

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



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Episode #253
Niccolò Machiavelli & The Prince
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[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:12] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:22] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about Niccolò Machiavelli, and his most famous work, The Prince.

[00:00:31] He is a man whose very¹ name has become synonymous² with a certain immoral behaviour - if someone is Machiavellian it means they are unscrupulous³, scheming⁴, or cunning⁵, and they will let nothing get between them and power.

[00:00:48] To explain how the name of an Italian diplomat, philosopher and author has become synonymous with treachery⁶ and deception⁷, we're going to travel back in time to Florence in the Early Renaissance.

[00:01:03] It was an intense period divided by social upheaval⁸, wars and political intrigue⁹, yet unified by art, culture and literature.

[00:01:14] There's plenty to discover, and there is a lot more to Machiavelli than many people think, so let's dive right into it.

[00:01:23] Ok then, The Prince by Machiavelli.

¹ exact, specific

² having the same meaning

³ not honest or fair

⁴ making plans in order to do something illegal or wrong

⁵ clever or skillful at getting what they want, especially by tricking or fooling people

⁶ behaviour that is not loyal, an act of treason

⁷ the act of causing someone to believe something that is not true, especially for personal gain

⁸ violent or sudden change

⁹ secret plans or plots

[00:01:27] Let's get started by taking a closer look at Machiavelli himself.

[00:01:32] Who actually was Niccolò Machiavelli?

[00:01:35] What do we know about his life?

[00:01:37] And how did the [tumultuous](#)¹⁰, or [agitated](#)¹¹, [turbulent](#)¹² times in which Machiavelli lived [shape](#)¹³ his beliefs and inspire his writings?

[00:01:49] Niccolò Machiavelli was born in 1469 in Florence, Italy, to a family descended from Florentine nobility. At the time, Florence was the very [epicentre](#)¹⁴ of European art and culture as the birthplace of the Renaissance.

[00:02:08] The Renaissance, as I am sure you will know, was the [transitional](#)¹⁵ period between the 14-17th centuries that [revived](#)¹⁶ and attempted to [surpass](#)¹⁷ achievements and ideas from classical antiquity.

¹⁰ characterised by disagreement, disorder or confusion, turbulent

¹¹ angry or troubled

¹² characterised by disagreement, disorder or confusion

¹³ have great effect on

¹⁴ central point

¹⁵ relating to a change from one period to another

¹⁶ brought back into existence

¹⁷ do better than

[00:02:25] In contrast to the so-called Dark Ages or Middle Ages, following the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Renaissance was a [fervent](#)¹⁸, an intense period of rediscovery, as well as cultural, scientific, philosophical and artistic progress.

[00:02:45] And, as you may well be aware, after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Italy was [fragmented](#)¹⁹, it was [split up](#)²⁰ into numerous self-ruling city-states and districts. There was no united Italian nation until 1861.

[00:03:03] While Florence was a republic, power was mainly concentrated in the hands of wealthy families, especially the [influential](#)²¹ Medici family who dominated the Florentine representative government for several centuries.

[00:03:20] If you'd like to learn more about the Medici, we have an episode on that too, it's episode number 90.

[00:03:29] Well, back to Machiavelli and Florence.

[00:03:32] Machiavelli lived in [turbulent](#) times, popes would [wage wars](#)²² against city-states, while the Holy Roman Empire, France and Spain battled for greater regional influence and control.

¹⁸ intense, passionate

¹⁹ consisting of separate parts

²⁰ separated, divided

²¹ having a lot of influence or effect

²² start or engage in wars

[00:03:47] Governments were often [short-lived](#)²³ and political alliances changed frequently, as did the [mercenary](#)²⁴, the paid soldiers who [were prone to](#)²⁵ changing sides without warning, depending on which way the wind blew and who paid the most money.

[00:04:05] It's undoubtedly thanks to this [backdrop](#)²⁶ of [instability](#)²⁷ and [upheaval](#), of social [manoeuvring](#)²⁸ and intense power struggles that Machiavelli got the inspiration for his most famous work The Prince.

