



Italian Historical Society of America

Newsletter

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Tutto Italiano **Benvenuto a *Tutto Italiano***

This month 550 years ago, two decades before the High Renaissance began with the emergence of Botticelli, da Vinci, Michelangelo, and later, Raphael, [Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli](#) was born in Florence. He grew up during a time of political discord where – at alternating times – city-states were in battle with each other, the Holy Roman Empire, France, or Spain. It was also a time of humanistic accord, as the writings of [Petrarch](#) a century earlier were bringing awareness to individual intellect and creativity.

Machiavelli's family was prominent in Florence; but his father Bernardo, educated in law, carried the debts of his ancestors and was barred from holding public office. Niccolò, though, received a classic education that included Latin, grammar, oratory, math, science, and ancient and medieval philosophy; and in keeping with the times, he attended lectures on humanism.

His education and family's political connections may have led him to work for the Florentine government. In 1494 Piero de' Medici, "The Unfortunate," was forced to leave Florence, ending a 60-year rule under the House of Medici. Machiavelli was made secretary and later military liaison of the Florentine Republic. He traveled as a diplomat of the Republic and was responsible for procuring government documents. During that time, he also wrote several political papers.

In 1512, the House of Medici regained power, and Machiavelli was accused of conspiring against the returning regime. He was imprisoned and tortured, but denied involvement and was exiled. He moved to the family's small estate on the outskirts of Florence and wrote [The Prince](#), a critique of those in power and their ethics in ruling. In 1517, Machiavelli wrote [Discourses on Livy](#), three books detailing his assessment of the historical text of Rome written by [Titus Livius](#); and in 1521, he wrote [The Art of War](#), a series of discussions on the fundamentals of military strategy; and the only book published while he was alive. (It's noted that Thomas Jefferson had a copy of the book, and an American edition was published during the War of 1812.)

While he was working on [The Art of War](#), Machiavelli was accepted back into the political realm and literary circles of Florence; and received a commission to write the history of the city; completed in 1525. The following year, the War of the [League of Cognac](#) – a battle between the coalition of France, the Papal States (Pope Clement VII), Florence, Genoa, Milan, and Venice with Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor – began, ending in defeat for the League and a takeover of the House of Medici by the Republic of Florence.

Machiavelli was a military advisor to the Pope and Florence during the war and was intent on seeking a government position in the Republic, but he died in 1527, shortly after the defeat of Rome. With a treaty signed by all but Florence, Charles and Clement (brother of Lorenzo de' Medici) formed an alliance. Florence was invaded by Charles' army, the Republic was defeated, and the House of Medici was restored in 1530.

Although he has written at least 20 books on political, historical, and fictional topics, Machiavelli is most well known as author of [The Prince](#). He is often described as a

political philosopher, and the term associated with his name – Machiavellian – has been widely used to describe the “evil” actions he wrote about; but some claim *The Prince* is a satire. In recent years, books and articles have been written that take an in-depth look into *The Prince*, and question not Machiavelli’s words, but his intent.

[Niccolò Machiavelli](#) (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

[Machiavelli Family Estate](#)

[Cicero and Machiavelli](#)

[Titus Livius: The History of Rome](#)

[1527 Sack of Rome](#)

[Have we got Machiavelli all wrong?](#) (The Guardian; March 3, 2017)

[How Machiavellian was Machiavelli?](#) (BBC History Magazine; May 26, 2016)

[Redeeming “The Prince”: The Meaning of Machiavelli’s Masterpiece by Maurizio Viroli](#) (Book Introduction, PDF)

[How Did the Renaissance Begin?](#) (Italy Magazine; October 17, 2011)

[High Renaissance Art](#)

From the Italian American Press

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Book Review

***A Camp Without Walls* by Dr. Maria Lombardo**

It is difficult to imagine how a war started in another country that happened before you were born could possibly affect your life. War is an interloper; changing with the times, the environment, the people, the circumstances. For some, war is a necessity; but for most, war is an intrusion, destroying lives, plans, dreams, hope, and oftentimes, faith.

[Read the full review at *La Gazzetta Italiana*.](#)

Italian American Heritage Project

Earlier this year, lesson plans based on the letters Christopher Columbus wrote after his first voyage were posted on [sharemylesson.com](#), a website funded and founded (with TES Global) by the [American Federation of Teachers](#). The lesson plans were developed to provide an objective historical foundation for students to learn about Columbus.

Several weeks ago, the [Columbus Heritage Coalition](#) added the [Columbus Letters lesson plans](#) to its website. The Coalition, founded in 2017, has more than 50 member groups totaling about 20,000 members “dedicated to the preservation, protection and promotion of the historical legacy of Christopher Columbus;” and members participate in many activities throughout the United States to uphold its mission. [List of 2019 Columbus Day Parades](#). If Columbus Day or a Columbus statue is in danger of becoming extinct in your community, [contact the Coalition](#).

Last month John Mancini, Director of the [Italic Institute of America](#), wrote about a group of fifth grade students in Chicago who petitioned their state representative to eliminate Columbus Day. Their appeal was based on Internet research and finding

that Columbus was “a mass murderer and liar.”

A recent Internet search for lesson plans about Columbus brought numerous results, but in evaluating the top ten, eight contained a biased view of the explorer and his first voyage. Add the extremely limited amount of lesson plans about Italian Americans, and the result is a scholastic void in the history and culture of Italians in America.

When I founded Thirty-One Days of Italians in 2006, a preliminary outline for lesson plans was included on the website. In 2008, I wrote “Searching for Italian American History,” addressing the lack of teaching the history of Italian immigration and how it has affected society, especially Italian American children. The paper was accepted for a 2009 university publication, but the journal folded that year. The paper was updated and presented at a conference on Italian American sociohistorical topics in 2015, and it’s used as a reference for educational projects.

In my research, I read many articles about Columbus and – while it’s encouraging to see some who defend him – most comments are not only derogatory but also quite hateful. What is even more disconcerting is the misinformation the comments are based on. Where does it come from? Schools, social networking, websites, blogs, and traditional media.

How many cities, states, and educational institutions will remove or replace Columbus Day this year? It’s still not too late to address the problem. You can download the lesson plans, talk to teachers and other educators, and even speak with town and state government representatives. You can [sponsor my work](#) in developing educational resources.

Read my articles about the Columbus letters at *La Gazzetta Italiana*.
[The Columbus Letters](#) (February 2019)

[The Columbus Letters, Part 2](#) (April 2019)

Support the IAHP

Visit the [IAHP website](#) to read my articles, learn about the lesson plans, see the resources I’ve used, and support my work. Donate for a cause – preserving Italian heritage and Italian American history and culture through education. [All donations are tax-deductible.](#)

Italian American News

[Ron Howard’s Pavarotti Documentary](#) (Playbill; May 11, 2019)

[Santa Maria sails from Spain, docks in downtown Wilmington](#) (Port City Daily; May 10, 2019)

[Rao’s: NYC’s Most Exclusive Italian Restaurant](#) (Bon Appétit; April 16, 2019)

Exhibit

[Moroni: The Riches of Renaissance Portraiture](#); The Frick Collection, NYC (Through June 2, 2019)

“Exclusive Look at Moroni as a Portraitist Through Paintings and Objects from International Collections”

News About Italy

[Giuliano Bugialli, evangelist for traditional Italian cooking, dies at 88](#) (Washington Post; May 5, 2019)

[What does Steve Bannon want with this Italian monastery? Inside his fledgling school for populism](#) (The Globe and Mail; April 22, 2019)

[Italy offers help rebuilding Norte-Dame](#) (ANSA; April 17, 2019)

