WRITING AN INTRODUCTION

“What captivated the Italians of the Renaissance was a sense of man’s tremendous powers, the rich potentialities of human nature, the free and unfettered creative play of talent in every field”

Assess the validity of this statement.

Below are two opening paragraphs from student essays assessing the above statement. Read the paragraphs and decide which is better and why.

Paragraph A

The Renaissance was a new beginning for Italians. Renaissance means rebirth and Italy was the center of the new talent. Artists changed their style of painting and Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*. Men were more interested in human things and turned their attention to this world from the spiritual world. So the Renaissance was a time when men began to discover their talents and develop their powers. Castiglione describes the ideal court gentleman and Cellini criticized a sculpture because it wasn’t lifelike. Even church leaders bought works of art and had the artists sign their names to show wealth of the church.

Paragraph B

The Renaissance is a useful label for the approximate period 1400-1600 in Western Europe. In certain respects, the Renaissance was a new beginning for an elite group of urban citizens in Italy. While not a dramatic break in their concerns with the here-and-now interest in secular affairs developed appreciably. In art, philosophy, political theory, and education, themes indebted to the classical world emerged. Wealthy bankers and traders promoted this rebirth and enjoyed the rich discoveries. Yet the impact was narrow. For the common man and for most women, the “Sense of tremendous powers” probably had little meaning. Their roles in society were set and unchanging.

Evaluation

Paragraph B tries to deal with the accuracy of the quotation : ”What captivated the Italians of the Renaissance was a sense of man’s tremendous powers, the rich potentialities of human nature, the free and unfettered creative play of talent in every field” and its validity as a summary for the period known as the Renaissance.

First, it considers the Renaissance as a label for the time period. Second, while it agrees to some extent with the quotation, it notes possible exceptions to the educated and wealthy Italians who shared in the intellectual and artistic changes of the time. Finally, it sets up the categories-art, political theory, education, and philosophy- that the body of the essay will explore.

Paragraph A, on the other hand, apart from asserting that the Renaissance was a new beginning, fails to consider the legitimacy of the term Renaissance for the historical period in early modern European history. Moreover, it includes the illustrative data that properly should make up the body of the essay in a series of paragraphs focusing on art, etiquette, and political theory.