[00:04:22] In terms of Machiavelli's life, biographers tend to split it into three [distinct](#)²⁹ parts, each of which also relates to a [distinct](#) period of Florentine history.

[00:04:36] The first period of Machiavelli's life runs from his birth in 1469 up to the year 1494, the first 25 years of his life.

²³ lasting only for a short time

²⁴ paid soldier

²⁵ were likely to

²⁶ setting, environment

²⁷ a situation characterised by sudden changes and uncertainty

²⁸ careful planning in order to get advantages

²⁹ clearly different or noticeable

[00:04:48] Although for most people this is where much of your character is formed, it's [crystalised](#)³⁰, we have little documentation of Machiavelli's youth, although we do know he was taught [rhetoric](#)³¹, grammar and Latin by a well-known teacher.

[00:05:06] During this period, Florence was indirectly ruled by Lorenzo de' Medici, also known as Il Magnifico, the Magnificent. Lorenzo de' Medici was the most powerful and [ardent](#)³², enthusiastic, [patron](#)³³ of Renaissance culture.

[00:05:25] However, in 1494, just two years after Lorenzo's death, the Medici lost power. Lorenzo's son and heir, Piero de' Medici, was formally [exiled](#)³⁴ and the Medici were not to rule Florence again until 1512.

[00:05:45] The period of 1494-1512, when Florence was free from the rule of the Medici, forms the second part of Machiavelli's life, during which he served the free Republic of Florence, and it's during this period that it seems that most of his political thought and ideology was [shaped](#)³⁵.

³⁰ formed, made definite and clear

³¹ the art of effective speaking or writing

³² showing strong feelings, enthusiastic

³³ supporter

³⁴ sent away from his country for political reasons

³⁵ formed

[00:06:07] Machiavelli was first **appointed**³⁶ to an office responsible for reproducing official government documents, before rising to an important diplomatic role.

[00:06:18] In this role Machiavelli conducted numerous important diplomatic missions meeting with Louis XII of France, Emperor Maximilian, the Spanish court and the papacy.

[00:06:31] A lot of Machiavelli's time spent as a diplomat was occupied with Pope Alexander VI and his **illegitimate**³⁷ but incredibly powerful son, Cesare Borgia. The father and son had huge ambitions to **carve out**³⁸ a central Italian state for their own benefit.

[00:06:53] Cesare Borgia's **ruthless**³⁹ **quest**⁴⁰ to expand his lands, his **immense**⁴¹ capabilities as a statesman, general and ruler, alongside his ultimate failure to **retain**⁴² power are all discussed at length in The Prince.

[00:07:10] So, now for the third period of Machiavelli's life.

³⁶ officially chosen for

³⁷ born of parents not married to each other

³⁸ create, establish

³⁹ showing no compassion or pity, cruel

⁴⁰ the act of looking for it and having it as a goal

⁴¹ extremely great in degree or level

⁴² keep, continue to have

[00:07:14] France, Germany and Spain [allied](#)⁴³ with a new pope, Pope Julius II, to form the League of Cambrai with the main [intent](#)⁴⁴ of [crushing](#)⁴⁵ the powerful Venetian Republic.

[00:07:28] However, despite the league's initial success, [friction](#)⁴⁶ began to grow between the pope and France.

[00:07:36] Ultimately, this led to the pope hiring an army of [mercenaries](#)⁴⁷, of paid soldiers, to drive the French out of Italy. This left the Republic of Florence in a [delicate](#)⁴⁸ situation, having been a long-term ally of France.

[00:07:54] Florence had no choice but to [comply](#)⁴⁹ with the pope's demands, one of which was to restore the Medici family to power.

