time he should be apprehended. Petracco fled, taking with him his wife, Eletta Canigiani, a lady of a distinguished family in Florence, several of whom had held the office of Gonfalonier. Petracco and his wife first settled at Arezzo, a very ancient city of Tuscany. Hostilities did not cease between the Florentine factions till some years afterwards; and, in an attempt made by the Whites to take Florence by assault, Petracco was present with his party. This action, which was fatal to their cause, took place in the night between the 19th and 20th days of July, 1304—the precise date of the birth of Petrarch. As the pretext for banishing Petracco was purely personal, Eletta, his wife, was not included in the sentence. In their passage thither, both mother and child, together with their guide, had a narrow escape from being drowned in the Arno. In passing the river, the horse of the guide, who carried Petrarch, stumbled, and sank down; and in their struggles to save him, both his sturdy bearer and the frantic parent were, like the infant itself, on the point of being drowned. After Eletta had settled at Ancisa, Petracco often visited her by stealth, and the pledges of their affection were two other sons, one of whom died in childhood. The other, called Gherardo, was educated along with Petrarch. Petrarch remained with his mother at Ancisa for seven years. Petracco remained with his family in Pisa for several months; but tired at last of fallacious hopes, and not daring to trust himself to the promises of the popular party, who offered to recall him to Florence, he sought an asylum in Avignon, a place to which many Italians were allured by the hopes of honours and gain at the papal residence. In this voyage, Petracco and his family were nearly shipwrecked off Marseilles. But the numbers that crowded to Avignon, and its luxurious court, rendered that city an uncomfortable place for a family in slender circumstances. Petracco accordingly removed his household, in 1306, to Carpentras, a small quiet town, where living was cheaper than at Avignon. There, under the care of his mother, Petrarch imbibed his first instruction, and was taught by one Convenevole da Prato as much grammar and logic as could be learned at his age, and more than could be learned by an ordinary disciple from so common-place a preceptor. This poor master, however, had sufficient intelligence to appreciate the genius of Petrarch, whom he esteemed and honoured beyond all his other pupils. On the other hand, his illustrious scholar aided him, in his old age and poverty, out of his scanty income. Petrarch used to compare Convenevole to a whetstone, which is blunt itself, but which sharpens others. His old master, however was sharp enough to overreach him in the matter of borrowing and lending. When the poet had collected a considerable library, Convenevole paid him a visit, and, pretending to be engaged in something that required him to consult Cicero, borrowed a copy of one of the works of that orator, which was particularly valuable. He made excuses, from time to time, for not returning it; but Petrarch, at last, had too good reason to suspect that the old grammarian had pawned it. The poet would willingly have paid for redeeming it, but Convenevole was so much ashamed, that he would not tell to whom it was pawned; and the precious manuscript was lost. Petracco contracted an intimacy with Settimo, a Genoese, who was like himself, an exile for his political principles, and who fixed his abode at Avignon with his wife and his boy, Guido Settimo, who was about the same age with Petrarch. The two youths formed a friendship, which subsisted between them for

life. Petrarch manifested signs of extraordinary sensibility to the charms of nature in his childhood, both when he was at Carpentras and at Avignon. One day, when he was at the latter residence, a party was made up, to see the fountain of Vaucluse, a few leagues from Avignon. Accordingly, while his fellow pupils were still plodding through the first rudiments of Latin, Petrarch had recourse to the original writers, from whom the grammarians drew their authority, and particularly employed himself in perusing the works of Cicero. His father, who was himself something of a scholar, was pleased and astonished at this early proof of his good taste; he applauded his classical studies, and encouraged him to persevere in them; but, very soon, he imagined that he had cause to repent of his commendations. Classical learning was, in that age, regarded as a mere solitary accomplishment, and the law was the only road that led to honours and preferment. Petrarch was, therefore, desirous to turn into that channel the brilliant qualities of his son; and for this purpose he sent him, at the age of fifteen, to the university of Montpellier. Petrarch remained there for four years, and attended lectures on law from some of the most famous professors of the science. But his prepossession for Cicero prevented him from much frequenting the dry and dusty walks of jurisprudence. In his epistle to posterity, he endeavours to justify this repugnance by other motives. He represents the abuses, the chicanery, and mercenary practices of the law, as inconsistent with every principle of candour and honesty. When Petrarch observed that his son made no great progress in his legal studies at Montpellier, he removed him, in , to Bologna, celebrated for the study of the canon and civil law, probably imagining that the superior fame of the latter place might attract him to love the law. To Bologna Petrarch was accompanied by his brother Gherardo, and by his inseparable friend, young Guido Settimo. But neither the abilities of the several professors in that celebrated academy, nor the strongest exhortations of his father, were sufficient to conquer the deeply-rooted aversion which our poet had conceived for the law. Petrarch, guessing at the motive of his arrival, hid the copies of Cicero, Virgil, and some other authors, which composed his small library, and to purchase which he had deprived himself of almost the necessaries of life. His father, however, soon discovered the place of their concealment, and threw them into the fire. At Bologna, however, he met with an accomplished literary man and no inelegant poet in one of the professors, who, if he failed in persuading Petrarch to make the law his profession, certainly quickened his relish and ambition for poetry. This man was Cino da Pistoia, who is esteemed by Italians as the most tender and harmonious lyric poet in the native language anterior to Petrarch. During his residence at Bologna, Petrarch made an excursion as far as Venice, a city that struck him with enthusiastic admiration. The young poet, perhaps, at this time little imagined that Venice was to be the last scene of his triumphant eloquence. Soon after his return from Venice to Bologna, he received the melancholy intelligence of the death of his mother, in the thirty-eighth year of her age. Her age is known by a copy of verses which Petrarch wrote upon her death, the verses being the same in number as the years of her life. She had lived humble and retired, and had devoted herself to the good of her family; virtuous amidst the prevalence of corrupted manners, and, though a beautiful woman, untainted by the breath of calumny. Petrarch has repaid her maternal affection by preserving her memory from oblivion. Petrarch did not long survive the death of this excellent woman. According to the judgment of our poet, his father was a man of strong character and understanding. Banished from his native country, and engaged in providing for his family, he was prevented by the scantiness of his fortune, and the cares of his situation, from rising to that eminence which he might have otherwise attained. But his admiration of Cicero, in an age when that author was universally neglected, was a proof of his superior mind. Under these circumstances, Petrarch was most anxious for a MS. But, that inheritance being small, and not sufficient for the maintenance of the two brothers, they were obliged to think of some profession for their subsistence; they therefore entered the church; and Avignon was the place, of all others, where preferment was most easily obtained. The pretence for this appropriation was to prevent simonyâ€”in others, not in his Holinessâ€”as the sale of benefices was carried by him to an enormous height. At every promotion to a bishopric, he removed other bishops; and, by the meanest impositions, soon amassed prodigious wealth. Scandalous emoluments, also, which arose from the sale of indulgences, were enlarged, if not invented, under his papacy, and every method of acquiring riches was justified which could contribute to feed his avarice. By these sordid means, he collected such sums, that, according to Villani, he left behind him, in the sacred treasury, twenty-five millions of florins, a treasure which Voltaire remarks is hardly

