Enlightenment America

What was the Enlightenment & how did it change American culture in the 1700s?

What examples illustrate American Enlightenment in the 1700s?

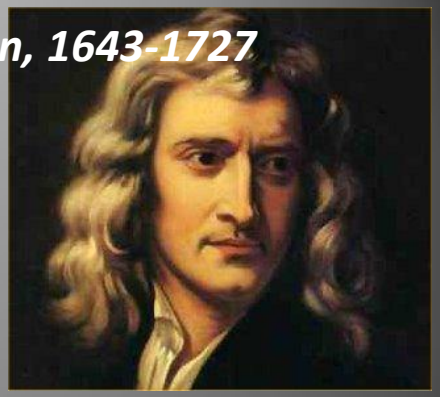
How did Benjamin Franklin become a champion of the Enlightenment?

What was the Great Awakening and its relationship to the Enlightenment?

Enlightenment: Background & Summary

- 1600s to 1790s, starting in Europe new scientific and intellectual trends significantly changed religious, educational, social, economic, and political thought.
- By the late 1600s these ideas were coming to the American colonial cities and were embraced by upper and middle class patrons. Many in the American colonies were not impacted; and institutions such as American slavery flourished along with enlightenment ideals.
- While the entire subject of the enlightenment is too complex to cover in this lecture, we will explore examples of American enlightenment and its impact on religion. We will explore the political enlightenment later.

Sir Isaac Newton, 1643-1727



Selected Enlightenment Ideals

When scientists like Galileo suggested a "heliocentric cosmos" (revolving around the Sun, not the Earth) the enlightenment began with an explosion of new scientific principles. No scientific idea was more important than Newton's *Principia* he which he set the ground work for modern science, and helped establish the scientific method as a new way of thinking. Newton created the feeling that the world was visible, real and understandable; not some type of invisible supernatural mystery. Following Newton came other thinkers such as John Locke who applied scientific principles to humans suggestion that man is not "bad" by nature, but that man can improve his life and his environment. Other thinkers like Montesquieu wrote that man can improve governments by separation of powers. Called philosophes because they wished to apply reason and Newton's methods to all things human, these writers profoundly influenced European and American institutions.

The result was a maze of new concepts, which we take for granted today:

A. rationalism --> logical reasoning based on facts.
B. cosmology --> new world view based on Newtonian physics --> analysis of natural phenomena as systems.
C. secularism --> application of scientific theories to religion and society.
D. scientific method --> experimentation; observation; hypothesis.
E. Utilitarianism --> laws created for the common good and not for special interests.
F. optimism & self-confidence --> anything is possible (a reversal of medieval thinking).
G. tolerance --> a greater acceptance of different societies and cultures.
H. freedom --> a mind as well as a society free to think, free from prejudice.
I. mass education.
J. legal / penal reforms --> establishing the Georgia colony was a penal reform.
K. constitutionalism.

Many of these ideas were challenged by authority. Many were enjoyed primarily by wealthier, urban, white males. Some were even used to make excuses for societal evils like slavery . But overall, the beginning of change was profound.

Galileo Galilei & the Wonder of Science

Galileo's notes are copied at the right as he described what he called Jupiter's moons. He, and the rest of the world, were shocked to discover that these "moons" revolved around another planet than Earth. His approach using careful observation, and his conclusions changed the world.

One result in the American colonies was to make education a priority, as in the Boston schoolhouse

Libraries, patterned after Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia Library spread throughout colonial cities.

Harvard College was established in 1636, and other American colleges followed.