⁴³ connected by a political or military agreement

⁴⁴ goal, aim

⁴⁵ destroying

⁴⁶ disagreement, conflict

⁴⁷ paid soldiers

⁴⁸ easily damaged, fragile

⁴⁹ act according to, obey

[00:08:04] [Thus](#)⁵⁰ in 1512 the Medici returned to rule Florence and Machiavelli was [sacked](#)⁵¹.

[00:08:11] Worse still, he was imprisoned and tortured, under suspicion of having [conspired](#)⁵² or [plotted](#)⁵³ to [overthrow](#)⁵⁴ the Medici family, which there is no evidence of him having done, by the way.

[00:08:26] After the death of Pope Julius II, his successor, Pope Leo X secured Machiavelli's release from prison, and Machiavelli [plotted](#) his return to political life.

[00:08:39] This third and final part of Machiavelli's life saw him [retreat](#)⁵⁵ to his small [rural](#)⁵⁶ property just outside of Florence.

[00:08:49] It is during this time that he [penned](#)⁵⁷, he wrote, The Prince and his first Discourse on the First Decade of Titus Livius.

⁵⁰ in this way

⁵¹ dismissed, discharged

⁵² made secret plans

⁵³ made secret plans

⁵⁴ remove from power

⁵⁵ move out, withdraw

⁵⁶ located in the countryside

⁵⁷ wrote

[00:09:00] While neither of these two works, his two most famous writings, were published during his lifetime, Machiavelli did write a number of successful plays that were popular and widely enjoyed by his [contemporaries](#)⁵⁸.

[00:09:14] But he [struggled](#)⁵⁹ to accept his fate as removed from political life and his [correspondence](#)⁶⁰ from this time shows that he attempted to stay involved in the political [sphere](#)⁶¹ through his friends with connections.

[00:09:30] Ultimately, it was not to be and Machiavelli did not manage to take up his old diplomatic post.

[00:09:37] He did, however, manage to achieve a re-entry [of sorts](#)⁶² into society - literary society in particular.

[00:09:45] In 1520, Giulio de Medici [commissioned](#)⁶³ Machiavelli to write a history of Florence. Machiavelli accepted in the hope of [getting back into the good books](#)⁶⁴ of

⁵⁸ people of his time

⁵⁹ found it difficult

⁶⁰ letters

⁶¹ area of field of activity

⁶² to some extent, in some way

⁶³ formally asked

⁶⁴ being accepted or approved again by

the Medici family, and wrote an eight-part work that [portrays](#)⁶⁵ the Medici in a favourable light.

[00:10:05] Having Giulio de Medici as a friend and ally would [turn out](#)⁶⁶ to be a positive thing for Machiavelli, because three years later Giulio de Medici would become Pope Clement VII.

[00:10:18] But there are limits to even the pope's power, as Clement VII found out in 1526 when Rome was [sacked](#) by the Holy Roman Emperor, the pope was kept prisoner and eventually the Medici were [kicked out](#)⁶⁷ of Florence.

[00:10:35] Machiavelli, ever hopeful of a full return to political life, quickly returned to Florence, but shortly after his arrival he took ill and died in June 1527, at the age of 58.

[00:10:50] Now, I know that there were a lot of names and dates there, and you are certainly not expected to remember all of them.

[00:10:58] We've really [rushed](#)⁶⁸ through it, but I share this with you to give you an idea of the society in which Machiavelli lived.

⁶⁵ represents, describes

⁶⁶ prove, be in the end

⁶⁷ forced to leave, thrown out

⁶⁸ dealt with it quickly, in a hurry

[00:11:07] It's very clear that the political [upheaval](#), numerous wars and constantly changing alliances were the [norm](#)⁶⁹ rather than the exception.

[00:11:18] So, where does Machiavelli's most famous work, The Prince fit into all of this?

[00:11:25] What is The Prince actually about? And why are we still reading it today?

[00:11:30] The Prince, in Machiavelli's own words, is a discussion of the [conduct](#)⁷⁰ of great men and the [principles](#)⁷¹ of [princely](#)⁷² government.

