The 18th century

The Enlightenment, the steam engine, and a nation founded on a proposition.

Reason was turned on government, economics and nature. Watt's engine began the industrial age, Smith explained the wealth of nations, and the American founders built a republic on written principles.

What rose

1712. Newcomen's steam engine pumps water from mines. Source: Newcomen atmospheric engine

1751–72. Diderot and d'Alembert's Encyclopédie. Source: Encyclopédie

1769. Watt's separate condenser makes steam power efficient. Source: Watt steam engine

1776. The Declaration of Independence. Smith's Wealth of Nations. Source: The Wealth of Nations

1787. The U.S. Constitution. Source: Constitution of the United States

1796. Jenner's smallpox vaccine. Source: Edward Jenner

What fell or stalled

The French Revolution ended in the Terror and two decades of war. Source: Reign of Terror

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