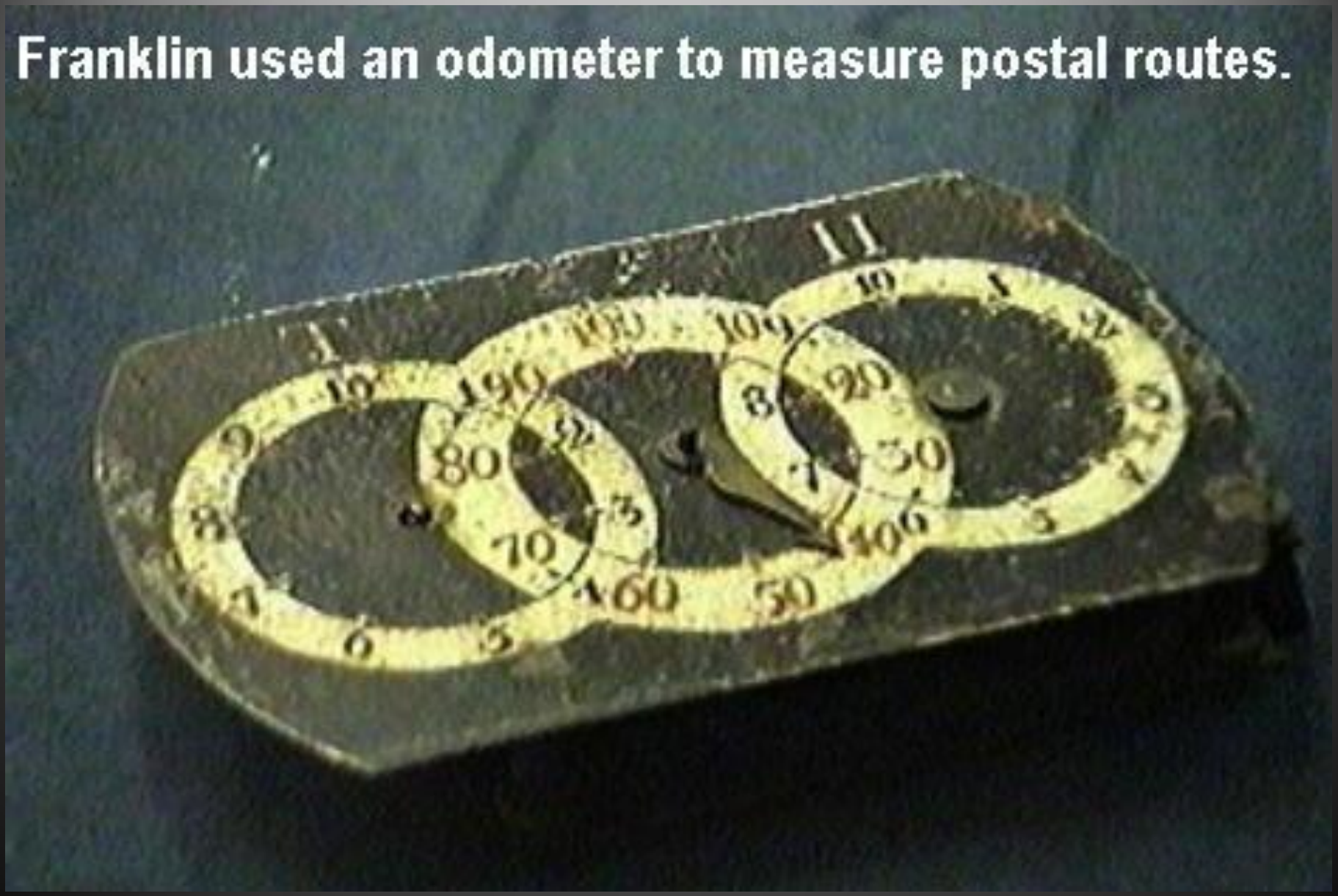
Colonial cities developed outlets for intellectual and philosophical discussions, and public news

- The “Tuesday Club” in Annapolis was a discussion forum
- “Poor Richard’s Almanac” printed by Franklin distributed “advice”
- “Toy” telescopes symbolizing the new cosmos became a fad
- Newspaper circulations grew
- Yale was established in 1701
- And Benjamin Franklin became “America’s Scientist” and innovator….

Franklin's "Stove" proved a practical fireplace add-on

Franklin’s Bifocals

Franklin used an odometer to measure postal routes.