credible. The partizans of that court, it is true, accuse him of prejudice and exaggeration. He painted, as they allege, the popes and cardinals in the gloomiest colouring. His letters contain the blackest catalogue of crimes that ever disgraced humanity. Petrarch was twenty-two years of age when he settled at Avignon, a scene of licentiousness and profligacy. The luxury of the cardinals, and the pomp and riches of the papal court, were displayed in an extravagant profusion of feasts and ceremonies, which attracted to Avignon women of all ranks, among whom intrigue and gallantry were generally countenanced. Petrarch was by nature of a warm temperament, with vivid and susceptible passions, and strongly attached to the fair sex. We must not therefore be surprised if, with these dispositions, and in such a dissolute city, he was betrayed into some excesses. But these were the result of his complexion, and not of deliberate profligacy. He alludes to this subject in his Epistle to Posterity, with every appearance of truth and candour. From his own confession, Petrarch seems to have been somewhat vain of his personal appearance during his youth, a venial foible, from which neither the handsome nor the homely, nor the wise nor the foolish, are exempt. It is amusing to find our own Milton betraying this weakness, in spite of all the surrounding strength of his character. In answering one of his slanderers, who had called him pale and cadaverous, the author of Paradise Lost appeals to all who knew him whether his complexion was not so fresh and blooming as to make him appear ten years younger than he really was. Petrarch, when young, was so strikingly handsome, that he was frequently pointed at and admired as he passed along, for his features were manly, well-formed, and expressive, and his carriage was graceful and distinguished. He was sprightly in conversation, and his voice was uncommonly musical. His complexion was between brown and fair, and his eyes were bright and animated. His countenance was a faithful index of his heart. He endeavoured to temper the warmth of his constitution by the regularity of his living and the plainness of his diet. He indulged little in either wine or sleep, and fed chiefly on fruits and vegetables. In his early days he was nice and neat in his dress, even to a degree of affectation, which, in later life, he ridiculed when writing to his brother Gherardo. And even then neither attention to his personal appearance, nor his attachment to the fair sex, nor his attendance upon the great, could induce Petrarch to neglect his own mental improvement, for, amidst all these occupations, he found leisure for application, and devoted himself to the cultivation of his favourite pursuits of literature. Inclined by nature to moral philosophy, he was guided by the reading of Cicero and Seneca to that profound knowledge of the human heart, of the duties of others and of our own duties, which shows itself in all his writings. Gifted with a mind full of enthusiasm for poetry, he learned from Virgil elegance and dignity in versification. But he had still higher advantages from the perusal of Livy. The magnanimous actions of Roman heroes so much excited the soul of Petrarch, that he thought the men of his own age light and contemptible. His first compositions were in Latin: Petrarch wrote for the living, and for that portion of the living who were least of all to be fascinated by the language of the dead. Latin might be all very well for inscriptions on mausoleums, but it was not suited for the ears of beauty and the bowers of love. The Italian language acquired, under his cultivation, increased elegance and richness, so that the harmony of his style has contributed to its beauty. He did not, however, attach himself solely to Italian, but composed much in Latin, which he reserved for graver, or, as he considered, more important subjects. His compositions in Latin are—Africa, an epic poem; his Bucolics, containing twelve eclogues; and three books of epistles. This scarcity of books had checked the dawning light of literature. The zeal of our poet, however, surmounted all these obstacles, for he was indefatigable in collecting and copying many of the choicest manuscripts; and posterity is indebted to him for the possession of many valuable writings, which were in danger of being lost through the carelessness or ignorance of the possessors. Petrarch could not but perceive the superiority of his own understanding and the brilliancy of his abilities.

Chapter 2 : Petrarch - Wikipedia

In contrast, Petrarch's thought and style are relatively uniform throughout his life - he spent much of it revising the songs and sonnets of the Canzoniere rather than moving to new subjects or poetry.

He was taken to Avignon in 1327, and there he spent most of his life until 1374, except for a period as a student of law at Montpellier and Bologna and several long journeys to Italy. Petrarch held several ecclesiastical benefices and also enjoyed the patronage of the Colonna and the Visconti. His Latin writings include poems, orations, invectives, historical works, a large body of letters, and a few moral treatises. Petrarch was no philosopher in the technical sense, and even his treatises on moral subjects are loosely written and lack a firm structure or method. Much of his thought consists of tendencies and aspirations rather than of developed ideas or doctrines, and it is inextricably linked with his learning, reading, tastes, and feelings. He was the first great representative of Renaissance humanism, if not its founder; as a poet, scholar, and personality, he had a vast reputation during his lifetime and for several subsequent centuries. In many ways he set the pattern for the taste, outlook, and range of interests that determined the thought of Renaissance humanism down to the sixteenth century. He attacked astrology as well as logic and jurisprudence and dedicated entire works to criticizing the physicians and the Aristotelian philosophers. These attacks, though sweeping and suggestive, are highly personal and subjective and rarely enter into specific issues or arguments. When Petrarch rejects the authority of Aristotle or of his Arabic commentator Averroes, he does so from personal dislike, not from objective grounds; when he criticizes such theories as the eternity of the world, the attainment of perfect happiness during the present life, or the so-called theory of the double truth that is, of the separate validity of Aristotelian philosophy and of Christian theology, his main argument is that these doctrines are contrary to the Christian religion. Yet the positive value that Petrarch opposed to medieval science was neither a new science nor mere religious faith but the study of classical antiquity. All his life Petrarch was an avid reader of the ancient Latin writers; he copied, collected, and annotated their works and tried to correct their texts and appropriate their style and ideas. He felt a strong nostalgia for the political greatness of the Roman Republic and Empire, and the hope to restore this greatness was the central political idea that guided him in his dealings with the pope and the emperor, with the Roman revolutionary Cola di Rienzo, and with the various Italian governments of his time. His polemic against dialectic and other branches of scholastic learning and his emphasis on moral problems seem to be modeled after the more moderate skepticism which Seneca expresses in his Moral Epistles with reference to the subtle dialectic of the older Stoics. To Seneca, Petrarch owes his taste for moral declamation and the Stoic notions that appear in his writings—the conflict between virtue and fortune, the contrast between reason and the four basic passions, and the close link between virtue and happiness. We might even say that Petrarch and other humanists owe to their imitation of Cicero and Seneca not only the elegance of their style, but also the elusive and at times superficial manner of their reasoning. Petrarch could not fail to notice the numerous references to Greek sources in the writings of his favorite Roman authors. He made an attempt to learn Greek, and although he did not progress far enough to read the ancient Greek writers in the original, his awareness of Greek philosophy and literature did affect his outlook and orientation. He owned a Greek manuscript of Plato and read the *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*, which were available to him in Latin translations. He also gathered information on Plato in Cicero and other Roman authors and cited some Platonic doctrines. Petrarch assigned second place to Aristotle, but he was far from holding him in contempt. Petrarch thus pointed the way to a new attitude toward Aristotle that was to take shape in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Aristotle was to be studied in the original Greek text and in the company of other Greek philosophers and writers; his medieval Latin translations were to be replaced by new humanist translations, and his medieval Arabic and Latin commentators were to give way to the ancient Greek commentators and to those modern Renaissance interpreters who were able to read and understand Aristotle in his original text. Thus, Petrarch was the prophet of Renaissance Aristotelianism, as he had been of Renaissance Platonism. Although Petrarch opposed the classical authors to the medieval tradition, he was by no means completely detached from his immediate past. Christian faith and piety occupy a central position in

