

Encounters and Foundations to 1800

Introduction to the Literary Period

Feature Menu



Interactive Time Line

Milestone: Clash of Cultures

Milestone: Iroquois Confederacy

Milestone: Puritan Dominance

Milestone: Rise of Rationalism and
Independence

Milestone: Smallpox Plague

Milestone: American Revolution

What Have You Learned?



Previous

Next

Collection
Menu

Exit

Encounters and Foundations to 1800

Choose a link on the time line to go to a milestone.

1492

Clash of Cultures

1620

Puritan
Dominance

1775-1783

American
Revolution

1721

Smallpox Plague

1500

Iroquois
Confederacy

1700-1800

Rise of Rationalism
and Independence



Clash of Cultures

Forming New Relationships

- Norse explorers land before 1492
- Columbus lands in 1492
- Spaniards explore Florida and the Southwest



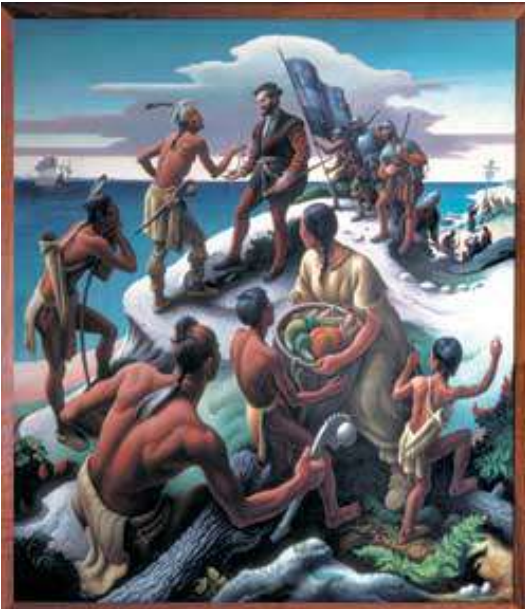
Forming New Relationships

- Interdependence between Europeans and Indians develops.
 - Europeans relied on American Indians to teach them survival skills like making canoes, planting crops, and making clothes.
 - American Indians wanted European firearms, textiles and steel tools.



Clash of Cultures

Forming New Relationships



Jacques Cartier's Discovery of the St. Lawrence River (1957) by Thomas H. Benton. Tempera on canvas (7'x6'). New York Power Authority. © T.H. Benton and R.P. Benton Testamentary Trusts/ UMB Bank Trustee/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

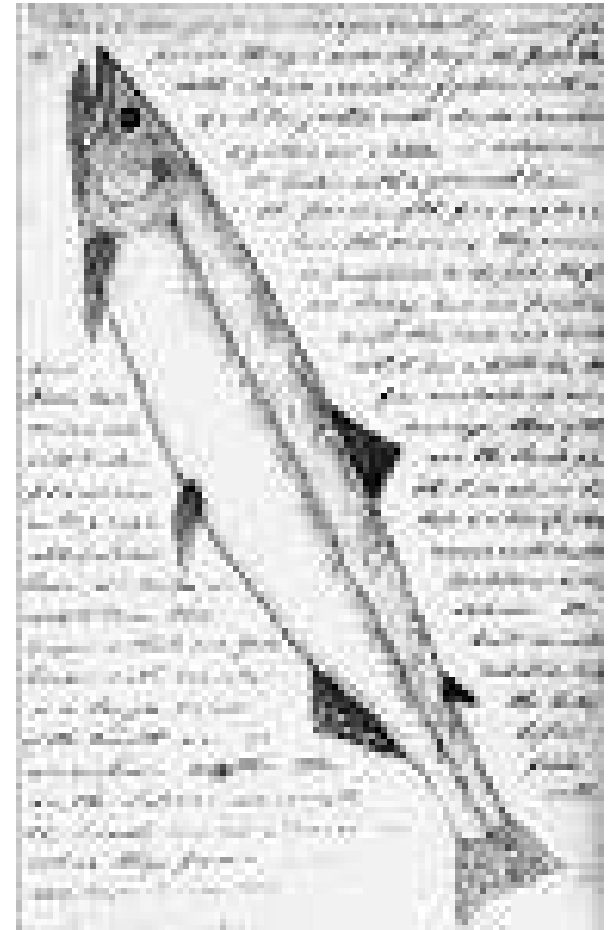
Europeans expose Indians to new, deadly diseases.

- Small pox epidemics could wipe out entire villages.
- Settlers force some Indians from their traditional homes.

Clash of Cultures

Explorers' Writings ▼

- Observations recorded by explorers to New World. ▼
- Explorers use journals, letters and books ▼
- Hoping to receive funds for further exploration, they emphasize resources, hospitality and promise of wealth



[Return to Time Line](#)

Cabeza de Vaca

1528 expedition

Became lost in the Texas Gulf area for 8 years

His narrative provides firsthand accounts of native life and culture as well as an adventure story.



