



The Age of Reason

The Age of Reason and Rationalists

- **The Age of Reason began in Europe in the late 1600s and went into the 1700s.**
- **It was a time for philosophers and scientists: rationalists**
- **Rationalists believed that people had the ability to think in an ordered, logical manner**

Rationalist Beliefs (cont.)

- **God gave humanity the gift of reason – people had the ability to discover both scientific and spiritual truth**
- **People had the ability to improve their lives**
 - **Improvements come through experimentation**
- **God was not only seen in specific places and times**
 - **A person could find God in all places at all times using reason.**

Deists

- **Believed that the universe was orderly and good**
- **The best form of worship was to do good for others**
- **Beliefs brought about the need or desire to improve as a country**
 - **Political leaders were rationalists and deists**
 - **A time of revolution – seeking freedom and independence**

Literature of the Time

- Literature was practical or political (rooted in reality)
- Writing about the self-made American
- Reflection to find ways to improve
- Emergence of rags-to-riches stories (non-fiction) of the self-made person's triumph
 - Ben Franklin's Autobiography – from being poor to being a model citizen, an ambassador, a leader of the country, an inventor...