his thought and writings, and there is no reason to doubt his sincerity. Whenever a conflict between religion and ancient philosophy might arise, he is ready to stand by the teachings of the former. The *Secretum*, in which Petrarch subjects his most intimate feelings and actions to religious scrutiny, is a thoroughly Christian work, and his treatise *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae* is equally Christian, even specifically medieval. In his treatise on his ignorance, Petrarch goes so far as to oppose his own piety to the supposedly irreligious views of his scholastic opponents. This shows that it was at least possible to reject Scholasticism and remain a convinced Christian, and to reconcile classical learning with religious faith. In accordance with this attitude, Petrarch liked to read the early Christian writers, especially the Church Fathers, along with the pagan classics but without the company of the scholastic theologians. His favorite Christian author was St. Augustine, who occupies a position of unique importance in his thought and work. Besides these and a few other general attitudes, there is at least one theoretical problem on which Petrarch formulates views akin to those of many later humanists. He keeps asserting that man and his problems should be the main object and concern of thought and philosophy. This is also the justification he gives for his emphasis on moral philosophy, and when he criticizes the scholastic science of his Aristotelian opponents, it is chiefly on the grounds that they raise useless questions and forget the most important problem, the human soul. This is also the gist of the words with which Petrarch describes his feelings when he had reached the top of Mont Ventoux. Petrarch expresses for the first time that emphasis on man which was to receive eloquent developments in the treatises of later humanists and to be given a metaphysical and cosmological foundation in the works of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. This is the reason that the humanists were to adopt the name "humanities" *studia humanitatis* for their studies to indicate their significance for man and his problems. When Petrarch speaks of man and his soul, he refers at the same time to the blessed life and eternal salvation, adding a distinctly Christian overtone to his moral and human preoccupation. He thus comes to link the knowledge of man and the knowledge of God in a distinctly Augustinian fashion and also to discuss an important problem of scholastic philosophy that had its root in Augustine: In discussing this scholastic problem, Petrarch follows the Augustinian tradition, as other humanists and Platonists were to do after him, in deciding the question in favor of the will. Petrarch, the great poet, writer, and scholar, is clearly an ambiguous and transitional figure when judged by his role in the history of philosophical thought. His thought consists in aspirations rather than developed ideas, but these aspirations were developed by later thinkers and were eventually transformed into more elaborate ideas. His intellectual program may be summed up in the formula that he uses once in the treatise on his ignorance: Platonic wisdom, Christian dogma, Ciceronian eloquence. His classical culture, his Christian faith, and his attack against Scholasticism all have a personal, and in a way modern, quality. At the same time everything he says is pervaded by his classical sources and often by residual traces of medieval thought. In this respect, as in many others, Petrarch is a typical representative of his age and of the humanist movement. He did not merely anticipate later Renaissance developments because he was unusually talented or perceptive; he also had an active share in bringing them about, because of the enormous prestige he enjoyed among his contemporaries and immediate successors. Of the *Edizione nazionale* of his collected works only six volumes have appeared, containing his poem *Africa*, a part of his letters "Le familiari," edited by V. Niemeyer; and *Petrarcas Briefwechsel mit deutschen Zeitgenossen*, edited by P. The collection of *Prose*, edited by G. Milan and Naples, contains the *Secretum*, *De Vita Solitaria*, and selections from the invectives and other treatises. Capelli Paris, is the only complete modern edition of this important treatise. For many other Latin works of Petrarch the old edition of his works, *Opera* Basel, must still be used. See also *Scritti inediti*, edited by A. English translations are available for the *Secretum*, translated by William H. University of Chicago Press, pp. University of Chicago Press, Sapegno, *Il trecento* Milan, Tatham, Francesco Petrarca, 2 vols. London, ; U. Indiana University Press, ; and, above all, numerous books and articles by Ernest H. University of Chicago, Whitfield, *Petrarch and the Renaissance* Oxford: Cornell University Press, ; Aldo S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Scipio and the Africa* Baltimore: Paul Oskar Kristeller Pick a style below, and copy the text for your bibliography.

Chapter 3 : Petrarch's On the Solitary Life - Articles - House of Solitude - Hermitary

One Hundred Sonnets: Translated After the Italian of Petrarca, with the Original Text, Notes, and a Life of Petrarch Feb 5, by Francesco Petrarca and Susan Wollaston.

In rediscovering the classics, these scholars developed a new way of thinking, a new way of viewing themselves and their world. With this sea-change in the way scholars thought about knowledge, they went beyond the recovery of old knowledge to the development of new knowledge. However that rebirth of learning did not burst forth instantly. Many of its early figures still had one foot firmly in the Age of Faith. Although they saw the works of the ancient writers with new eyes, they still looked at the world with the eyes of the medieval scholars. One of these scholars Petrarch, who officially was a member of the clergy of the Catholic Church while he pursued his studies and writing in the new secular literature he and others like him were creating. Francisco Petrarca, whose name is commonly anglicized as Francis Petrarch, was born on July 20, in Arezzo. Thus he grew up on the move as his father sought work in various cities. After an early attempt to study law he decided he wanted to be a man of letters. This appointment gave Petrarch a good income in return for very light duties. While such an act may seem like a dreadful abuse of the system to moderns, it was a common practice at the time. Certainly Petrarch did not regard it as being wrong. His biographer Bishop compares his attitude towards his benefice to the attitude of a modern stockholder who receives dividends derived from the labors of others and never questions the moral rectitude of such transfers of wealth. In particular he turned down a bishopric offered by a later Pope because it would have involved more work that he would have had to personally attend to, work that would have interfered with his own literary efforts. The only high-level post that he appears to have been interested in was that of Cardinal, which would have given him access to vast wealth and power while demanding very little in the way of mandatory duties, but that was not to be. That work was the recovery of the literature of the ancient world. Petrarch devoted most of his time to the collecting and editing of classical manuscripts. He developed a system for critically editing those manuscripts and undertook to teach it to others. Certainly Petrarch possessed the skills necessary to do this sort of work. By all indications he was quite skilled in the Latin language, to the extent that all of his marginalia and most of his correspondence are in that language. This shows particularly well in his epic poetic works, which he did in Latin. In his long narrative poem *Africa*, which concerned Scipio Africanus, he used the original classical senses of the terms *fides* fairness, loyalty, and mutual confidence and *pietas* devotion to parents, family, race and country rather than the Christian senses from which their English cognates "faith" and "piety" come. Instead he regarded the whole span of history as one great divine epic. In his historical writings Petrarch often would write of the parallels between the Biblical chronology and that of ancient Rome. For instance, he said that Rome was founded at the same time as King David was writing the Psalms. While Isadore of Seville derived his Etymologies from vague similarities between Latin words that supposedly supported some characteristic of the creatures or things so named, Petrarch rejected such fanciful ideas in favor of sound critical thinking. In his work *On His Own Ignorance* he discussed an incident in which four young scholars of Aristotle came to him, pretending to be admirers of him, and then called him ignorant, although a man of good character and faithful in his friendships. In response, Petrarch pointed out that the things that they considered important were little more than collections of trivia that missed the things that were really important to a scholar. In a letter to Boccaccio he told about how he read and re-read the classical authors so thoroughly that he not just learned them, but absorbed them. They became a part of his being, to his very marrow. Although Petrarch was primarily a student of the Latin classics, he made a redoubtable effort to learn ancient Greek so that he could study the Greek classics in their original language instead of Latin translations. However obtaining the necessary instruction was almost impossible in his time. Through great dint of effort he did manage to secure the efforts of a Greek monk visiting Avignon for talks with the Pope, but this monk proved to be a poor teacher, although a willing one, and Petrarch learned no useable Greek. His method of teaching involved taking Plato and translating it bit by bit into Latin, with the idea that Petrarch would thus grasp the mechanics of the language and be able to read it. However flawed its approach and

