

A New View of the World

The Big Idea

Europeans drew on earlier ideas to develop a new way of gaining knowledge about the natural world.

Main Ideas

- The Scientific Revolution marked the birth of modern science.
- The roots of the Scientific Revolution can be traced to ancient Greece, the Muslim world, and Europe.

Key Terms and People

Scientific Revolution
science
theories
Ptolemy
rationalists
alchemy

If YOU were there . . .

You are a student in Germany in the early 1500s. You love to watch the changing phases of the moon and draw the star patterns at different times of the year. You've asked your teachers many questions: Why does the moon hang in the sky? Why do the stars move? But their answers don't seem convincing to you.

How can you find the answers to your questions?

The Birth of Modern Science

During the 1500s and 1600s, a handful of brilliant individuals laid the foundations for science as we know it today. Some historians consider the development of modern science the most important event in the intellectual history of humankind.

A Revolution in Thinking The series of events that led to the birth of modern science is called the **Scientific Revolution**. It occurred between about 1540 and 1700. Why would the birth of science be called a "revolution"? The answer is that science was a radical new idea. It was a completely different way of looking at the world.

Before the Scientific Revolution, most educated people who studied the world took guidance from the explanations given by such authorities as ancient Greek writers and Catholic Church officials. After the Scientific Revolution, educated people placed more importance on what they observed and less on what they were told. They gained knowledge by observing the world around them and developing logical explanations for what they saw.

Understanding Science Science is a particular way of gaining knowledge about the world. In fact, the word *science* comes from a Latin word meaning "knowledge" or "understanding."