[00:11:40] The text is loosely based on the mirror-of-princes genre - a type of literary work that advises princes on how to best rule, almost like a handbook of government.

[00:11:55] This genre originated in Ancient Greece and went on to lay the foundations for Renaissance political theories, which [in turn](#)⁷³ [paved the way](#)⁷⁴ for modern political science.

[00:12:08] However, The Prince varies from other works in this genre in its content and style.

⁶⁹ usual, standard thing

⁷⁰ manner or way in which they behave

⁷¹ basic ideas

⁷² related to princes

⁷³ afterwards, subsequently

⁷⁴ opened the way

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[00:12:15] Firstly, Machiavelli focuses on ‘new’ princes in The Prince rather than the more traditional audience of a [hereditary](#)⁷⁵ prince, a prince who becomes a prince because he is born a prince.

[00:12:29] He states that [hereditary](#) princes come to power more easily and [retain](#), they keep hold of power, by not [upsetting](#)⁷⁶ the established [scheme](#)⁷⁷ of things.

[00:12:40] On the other hand, new princes, Machiavelli notes, find it more difficult to rule.

[00:12:48] They must first of all [cement](#)⁷⁸ their power with secure and stable foundations. The rise to power may be challenging and the previously existing order difficult to [topple](#)⁷⁹ or [bring down](#)⁸⁰.

[00:13:04] However, Machiavelli also believed that once a new prince had fully secured power, he would find it easier to [retain](#) it, to keep hold of it.

⁷⁵ having the title as a right passed by his parents

⁷⁶ disorganising, disturbing

⁷⁷ organisation, particular system

⁷⁸ secure

⁷⁹ cause them to lose power, bring down

⁸⁰ cause them to lose power

[00:13:15] This is an important concept in The Prince, with Machiavelli writing that for a new prince to rise to the top and secure power, he needs to do it through his own virtues, using [cunning](#) and force.

[00:13:31] Once he has forcefully [crushed](#)⁸¹ his opponents, the new prince will earn respect, being stronger and more [self-sufficient](#)⁸².

[00:13:41] This highlights another main difference between Machiavelli's The Prince and previous texts in the mirror-of-princes genre.

[00:13:50] Machiavelli is not [setting out](#)⁸³ an idealised, moral vision of how a ruler should rule.

[00:13:57] There is no right or wrong, no morality, no justice.

[00:14:02] Instead, The Prince focuses upon which [character traits](#)⁸⁴ and acts can be beneficial to a ruler looking to [consolidate](#)⁸⁵ their power.

⁸¹ defeated

⁸² able to support himself, independent

⁸³ presenting, describing

⁸⁴ character qualities or characteristics

⁸⁵ cause it to be greater

[00:14:13] In this respect, Machiavelli is actually showing us the world from a perspective completely [devoid of](#)⁸⁶, completely separate from moral judgement.

[00:14:24] This was particularly revolutionary because previously, at least in terms of written guidance, it was believed that good moral behaviour would ultimately lead to positive results - doing the right thing would result in a successful rule.

[00:14:43] In The Prince, Machiavelli said this was not the case.

[00:14:48] Throughout The Prince, Machiavelli makes his case that princes must be willing to rule [unscrupulously](#)⁸⁷ at times, with private and public morality being almost two separate things.

[00:15:02] Essentially, what he is saying is that: a prince should do whatever needs to be done to obtain and hold on to power.

[00:15:10] Immoral actions, [fraud](#)⁸⁸, [deceit](#)⁸⁹ and violence may all be necessary to ensure social stability and security.

[00:15:19] In other words, a leader has to be [ruthless](#) to stay in power.

⁸⁶ separate from

⁸⁷ in a dishonest or unfair way

⁸⁸ cheating or tricking people for personal gain

⁸⁹ the act of causing someone to believe something that is not true, especially for personal gain

[00:15:25] Throughout its 26 chapters, The Prince [draws upon](#)⁹⁰ many of Machiavelli's first-hand experiences during his diplomatic employment on behalf of the Florentine Republic, and indeed Machiavelli is remembered during his diplomatic time in Florence as a [ruthless](#) but incredibly efficient political operator.

