**Renaissance**

The **Renaissance** was a [cultural movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_movement) that spanned roughly from the 14th to the 17th century, beginning in Italy in the [Late Middle Ages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Late_Middle_Ages) and later spreading to the rest of Europe. The word *Renaissance*, literally translates from French into English as "Rebirth". It mainly affected European intellectual life in the [early modern period](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_modern_period). Its influence was felt in literature, philosophy, art, music, politics, science, religion, and other aspects of life. The reflection of art was more realistic and it offered a more natural reality in painting, mirroring normal life. It later also showed a widespread [educational](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_education) reform. In politics, the Renaissance contributed the development of the conventions of diplomacy, and in science an increased reliance on observation. Renaissance scholars employed the [humanist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_humanism) method in study, which simply means that they searched for realism and human emotions in art. In all, the Renaissance could be viewed as an attempt by intellectuals to study and improve the [secular](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular) world through the revival of ancient ideas and through novel or unique approaches to thought.

What triggered and made Renaissance possible?

**Islamic Spain (Al Andalus or Andalusia)**

Andalus roughly means to become green at the end of the summer.

In 711, Islam made its entrance into the Iberian Peninsula. Having been invited to end the tyrannical rule of King Roderick, Muslim armies under the leadership of Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed the straits between Morocco and Spain. Within seven years, most of the Iberian Peninsula (modern Spain and Portugal) was under Muslim control. Parts of this land would remain Muslim for over 700 years.

By the mid 900s, Islam had reached its zenith in the land known as al-Andalus. Over 5 million Muslims lived there, making up over 80% of the population. A strong, united Umayyad caliphate ruled the land and was by far the most advanced and stable society in Europe. The capital, Cordoba, attracted those seeking education from all over the Muslim world and Europe.

Some products which were introduced into the west through Andalus are: cotton, paper, glass mirrors, street lamps, salt, sugar, perfumes, resins, oils, paints, colored glass, silk, satin, pepper, cinnamon, handkerchiefs, deodorant, linen, firearms, cotton balls, paper money, postage stamps, book binding, clocks, ceramic tiles, nitric acid, soap, astro labs, compasses for navigation, slide rules, rulers, surgical instruments, wind mills, spinning wheels, rose water, mercury ointment, maps, globes, citric and nectar fruits, carpets, eye glasses, curtains, test tubes, uses for jars and flasks, porcelain, fine furs, velvet, almanacs and encyclopaedias, Algebra, Arabic numeral system, alogorism (algorithms), general formula for solving third degree equations, trigonometry, calculus, science of power or mechanics, formula for finding the centre of gravity, mechanical properties of geometric bodies, hydrometer, aerometer, lever, balance, scale, pendulum, spring and wall clock, atomic theory of matter, processes of evaporation, sublimation, crystallization, distillation, filtration, pigmentation, melting, methods of steel making, metal work, cloth dying, established astronomical sciences, gynecology, obstetrics, and medical encyclopaedias. Muslims also used and described over 200 surgical instruments, described 130 eye diseases, characterized 143 drugs.

Arabic origins of medicines and herbs betrayed by their names such as, alcohol, alkali, alfalfa, camphor, cotton, hakim, jasmine, saffron etc.

So how did the world find its way towards rebirth or renaissance?