intended results might have been, this endeavor did provide him with a serviceable translation of Plato into Latin in the process. Many times he would stare at them in longing for the day when he would be able to find a suitable tutor in the language and be able to fathom the mysteries hidden within a language that would remain shut to him for all his days. Yet he still continued to hope that one day he would be able to, noting that Cato learned a substantial amount of Greek at an advanced age. In his day it was far more difficult for a person to send a letter to a friend than it is in modern times. In the Fourteenth Century there were no regular mail services. The only way to send a letter was to entrust it to a person travelling in that direction, hoping that the person would not discard or lose the letter. Bandits lurked along the roads to rob and kill the unwary on an overland trip, while a journey by sea held the peril of storm and shipwreck. Many travellers never got through to their intended destinations, and many letters fell by the wayside with them, or were taken by bandits to be sold, particularly if their authors were well-known figures. However his attitude toward his books comes out quite clearly in the way he uses the things he has learned from his books when writing on other subjects. In many of his letters he makes frequent references to the classical writers, regarding them as fine sources of wisdom. Balkan in Bulgaria in order to find out if he could see the Black Sea and the Adriatic at once from its peak. However that was justification for the undertaking. On this basis, Morris Bishop calls Petrarch the first modern mountain-climber. Although the women should have been virgins, there were no doubt cases in which they were not. While many lords probably chose to ignore such things, or were deceived by clever wenches who found ways to produce false blood, this one apparently chose to demand his rights and lay punishment for those who dared to filch what was regarded as rightfully his. But of all the classical authors, Petrarch held Cicero in the greatest of esteem. Perhaps it was one particular discovery that Petrarch made which inspired him to be such a great correspondent. Although still recovering from a fall from a horse, Petrarch set himself to the work of copying them in their entirety, along with a number of other letters of Cicero. The resultant manuscript was so large that it could not fit on a bookshelf and had to be set on the floor instead. In this effort being a member of the clergy served him well, since it is unlikely that he would have been allowed to peruse many of those libraries if he had been a lay scholar instead. In a letter to Lapo di Castiglionchio he discusses his difficulties in getting a copy made of a work of Cicero that Castiglionchio had loaned to him. He begins by bemoaning the woeful lack of scribes that have a real understanding of the works that they are copying and ignorant scribes would produce unintelligible manuscripts and thus a great loss of learning. In regards to the specific problems he had in obtaining a copy of the Cicero in question he does not go into great detail, saying only that he could not have it copied because of the "incompetence of the copyists. His patience apparently exhausted by these inadequate results, he finally decided that there was simply no other way to obtain an adequate copy except by setting his own hand to the pen, and so he did. But even as he was midway through his undertaking, he began to have second thoughts about whether he should be devoting his time to such manual pursuits as the mere transcription of a text. It is particularly fascinating to see the way in which he related to his books. In an earlier letter to Castiglionchio, thanking him for the receipt of a copy of Cicero perhaps the selfsame volume that he was at such pains to get a copy made, he speaks of the book as though it were the man himself. In giving his account he talks about the volume as though it were Cicero himself, relating how he asked the tome why it fell over and that it of course said nothing in reply. Yet he relates it as though he really expected the book to answer him and give account of itself. Even so, it is clear that he regarded his books with great fondness. Petrarch did go so far as write two of his letters to Cicero himself, addressing the ancient writer as though he were still among the living. In a letter to Luca da Penna, while relating how he was a lifelong devotee of Cicero, he tells the story of how that manuscript passed through his hands. He had received several works of Cicero from Raimondo Soranzo, including *De gloria*, which he immediately recognized as a great treasure. Not long after he acquired this treasure, an old friend of his boyhood days came to him. This was his former schoolmaster, Convenevole da Prata. Among them was that priceless volume of Cicero, which Petrarch was planning to have copied. Finally Petrarch began to suspect that da Prata had put them to some other use than study and began to investigate their whereabouts. In time he discovered that they had been pawned and went to da Prata, asking the name of the pawnbroker in order to redeem them. Da Prata refused, regarding this as something that would irredeemably besmirch his honor. It is

more likely that the pawnbroker, not recognizing the importance of the treasure that had passed into his hands, sold it to someone who scraped or wiped off the writing and reused the parchment in the practice in that time. Petrarch died in his library, surrounded by his beloved books and busy reading Virgil, on his seventieth birthday. Petrarch interested the other Italian humanists in seeking out and studying the classics. Aldo Scaglioni gives the example of Machiavelli dressing up in his best clothes when he went into his library to read and study the works of the classical authors. There were certainly enough other brilliant minds in that period, all working to recover the knowledge that they regarded as being lost. But no doubt the Renaissance would have been poorer for the absence of Petrarch.

Chapter 4 : Life of Petrarch

Petrarch. The Italian poet Petrarch (), or Francesco Petrarca, is best known for the lyric poetry of his Canzoniere and is considered one of the greatest love poets of world literature.

He was born in Florence or in a village near Certaldo where his family was from. His father worked for the Compagnia dei Bardi and, in the s, married Margherita dei Mardoli, who was of a well-to-do family. Boccaccio may have been tutored by Giovanni Mazzuoli and received from him an early introduction to the works of Dante. In , his father was appointed head of a bank and moved with his family to Naples. Boccaccio was an apprentice at the bank but disliked the banking profession. He persuaded his father to let him study law at the Studium [4] the present-day University of Naples , where he studied canon law for the next six years. He also pursued his interest in scientific and literary studies. It seems that Boccaccio enjoyed law no more than banking, but his studies allowed him the opportunity to study widely and make good contacts with fellow scholars. His early influences included Paolo da Perugia a curator and author of a collection of myths called the Collectiones , humanists Barbato da Sulmona and Giovanni Barrili, and theologian Dionigi di Borgo San Sepolcro. Boccaccio returned to Florence in early , avoiding the plague of in that city, but also missing the visit of Petrarch to Naples in He had left Naples due to tensions between the Angevin king and Florence. His father had returned to Florence in , where he had gone bankrupt. His mother died shortly afterward possibly, as she was unknown – see above. Boccaccio continued to work, although dissatisfied with his return to Florence, producing Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine in also known as Ameto , a mix of prose and poems, completing the fifty- canto allegorical poem Amorosa visione in , and Fiammetta [8] in The pastoral piece "Ninfale fiesolano" probably dates from this time, also. His children by his first marriage had all died, but he had another son named Iacopo in Giovanni Boccaccio and Florentines who have fled from the plague In Florence, the overthrow of Walter of Brienne brought about the government of popolo minuto "small people", workers. It diminished the influence of the nobility and the wealthier merchant classes and assisted in the relative decline of Florence. From , Boccaccio spent much time in Ravenna, seeking new patronage and, despite his claims, it is not certain whether he was present in plague-ravaged Florence. His stepmother died during the epidemic and his father was closely associated with the government efforts as Minister of Supply in the city. His father died in and Boccaccio was forced into a more active role as head of the family. Boccaccio began work on The Decameron [9] [10] around It is probable that the structures of many of the tales date from earlier in his career, but the choice of a hundred tales and the frame-story lieta brigata of three men and seven women dates from this time. The work was largely complete by Boccaccio revised and rewrote The Decameron in – This manuscript has survived to the present day. From , Boccaccio became closely involved with Italian humanism although less of a scholar and also with the Florentine government. His first official mission was to Romagna in late He revisited that city-state twice and also was sent to Brandenburg , Milan and Avignon. He also pushed for the study of Greek, housing Barlaam of Calabria , and encouraging his tentative translations of works by Homer , Euripides , and Aristotle. In these years, he also took minor orders. The meeting between the two was extremely fruitful and they were friends from then on, Boccaccio calling Petrarch his teacher and magister. Petrarch at that time encouraged Boccaccio to study classical Greek and Latin literature. They met again in Padua in , Boccaccio on an official mission to invite Petrarch to take a chair at the university in Florence. Although unsuccessful, the discussions between the two were instrumental in Boccaccio writing the Genealogia deorum gentilium ; the first edition was completed in and this remained one of the key reference works on classical mythology for over years. It served as an extended defense for the studies of ancient literature and thought. Despite the Pagan beliefs at its core, Boccaccio believed that much could be learned from antiquity. Thus, he challenged the arguments of clerical intellectuals who wanted to limit access to classical sources to prevent any moral harm to Christian readers. The revival of classical antiquity became a foundation of the Renaissance, and his defense of the importance of ancient literature was an essential requirement for its development. Certain sources also see a conversion of Boccaccio by Petrarch from the open humanist of the Decameron to a more ascetic style, closer to the dominant fourteenth century

