**The Prince**

Machiavelli was born in Florence on May 5th, 1469. In his early years he was exposed to an extremely chaotic time period with popes leading armies, powerful city-states falling one after another to foreign powers, and governments changing within the space of just weeks. As a student, Machiavelli was educated by the humanist ideals of the Renaissance and hence The Prince seems to be set with these ideals. Later in life Machiavelli pursued a career within the government, where he was first a clerk, then an ambassador and finally on a council responsible for diplomatic negotiations and military matters. He was placed in charge of the Florentine militia and was trusted with the protection of the city. Machiavelli did not trust mercenaries or paid armies and was much more comfortable with a citizen militia. He believed citizens would possess more loyalty and would not be motivated by money. Machiavelli was very devoted to the Florentine Republic and served it for many years.

Machiavelli’s The Prince has been incredibly influential since it was published 5 years after his death in 1532. It was written during the European Renaissance when intellect and the discussion of new ideas was a widespread them of the era. Machiavelli did not write The Prince to become famous but instead wrote his book to achieve a position in the new Italian government formed by the Medici family. The Prince was written as a political handbook for rulers and has been used this way for many centuries. The book has caused passionate debates and controversy since the day it was published and it appears that it will continue to do so. When The Prince was published, Italy was not a unified country but a compilation of city states that were all fighting to gain power over one another. Machiavelli was greatly influenced and interested in the complicated nature of European politics.

Originally, Machiavelli played a large role in the anti-Medici government. When they came back into power Machiavelli was arrested and charged with conspiracy. He denied having anything to do with this and was eventually released. He retired to his estate in Sant’Andrea, Percussina and began writing The Prince in an effort to compel the Medici government to reassess his allegiance to their political beliefs.

Machiavelli’s ideas contained in The Prince are relatively straight forward, as he strove to provide practical, easily understood advice to Lorenzo De’Medici, to whom the book is dedicated. He did not write The Prince for literary acknowledgement but alternatively wrote it to prove his proficiency on government in the western world and to offer advice on how to gain power and keep it efficient. Machiavelli strongly believed in the requirement of a strong leader in order to maintain domination for the benefit of citizens and not for individual advancement.

One of the main questions discussed in the book “is it better for a Prince to be loved or feared?” Machiavelli’s short answer is that it would be preferable to be loved and feared; however the two simply can’t exist together. As a result, he says that it would be best to be feared and not loved. It is better to be feared then loved because as a leader it is your responsibility is to control and run the state and Machiavelli feels that to do so you need complete obedience from your people. Machiavelli does not believe in cruelty and he only warrants it for military use. This is because he believes that if you have a good military then you will have good laws. One of his most famous quotes helps explain this theory, “the presence of sound military forces indicates the presence of sound laws.” Although the author believes it is better to be feared than loved, he recognized that a leader cannot be hated or it will lead to his downfall. Machiavelli advises that Princes should avoid being hated or despised, as the people’s allegiance is a better defense than building a fortress.