

Girolamo Savonarola

was an Italian preacher, religious reformer, and martyr. He joined the Dominican order in 1475 and was sent to Florence to lecture at the convent of San Marco, where he became known for his learning and asceticism. His apocalyptic preaching maintained that the church needed reforming, that it would be scourged and then renewed. After the overthrow of the Medici family in 1494, (by the army of Charles VIII, French king), Savonarola became leader of Florence, setting up a democratic but severely puritanical government, notable for its "bonfire of the vanities," in which frivolous materials were burned. He also sought to establish a Christian republic as a base for reforming Italy and the church. He was opposed by the supporters of the Medici, and by Pope Alexander VI (Borgia), who attempted to restrain his unusual interpretations of scripture and his claim of prophecy. Savonarola was tried, convicted of heresy (1498), and hanged and burned.

1. What nationality was Girolamo Savonarola? What was he famous for?
2. What important event happened in Florence in 1494?
3. What was the purpose of the „bonfires of vanities“? What were these frivolous materials?
4. Why was he put to death in 1498?