ethos. For example, he followed Petrarch and Dante in the unsuccessful championing of an archaic and deeply allusive form of Latin poetry. In 1350, following a meeting with Pope Innocent VI and further meetings with Petrarch, it is probable that Boccaccio took some kind of religious mantle. There is a persistent but unsupported tale that he repudiated his earlier works as profane in 1358, including *The Decameron*. It was in this year that Boccaccio left Florence to reside in Certaldo, although not directly linked to the conspiracy, where he became less involved in government affairs. He later returned to Certaldo. He met Petrarch only once again in Padua in 1374. Upon hearing of the death of Petrarch 19 July 1374, Boccaccio wrote a commemorative poem, including it in his collection of lyric poems, the *Rime*. He returned to work for the Florentine government in 1375, undertaking a mission to Pope Urban V. The papacy returned to Rome from Avignon in 1377, and Boccaccio was again sent to Urban, offering congratulations. He also undertook diplomatic missions to Venice and Naples. Of his later works, the moralistic biographies gathered as *De casibus virorum illustrium* (1374) and *De mulieribus claris* (1375) were most significant. He gave a series of lectures on Dante at the Santo Stefano church in 1375 and these resulted in his final major work, the detailed *Esposizioni sopra la Commedia di Dante*. It also was due to disappointments in love. Some such disappointment could explain why Boccaccio came suddenly to write in a bitter Corbaccio style, having previously written always in praise of women and love. Petrarch describes how Pietro Petrone a Carthusian monk on his death bed in 1374 sent another Carthusian Gioacchino Ciani to urge him to renounce his worldly studies. He died on 21 December in Certaldo, where he is buried.

Chapter 5 : The Life Of Solitude by Francesco Petrarca

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The nineteenth-century Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt noted that Jean Buridan had climbed the same mountain a few years before, and ascents accomplished during the Middle Ages have been recorded, including that of Anno II, Archbishop of Cologne. In Petrarch, this attitude is coupled with an aspiration for a virtuous Christian life, and on reaching the summit, he took from his pocket a volume by his beloved mentor, Saint Augustine, that he always carried with him. It was no great feat, of course; but he was the first recorded Alpinist of modern times, the first to climb a mountain merely for the delight of looking from its top. Or almost the first; for in a high pasture he met an old shepherd, who said that fifty years before he had attained the summit, and had got nothing from it save toil and repentance and torn clothing. Petrarch was dazed and stirred by the view of the Alps, the mountains around Lyons, the Rhone, the Bay of Marseilles. And men go about to wonder at the heights of the mountains, and the mighty waves of the sea, and the wide sweep of rivers, and the circuit of the ocean, and the revolution of the stars, but themselves they consider not. I closed the book, angry with myself that I should still be admiring earthly things who might long ago have learned from even the pagan philosophers that nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, when great itself, finds nothing great outside itself. Then, in truth, I was satisfied that I had seen enough of the mountain; I turned my inward eye upon myself, and from that time not a syllable fell from my lips until we reached the bottom again. Arguing against such a singular and hyperbolic periodization, Paul James suggests a different reading: His career in the Church did not allow him to marry, but he is believed to have fathered two children by a woman or women unknown to posterity. A son, Giovanni, was born in , and a daughter, Francesca, was born in . Both he later legitimized. In the same year Petrarch was named canon in Monselice near Padua. A second grandchild, Francesco, was born in , but died before his second birthday. Francesca and her family lived with Petrarch in Venice for five years from to at Palazzo Molina; although Petrarch continued to travel in those years. Between and the younger Boccaccio paid the older Petrarch two visits. The first was in Venice, the second was in Padua. On the marble slab there is a Latin inscription written by Antonio Quarenghi: *Etruscus gemino vates ardebat amore: Maximus ignis ego; Laura secundus erat. Arcebam sacro vivens a limine mures, Ne domini exitio scripta diserta forent; Incutio trepidis eadem defuncta pavorem, Et viget exanimi in corpore prisca fides.* This arrangement was probably cancelled when he moved to Padua, the enemy of Venice, in . The library was seized by the lords of Padua, and his books and manuscripts are now widely scattered over Europe. The *Triumph of Death*, or *The 3 Fates*. Flemish tapestry probably Brussels, ca. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The three Fates, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, who spin, draw out and cut the thread of life, represent Death in this tapestry, as they triumph over the fallen body of Chastity. However, Petrarch was an enthusiastic Latin scholar and did most of his writing in this language. His Latin writings include scholarly works, introspective essays, letters, and more poetry. He translated seven psalms, a collection known as the *Penitential Psalms*. Cicero, Virgil, and Seneca were his literary models. Most of his Latin writings are difficult to find today, but several of his works are available in English translations. Petrarch collected his letters into two major sets of books called *Epistolae familiares* "Letters on Familiar Matters" and *Seniles* "Letters of Old Age", both of which are available in English translation. These were published "without names" to protect the recipients, all of whom had close relationships to Petrarch. His "Letter to Posterity" the last letter in *Seniles* [33] gives an autobiography and a synopsis of his philosophy in life. It was originally written in Latin and was completed in or - the first such autobiography in a thousand years since Saint Augustine. This is *Non al suo amante* by Jacopo da Bologna, written around . *Laura and poetry*[edit] This section needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. *Laura and Petrarch* had little or no personal contact. According to his "Secretum", she refused him because she was already married. He channeled his feelings into love poems

