

# THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT



# Enlightenment

## “The Age of Reason”

- Extends roughly from the English Revolution, 1660 to the French Revolution, 1789.
- Seen in the symbolism of how leaders were executed—Charles I beheaded by a nobleman's sword; Louis XVI by guillotine. Their deaths depict changes in technology and mass production of death.
- France and England generated massive intellectual and political change.
- France and England were the two most powerful and centralized nations of the time.

# L'Age des Lumières

- *L'Age des Lumières*, a French term, was produced by a meeting of the great minds, the *philosophes*.
- The *philosophes* questioned religious, political, moral and intellectual “received authority.”
- Absolute authority should be replaced by the guidance of reason.

# Origins of The Enlightenment

- ❑ Started with the religious Reformation and the Renaissance of classical humanist learning.
- ❑ Enlightenment philosophers called for religious toleration and freedom of thought.
- ❑ Rousseau's "social contract" is described as a bond willingly build up from below by individuals in need of mutual support, rather than imposed upon from powers above them.

# Age of Encyclopedias

- ❑ Scientific advances and global explorations were catalogued.
- ❑ Philosophers wanted to record entirety of human knowledge and experience
- ❑ Great thinkers wanted to open up knowledge to anyone, and had “shocking” diagrams of anatomy and scientific processes, and explanations of how things work that were previously guarded by the guilds.

# Satire and Revolution

- ❑ Satire had great power in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- ❑ French books were reviewed by government and religious censors, but in theatre, any material could be staged at least once.
- ❑ Several satirists were imprisoned for their writings, including Voltaire.
- ❑ There was a big debate over whether to stick to established literary forms, or to break them—a war between the Ancients and the Moderns.

# Watch/Watchmaker Theory

- Idea that God is the Watchmaker and never interfered with His creation.
- Explanation for evil in world. Deism encouraged separation between ethics and religion. Believed that ethics was a product of reason.
- Rather than look to priests, humans could look to themselves and think for themselves.

# Changing Image of Women

- The Enlightenment questioned women's traditional role in society.
- Women held salons for intellectual and frivolous conversation.
- Women writers wrote novels that, ironically, changed women's stereotypes—originally depicted as sexually cunning, women were now seen as desexualized and passive.
- Called the “great gender shift,” the angelic woman needed a freethinking, highly sexual male as her mate.



# Immanuel Kant

- ❑ Believed in the importance of regulating one's life.
- ❑ Wrote "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?"
- ❑ Defined Enlightenment as : "the human being's emergence from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is inability to make use of one's own understanding without direction from another."

# “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?”

- Wants men to use their own understanding.
- The public needs freedom if it is to enlighten itself.  
The individual needs to think for himself.
- The scholar needs the freedom to express his/her ideas.
- The scholar needs to follow civic rules, but should have the liberty to publicly use and express reason.

# Enlightenment is Inevitable

- “One can indeed, for his own person and even then only for some time, postpone enlightenment in what is incumbent upon him to know; but to renounce enlightenment, whether for his own person or even more so for posterity, is to violate the sacred right of humanity and trample it underfoot.”
- We do not live in an enlightened age, but we live in an age of enlightenment.

# Kant's Principles

- People should be free to use their own reason to understand their own conscience and decide what is true for them concerning religion.
- People should be free to publish their thoughts and think freely.
- “Argue as much as you will about what you will: only obey!”
- Treat the human being in such a way as to allow him to keep his dignity.