Background: You are about to explore a period in history known as the Renaissance. This was a time of remarkable artistic achievement in Europe. The atmosphere in many cities was one of great creativity and competition as artists worked to achieve fame and fortune.

To achieve success, Renaissance artists often relied on patrons. A patron was a person who provided money and support to an artist. Many patrons were rich merchants or bankers. Some religious and political leaders were also patrons. Imagine you are an artist trying to win over a patron and break out of the crowd.

Famous patron Lorenzo de Medici
It is just before sunrise, and you are already hard at work in your small art studio above a busy street in the city of Florence, Italy. All around you are brushes and paint cans. You have been working on the painting in front of you for months, and now it all comes down to this: a wealthy banker is on his way to see your work.

He is looking for an artist to paint portraits of his family. You know that many other artists are competing against you for this position. You need this job to support yourself. Your money is running low.

You can’t ask your family for more money. They are just simple farmers who live in a small village many miles away. They already gave you most of their savings so you could go to Florence and become an artist. If you gain the patronage of this banker, your family’s faith in you will be justified. You could become a wealthy artist and help your family.

The moment of the banker’s arrival nears. You walk back and forth in front of the painting looking for any flaws. The painting depicts Helen of Troy, a heroine of a Greek epic poem called the *Iliad*. You have heard that the banker likes ancient Greek writings.

You eventually decide that Helen’s eyes do not shine enough. You quickly grab the smallest brush you can find. For the next hour you painstakingly work to achieve the look you want. Suddenly, you hear footsteps coming up the stairs. You look over the painting. Is it good enough? Will the banker like it? Soon you will know the answer.

**Why do people value art so highly?**

1. **READING: Characterization** What personal traits do you think were necessary to become a successful Renaissance artist?

2. **WRITING: Summarize** Based on what you read, write a paragraph summarizing the relationship between artists and patrons during the Renaissance.

**CALIFORNIA STANDARDS** Writing 2.5
Write summaries of reading materials.