that were exclamatory rather than persuasive, and wrote prose that showed his contempt for men who pursue women. Upon her death in 1374, the poet found that his grief was as difficult to live with as was his former despair. Later in his "Letter to Posterity", Petrarch wrote: "I certainly wish I could say that I have always been entirely free from desires of the flesh, but I would be lying if I did". Laura de Noves While it is possible she was an idealized or pseudonymous character — particularly since the name "Laura" has a linguistic connection to the poetic "laurels" Petrarch coveted — Petrarch himself always denied it. There is psychological realism in the description of Laura, although Petrarch draws heavily on conventionalised descriptions of love and lovers from troubadour songs and other literature of courtly love. Her presence causes him unspeakable joy, but his unrequited love creates unendurable desires, inner conflicts between the ardent lover and the mystic Christian, making it impossible to reconcile the two. Francesco De Sanctis remarks much the same thing in his *Storia della letteratura italiana*, and contemporary critics agree on the powerful music of his verse. Perhaps the poet was inspired by a famous singer he met in Veneto around the 1340s. Laura is too holy to be painted; she is an awe-inspiring goddess. Sensuality and passion are suggested rather by the rhythm and music that shape the vague contours of the lady. In addition, some today consider Laura to be a representation of an "ideal Renaissance woman", based on her nature and definitive characteristics.

Chapter 6 : The Life of Petrarch / Thomas Campbell

Petrarch provided a theoretical basis for the enrichment of man's life. But, even more important, the humanist attitudes of the Italian 15th century that led into the Renaissance would not have been possible without him.

Search this Site Search the Web All my critics, however, are not like you, for they do not all think the same, nor do they all love me as you do. But how can I hope to please everybody, when I have always striven to gratify a few only? There are three poisons which kill sound criticism, love, hate, and envy. Beware lest through too much love you should make public what might better be kept concealed. As you are guided by love, so others may be influenced by other passions. Between the blindness of love and that of jealousy there is indeed a great difference in origin, but not always in effect. Peter Sadlon Many people come here looking for a simple answer to the question "Who was Francesco Petrarch? If you want a simple answer it is, "He was a man. The simple answer is, "Petrarch wrote a letter. His family exiled by the same people who exiled Dante shortly before from Florence, Petrarch spent the first few years of his life in Incisa Ancisa not all that far away. In his brother Gherardo was born. A few years later in the family moved to Pisa to meet the new Emperor and in to Avignon following the Holy See. But because of the popularity of the city at the time and not being able to find accomodations in Avignon the family settled in Carentras, a small town just outside the city. In he went to study in Montpellier with Gherardo. Shortly after in his mother died of unknown causes. In he was studying law in Bologna. Petrarch despised the profession of lawyers. Although the logic of law appealed to him, the dishonest associated with the profession made his stomach turn. In when his father dies, Petrarch abandons his study of law and turns to the classics of which he studied in small amounts during his schooling. His brother, Gherardo, enters the service of the church as Petrarch does as well. Their family moneys all gone the church would support him for the rest of his life. Who Laura really was, and even if she really existed is a little bit of a mystery, but she is thought to be Laura de Noves, born in and married to Hugues II de Sade in Falling madly in love with a woman he may have never even talked to, Petrarch would go on to write hundreds of poems to her; which in years to come would get transported around the world and translated into just about every known language. He will spend the rest of his life in the service of the Church under different Cardinals and Bishops. He will undertake many diplomatic missions across Europe for various reasons. He will become ambassadors and be instrumental in bringing about Italian unity by fulfilling these roles. In Petrarch takes a trip across France and the Netherlands and into Germany. He begins to attempt to revive classical writings believing that their teachings have been lost. By when Petrarch dies it contains poems, mostly sonnets to and about the love of his life which he could never have, Laura. Of the poems would be written while she was alive and after her death. Laura would die while Petrarch was traveling later in , on Good Friday. She would leave behind 11 children and a husband who would remarry within a year. A year later in , and on the road again he travels to Flanders and the Brabant and then to Rome for the first time in his life. Later that year, his first child, Giovanni is born out of wedlock. The relationship between Petrarch and his son was a disappointment to Francesco. He describes Giovanni as "Intelligent, perhaps even exceptionally intelligent, but he hates books". Giovanni will stay with Petrarch until he was 20 years old , at which time living in Italy, Petrarch will send his son to Avignon and in Giovanni would die from the plague. In , as Petrarch writes, on the same day he received two invitations, one from Rome and one from Paris, each asking him to accept the crown as poet laureate. He develops the idea of the laurel being the symbol for poetic and literary immortality. Francesca later marries Francescuolo da Brossano and bares two children of her own, a daughter named Eletta in and a son, Francesco whom Petrarch adored. Francesco, the grandson, will die in , probably of the plague. This causes Petrarch to examine his faith and write Secretum. It is composed of three imaginary dialogues between Petrarch and St. Augustine, who speak in the presence of Lady Truth. The Secretum is a "secret" book, intended for private meditation; Petrarch kept it by him for the rest of his life. In and living in Verona Petrarch discovers a collection of letters written by Cicero and collected by him over years ago. His Familiares will end up being a collection of letters in 24 books spanning from to Petrarch would terminate Familiares years later and begin Seniles Letters of the elder years. That collection would

contain letters in 18 books written between and Petrarch would spend a considerable amount of time in these collections, rewriting letters and sometimes composing new ones on the fly. He would write to kings and queens, he would write to popes and cardinals. He would write to the ghosts of Cicero and Homer. Petrarch would live out the rest of his life in Italy. Still in the service of the church and going on diplomatic missions from time to time. He was buried in the parish church. His writings influenced countless others during his lifetime, others such as Boccaccio to write his own great works. And centuries later others such as Shakespeare would study his works and copy his sonnets. Petrarch lived through the harshest bouts of the plague and lost nearly everyone he knew to it. His mother and father had died in his early years but his son, his grandson, numerous friends, and of course Laura, for which his writings of her will live on forever, all died as victims of the disease. So great were his writings that royalty treated him, the son of exiled nobles, like a king and in a letter to a friend he even goes as far as to say that he has caused his own plague to spread over Europe, one which has caused people to take up pen and paper and write and read. And so ended the dark ages and the start of Humanism.

Chapter 7 : Part 1: love sonnets to Laura - Eagle Poetry

Petrarch viewed collecting books as being the actions of a custodian of memories, until the ghosts of the past filled his memories In a sense he saw his work as that of bringing the authors to life within his mind by learning their books, and the transmission of them to future generations by seeing to it that adequate copies of them were made.

