**Niccolo Machiavelli**

**Reading Assignment**

**Inventor of Political Science**

*“My intent being to write a useful work…it seemed to me more appropriate to pursue the actual truth of the matter than the imagination of it. Many have imagined republics and principalities which were never seen or known really to exist; because how one lives is so far removed from how one ought to live that he who abandons what one does for what one ought to do, learns rather his own ruin than his preservation.”* –Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)

Niccolo Machiavelli, an intellectual and sometime government official, nearly lived an anonymous life. He was an educated man who had written plays but remained an unknown citizen of Florence, Italy, well into middle age. It was not until the age of 44 that he single-handedly revolutionized the study of governments and politics.

Machiavelli was born in 1469 to a noble family in Florence, one of the intellectual centers of the Italian Renaissance. He received a solid education. During his twenties, he worked in Rome on behalf of a Florentine banker. Florence was experiencing political upheaval at the time. Lorenzo de’ Medici, the great banker and patron of the arts, had ruled the city until his death in 1492. His son proved to be an incompetent heir and was banished from the city. A few years later, the people of Florence decided to form a republic.

Machiavelli became an official in the new government. He served the city-state on several diplomatic missions that allowed him close observation of some of the leading political figures of his time. He grew to respect those who knew how to gain and use power. He also took the role of organizing a citizen-army for Florence, which he modeled after the army of the ancient Roman Republic.

Machiavelli’s militia did not have the fighting ability of Rome’s famed legions, though. In 1512, the Spanish army defeated the Florentine troops, and the Medici family once again took power. Machiavelli was dismissed from the government and retired to his country estate to write.

Among Machiavelli’s creations was *The Prince*. A devoted supporter of republican government, he nevertheless dedicated the work to the new Medici ruler of Florence. Machiavelli hoped *The Prince* would prove his intelligence so he could win a job in the new regime. He also hoped to spur the Medici family to unite northern Italy and insulate it from foreign interference.

Previous writers of political philosophy tried to describe perfect governments. Machiavelli had a different idea in mind. He wanted to understand how political leaders could best obtain and hold power. He thought that trickery was more effective in achieving these goals than honesty. He also thought that acquiring and maintaining power was more important to rulers than being a “good” leader. The chapter title “On Cruelty and [compassion], and Whether It Is Better To Be Loved or Feared” reveals the core of his view of government, which is based on his view of human nature:

*It will naturally be answered that it would be desirable to be both [loved] and [feared]; but as it is difficult to be both at the same time, it is much more safe to be feared than to be loved, when you have to choose between the two. For it may be said of men in general, that they are ungrateful and fickle, dissemblers, avoiders of danger, and greedy of gain.*

His name became an adjective – “Machiavellian” came to describe any leader who used deceit to impose his or her will.

Ironically, Machiavelli was ruined by his own ambitions. The Medici gave him diplomatic work. However, when they were overthrown and the republic restored again, Machiavelli was tainted by his association with the Medici. He was turned down for employment and died shortly thereafter.

***Take a moment to respond to the questions on your worksheet using complete sentences.***

***The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli**

*In this selection of The Prince, Machiavelli continues his central theme of how a prince can gain and maintain power. As this passage illustrates, he leaves behind the idealism of the medieval Christian king and looks instead to what he views as the realities of human nature. As he does throughout the book, Machiavelli uses examples from classical Rome to support his points. In this case he refers to the great Carthaginian general Hannibal and his noted Roman opponent, Scipio Africanus.*

Here the question arises: is it better to be loved than feared, or vice versa? I don’t doubt that every prince would like to be both; but since it is hard to accommodate these qualities, if you have to make a choice, to be feared is much safer than to be loved. For it is a good general rule about men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, liars, and deceivers, fearful of danger and greedy for gain. While you serve their welfare, they are all yours, offering their blood, their belongings, their lives, and their children’s lives, as we noted above – so long as the danger is remote. But when the danger is close at hand, they turn against you. Then, any prince who has relied on their words and has made no other preparations will come to grief; because friendships that are bought at a price, and not with greatness and nobility of soul, may be paid for but they are not required, and they cannot be used in time of need. People are less concerned with offending a man who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared; the reason is that love is a link of obligation which men, because they are rotten, will break any time they think doing so serves their advantage; but fear involves dread of punishment, from which they can never escape. Still, a prince should make himself feared in such a way that, even if he gets no love, he gets no hate either; because it is perfectly possible to be feared and not hated, and this will be the result if only the prince will keep his hands off the property of his subjects or citizens, and off their women. When he does have to shed blood, he should be sure to have a strong justification and manifest cause; but above all, he should not confiscate people’s property, because men are quicker to forget the death of a father than the loss of a patrimony. Besides, pretexts for confiscation are always plentiful; it never fails that a prince who starts to live by plunder can find reasons to rob someone else. Excuses for proceeding against someone’s life are much rarer and more quickly exhausted.

But a prince at the head of his armies and commanding a multitude of soldiers should not care a bit if he is considered cruel; without such a reputation, he could never hold his army together and ready for action. Among the marvelous deeds of Hannibal, this was prime, that, having an immense army, which included men of many different races and nations, and which he led to battle in distant countries; he never allowed them to fight among themselves or to ride against him, whether his fortune was good or bad. The reason for this could be his inhuman cruelty, which, along with his countless other talents, made him an object of awe and terror to his soldiers; and without the cruelty, his other qualities would never have sufficed. The historians who pass snap judgments on these matters admire his accomplishments and at the same time condemn the cruelty which was their main cause.

When I say, “His other qualities would never have sufficed,” we can see that this is true from the example of Scipio, an outstanding man not only among those of his time, but in all recorded history; yet his armies revolted in Spain, for no other reason than his excessive leniency in allowing his soldiers more freedom than military discipline permits. Fabius Maximus rebuked him in the senate for this failing, calling him the corrupter of the Roman armies. When a lieutenant of Scipio’s plundered the Locrians, he took no action in behalf of the people, and did nothing to discipline that insolent lieutenant; again, this was the result of his easygoing nature. Indeed, when someone in the senate wanted to excuse him on this occasion, he said there are many men who know better how to avoid error themselves than how to correct error in others. Such a soft temper would in time have tarnished the flame and glory of Scipio, had he brought it to the office of emperor; but as he lived under the control of the senate, this harmful quality of his not only remained hidden but was considered creditable.

Returning to the question of being feared or loved, I conclude that since men love at their own inclination but can be made to fear at the inclination of the prince, a shrewd prince will lay his foundations on what is under his own control, not on what is controlled by others. He should simply take pains not to be hated, as I said.

**Niccolo Machiavelli Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Renaissance Leads to Reformation & Discovery Reading Comprehension**

***The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli**

1. In the excerpt of The Prince, how does Machiavelli say one should be perceived? Why does he think that way?

2. According to Machiavelli, what will force people to turn against you?

3. Why are people less concerned with offending a man who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared?

4. Why does Machiavelli say that a ruler must show himself to be capable of cruelty to his army?

5. Why does Machiavelli consider cruelty a virtue in a military leader?