

The Prince (1513)



Machiavelli

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Niccolò Machiavelli was born in Florence, Italy, on May 3, 1469. At the time, Florence was a wealthy **city-state** in Italy and the heart of the **Renaissance**. The wealthy Medici family, who made their money through banking, ruled Florence. Italy was divided up into four city-states and because of this division the area was at risk of being **invaded** by stronger, more powerful states in eastern Europe.

Machiavelli was a Renaissance **humanist**. He learned Greek and Latin in school and was a student of Roman history. He even published a commentary on the works of the Roman historian Livy entitled *Discourses on Livy* in which he used lessons from the Roman past to suggest ways of dealing with problems in Florence in the 1500s.

In 1494, the Medici family was run out of Florence. During their 14 year exile from the city, Machiavelli worked for the government in Florence as a diplomat. He was in charge of the republic's foreign affairs and has been described as a "devious" civil servant.

In 1512, the Medici family returned to rule Florence. They imprisoned Machiavelli and tortured him because they suspected him of **conspiring** to keep them out of power. He was **exiled** from the city in 1513 to his father's house south of Florence. While in exile, Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* (1513). *The Prince* is a guide book on

ruling based on his experiences working for the government of Florence, his diplomatic trips throughout Europe, and his study of Roman history. Hoping to win the favor of the Medici he dedicated *The Prince* to Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, the ruler of Florence at that time.

After the publication of his book, Machiavelli held a number of posts in the Florentine government. Fueled by the newly invented **printing press**, *The Prince* was widely read and translated and has influenced philosophers and rulers throughout history. Because of *The Prince*, Machiavelli is now known as the "father of modern political theory."

Sources:
 Biography.com Editors. "Niccolò Machiavelli Biography." *Biography*. A&E Television Networks, 2 Apr. 2014. [Web](#). 25 July 2017.
 Machiavelli, Nicolo. "Nicolo Machiavelli (1469-1527): The Prince, 1513." *Project Gutenberg*. N.p., Mar. 1998. [Web](#). 25 July 2017.
 Mansfield, Harvey. "Niccolò Machiavelli ITALIAN STATESMAN AND WRITER." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 20 July 1998. [Web](#). 25 July 2017.

1. **Who** wrote *The Prince*?

2. **Where** was *The Prince* written?

3. **When** was *The Prince* written?

4. **Who** was the audience for *The Prince*?

5. What **type of source** is *The Prince*? [circle one]

6. What **genre of source** is *The Prince* [circle one]

7. **Why** was *The Prince* written?

8. How might *The Prince* be useful evidence in understanding how Machiavelli believed power is gained, maintained, and consolidated?

9. What bias might Machiavelli have about the how power is gained, maintained, and consolidated?? Explain.

Section 1: That Which Concerns a Prince on the Subject of the Art of War

- 1 | The Prince ought to have no other aim or thought [...] than war and
- 2 | its rules and **discipline** [...] [W]hen princes have thought more of
- 3 | ease than of arms they have lost their states.

1a. According to Machiavelli, what should be the two aims of a prince?

and

1b. When Machiavelli writes that a prince who has “thought more of ease than of arms” may lose their states, what is he warning princes to avoid?

Section 2: Concerning Things for Which Men, and Especially Princes, are Blamed

- 4 | It remains now to see what ought to be the rules of conduct for
- 5 | a prince toward subject and friends [...] I know that many have
- 6 | written on this point, [but] I shall depart from the methods of
- 7 | other people. [...] [I]t appears to me more appropriate to follow
- 8 | up the real truth of a matter than the imagination of it [...]
- 9 | [M]any have pictured [governments] which in fact have never
- 10 | been known or seen [...]

2a. Machiavelli critiques other writers who have attempted to write about the roles of leaders and governments. According to Machiavelli, how does he think his writing will be different?

2b. Why is Machiavelli critical of people who have written about governments in their imagination, or “[governments] which in fact have never been seen?”

Section 3: Concerning Things for Which Men, and Especially Princes, are Blamed

11 Hence, it is necessary for a prince wishing to hold his own to know
12 how to do wrong, and to make use of it or not according to necessity.
13 [...] And I know that everyone will confess that it would be most
14 praiseworthy in a prince to exhibit all the above qualities that are
15 considered good; [...] [I]t is necessary for him to be sufficiently
16 prudent [wise] that he may know how to avoid the reproach
17 [disapproval] of those vices [wrongdoings] which would lose him his
18 states ...

3. Machiavelli writes, "it is necessary for a prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong, and to make use of it or not according to necessity." What is Machiavelli encouraging?

Section 4: Concerning Cruelty and Clemency [Mercy], and Whether it is Better to be Loved than Feared

19 Upon this a question arises: whether it is better to be loved than
20 feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish
21 to be both, but [...] it is much safer to be feared than loved [...]
22 Because this is to be asserted [stated as fact] in general of men, that
23 they are ungrateful, fickle [quickly changing], false, cowardly,
24 covetous [greedy] [...] [M]en have less scruple [hesitation/reluctance]
25 in offending one who is beloved than one who is feared, for love is
26 preserved by the link of obligation which [...] is broken at every
27 opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of
28 punishment which never fails. Nevertheless a prince ought to inspire
29 fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred [...]

4a. According to Machiavelli, what is the answer to the question, “whether it is better to be loved than feared or feared than loved?”

4b. According to Machiavelli, what are the qualities of men?

4c. According to Machiavelli, why do “men have less scruple [hesitation/reluctance] in offending one who is beloved than one who is feared”?

4d. According to Machiavelli, to avoid hatred from his citizens and subjects, what must a prince prevent himself from doing?

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SUMMARY QUESTIONS (Use complete sentences.)

1. Using *The Prince*, explain Macchiavelli’s point of view on how to gain, maintain, and consolidate power.

2. How do you think *The Prince* might impact how leaders govern their states?