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Sommario/riassunto	<p>By 1400, the foundation of the Italian Renaissance had been laid. There was burgeoning trade and industry, newly wealthy individuals and cities, and a new political freedom and energy throughout the land. The prevailing mood was one of change and improvement; old moral restraints and medieval dogmas were crumbling, and in their place was a zeal for building on the classics of ancient Greece and Rome to create a better civilization. And finally, there was rivalry: between cities, merchant princes, artists, all vying to do better than anyone else, whether they were planning an ideal state, building a church, or striking a medal. It was the wealthiest and most menacing age Europe had ever known; Italy possessed the greatest concentration of gifted individuals that Western civilization had seen for 1,000 years, and the conjunction of genius and the times produced an explosion of energy as powerful as an erupting volcano. Here, from the eminent British Historian Sir J. H. Plumb, is the story of the Renaissance.</p>