

The 18th century

EXPANSION OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

- strongly influenced social life (rapid economic growth and colonial expansion)
- attachment to **Puritan morality**



- importance of self-support and hard work
- idea that misfortune could be overcome through faith in God and personal effort



the Puritan ideal of the independent **self-made man**

materialistic and pragmatic society

- promotion of individualism, initiative, enterprise, enrichment
- hereditary privileges were not abolished
- the state protected legal rights, but didn't interfere in private property

THE RISE OF JOURNALISM



- the interest of the middle classes in literature, art, political life and their desire to be informed of current events (Addison with *"The Spectator"* and Steele with *"The Tatler"* tried to instruct, amuse and edify with their intelligent and cultivated prose)
- combination of moral improvement with entertainment
- imitated outside England: *L'Osservatore Veneto* by Gasparo Gozzi and *Il Caffè* by Alessandro and Pietro Verri

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

- it was critical, reforming, and eventually revolutionary. Locke and Jeremy Bentham in England, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Voltaire in France, and Jefferson in America all contributed to an evolving **critique of the authoritarian state** and to sketching the outline of a higher form of social organization, based on natural rights and functioning as a **political democracy**; these ideas found expression as reform in England and as revolution in France and America
- from a political point of view, **England's constitutional monarchy** was a model to imitate in the struggle of the European Enlightenment against the absolutism of monarchy, aristocracy and clergy

THE AUGUSTAN AGE



the term is used with reference to the age of the Roman Emperor Augustus (31 BC–AD 14), characterised by political stability, social and economic prosperity and flowering of the arts

THE AGE OF REASON

- faith in **reason** (= the key to the understanding of man and the world that surrounds him) and common sense
- optimism
- confidence in progress and human perfectibility

COFFEE-HOUSES

- frequented by the middle and upper classes, fashionable and artistic people
- associated with news and gossip as well as entertainment

as regards LITERATURE, the Augustans were interested in real life, social behaviour and morals



DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOVEL



influence of the middle classes' ideals = faith in God, individualism, materialism, productiveness, practical attitude to life, faith in progress

- **the novelist** = the spokesman of the middle classes
- **the novel** = written in a simple, colloquial, lively style
- **its aim** = the impression of fidelity to human experience, the reproduction of the real world in an apparently objective way