Revolutionary Literature

THE AGE OF RATIONALISM
Unit Objectives

- To explain the concept of Rationalism and identify characteristics of Rationalism in the literature of the period
- To define and identify in text these persuasive devices: rhetorical question, parallelism, emotional appeal, logical appeal, and allusion
- To define and provide examples of aphorisms and Ben Franklin’s contributions to literature
- To apply the persuasive devices by integrating them into persuasive writing pieces
What is Rationalism?

- The time period of the Revolution is also called the Age of Reason, or in another word Rationalism.

- Think about the word “Rationalism.” What is the root of this word? What does that word mean?

- Each time period after another one is usually a reflection against the time before. Therefore the Rationalism period is a reaction against the conservative and religious lifestyle of the Puritans.
The Revolutionary War Period

- With a partner, brainstorm a list of what you already know about this period in history. You may list major events from the time period, famous people, literary works you are familiar with, etc.
- Why is this period in history important to our country? Why do you think we still bother to study it today?
What is Rationalism?

- During the Age of Reason, scientists believed in **Rationalism**, which is the belief that human beings can arrive at the truth by using reason rather than relying on the authority of the past, or religious faith, or intuition.

- Rationalists believed in **Deism**. This means that God made it possible for all people at all times to discover natural laws through their God-given power of **reason**. Decisions should be based on logic, rather than emotion.
Literature During Revolutionary Period

- Remember that at this time, we are not officially the United States, but rather the 13 colonies under England’s control. We have numerous complaints against England and want to form our own government and rules to live by.
- Most literature written in the American colonies was rooted in reality.
- This time was called an “age of pamphlets” because most literature was intended to serve a practical purpose.
- What practical purpose do you think this type of literature served? (Hint: Think about the time period)

Thomas Paine’s pamphlet “Common Sense” was one of the most popular of the time period.
The most famous works of the Revolutionary period, include speeches that urged the colonists to rebel, and the foundational documents that early American leaders used to get our country started. These include Patrick Henry’s “Speech to the Virginia Convention” and “The Declaration of Independence.”
Benjamin Franklin 1706-1790
Benjamin Franklin 1706-1790

- One of 17 children.
- Left school early in order to work.
- By the time he was 24 he was a prosperous merchant, the owner of a print shop, and publisher of *The Pennsylvania Gazette*.
- He helped found the Academy of Philadelphia (became UPenn), the American Philosophical Society and the first public library in America.
- He promoted numerous municipal projects in Philadelphia: paved streets, sewer lines, improved street lighting, and a fire brigade.
Benjamin Franklin 1706-1790

- He was a scientist and an important inventor: His research, especially on electricity, resulted in his election to England’s Royal Society.
- He also invented an open heating stove (called a Franklin stove), bifocal eye-glasses, a type of harmonica, and a rocking chair that could swat flies.
- He, like Thomas Jefferson, was constantly looking for ways to make things work a little better or more efficiently.
- At 41, Franklin had made enough money to retire from business.
Franklin’s Literary Contributions

- *Poor Richard’s Almanack* was Franklin’s biggest publishing success.
- He published it for 25 years.
- Almanacs calculated tides and the phases of the moon, claimed to forecast the weather for the next year, and even provided astrological advice.
- Many also supplied recipes, jokes, and aphorisms.
- Aphorism: a brief, cleverly worded statement that makes a wise observation about life. Similar to a proverb.
Sample Aphorisms

- Whatever is begun in anger, ends in shame.
- Beware of little expenses, a small leak can sink a great ship.
- Failure to prepare is preparing to fail.
- Wise men don’t need advice; fools won’t take it.
- In this world, nothing is certain except for death and taxes.
- Life’s tragedy is that we get old too quick and wise too late.
Illustrate an Aphorism

- Think about some of the aphorisms from Benjamin Franklin we just learned. How would you ILLUSTRATE the one you connected with the most? Draw a picture (full-color) that represents the ideas in the aphorism. Be sure to write the aphorism at the top.

- On the back of your drawing, write a well-constructed paragraph that discusses how/when the aphorism could be applied to your life.

- Additional Ben Franklin aphorisms can be found on page 292 of your textbook.