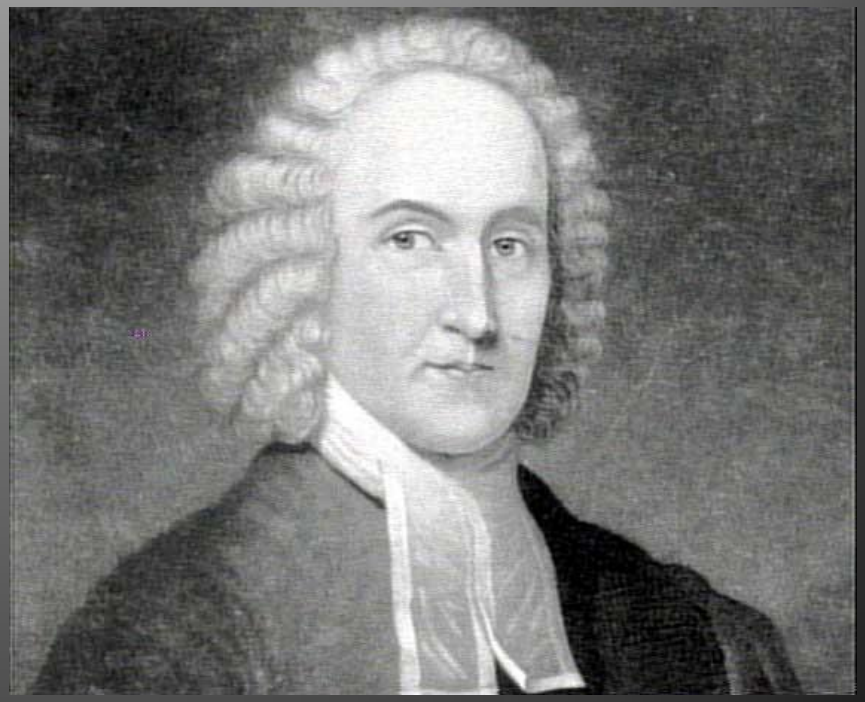


Franklin's Armonica

Other Americans began to speak for greater freedoms, like the young slave, Phyllis Wheatley. This rise of political enlightenment is the subject of the Revolutionary era.

Enlightenment ideals said that any man, or women, could be saved. As a result the “Great Awakening” in America accompanied the Enlightenment and dramatically changed American religion. New Light preachers had harsh messages, but accepted the saved. As a result, many new churches developed and church membership in the colonies grew.

- Many of the new light ministers traveled around the colonies – thus spreading enlightenment ideals
- Those converted at the revivals were also called “new lights”.
- A primary message dealt with "reviving" man’s inner goodness and seeking God’s forgiveness
- Jonathan Edwards was one of the most effective new light preachers who practiced the “fire and brimstone” message that sinners would be punished by an angry God.

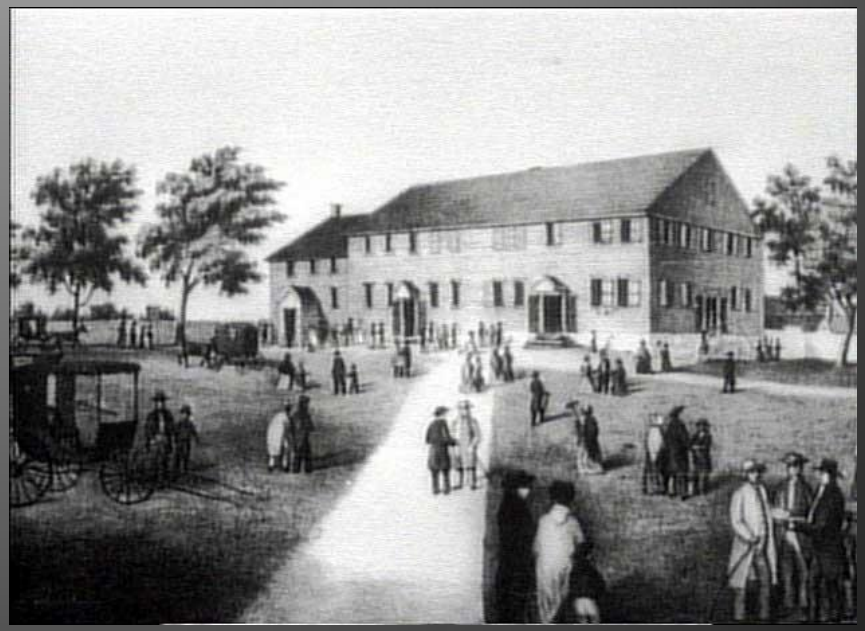


A variety of religious groups developed.

- The Anglican, or Episcopal Church continued strong growth in parts of the South as well as the northeast. The North Meeting House in Salem, Massachusetts, depicted here, became an influential Congregational church.

Society of Friends

- This Society of Friends (Quaker) House in Newport Rhode Island was part of a rich diverse Newport religious community that included Baptist, Methodists, Catholics and Jews.

