

Topic Page: [Bembo, Pietro, 1470-1547](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bembo_pietro_1470_1547)

Summary Article: **Bembo, Pietro**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Italian scholar, poet, and humanist. He was secretary to Pope Leo X 1513–21 and later official historian of Venice. As a scholar he edited the works of Petrarch and Dante, and played an important role in the development of Italian by suggesting that the works of Petrarch and Boccaccio should be used as models. His literary reputation was established by his *Gli Asolani/The People of Asolani* (1505), a set of dialogues on love dedicated to Lucrezia Borgia.

Bembo was an important figure in the revival of vernacular poetry, and started a vogue for imitations of Petrarch. He showed a much greater sensitivity to form than did those humanists who concentrated on classical literature. His *Prose della volgar lingua/Prose in the Vernacular* (1525), in which he cites Petrarch and Boccaccio as models for a vernacular suitable both for literature and for practical discourse, was the first critical history of Italian literature since Dante.

He was also a leading member of the sceptical group of writers and intellectuals that flourished around Leo X, and was patron of the free-thinking philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi.

Born in Venice, he was educated by the scholars Augurello, Ermolao Barbaro, and Donato. He met Politian in 1491 and in the same year travelled to Messina to learn Greek from Constantine Lascaris. In 1493 he returned to Venice and edited Lascaris's Greek grammar for the scholar-publisher Manutius, who also issued Bembo's editions of Petrarch in 1501 and Dante in 1502.

Gli Asolani brought Bembo to Urbino where he is depicted as the advocate of platonic love in Castiglione's *The Courtier* (1528). In 1513 in Rome Bembo published *De imitatione*, which championed Ciceronianism and led to his appointment as secretary to Pope Leo X, after which he went to Padua.

In 1530 he published *Rime*, a collection of his Italian poetry, and was nominated historian and librarian of the Venetian republic – his *Historia Veneta/History of Venice* is noted for its style rather than its content. In 1539 he was made a cardinal and moved back to Rome, where he died.

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