

How the Merchants of Venice Created Modern Finance by Jane G. White Essay

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How the Merchants of Venice Created Modern Finance, Jane Gleeson-White explores the development of double-entry accounting from its ancient roots up to its impacts on modern day society. She shows that the effects of double-entry accounting are widespread and encompass almost every aspect of life, not just those involving accounting and finance. Gleeson-White delves into topics ranging from the economic system of [capitalism](#) to environmental degradation. She even includes a brief psychology discussion comparing corporations to psychopaths. By covering all of these topics, Gleeson-White emphasizes the importance of double-entry accounting and the role that Venetian merchants played in the perfection and widespread use of this accounting system.

Although, it can be argued that the merchants of [Venice](#) created modern finance, they cannot be credited with the initial idea of double-entry accounting. The roots of double-entry accounting and accounting as a whole, can be traced back much further. Centuries before the Venetian merchants began using double-entry accounting, other businessmen were accounting for their transactions with a method that used two pages of paper, one for the person who received money or property and another for the one who gave it. Although,

accounting records had been kept in some form for hundreds of years prior to the developments of the Venetian merchants, the merchants of Venice are believed to be the first to use a method that required two entries for each transaction. By requiring two entries, the Venice merchants could easily see if their books balanced. This form of record keeping also made it easier for the merchants to compute different figures such as profit, which was not a common idea at the time....

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...f items. Businesses do not have to worry about problems such as the degradation of the environment and ill effects on health so they do not include them in the cost of their products. Gleeson-White asserts that accountants need to find a way to account for these externalities soon to make businesses care about the impact that they are having on the world.

In her book *Double Entry: How the Merchants of Venice Created Modern Finance*, Jane Gleeson-White traces accounting from its ancient roots to the impact that it has on the world today. She includes not only the influence that Venetian merchants had on the development of double-entry accounting, but also how double-entry accounting affects the world today.

Works Cited

Gleeson-White, Jane. *Double Entry: How the Merchants of Venice Created Modern Finance*.

New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011. Print.

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