**The Hanoverians and the Augustan Age**

The first Hanoverian king was George I; he spoke little English and spent most of his time in Germany; so, to govern, he relied on a ‘cabinet’ of top ministers led by the Prime Minister.

Britain’s first prime minister was the Whig Sir Robert Walpole. He did not want any war or military expenses for England and his government was one of the longest in English history (1721-1742). He promoted trade and managed to reduce land taxes but was accused of corruption by his opponents. He went to live in a house in Downing Street that would become the official London residence of the British Prime Minister still today. In England there were two political parties:The Whigs and the Tories

**The Tories came from the Royalists and were supported by the Church of England and noble landowners; they fought for the King CONSERVATORI (NOBILI) (X IL RE)**

**The Whigs came from Parliamentarians, were supported by the wealthy and commercial classes and fought for commercial development, and religious toleration. (LIBERALI) (NEW CLASSE RICCA) (X IL PARL)**

Then suceeded king George II. During his reign Britain fought in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and defeated a Scottish rebellion of Stuart Christian known as ‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’ who still claimed the English throne. Britain’s foreign policy was guided by mercantilism and aimed to maintain a favourable balance of power in Europe; in 1756 war broke out, which lasted seven years and therefore was called the Seven Years’ War. The conflict saw Britain and Prussia against France, Austria, Spain and Russia;England won many battles and conquered most of Canada and India and other territories in Europe too.

William Pitt (1708-1778) became Prime Minister in 1756.

This period was called ‘Augustan’ after the period of Roman history which had achieved political stability and power as well as a flourishing of the arts. It was the period of Enlightment, new thinkers and their positive theories bases on intellect which rejected the pessimism of the puritans and extremism. The movement wanted to free man’s mind from ignorance and superstition and, thanks to the faith in reason and education, seeked man’s happiness.

The English society was changing very fast: merchants, tradesmen and manufacturers have become rich and now are part of the upper class with landowners and nobles; then there was a growing middle class consisting professionals, merchants, artisans,and shopkeepers; and finally below were the poor both from the countryside and the town who still lived in desperate conditions.

Coffee-houses in town were meeting places frequented by fashionable and artistic people; onlyby men who met to share ideas, discuss about politics, business and read the latest newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets.