

Encounters & Foundations

CA Focus Standard:

3.5 Analyze recognized works of American literature representing a variety of genres and traditions.

Objectives:

1. **Describe** the effect of European settlement on Native populations of the American continent.
2. **Compare** Puritan and the Rationalist ideas on God, human nature, and government.

Evidence: Completed Gallery Walk Pamphlet

Clash of Cultures

During the 1490's, when the great wave of European exploration of the Americas started, numerous groups of American Indians were living all over North America. These societies were diverse, and each had its own long history. Most were made up of a few thousand people. (The Aztec Empire, in what is now Mexico, was the largest Native American civilization in the fifteenth century, with millions of people living within its borders.)

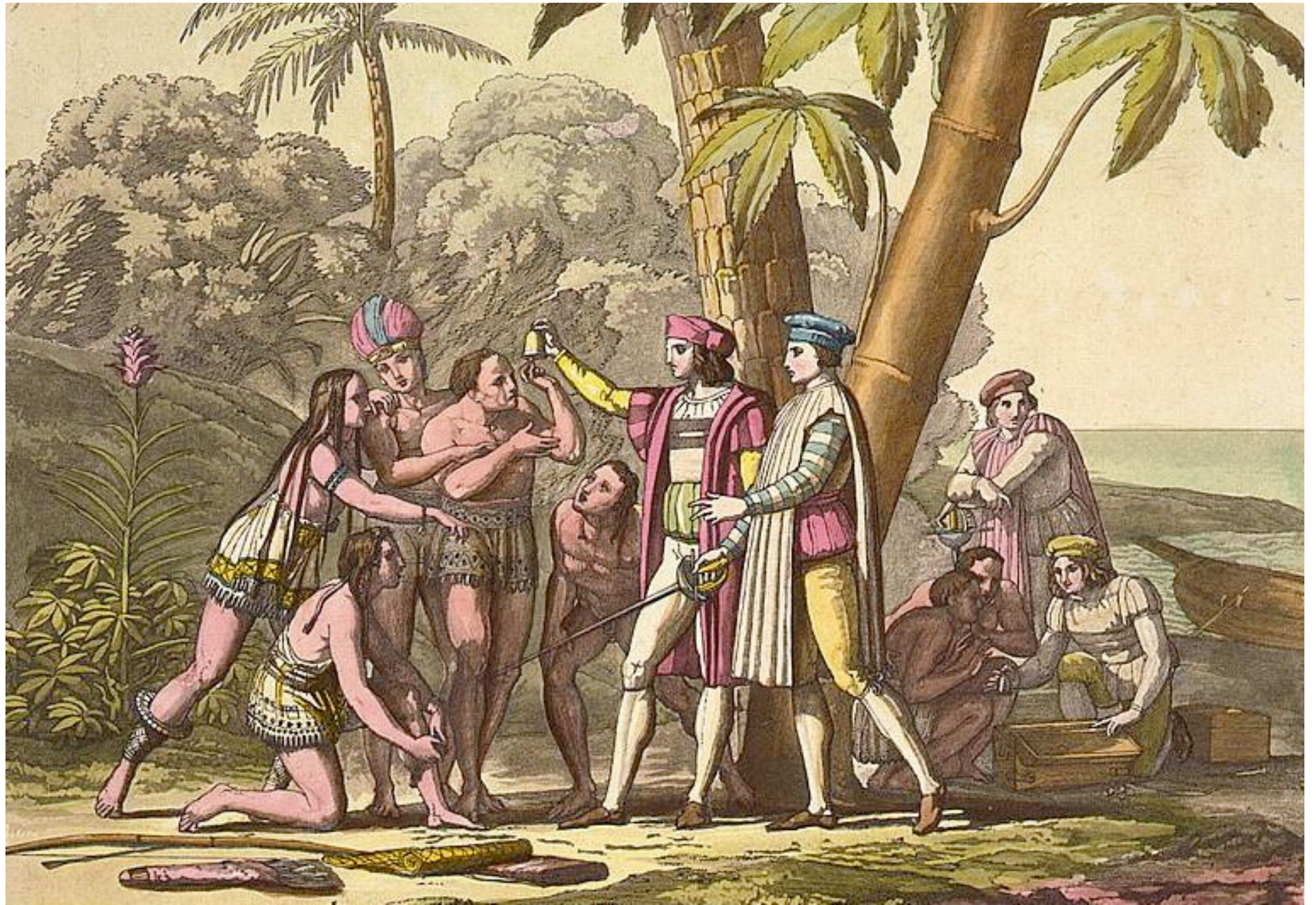
What's important to remember is that there were people on this continent when the Europeans arrived; descendants of those original people are still here and their traditions remain.



Diego Rivera, La Gran Tenochtitlan 1945
El Palacio Nacional, Mexico D.F.

“Europeans did not find wilderness here; rather , however, involuntarily, they made one. Jamestown, Plymouth, Salem, Boston, Providence, New Amsterdam, Philadelphia—all grew upon sites previously occupied by Indian communities. So did Quebec and Montreal and Detroit and Chicago. The so-called settlement of America was a resettlement, a reoccupation of a land made waste by the diseases and demoralization introduced by the newcomers.”

Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America* (1975)



“They... brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawk’s bells. They willingly traded everything they owned.. They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features... They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane... They would make fine servants... With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.”

--Christopher Columbus, 1492

Puritan Dominance

In many respects the American character has been shaped by the moral, ethical, and religious convictions of the Puritans. In 1620, just before Christmas, the first and most famous group of these English Puritans landed on the tip of Cape Cod. They were followed ten years later by about seven hundred more Puritan settlers. By 1640, as many as twenty thousand English Puritans had sailed to what they called New England.

Although the real commerce of the Puritans was with heaven, they were competent in the business world as well. It is important to remember that the founding of a new society in North America was a spiritual one. For the Puritans the everyday world and the spiritual world were closely intertwined.



“**Puritans** is a broad term, referring to a number of **Protestant** groups that, beginning about 1560, sought to “purify” the Church of England, which since the time of Henry VII (who reigned from 1509 to 1547) had been virtually inseparable from the country’s government. Like other Protestant **reformers** on the European continent, English Puritans wished to return to the simpler forms of worship and church organization that are described in the Christian Scriptures. For them religion was first of all a personal, inner experience. They did not believe that the clergy or the government should or could act as an intermediary between the individual and God.”