Love found me all disarmed and found The way Was clear to reach my heart down Through the eyes Which have become the halls and Doors of tears It seems to me it did him little honour To wound me with his arrow in my state and to you, armed, not show his bow At all. Petrarch wrote books on infatuation- a brief passion for someone or something. Petrarch had a short-lived love for Laura, some young woman he saw first in church. In the last stanza it says how love attacked him or shot him, meaning he fell in love, but how the woman did not bring love to her. So he loved her but she did not. That is why the line 18 and 19 talk how he cried, maybe for that reason. He fell in love with someone that could not love him back. Francis Petrarch to be able to express grief over the death of "Laura," an unidentified woman who became his ideal of love. There is still an echo of the shift in tone in lines Usually about love, sonnets often are written about beauty but also about the effects of time and mortality. The sonnet form from the Italian sonneto , "little song" was set well enough to be defined as Italian poets were writing them: The Petrarchan Sonnet or Italian Sonnet has a characteristic split into two parts, the first eight lines form the octave and the last six lines for the sestet. The rhyme pattern of the octave is usually abbaabba, while that of the sestet varies from the following three: Petrarch developed this sonnet type in order to have a problem or question in the octave and a solution in the sestet. The octave and sestet may be used for a number of other ways too, to display a point and then a counterpoint or to display two sides to the same story. The three poems are about the same, they all talk about love to Laura. They all have the same style and same way he describes her as beautiful. The way he was attracted by her and yet she could not love him. Head-over-heels in love with Laura, Petrarca wrote sonnets, one passionate poem a day dedicated to his true love. Considered the first modern poet because of his interest in individuality, the Italian poet perfected the sonnet during the 14th century. The sonnet, a lyric poem of 14 lines with a formal rhyme scheme, expresses different aspects of a thought, mood, or feeling. On the other hand, mood is the feeling the reader gets when reading. My tone was sadness and love that could not come true. The way he grieved for Laura and the way he described her was touching. Although it seems he did nothing to be noticed and never fought to win her love. Mostly it was oh look at her eyes and she is so perfect and then but I am not and then but I live when she is gone, how? There was nothing that showed me he wanted her except for words but the poems were beautiful. The mood was grievance, to mourn the death of Laura and of course sad and a love story.

Chapter 8 : The Life of Petrarch

Petrarch spent a great deal of his life in foreign lands and often wrote on how life itself was a journey, an all too common theme in today's literature, but one which was not fully explored before Petrarch's time.

The Italian poet Petrarch, or Francesco Petrarca, is best known for the lyric poetry of his *Canzoniere* and is considered one of the greatest love poets of world literature. A scholar of classical antiquity, he was the founder of humanism. Petrarch has been called the first modern man. He observed the external world and analyzed his own interior life with a new awareness of values. Painfully conscious of human transience, he felt it his mission to bridge the ages and to save the classical authors from the ravages of time for posterity. He also longed for fame and for permanence in the future. Petrarch attained a vast direct knowledge of classical texts, subjecting them to critical evaluation and prizing them as an expression of the living human spirit. His attitude provided the first great stimulus to the cultural movement that culminated in the Renaissance. Equally constant was an unresolved interior conflict between the attractions of earthly life, particularly love and glory, and his aspirations toward higher religious goals.

Early Years and Education Petrarch was born on July 20, 1304, in Arezzo, where his family was living in political exile. His childhood was spent at Incisa and Pisa until 1313, when his family moved to Avignon, then the papal residence. A housing shortage there obliged Petrarch, his younger brother Gherardo, and their mother to settle in nearby Carpentras, where he began to study grammar and rhetoric. Beginning in 1323, Petrarch pursued legal studies at the University of Montpellier. But already he preferred classical poets to the study of law. In 1327 Petrarch and Gherardo went to Bologna to attend the law schools. Free to pursue his own interests, Petrarch then abandoned law and participated in the fashionable social life of Avignon.

Laura and the *Canzoniere* On April 6, 1327, in the church of St. Clare, Petrarch saw and fell in love with the young woman whom he called Laura. She did not return his love. Petrarch composed and revised the love lyrics inspired by Laura until his very last years. The *Canzoniere*, or *Rerum vulgarum fragmenta*, contains poems mostly sonnets, with a few canzoni and compositions in other meters and is divided into two sections: Petrarch became a model for Italian poets. The influence of his art and introspective sensibility was felt for more than 3 centuries in all European literatures. Upon returning to Avignon, he met the Augustinian scholar Dionigi di Borgo San Sepolcro, who directed him toward a greater awareness of the importance of Christian patristic literature. Until the end of his life, Petrarch carried with him a tiny copy of St. Augustine's *Confessions*. In 1336 Petrarch climbed Mt. Ventoux in Provence; on the summit, opening the *Confessions* at random, he read that men admire mountains and rivers and seas and stars, yet neglect themselves. He described this experience in spiritual terms in a letter that he wrote to Dionigi Familiare IV, 1. He participated during this period in the polemic concerning the papal residence, expressing in two *Epistolae metricae* his conviction that the papacy must return to Rome. Early in 1337 Petrarch visited Rome for the first time. The ancient ruins of the city deepened his admiration for the classical age. In the summer he returned to Avignon, where his son, Giovanni, had been born, and then went to live at Vaucluse Fontaine-de-Vaucluse near the source of the Sorgue River. There he led a life of solitude and simplicity, and he also conceived his major Latin works. In 1338 Petrarch began his *De viris illustribus*, and about that time he also started his Latin epic on Scipio Africanus, the *Africa*. In Vaucluse, Petrarch probably also worked on his *Triumphus Cupidinis*, a poetic "procession," written in Italian, in which Cupid leads his captive lovers. In 1340 Petrarch received invitations simultaneously from Paris and Rome to be crowned as poet. His coronation on April 8, 1340, was a personal victory and a triumph for art and knowledge as well. There, on the wooded plateau of Selvapiana, he continued his *Africa* with renewed inspiration. His inner conflict inspired the *Secretum* dialogue in three books between St. Augustine and Petrarch. In it Petrarch expressed his awareness of his failure to realize his religious ideal and his inability to renounce the temporal values that motivated his life. That year Petrarch also began a treatise on the cardinal virtues, *Rerum memorandarum libri*. In the fall of 1340 Petrarch went to Naples on a diplomatic mission for Cardinal Colonna. He recorded his travel impressions in several letters *Familiare* V, 3, 6. Upon his return he stopped at Parma, hoping to settle at Selvapiana. Petrarch personally transcribed them, and these letters of Cicero stimulated Petrarch to plan a formal collection of his own letters. From 1341 to 1348 Petrarch lived at Vaucluse and undertook his *De vita solitaria* and the *Bucolicum carmen*

the latter a collection of 12 Latin eclogues. In May of that year an event occurred in Rome that aroused his greatest enthusiasm. Petrarch encouraged Cola with his pen, exhorting him to persevere in his task of restoring Rome to its universal political and cultural missions. Petrarch then started out for Rome. The Black Death deprived Petrarch of several of his close friends that year, among them Cardinal Colonna. His grief is reflected in the poems he then wrote to Laura and in his letters of this period, one of the most desolate letters being addressed to himself *Ad se ipsum*. Three eclogues and the *Triumphus mortis* following the *Triumph of Love* and the *Triumph of Chastity* were also inspired by the pestilence. Because of the losses Petrarch had suffered, a period of his life seemed to have ended. In he began to make the formal collection of his Latin prose letters called *Familiars*. Since was a Year of Jubilee, Petrarch also made a pilgrimage to Rome. On his way he stopped in Florence, where he made new friends, among whom was Giovanni Boccaccio. After a brief stay in Rome, Petrarch returned northward and arrived in Parma in January Petrarch chose Provence, where he hoped to complete some of his major works. He arrived in Vaucluse in June , accompanied by his son. In Avignon that August he refused a papal secretaryship and a bishopric offered to him. Petrarch was impatient to leave the papal "Babylon" and wrote a series of violent letters against the Curia *Epistolae sine nomine*. In the spring of , Petrarch returned to Vaucluse, resolved to leave Provence. For 8 years he stayed in Milan under the patronage of Giovanni Visconti and later Galeazzo II Visconti, enjoying seclusion and freedom for study while using his pen to urge peace among Italian cities and states. He worked on the *Canzoniere*, took up old works *De viris illustribus* , and began the treatise *De remediis utriusque fortunae*. Petrarch was also entrusted with diplomatic missions that brought him into direct relationship with heads of state, including the emperor Charles IV. In Padua he terminated the *Familiars* and initiated a new collection, *Seniles*. In the fall of Petrarch settled in Venice, where he had been given a house in exchange for the bequest of his library to the city. From Venice he made numerous trips until his definitive return to Padua in During this period a controversy with several Averroists gave rise to an *Invective* on his own ignorance. There Petrarch built a house to which he retired in He received friends, studied, and wrote, and there his daughter, Francesca, now married, joined him with her family. Despite poor health, Petrarch attempted a trip to Rome in , but he had to turn back at Ferrara. Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* Robinson and Henry W. *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Copyright The Gale Group, Inc.

