The Age of Reason

1750-1800
The Age of Enlightenment

was the term given in Europe to the time period characterized by an emergence from centuries of “darkness” and “ignorance” into an age enlightened by reason, science, and a respect for humanity.
Enlightenment thinking promoted the idea that rational thought begins with clearly stated principles, uses correct logic to arrive at conclusions, tests the conclusions against evidence, and then revises the principles in the light of the evidence.

*It is like an application of the scientific method to philosophy.*
Key Terms

• **Rationalism**: based on the belief that humans can discover truth by using reason rather than by relying solely on religious faith

• **Deism**: Rationalist belief that God created the natural world and its laws, but that people can use reason to understand the world and guide their lives
1750-1800

What was happening in the British colonies in America during this time?
Make a list with a partner.
Literary Genres

• Biographies/Autobiographies:
  – Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*

• Government Documents:
  – Thomas Jefferson’s *Declaration of Independence*

• Newspapers/Pamphlets:
  – Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense & The Crisis*

• Speeches:
  – Patrick Henry’s *Speech at the Virginia Convention*

The writing of the time contains many persuasive techniques. Why??
**Rhetoric:** the art of speaking or writing effectively

- **Appeals to emotion** (uses loaded words and images to stir up an audience’s feelings) **AND** **logic** (provides reasons to support a particular opinion or course of action)

- **Repetitions of clauses** (**parallelisms**) or words

- **Rhetorical questions:** not meant to be answered but rather thought about

- **Figures of speech:** metaphor, simile, analogy, allusion, anecdote, hyperbole, oxymoron
Patrick Henry

• Born in VA in 1736
• Recognized as one of the most persuasive orators in American Colonial history
• 1765- made a powerful speech against the Stamp Act
• 1775- After colonists protested against the “Intolerable Acts”, Britain agreed to ease their taxes on the condition that the colonists fully support British rule.
• After several delegates of the VA House of Burgesses gave speeches supporting the compromise with Britain, Henry rose and gave his famous “Give me Liberty or give me Death” speech.
• **Interesting Fact**: While giving the speech, Henry supposedly grabbed a letter opener and plunged it toward his chest as he delivered the aforementioned, famous line. **What type of effect might that have had on Henry’s audience??**
Evaluate the rhetorical devices used in Patrick Henry’s “Speech to the Virginia Convention”
Mr. President: No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve.
Persuasive Techniques

• Henry begins his speech with a very respectful tone; he refers to the previous speakers as “worthy gentlemen”
  – By doing so, Henry’s audience is more likely to be interested in what he has to say.

• Henry also uses a logical appeal when he states that “different men often see the same subject in different lights.”
  – This is precisely what he is about to prove when he delivers his argument that instead of compromising with Britain, the colonists need to wage war.
This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we would to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself as guilty of treason toward my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the majesty of heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.
Persuasive Techniques

• **Logical Appeals:** He makes a very reasoned, rational introduction to his purpose: “It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we would to God and our country.”

• **“This is no time for ceremony”:** This formal phrase maintains the respectful tone and emphasizes to his audience the seriousness and the urgency of the situation.

• **Emotional Appeals:** He compares complying with British rule to being enslaved. This is meant to arouse a feeling of anger in his audience, and a renewed desire for freedom.
  – He also appeals to their sense of responsibility to their country and God, an intimation that would resonate within the hearts of all average Americans of the time period.
“The Crisis, No. 1” by Thomas Paine

These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap we esteem too lightly; ‘tis dearness only that gives everything its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to tax) but “to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER,” and if being bound in that manner, is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious, for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.
Persuasive Techniques

• **Emotion:**
  – By comparing British rule to tyranny *(analogy)*, Paine is arousing the colonists’ anger.
  – By dismissing the “summer soldier and the sunshine patriot” who “will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country” *(aphorism)*, Paine is stirring up the indignation of the colonists against their fair-weather friends, and their pride in those who would fight for them.

• **Logic**
  – Paine quotes the *British Declaratory Act* *(allusion)* which states that Britain has the right to “Bind us in all cases whatsoever,” which, when analyzed, is the very definition of slavery.
  – He also states that only God has the power to invest people with freedom; therefore, Britain does NOT have the right to strip colonists of it.