

## The Enlightenment

Actively read the documents below (remember, active readers always annotate). As you use your standard annotations, make a new annotation for SIMILARITIES found in the excerpts.

### Document 1: Rene Descartes, *Meditation II*, (1641)

"I suppose that everything I see is false. I believe that none of what my deceitful memory represents ever existed. I have no senses whatsoever. Body, shape, extension, movement, and place are all chimeras. Is it then the case that I too do not exist? ... Then too there is no doubt that I exist, if he is deceiving me. And let him do his best at deception, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I shall think that I am something. Thus after everything has been carefully weighed, it must finally be established that this pronouncement "I am, I exist!" (ego sum, ego existo!) is necessarily true every time I utter it or conceive it in my mind... I think, therefore I exist (cogito, ergo sum)."

*Chimera - something hoped for that is impossible to achieve*

### Document 2: David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748)

"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.

Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country.

When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle."

### Document 3: Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* (1784)

Enlightenment is bringing "light into the dark corners of the mind. 'Have courage to use your own reason!'— that is the motto of enlightenment...For this enlightenment, however, nothing is required but freedom, and indeed the most harmless among all the things to which this term can properly be applied. It is the freedom to make public use of one's reason at every point. But I hear on all sides, 'Do not argue!' The Officer says: 'Do not argue but drill!' The tax collector: 'Do not argue but pay!' The cleric: 'Do not argue but believe!' Only one prince in the world says, 'Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, but obey!' Everywhere there is a restriction on freedom...."

### Questions for discussion (make sure you find text evidence to support your response):

What is questioned or challenged by all three writers?

What is asserted or affirmed by all three writers?

Knowing that all three excerpts are symbolic of The Enlightenment, try to develop your own definition of The Enlightenment.