-- Gary Q. Arpin, “Encounters and Foundations to 1800”, 1994

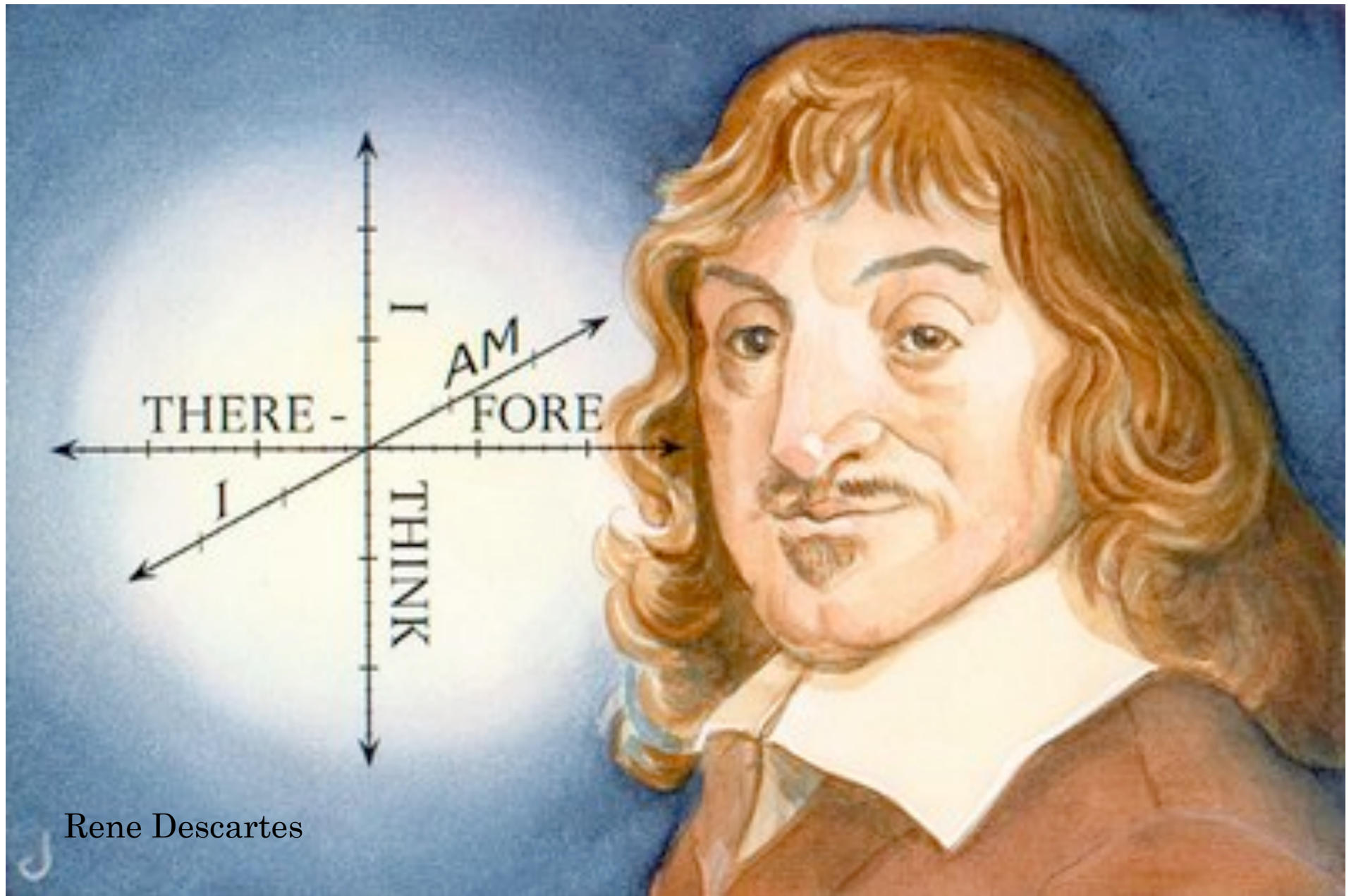


“For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.”

-- John Winthrop “A Model of Christian Charity”, 1630

The Rise of Rationalism

Beginning in Europe near the end of the seventeenth century, a group of philosophers and scientists began calling themselves rationalists. This marked the start of the Age of Reason, which soon had a growing influence in America. These rationalists believed that people can discover truth by using their own reason rather than relying on only religious faith or intuition. Along with homegrown American sense of practicality the ideas of these European thinkers inspired many of the triumphs of the eighteenth century American life. The great by-product of rationalism in America was the mindset that resulted in the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution.



Rene Descartes

“The Age of Reason, or the Enlightenment, began in Europe with the philosophers and scientists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who called themselves rationalists. **Rationalism** is the belief that human beings can arrive at truth by using reason, rather than by relying on the authority of the past, on religious faith, or intuition.”

-- Gary Q. Arpin, “Encounters and Foundations to 1800”, 1994



"A man may
imagine things that
are false, but he can
only understand
things that are
true."

-- Sir Isaac Newton

“The great English rationalist Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), who formulated the laws of gravity and motion, compared God to a clockmaker. Having created the perfect mechanism of this Universe God then left his creation to run on its own, like a clock. The rationalists believed that God’s special gift to humanity is reason– the ability to think in an ordered logical manner. This gift of reason enables people to discover both scientific and spiritual truth. According to the rationalists, then, everyone has the capacity to regulate and improve his or her own life”

-- Gary Q. Arpin, “Encounters and Foundations to 1800”, 1994

Puritan Beliefs: A Brief Snapshot

God

• God created the universe and is directly involved in planning every one of its workings.

Human Nature

• Human nature is flawed and most humans will face eternal damnation due to original sin.
• Two key indications of the state of your soul:
1. Feeling the grace of God within and –
2. Showing grace through outward “saintly” behavior (hard work and simplicity)

Government

• The Puritans believed that their covenant with God enjoined them to create a society governed strictly by the Bible, in which everyone worked together for the common good.
• A good government requires strict conformity: those who do not conform to social norms and rules were publically punished, banished, or put to death.

Rationalist Beliefs: A Brief Snapshot

God

- God created the rules and laws of the universe but does not interfere in its workings.
- Through the use of reason, people can discover those rules.

Human Nature

- People are basically good and perfectible.
- Doing good for others is the best way to worship God.
- Human nature's curiosity and use of reason enables progress toward a more perfect existence.

