

DOSSIER 3 - RATIONALISM/ENLIGHTENMENT

To guide your research process, start with resources below that will give you some basic background on the historical context, key ideas, authors, and stylistic aim of this literary period.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND and LITERARY MOTIVATIONS -

- Remember to refer to Nina Baym's 11-page intro to help you contextualize this historical period to the ones that come before and after -- [Norton Anthology, "Overview of American Literature"](#)
- [Norton Anthology, "1700-1820"](#)
- [Brooks, Lewis and Warren Anthology, "The Emergent National Literature"](#)
- [Annenberg Learner, "Spirit of Nationalism" essay](#) // [Annenberg Learner, "Spirit of Nationalism" video](#) (focus on Franklin; Ralph Waldo Emerson (also featured in the video) more neatly fits in Romanticism, for our purposes -- note the differences enunciated around 12:30)

[BIBLIOGRAPHIC DETAILS TO CITE ANTHOLOGIES](#)

KEY TERMS and CONCEPTS

- Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution
- Deism - Religious Belief in a Secular Society - Sir Isaac Newton's Clock Metaphor
- John Locke and the Natural Rights of Man
- The Self-Made Man
- Civic Virtue or the Public Good
- Perfectibility of Man (as contrasted with the Puritan fallibility of man)
- Public Discourse in the Political Arena
- Political Arguments and Rhetoric

IMPORTANT AUTHORS and PIVOTAL TITLES TO CONSIDER

- [Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin by Franklin](#) (try chapter IX - it will look familiar)
- [The Declaration of Independence](#) by Thomas Jefferson
- [The Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano](#) by Equiano
- [The Crisis](#) by Thomas Paine
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