THE RATIONALISTS

RATIONALISM

❖ Rationalism is the belief that human beings can arrive at truth by using reason, rather than by relying on the authority of the past, on religious faith, or on intuition.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RATIONALISM

❖ People arrive at truth by using reason rather than by relying on the authority of the past, on religion, or on nonrational mental processes like intuition.

❖ God created the universe but does not interfere with its workings.

❖ The world operates according to God's rules, and through the use of reason we can discover those rules.

❖ People are basically good and perfectable.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RATIONALISM

❖ Since God wants people to be happy, they worship God best by helping other people.

❖ Human history is marked by progress toward a more perfect existence.

RATIONALISTS AND GOD

❖ **<u>Clockmaker Theory-</u>** According to Sir Isaac Newton God is like a clockmaker. God created the perfect mechanism of this universe, then left his creation to run on its own, like a clock.

❖ This belief is also known as deism. **<u>Deism</u>** is essentially the view that God exists, but that He is not directly involved in the world. Deists believed that the universe was orderly and good. They believed that the best form of worship was to do good for others.

RATIONALISTS AND GOD

❖ The rationalists believed that God's special gift to humanity was reason- the ability to think in an ordered, logical manner.

❖ Because of the gift of reason, everyone has the ability to regulate and improve their own life. On their own people could discover scientific and spiritual truth.

SELF-MADE AMERICANS

❖ The majority of writing during this period took the form of pamphlets since most literature was intended to serve practical or political purposes.

❖ Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* is similar to a Puritanical journal but is leaves out its religious context. Franklin portrays himself as a self-made American.

READING

❖Read the "Arriving at Moral Perfection" section of *The Autobiography* Page 92-94

ASSIGNMENT

❖ Answer the following questions about this reading.

❖ 1. Can you find any irony in Franklin's virtue number thirteen?

❖ 2. What do you learn about Franklin from his plan for moral development?

❖ 3. Who in our culture today night be considered similar to Franklin? What are their similarities and differences?

❖ 4. What does Franklin's project for moral perfection reveal about his views of human nature and his attitudes toward education? Do you agree or disagree with his views?

❖ 5. Which virtue on Franklin's list do you think is most important? Least important? Why?