



The Age of Reason

or the Revolutionary Period in
American Literature... (The late
1700s)

Focus on “reason”

- ▶ By the end of the 1700s, the Puritan influence on America began to wane (decrease).
- ▶ People had come from all over Europe to the American colonies.
- ▶ Were the colonists happy, overall, with the situation they were in?
- ▶ DISCUSS

OF COURSE NOT...

- ▶ We all know about the troubles that the American colonists ran into with British rule.
- ▶ But how did it affect the literature that was produced?

How do events of a given time influence what is written?

- ▶ To answer this question, you should know that the most important pieces of literature during the AGE OF REASON, were political documents, speeches, and pamphlets (short, concise works that usually argue for or against a political cause.)
- ▶ Non-fiction (such as the forms mentioned above) was far more influential than fiction.
- ▶ CAN YOU NAME WORKS OF LIT. THAT FIT THIS DESCRIPTION? LIST AS MANY AS YOU CAN.

List of political documents that we think might be a part of the AGE OF REASON (Revolutionary Period)

- ▶ *The Declaration of Independence*
- ▶ Patrick Henry's *Speech to the Virginia Convention*
- ▶ Thomas Paine's *The Crisis*
- ▶ *The Federalist Papers* (various authors)
- ▶ Works of Benjamin Franklin

So how about a short definition describing the Age of Reason as a literary period?

- ▶ *Age of Reason*: a movement that was marked by an emphasis on rationality rather than tradition, scientific inquiry instead of unquestioning religious dogma, and representative government in place of monarchy.
- ▶ *Important writers*: Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry, and any other of the so-called "Founding Fathers."

Ticket out the door...

- ▶ Give three characteristics of the Age of Reason.
- ▶ Name 2 authors that represent the Age of Reason.
- ▶ Answer the following question:
 - Why were political documents so important during the Age of Reason?