The Enlightenment called into question traditional beliefs and inspired widespread political, economic, and social change. This intellectual movement was used to challenge political authorities in Europe and colonial rule in the Americas. These ideals inspired political and social movements.

**The Enlightenment:** a period of time (mid-1600s to the late 1700s) in **Western Europe** when **philosophers** and **writers** applied the scientific idea of **reason to answer political questions.** The Enlightenment is sometimes known as the **Age of Reason.**

The writers who took part in the Enlightenment are called **Enlightenment Thinkers**, sometimes known as ***philosophes,*** the French word for philosophers. Just as scientists challenged the claims of the Catholic Church, Enlightenment Thinkers often challenged the claims of absolute monarchs. We study them because of the actions that their ideas inspired later in history.

American Revolution-turning points(absolute monarchy to independence and self governing)

French Revolution-turning point(absolute monarchy to republic and to Napoleon empire)