**Linking Past and Present ~ The Renaissance**

*Supporting the Arts: Past and Present*

**Then** During the Renaissance, many artists were supported by wealthy patrons. These patrons – who included popes, monarchs, and the rulers of city-states – frequently invited artist to join their households as court artist. Artist were also funded by guilds and local religious organizations. These groups contracted artists to create specific works of art, for which they were paid handsomely.

The generosity of patrons was often motivated by their desire to be viewed by their peers as being cultured people who encouraged geniuses. Patrons also participated – somewhat vicariously – in the creative process, usually by choosing the subject of a particular work of art. More modest patrons hired humanist scholars to explain the philosophical ideas that they wanted a particular artwork to reflect.

Powerful leaders sometimes induced artist to represent them – either directly or symbolically – in a religious context. Pope Julius II used Raphael’s talent in this way. Having persuaded an ecumenical council to accept his plan for church reform, Julius II then commissioned Raphael to paint a biblical scene, *The Expulsion of Heliodorus*. The picture shows God intervening on behalf of a Jewish high priest. The audience of the day would have recognized that the high priest symbolized Julius and that the pope, like the high priest, was also supported by God.

Although self-interest played a part in their generosity, Renaissance patrons did not usually stifle artists’ essential visions. Perhaps this was because patrons and protégés shared an open, exploratory attitude toward life.

**Now** Art is still supported by wealthy individuals. Today, artist display their works in galleries in hopes that the works of art will be bought. In today’s art market, successful artists are those who most please the taste of the buyer. Universities and colleges also support well-known artists by hiring them as special faculty members and giving them the facilities and time to pursue their own projects.

In most countries, the government and major corporations both buy art and provide charitable support for it. In the United States, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), a government program financed by public money or taxes, is an important source of funds for artistic projects.

Since its establishment in 1965, the NEA has stirred up controversy. Some people consider art a luxury that should not be supported by taxes. Other opponents of the NEA claim that government funding of the arts will inevitably lead to the political control of artistic expression.

When the NEA was established, the United States Congress stressed that, in accordance with the Constitution, the program was required to allow freedom of expression. However, in 1989, Congress cut the NEA’s budget by $45,000 to punish it for supporting art that many citizens found objectionable. Congress also passed a bill that prohibited the NEA from financing similar works.

**Critical Thinking**

**Directions:** Answer the following questions.

1. **Drawing Conclusions:** How did Renaissance patrons influence artistic expression? **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. **Making Inferences:** How is the United States Congress able to influence artistic expression?

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1. **Synthesizing Information:** Why do some people want to ban explicit music lyrics? Why could you argue that these music lyrics are important in contemporary American culture? With which viewpoint do you agree? Explain why? **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. **Thinking Critically:** In what way are all people in today’s society patrons? **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**