[00:15:47] We see this in the book. Machiavelli sets himself as an authoritative figure providing sound governmental and military advice through his analysis of historical and contemporary commanders.

[00:16:01] Louis XII of France, for example, is [notably](#)⁹¹ referenced in The Prince. Remember, it was King Louis who tried to expand into northern Italy, but ended up [being driven out](#)⁹² after a series of expensive wars.

[00:16:18] In Chapter III, Machiavelli lists the five main errors of [statecraft](#)⁹³ that Louis committed, causing him to lose power in Lombardy and [be driven out](#)⁹⁴ of Italy.

[00:16:31] According to Machiavelli, Louis' errors were as follows: failure to settle into the country, making a greater power even stronger, destroying minor powers, bringing in a foreign power and not bringing in colonies.

⁹⁰ makes use of

⁹¹ in particular, especially

⁹² being forced to leave

⁹³ management of state affairs or the art of governing and politics

⁹⁴ be forced to leave

[00:16:47] Machiavelli wrote detailed assessments of power struggles, [singling out](#)⁹⁵ individuals and [pinpointing](#)⁹⁶ the elements that resulted in their [downfall](#)⁹⁷, as well as signalling how these [downfalls](#)⁹⁸ could have been avoided.

[00:17:02] One person from Machiavelli's [first-hand](#)⁹⁹ observations who features extensively throughout The Prince is Cesare Borgia.

[00:17:12] As we heard earlier on, Cesare Borgia, with his father as pope, attempted to create a large central Italian state under his direct control. Borgia was a highly capable general and statesman, well equipped with a [ruthless](#), [cunning](#) nature, and he provided a major inspiration for Machiavelli's The Prince.

[00:17:37] While Cesare Borgia is [portrayed](#)¹⁰⁰ as an excellent example of a new prince [carving out](#)¹⁰¹ a new state and holding on to power [in line with](#)¹⁰² Machiavelli's principles, Borgia struggled to maintain power once his powerful father died.

⁹⁵ giving special attention to

⁹⁶ finding and showing exactly

⁹⁷ loss of power and status

⁹⁸ losses of power and status

⁹⁹ coming from personal experience

¹⁰⁰ presented, described

¹⁰¹ creating, establishing

¹⁰² in accordance or agreement with

[00:17:55] This, actually, is a [fundamental](#)¹⁰³ part of the theory presented in The Prince.

[00:18:01] For Machiavelli, Borgia's [downfall](#) ultimately came down to the hostility of fate or fortune.

[00:18:10] While Machiavelli strongly encourages rulers to plan for all [eventualities](#)¹⁰⁴, Borgia, despite his [scheming](#), planning and intentions, was still [brought down](#)¹⁰⁵ by the one event he did not plan for - being [incapacitated](#)¹⁰⁶, or ill, at the same time as his father's death.

[00:18:32] Sometimes you can plan for everything, but a [curveball](#)¹⁰⁷ comes your way and there's very little you can do to stop it.

[00:18:41] All Machiavelli tries to do here is explain what an [aspiring](#)¹⁰⁸ leader can do to control their own fate as much as possible.

[00:18:52] Now, this text, The Prince, was written over 500 years ago, and scholars, politicians, and indeed anyone with an interest in power, have been studying it ever since.

¹⁰³ basic, of central importance

¹⁰⁴ possible events

¹⁰⁵ caused to lose power

¹⁰⁶ disabled, ill

¹⁰⁷ something unexpected that causes trouble

¹⁰⁸ someone who is trying to become successful

[00:19:06] It was trusted by Thomas Cromwell, referenced by Sir Francis Bacon and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it's thought to have influenced Descartes, Hobbes, and John Locke, Napoleon, Mussolini and Stalin were all huge fans, and in more recent times President Richard Nixon and the [famed](#)¹⁰⁹ diplomat Henry Kissinger both referenced the book as being highly influential.

