

SOCIAL STUDIES / SCIENCE · P5–P7

An Soillseachadh Albannach — The Scottish Enlightenment

Scottish Scientists — P5–P7

Key figures

1

The Scottish Enlightenment (c.1730–1800)

A remarkable flourishing of intellectual life centred on Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. Scotland produced thinkers who transformed philosophy, economics, history, and science in the 18th century.

Example: Edinburgh was known as the 'Athens of the North'

2

Adam Smith (1723–1790)

Born in Kirkcaldy. Author of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) — the foundational text of modern economics. Described the 'invisible hand' of markets and the principles of free trade.

3

David Hume (1711–1776)

Edinburgh philosopher. One of the most important figures in Western philosophy. Empiricism, scepticism about religion, the problem of induction. Still highly influential.

4

James Watt (1736–1819)

Born in Greenock. Improved the steam engine dramatically, making industrial steam power practical. The watt (unit of power) is named after him. His partner Matthew Boulton said they were selling power the whole world wanted.

5

James Hutton (1726–1797)

Edinburgh geologist. 'Father of modern geology.' Recognised that Earth's rocks required millions of years to form — not the 6,000 years of biblical chronology. Proposed 'deep time'.



6

Alexander Fleming (1881–1955)

Born in Ayrshire. Discovered penicillin (1928) — the first antibiotic. Won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (1945). Penicillin has saved approximately 200 million lives.

7

John Logie Baird (1888–1946)

Born in Helensburgh. Invented television — first demonstrated a working TV system in London, January 1926. Also worked on colour TV and radar.