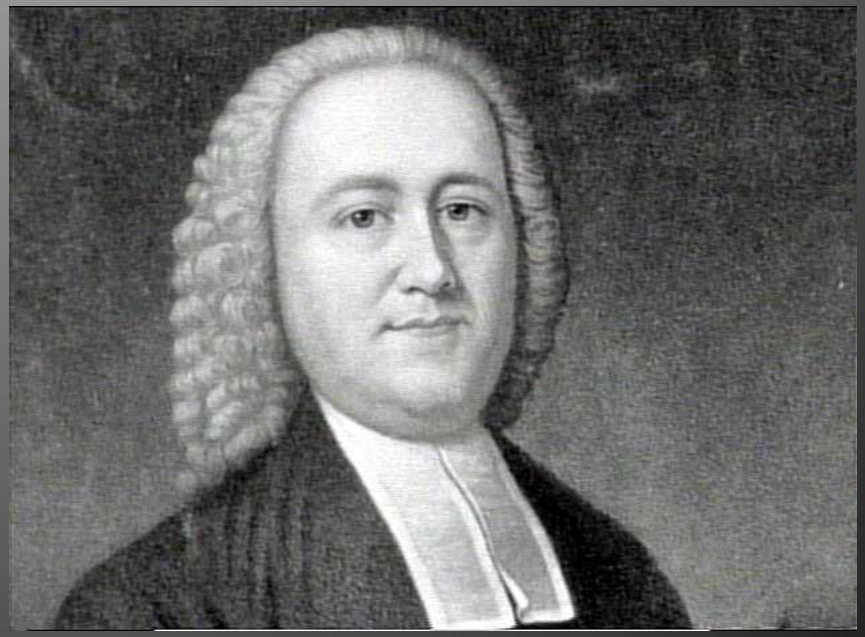


Churches also networked colonial wide organizations like the Synod—which organized Presbyterian churches.

- Most churches were local institutions
- But most also used extensive communications lines
- Presbyterians , Anglicans, and Catholics were more formally organized
- Baptist churches spread doctrine of the "church at will".

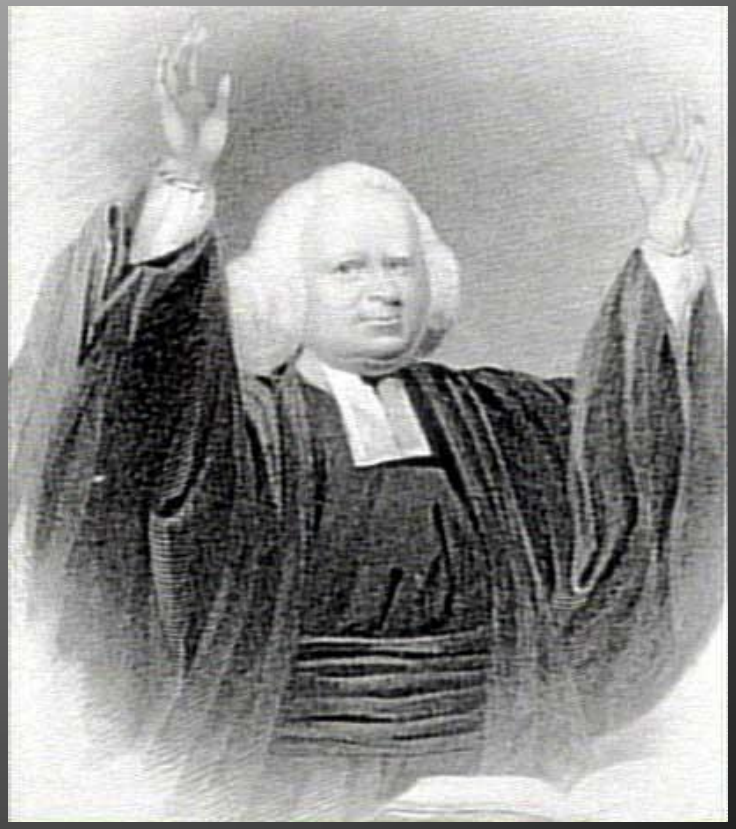
Gilbert Tennent

- Tennent was a well-known Presbyterian minister who is credited with popularizing outdoor sermons in New Jersey in the 1720s.



George Whitefield

- George Whitefield was an Anglican minister and preached in Philadelphia and Boston as well as traveling to the interior
- His sermons were reported as great entertainment, and criticized by some
- In Boston, Whitefield reportedly preached to a crowd of 5,000 to 7,000.