Cabeza de Vaca in the Desert (1906) by Frederic Remington.
Oil on canvas. Courtesy Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York

Cabeza de Vaca in the Desert
by Frederic Remington.

Puritan Dominance

Puritans in America ▼

- Puritans flee religious persecution in England ▼
- Use simple forms of worship – religion was first of all a personal, inner experience.
- Set out new form of government in Mayflower Compact
- Value self-reliance, industriousness, temperance, simplicity



Puritan Dominance

Government by Contract



- Believe a contract (covenant) exists between God and humanity
- Use contractual agreement model for constitutional democracy
- Sainly “elect” are leaders of society

Government by Contract

- Political views tend to leave little room for compromise
 - They demanded strict conformity
 - Dissenters were often flogged, banished or on occasion put to death



In Puritan Massachusetts, religious nonconformists suffered this fate—and much worse. (An 1892 lithograph from the Library of Congress print collection.)

Puritan Dominance

Salem Witchcraft Trials

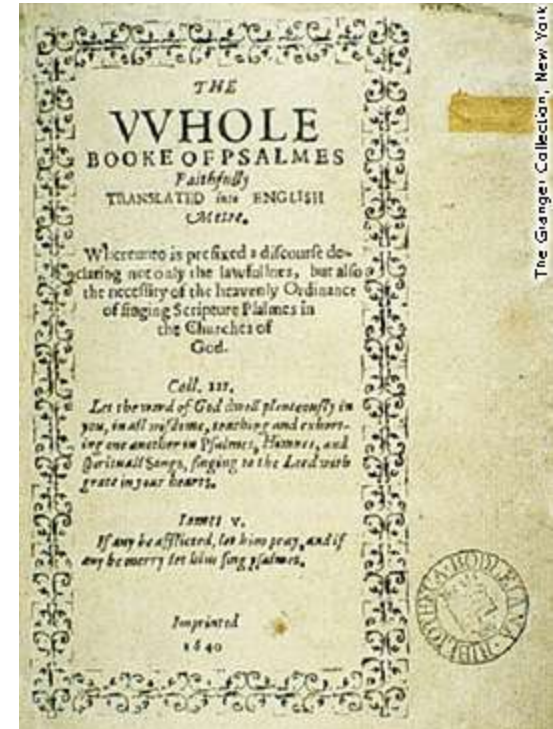
- Began in 1691—three women accused of witchcraft
- Within ten months, about 150 people accused—many put to death
- Strict, repressive society could be one cause for mass hysteria



Puritan Dominance

Puritan Writing

- Believed Bible was literal word of God
- Viewed life as a journey to salvation
- Valued education; Harvard founded sixteen years after first Pilgrims arrived
- Diaries and histories most common forms of literature



Rise of Rationalism and Independence

The Age of Reason, the Enlightenment

- Started in Europe and spread to America
- Threatened faith system of Puritans
- Believed man could use reason and intellect, rather than religion, to discover scientific and spiritual truth - Rationalism
- Best form of worship was to do good for others

Smallpox Plague

Thought in Action ▼

- April 1721 - Plague infected nearly half of Boston's population ▼
- Puritan preacher Cotton Mather started inoculation efforts ▼
- Proof that not all Puritan thinking was rigid and narrow ▼
- Example of how practical approach to change was necessary in America



Iroquois Confederacy

Unity Among Native Americans

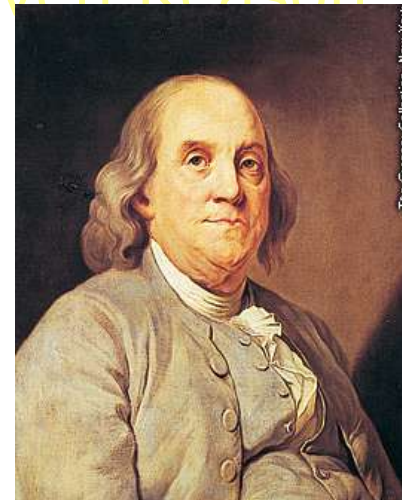
- Mohawk leader Dekanawida unites rival tribes around 1500
- Complex and egalitarian constitution preserved in oral history
- Had influence on future government of New World



Rise of Rationalism and Independence

Tinkerers and Experimenters

- Prominent American rationalists (deists) include: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Thomas Paine
- Deism = belief in God + God Given Reason
- Writings reflected rationalist worldview
- Most prominent work was Franklin's *The Autobiography*



Benjamin Franklin

[Return to Time Line](#)

American Revolution

Forming a New Nation ▼

- Signed Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1776 ▼
- Many arguments in Declaration based on rationalist beliefs ▼
- George Washington, a rationalist, elected first president of United States



"The Star Spangled Banner"



George Washington

[Return to Time Line](#)

What Have You Learned?

Indicate whether the following items refer to the time **before**, **during**, or **after** the Age of Reason.

during

Smallpox inoculations in Boston

during

Signing of Declaration of Independence

before

Early Spanish explorers reach New World

before

Migration of Puritans to New England

[End of Section]

The End

