

FRANCIS BACON'S ALTERNATIVE TO MORE'S *UTOPIA*

CURRICULUM UNIT

© CTMS

Contents

- I. Thomas More's *Utopia* vs. Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*
- II. Study Questions
- III. Study Outline - Bacon's *New Atlantis*
- IV. Text of *New Atlantis*

- I. Thomas More's *Utopia* vs. Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*

In his *New Atlantis*, Bacon presents the first model society based on empirical science and on Machiavelli's critique of classical utopias. As such, he does not present a utopia ("no place") as More did, but Bacon sets forth what he considers to be a realizable city of peace and prosperity founded on a scientifically inductive study of nature and of "humanity."

To appreciate the issues at stake in the difference between Thomas More's *Utopia* and Bacon's *New Atlantis*, you might consider books three and four of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* as well as Swift's "Battle of the Books." In this battle between the "ancients" and the "moderns," Swift sides with Thomas More while satirizing such enterprises as Bacon's *New Atlantis* in the voyage to Laputa and in the "pure reason" of the Houyhnhnms. In book three, Swift also praises More as one of the six great defenders of freedom of all time.

What is the difference between an "ancient" utopia and a "modern" model of society? To help reflection on this issue, see the questions that follow as well as CTMS Study Questions on *Utopia* and *Gulliver's Travels*. A download of the text of the *New Atlantis*, as well as PDF versions of the questions and outline below are available on the Publications page.