[00:19:30] The Prince has made the adjective Machiavellian a [byword](#)¹¹⁰, an expression, for [deception](#) and [scheming](#), especially in the context of political manipulation.

[00:19:43] The book was banned by the Catholic church, and it has remained an extremely controversial text ever since its publication.

[00:19:53] But it seems unlikely that Machiavelli ever intended for it to have such an impact.

[00:20:00] Firstly, it was written in [vernacular](#)¹¹¹, or common, Italian rather than Latin, which, contrary to what you might think, would have meant that the potential audience was smaller, as far more Europeans would have been able to read Latin than Italian.

[00:20:18] Secondly, it was dedicated to the Medici family, and really it was written as an attempt to escape his life of boredom and [regain](#)¹¹² active diplomatic service.

¹⁰⁹ well known or famous

¹¹⁰ expression

¹¹¹ common

¹¹² take back

[00:20:32] Essentially, it was a job application, it wasn't intended to be a [treatise](#)¹¹³ on political theory, read and studied by a global audience.

[00:20:42] And all this is [supported](#)¹¹⁴ by the fact that he never actually tried to publish it - it was only published after his death.

[00:20:51] And as much as Machiavelli has been [deviled](#)¹¹⁵ for The Prince, he has also been named the father, or at least one of the fathers, of modern political philosophy and political science.

[00:21:04] While a great many of the suggestions in the book are [shockingly](#)¹¹⁶ immoral, by explaining what tactics rulers use and completely ignoring any questions of ethics, Machiavelli has [emancipated](#)¹¹⁷ or [detached](#)¹¹⁸ politics from moral philosophy.

¹¹³ a formal piece of writing

¹¹⁴ suggested or proved

¹¹⁵ considered as bad or immoral

¹¹⁶ in a way that is very unpleasant, offensive or disturbing

¹¹⁷ separated, made it independant

¹¹⁸ separated

[00:21:23] Reading The Prince today in a modern context, the book still [strikes a chord](#)¹¹⁹ in its [call to action](#)¹²⁰, with [advice](#)¹²¹ on how to succeed in life by being [bold](#)¹²², taking risks and being [ruthless](#).

[00:21:38] Machiavelli's [brazen](#)¹²³, [shameless](#)¹²⁴, recommendations to eliminate, [scheme](#) and destroy to [hold on](#)¹²⁵ to power still [strike](#)¹²⁶ us today, and I'm sure that you can think of examples of politicians in your country that people know have done terrible, [scheming](#) things to their friends and allies just in order to gain power.

[00:22:02] Part of the fascination and what makes The Prince still relevant today is Machiavelli's very [matter of fact](#)¹²⁷ way of describing just how [ruthless](#) and [devoid of](#) morals humans can be to get what they want, whilst still hiding behind a mask of morality and [decorum](#)¹²⁸.

¹¹⁹ causes strong emotions

¹²⁰ something that asks or encourages people to take action

¹²¹ recommendations, suggestions or guidance

¹²² not afraid of danger, risky

¹²³ forward, without shame

¹²⁴ having no sense of shame or regrets for behaving in a way that is unacceptable for some people

¹²⁵ keep, retain

¹²⁶ impress, affect

¹²⁷ not showing feelings or emotion

¹²⁸ controlled, calm, polite behaviour

[00:22:23] By separating morality from politics and action, it brings us uncomfortably closer to a deeper consideration of human nature and whether or not we can claim to be [inherently](#)¹²⁹ moral as individuals or even as a society.

[00:22:39] Perhaps at the end of the day, the question we should be asking ourselves is, why does Machiavelli's The Prince still have such a bad reputation?

[00:22:49] Maybe it isn't just down to the [underhand](#)¹³⁰ and often cruel tactics that are recommended, but rather, more [worryingly](#)¹³¹, the fact that Machiavelli almost casually [exposes](#)¹³² a brutal dimension of human nature that we normally attempt to hide [at all costs](#)¹³³.

