Lessons from the Scottish Enlightenment

Sir Michael Atiyah,
November 23rd, 2009
“It was first published in 1768 by a Society of Gentlemen in Scotland”

Encyclopaedia Britannica
James Hutton

Joseph Black
Walter Scott

Robert Burns
Robert Adam  | Allan Ramsay  | Henry Raeburn
Mozart
“He thereupon set to work to repair the defects of his early education, and having applied himself to the study of mathematics, natural philosophy, logic, ethics and metaphysics, as well as law, was called to the Scottish Bar on 19th January, 1724.”
“His views about the origin of Society and language and the faculties by which man is distinguished from the brutes, afforded endless matter for jest by the wags of his day, but readers of this generation are more likely to be surprised by the scientific character of his method and acuteness of his conclusion than amused by his eccentricities.”

Monboddo
“During the temporary cessation of business owing to the rebellion of 1745 Burnett paid a visit to London where he made the acquaintance of many of the literary characters of the day.”

Monboddo
• Historical
• Geographical
• Social
St. Andrews 1412
Glasgow 1451
Aberdeen 1494
Edinburgh 1583
“that it would be undesirable to increase the salaries of the Professors, a move which might render them less attentive to the instruction of their students, or independent of the involvement arising from a diligent performance of their duties.”

Principal Robertson
Newton

Galileo
“Nullius in Verba”

Royal Society
Witherspoon
October 27, 1771

“Dear Friend,
Thro’ Storms and Floods I arrived here on Saturday night, late, and was lodg’d miserably at an Inn; But that excellent Christian David Hume, agreeable to the Precepts of the Gospel, has received the Stranger and I now live with him at this House in the new Town most happily. I purpose staying about a Fortnight, and shall be glad to hear from you. …

With sincerest Esteem, I am, your dear friend,
Yours most affectionately,
B. Franklin”
“Your Majesty can alter the laws of the land but cannot alter the laws of nature.”

Pringle
“you could stand at the Mercat Cross and, in half an hour, shake 50 men of genius by the hand.”
“I know he discovered fire, but what has he done since”
“Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.”

Gray