In , in Avignon, Petrarch allegedly encountered Laura de Noves, a woman he fixated on for the rest of his life. From to , Petrarch wrote poems as part of a sequence, centered on the theme of his love for Laura.

The family eventually moved to Avignon , in the Provence region of southern France, the home of the exiled papal court, at which an Italian lawyer might hope to find employment. From there he returned to Italy with his younger brother Gherardo to continue these studies at Bologna. Meanwhile, his knowledge and love of the Classical authors increasing, he made his acquaintance with the new vernacular poetry that was being written. Returning to Avignon, he took minor ecclesiastical orders and entered the household of the influential cardinal Giovanni Colonna. Petrarch enjoyed life in Avignon, and there is a famous description of him and his brother as dandies in its polished courtly world; but he was also making a name there for his scholarship and the elegance of his culture. As well as a love of literature , Petrarch also had during his early youth a deep religious faith, a love of virtue, and an unusually deep perception of the transitory nature of human affairs. There now followed the reactionâ€”a period of dissipationâ€”which also coincided with the beginning of his famous chaste love for a woman known now only as Laura. Vain attempts have been made to identify her, but Petrarch himself kept silent about everything concerning her civil status, as though he thought it unimportant. He first saw her in the Church of St. Clare at Avignon on April 6, , and loved her, although she was outside his reach, almost until his death. From this love there springs the work for which he is most celebrated, the Italian poems *Rime* , which he affected to despise as mere trifles in the vulgar tongue but which he collected and revised throughout his life. Classical studies and career â€”⁴⁰ He spent the summer of at Lombez, France, the bishop of which was an old friend from Bologna, Giacomo Colonna. In he received a canonry there but continued to reside at Avignon in the service of the Cardinal, with whom he stayed until. Quite apart from his love for Laura, this period was an important one for Petrarch. These were years of ambition and unremitting study notably in the field of Classical Latin. They were also years of travel. In Paris he was given a copy of the *Confessions* of St. Augustine by a friend and spiritual confidant, the Augustinian monk Dionigi of Sansepolcro, and he was to use this more and more as the breviary of his spiritual life. By making a synthesis of the two seemingly conflicting idealsâ€”regarding the one as the rich promise and the other as its divine fulfillmentâ€”he can claim to be the founder and great representative of the movement known as European humanism. He rejected the sterile argumentation and endless dialectical subtleties to which medieval Scholasticism had become prey and turned back for values and illumination to the moral weight of the Classical world. In he visited Rome for the first time, to be stirred among its ruins by the evident grandeur of its past. Moral and literary evolution â€”⁴⁶ Meanwhile, his reputation as a scholar was spreading; in September he received invitations from Paris and Rome to be crowned as poet. He had perhaps sought out this honour, partly from ambition but mainly in order that the rebirth of the cult of poetry after more than 1, years might be fittingly celebrated. He had no hesitation in choosing Rome, and accordingly he was crowned on the Capitoline Hill on April 8, , afterward placing his laurel wreath on the tomb of the Apostle in St. From Rome he went to Parma and the nearby solitude of Selvapiana, returning to Avignon in the autumn of. At any rate, this is a common reading of the *Secretum meum* â€” It is an autobiographical treatise consisting of three dialogues between Petrarch and St. Augustine in the presence of Truth. In it he maintains hope that, even amidst worldly preoccupations and error, even while absorbed in himself and his own affairs, a man might still find a way to God. It was an evolution in his thinking that led him to break through the barriers of his too-exclusive admiration for antiquity and to admit other authoritative voices. Break with his past â€”⁵³ The events of the next few years are fundamental to his biography , both as a man and as a writer. Finally, in the jubilee year of he made a pilgrimage to Rome and later assigned to this year his renunciation of sensual pleasures. In Verona in he made his great discovery of the letters of Cicero to Atticus, Brutus, and Quintus, which allowed him to penetrate the surface of the great orator and see the man himself. The letters spurred him on to write epistles to the ancient authors whom he loved and to make a collection of his own letters that he had scattered among his friends. Toward the end of he returned again to the peace of Vaucluse and spent two

years there, chiefly revising *De vita solitaria* but also developing the theme of solitude in a specifically monastic context, in *De otio religioso*. Much of the time was spent in advancing his career in the church; the manoeuvring and animosities this involved resulted in an intense longing for the peace of Vacluse; not even a visit from his lifelong friend the poet Boccaccio, who offered him a chair to be established under his guidance in the University of Florence, could deflect him. He left Rome in May for Vacluse. Here he worked on a new plan for the *Rime*. The project was divided into two parts: The theme of his *Canzoniere* as the poems are usually known therefore goes beyond the apparent subject matter, his love for Laura. For the first time in the history of the new poetry, lyrics are held together in a marvellous new tapestry, possessing its own unity. By selecting all that was most polished and at the same time most vigorous in the lyric tradition of the preceding two centuries and filtering it through his new appreciation of the classics, he not only bequeathed to humanity the most limpid and yet passionate, precise yet suggestive, expression of love and grief, of the ecstasies and sorrows of man, but also created with his marvellous sensibility the form and language of the modern lyric, to provide a common stock for lyric poets of the whole of Europe. Later years 1374 But the death of his closest friends, dislike of the newly elected pope, Innocent VI, increasingly bitter relations with the Avignon court, all finally determined Petrarch to leave Provence. He found rooms in Milan and stayed there for most of the next eight years. During these eight years he also completed the first proper edition of the *Rime*, continued assiduously with the *Familiars*, worked on the *Trionfi*, and set in order many of his earlier writings. Early in he went to Padua, hoping to escape the plague. He remained there until September, when, again a fugitive from the Black Death, he sought shelter in Venice. He was given a house, and in return Petrarch promised to bequeath all his books to the republic. He was joined by his daughter Francesca, and the tranquil happiness of her little family gave him great pleasure. There he wrote the defense of his humanism against the critical attack from Venice, *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*. He was still in great demand as a diplomat; in he was called to Rome by Urban V, and he set off eager to see the fulfillment of his great dream of a new Roman papacy, but at Ferrara he was seized by a stroke. Yet he did not stop working; in addition to revision he composed more minor works and added new sections to his *Posteritati*, an autobiographical letter to posterity that was to have formed the conclusion to his *Seniles*; he also composed the final sections of the *Trionfi*. His abiding achievement was to recognize that, if there is a Providence that guides the world, then it has set man at the centre. But, even more important, the humanist attitudes of the Italian 15th century that led into the Renaissance would not have been possible without him.