[00:23:08] While some people read The Prince and interpret Machiavelli as [suggesting](#)¹³⁴ that this is what politicians should do, there are plenty who take an alternative view, that Machiavelli is simply documenting the behaviour that he saw and indeed [engaged](#)¹³⁵ [in](#)¹³⁵ during his time as a diplomat.

¹²⁹ in a permanent or characteristic way

¹³⁰ secret, not honest

¹³¹ in a way that causes worry or concern

¹³² makes visible, reveals

¹³³ regardless of the price to be paid or the effort needed

¹³⁴ proposing, recommending

¹³⁵ was involved in

[00:23:27] He isn't writing some [abstract](#)¹³⁶ theoretical novel, he is writing a detailed account, full of plenty of real-life contemporary examples showing the extent to which people will go to gain power.

[00:23:42] When faced with survival, and even in some cases when not, humans are capable of committing [atrocities](#)¹³⁷ and those in power may [resort to](#)¹³⁸ [deceitfulness](#)¹³⁹ and [scheming](#) far more regularly than we are in fact aware of.

[00:23:58] In other words, [when push comes to shove](#)¹⁴⁰, as Machiavelli so famously reminds us, morality is often one of the very first things to go out the window.

[00:24:10] And whether we're talking about Renaissance Florence, 18th century Paris, the 21st century British Houses of Parliament or indeed any seat of power and influence, it's clear that so long as there is more power to be taken, men and women will [go to extraordinary lengths](#)¹⁴¹ to get it.

[00:24:32] OK then, that is it for today's episode on Niccolò Machiavelli and The Prince.

¹³⁶ existing only in thought or as an idea

¹³⁷ extremely cruel or shocking acts

¹³⁸ turn to, make use of (usually as a final option)

¹³⁹ acts of causing people to believe something that is not true, especially for personal gain

¹⁴⁰ when the situation is very serious or urgent

¹⁴¹ use a lot of effort, do whatever is required

[00:24:39] I hope it's been an interesting one, and you've learned something new and maybe had a chance to reflect a little more deeply upon society and morality in general.

[00:24:50] As always, I would love to know what you thought about this episode.

[00:24:54] Have you read The Prince and what did you think of it?

[00:24:57] Why do you think The Prince is such a popular read over 500 years after it was written?

[00:25:04] Can the theories and ideology of Machiavelli ever be a good thing?

[00:25:10] I would love to know, so let's get this discussion started.

[00:25:14] You can head right in to our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting to other curious minds

[00:25:23] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:25:28] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Very	exact, specific
Synonymous	having the same meaning
Unscrupulous	not honest or fair
Scheming	making plans in order to do something illegal or wrong
Cunning	clever or skillful at getting what they want, especially by tricking or fooling people
Treachery	behaviour that is not loyal, an act of treason
Deception	the act of causing someone to believe something that is not true, especially for personal gain
Upheaval	violent or sudden change
Intrigue	secret plans or plots
Tumultuous	characterised by disagreement, disorder or confusion, turbulent
Agitated	angry or troubled

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Turbulent	characterised by disagreement, disorder or confusion
Shape	have great effect on
Epicentre	central point
Transitional	relating to a change from one period to another
Revived	brought back into existence
Surpass	do better than
Fervent	intense, passionate
Fragmented	consisting of separate parts
Split up	separated, divided
Influential	having a lot of influence or effect
Wage wars	start or engage in wars
Short-lived	lasting only for a short time
Mercenary	paid soldier
Were prone to	were likely to
Backdrop	setting, environment

