

## Satire: Horation Roots and Enlightenment Applications

### Discussion Questions:

1. Please read these lines from *Rape of the Lock*: “The meeting points the sacred hair dissever/From the fair head, forever, and forever!/The flashed the living lightning from her eyes/And screams of horror rend th’ affrighted skies.” How does Pope use satire in these lines? What is a mock epic?
2. How would you compare the satire here with that of *Candide*? In particular, think about Pope’s treatment of religion.
3. How would you read this poem in the context of the Enlightenment?

### Guide for Responding:

1. A mock epic is a poem that subverts the conventions of epic poetry in order to make a satirical point. In *Rape of the Lock*, Pope describes a trivial event—a piece of stolen hair—with overblown, dramatic language. The poem is written in a mock-heroic style, emulating while poking fun at the ancient epic and its conventions. The elevated language in these lines pokes fun at how society overdramatizes small events.
2. As in *Candide*, Pope satirizes the concept of religion in contemporary culture. His poem seems to poke fun at the idea that divinities are involved in the lives of mortals, as when he references unanswered prayers (i.e. that deities have failed to protect the humans they have promised to help). In fact, Pope presents religious figures as individuals working to make life harder for humans.
3. In the Enlightenment, literature often reflected a cultural interest in reason and science. Like many philosophers of his time (such as Locke or Rousseau), Pope also attempts to take on problems with the elite, ruling classes. In his poem, Pope represents the governing elite as immoral, shallow, and ridiculous. However, Pope seems to criticize the work of these very Enlightenment thinkers as futile and irrelevant to real-life concerns.

