In-class Essay Topic

English 326: British Literature II

Professor E. Derek Taylor

Friday, Oct. 12

*Instructions*: Students will use class time to write a four-paragraph essay based on the following prompt. Be sure to bring your textbook to class so that you can incorporate textual support; you may also bring an outline of **no more** than 100 words that will be submitted with your essay.

*Prompt*:

In various ways and for all their differences, the Enlightenment authors we have encountered thus far this semester shared a belief in the capacity of human beings to know, to explain, to understand the world around them.  At the same time, the skeptical stance fueling the drive to know, explain, and understand also produced an undertow tugging at human claims to certainty. Put differently, the Enlightenment is as much about ceaseless questioning as it is about final answers.

Choose two authors who together best demonstrate these two aspects of the period.  What questions do they insist on asking?  Why? What answers to they believe they have found?  Why do those answers matter?