Phyllis Wheatley on Whitefield…

- Behold the prophet in his tow'ring flight!
  He leaves the earth for heav'n's unmeasur'd height,
  And worlds unknown receive him from our sight.
  There *Whitefield* wings with rapid course his way,

Review & Conclusions

- European Enlightenment ideals focus on scientific methods that allowed mankind to understand their world. These ideals spread to the American colony.
- These ideals were also adopted in social, economic and political forms.
- As a result interests in science, education, innovation, religion, and public participation grew among American colonialists.

Review Question 1

The Great Awakening referred to a renewed interest in

a. religion and spirituality
b. self-government
c. classical thought
d. Enlightenment thought
e. none of the above

Review Question #2

Newton's universe replaced the invisible world of the supernatural with:

a. the Anglican religion.

b. the visible world of nature.

c. love and faith.

d. the hope of the Bible.

e. superstition and fantasy.

Review Question #3

George Whitefield belonged to the clergy of which religion?

a. the Anglican religion
b. the Puritan religion
c. the Quaker religion
d. the Catholic religion
e. Judaism

Review Question #4

Jonathan Edwards' preaching style could be best described as:

a. optimistic.

b. comforting.

c. fire and brimstone.

d. welcoming of all.

e. boring.

Review Question #5

Those converted in religious revivals were called:

a. Newcomers.
b. New Lights.
c. Old Lights.
d. Heretics.
e. disciples.

Review Question #6

The colony of Georgia was originally set up for prison reform.

a. True

b. False

Review Question #7

The Great Awakening led to the founding of such noted colleges as Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth and Princeton.

a. True

b. False

Feedback Question 1

a. religion and spirituality

That is Correct! Great Job!

Click to go to the next Review Question

Feedback Question #1

self-government.

b. Sorry that is Incorrect?

See page 72.

Return to the question for another attempt!

Feedback Question #1

c. classical thought.

Sorry that is Incorrect?

See page 72.

Return to the question for another attempt!

Feedback Question #1

d. Enlightenment thought.

Sorry that is Incorrect?

See page 72.

Return to the question for another attempt!

Feedback Question #1

e. none of the above

Sorry that is Incorrect?

See page 72.

Return to the question for another attempt!

Feedback Question #2

a. the Anglican religion.

Sorry, that is incorrect?

Return to the question for another attempt.

See page 75

Feedback Question #2

b. the visible world of nature.

That is Correct! Good job!

Go to the next review question.

Feedback Question #2

c. love and faith.

Sorry, this is incorrect?

Return to the question for another attempt.

Feedback Question #2

d. the hope of the Bible.

Sorry this incorrect?

Return to the question for another attempt.

Feedback Question #2

e. superstition and fantasy.

Sorry this is incorrect?

Return to the question for another attempt.

Feedback Question #3

a. the Anglican religion

That is correct, great job!

Click to go to the next question.

See page 76

Feedback Question #3

b. the Puritan religion

Sorry that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #3

c. the Quaker religion

Sorry that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #3

d. the Catholic religion

Sorry that is incorrect.

Return for another attempt.

See page 14

Feedback Question #3

e. Judaism

Sorry that is incorrect.

Return for another attempt.

See page 14

Feedback Question #4

a. optimistic.

Sorry, that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #4

b. comforting.

Sorry, that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #4

c. fire and brimstone.

Great, that is correct!

Go to the next question.

See page 76

Feedback Question #4

d. welcoming of all.

Sorry, that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #4

e. boring.

Sorry, that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #5

a. Newcomers.

Sorry, that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #5

b. New Lights.

That is correct!! Thanks.

Go to next question.

See page 76

Feedback Question #5

c. Old Lights.

Sorry, that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #5

d. Heretics.

Sorry, that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #5

e. disciples.

Sorry, that is incorrect?

Return for another attempt.

See page 76

Feedback Question #6

a. True

That is correct!! This answer is true.

Go to the next question.

See page 73

Feedback Question #6

b. False

Sorry, that answer is incorrect.

Return for another attempt.

See page 73

Feedback Question #7

a. True

Sorry that is incorrect.

Return for another attempt.

See page 76, 93

Feedback Question #7

b. False

That is correct! Good job.

See page 76, 93

End Presentation
Restart Presentation
Restart Review Questions

End of presentation.

Mini Lecture: Enlightenment America

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