

Rationalism

1750-1820

AKA An Apple a Day Keeps the Witches Away





Rationale/Standards

Several of our founding documents and ideals of democracy trace back to the Rationalist time period. Understanding the development, tenets, and implications of Rationalism gives students the foundation to draw their own conclusions about our government and its roles today.

I3.2 Examine historical, social, cultural, or political context to broaden inquiry and create questions.

R8.1 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific characters, ideas, or events develop and interact within a particular context.

R11.1 Analyze how point of view and author's perspective and purpose shape content, meaning, and style, supports rhetorical or aesthetic purposes, and conveys cultural experience.

W1.1 Write an argument that avoids logical fallacies and demonstrate an understanding of objectivity and subjectivity.

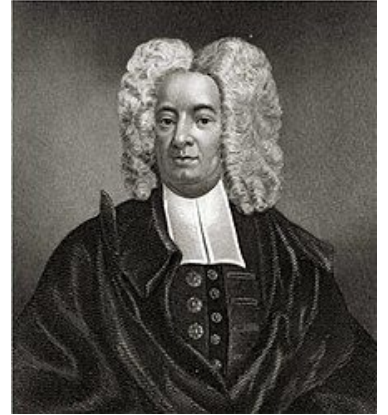
Rationalism (also called the American Enlightenment) came about for several reasons:





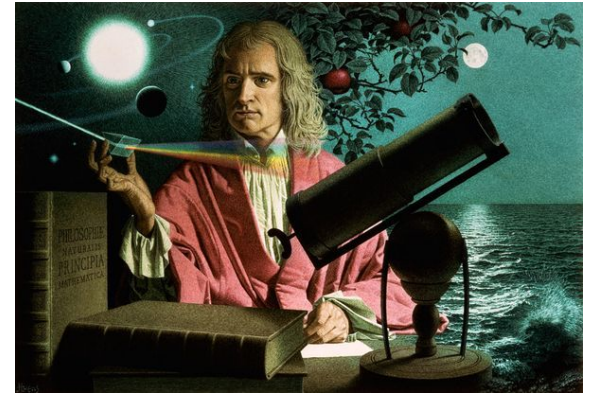
1. Cotton Mather Dies

- 1728 in Massachusetts Bay Colony
 - Minister
 - More than 450 books and pamphlets
 - Vigorous supporter of the Salem Witch Trials
- Puritanism begins to fade.



2. Important Figures start publishing their works

- Isaac Newton-laws of physics
- John Locke-*tabula rasa*
- Adam Smith-free will



→ Voices are replacing Mather's with very different doctrine.

3. Demand in Europe for American goods

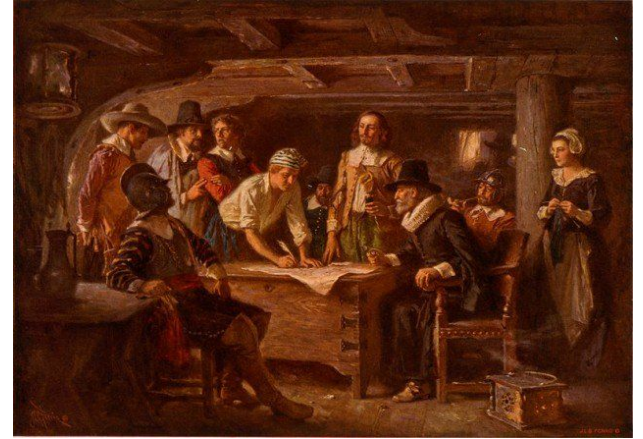
- Emigration from Europe
- Shipbuilding business: timber, tar, pitch
- Tobacco, rice, indigo



→ Monetary and material competition began to grow among colonists that could sometimes take precedence over morals or religious practices.

4. Increase in population

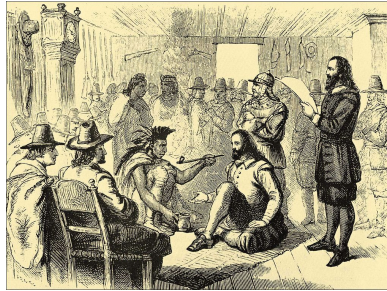
- 1670: 111,000
- 1700: 250,000
- 1760: 1,600,000
- French, Dutch, German



→ An increase in diversity meant that colonists had to work together in an heterogeneous environment and be exposed to different religions, ideas, and ways of life.

5. Colonists were not in as much danger.

- Eliminated, enslaved, became allies



- Did not have to live in fear and could focus on quality of life. Intellectualism became more important than hard work.

7. “The Speed Effect”

- People who experience traumatic events together form a strong bond.
 - Native Americans
 - Building new colonies
 - Crossing the Atlantic
 - Facing prosecution in the Motherland
- Colonists began to feel like they had more in common than differences.





Rationalist Literature will include...

- Autobiographies and diaries with the intent to inform.
- Speeches
- Philosophies



Qualities of Rationalist Literature

- Uses reason
 - Reason: the ability to think in an ordered, logical manner enables people to discover both scientific and spiritual truths
- Uses logic and rhetorical devices
- Call to action