Government

- The Rationalists believed that government was an agreement between people in order to inspire social and economic progress.
- A good government is created through reasonable debate and discussion between citizens.
- A good government should be ruled by rational laws that are created by its citizens.

1. What effect(s) did European settlement have on American Indians?

2. Who were the Puritans and the Rationalists? Compare and contrast their ideas on God, human nature, and government.

Puritans: _____

God: _____

Human Nature: _____

Government: _____

Rationalists: _____

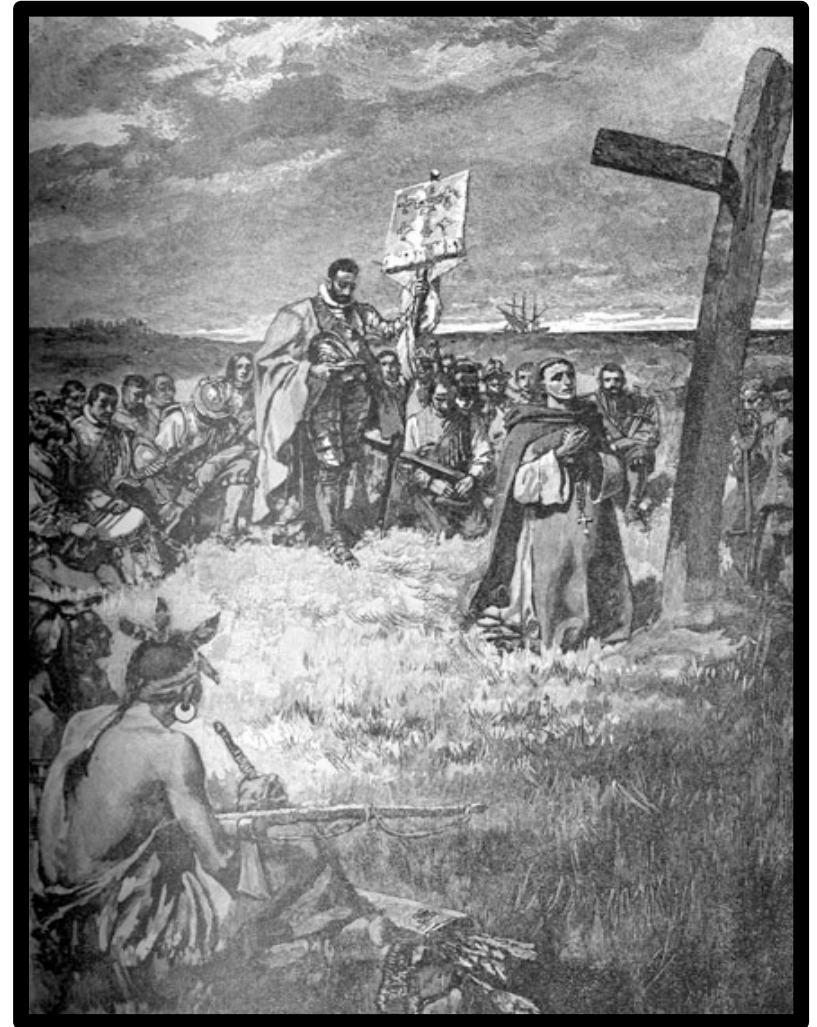
God: _____

Human Nature: _____

Government: _____

AMERICAN

Encounters and foundations



CA Focus Standard: Reading 3.5 a-c
Analyze recognized works of American literature
representing a variety of genres and traditions.

Purpose: Through discussion and collaboration you and your group will gain insight on important foundational events and ideas which shaped American literature and culture.

Directions: At each station, you and your group will observe the art and accompanying text. You will write down what you see and explain what it helps you understand about the United States' beginnings. After visiting every station, you will discuss and answer the introductory questions together with your group.

Station 1: *"La Gran Tenochtitlan" by Diego Rivera*

What I see:	What I read:
What I learned:	

Station 2: *Columbus' Journal Entry*

What I see:	What I read:
What I learned:	

Station 3: *Who were the Puritans?*

What I see:	What I read:
What I learned:	

Station 4: *City on a Hill*

What I see:	What I read:
What I learned:	

Station 5: *Rationalism*

What I see:	What I read:
What I learned:	

Station 6: *Rationalism and God*

What I see:	What I read:
What I learned:	