Instability	a situation characterised by sudden changes and uncertainty
Manoeuvring	careful planning in order to get advantages
Distinct	clearly different or noticeable
Crystallised	formed, made definite and clear
Rhetoric	the art of effective speaking or writing
Ardent	showing strong feelings, enthusiastic
Patron	supporter
Exiled	sent away from his country for political reasons
Shaped	formed
Appointed	officially chosen for
Illegitimate	born of parents not married to each other
Carve out	create, establish
Ruthless	showing no compassion or pity, cruel
Quest	the act of looking for it and having it as a goal
Immense	extremely great in degree or level

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Retain	keep, continue to have
Allied	connected by a political or military agreement
Intent	goal, aim
Crushing	destroying
Friction	disagreement, conflict
Mercenaries	paid soldiers
Delicate	easily damaged, fragile
Comply	act according to, obey
Thus	in this way
Sacked	dismissed, discharged
Conspired	made secret plans
Plotted	made secret plans
Overthrow	remove from power
Retreat	move out, withdraw
Rural	located in the countryside

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Penned	wrote
Contemporaries	people of his time
Struggled	found it difficult
Correspondence	letters
Sphere	area of field of activity
Of sorts	to some extent, in some way
Commissioned	formally asked
Getting back into the good books	being accepted or approved again by
Portrays	represents, describes
Turn out	prove, be in the end
Kicked out	forced to leave, thrown out
Rushed	dealt with it quickly, in a hurry
Norm	usual, standard thing
Conduct	manner or way in which they behave
Principles	basic ideas

Princely	related to princes
In turn	afterwards, subsequently
Paved the way	opened the way
Hereditary	having the title as a right passed by his parents
Upsetting	disorganising, disturbing
Scheme	organisation, particular system
Cement	secure
Topple	cause them to lose power, bring down
Bring down	cause them to lose power
Crushed	defeated
Self-sufficient	able to support himself, independent
Setting out	presenting, describing
Character traits	character qualities or characteristics
Consolidate	cause it to be greater
Devoid of	separate from

Unscrupulously	in a dishonest or unfair way
Fraud	cheating or tricking people for personal gain
Deceit	the act of causing someone to believe something that is not true, especially for personal gain
Draws upon	makes use of
Notably	in particular, especially
Being driven out	being forced to leave
Statecraft	management of state affairs or the art of governing and politics
Be driven out	be forced to leave
Singling out	giving special attention to
Pinpointing	finding and showing exactly
Downfall	loss of power and status
Downfalls	losses of power and status
First-hand	coming from personal experience
Portrayed	presented, described
Carving out	creating, establishing

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In line with	in accordance or agreement with
Fundamental	basic, of central importance
Eventualities	possible events
Brought down	caused to lose power
Incapacitated	disabled, ill
Curveball	something unexpected that causes trouble
Aspiring	someone who is trying to become successful
Famed	well known or famous
Byword	expression
Vernacular	common
Regain	take back
Treatise	a formal piece of writing
Supported	suggested or proved
Devised	considered as bad or immoral
Shockingly	in a way that is very unpleasant, offensive or disturbing

Emancipated	separated, made it independant
Detached	separated
Strikes a chord	causes strong emotions
Call to action	something that asks or encourages people to take action
Advice	recommendations, suggestions or guidance
Bold	not afraid of danger, risky
Brazen	forward, without shame
Shameless	having no sense of shame or regrets for behaving in a way that is unacceptable for some people
Hold on	keep, retain
Strike	impress, affect
Matter of fact	not showing feelings or emotion
Decorum	controlled, calm, polite behaviour
Inherently	in a permanent or characteristic way
Underhand	secret, not honest
Worryingly	in a way that causes worry or concern

Exposes	makes visible, reveals
At all costs	regardless of the price to be paid or the effort needed
Suggesting	proposing, recommending
Engaged in	was involved in
Abstract	existing only in thought or as an idea
Atrocities	extremely cruel or shocking acts
Resort to	turn to, make use of (usually as a final option)
Deceitfulness	acts of causing people to believe something that is not true, especially for personal gain
When push comes to shove	when the situation is very serious or urgent
Go to extraordinary lengths	use a lot of effort, do whatever is required

We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

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