The Great Awakening 1735-1750ish

I. What it was: an evangelical revival in spirituality, marked by fainting, swooning, emotion

II. Reasons for occurrence
   A. genuine tiredness—inability to take the strain of living a "perfect" life
   B. rebellion—tinging of inflexible authority
   C. inability to take the strain of the belief in Predestination
   D. decline in church membership—had the church authorities worried
   E. worldliness of incoming community members—introducing new ideas and beliefs
   F. Doctrine of Arminianism: opposition to the idea of Predestination
      1. Arminians maintained that God gives indispensable help in salvation, but that ultimately it is the free will of man which decides the issue.
         http://www.bible-researcher.com/arminianism.html

III. Characteristics
   A. Itinerancy—ministers going uninvited into other communities and preaching
   B. "New Lights" vs. "Old Lights"
      1. New Lights condoned the evangelism and the appeals to emotion (reaction against stoicism of Puritanism)
      2. Old Lights preferred the old form of Puritanism—sternness, strictness, focus on reason
   C. Fire and Brimstone ministers
      1. George Whitefield (British)—thousands traveled far to see him
      2. James Davenport—liked to disturb the peace at night by marching through the streets with an entourage of musicians playing loudly to scare sleeping people
      3. John Edwards—the Michael Jordan of his time—HUGE celebrity!
         a. John Edwards was influenced heavily by the new theories pushed forward by Newton and Locke in the late 1600's/early 1700's
            i. Newton—the laws of motion and gravity (1687)—people were beginning to understand that the "heavens" may NOT actually be an unexplainable realm
            ii. Locke—believed that discovery of truth can be attained by reason, not just by faith.
               (This was a reaction against the belief in the sudden grace you would experience when God had "chosen" you—election—to be saved.) Locke was anti-authoritarian. His faith was in the individual. He believed that the coming to truth and betterment of the individual and ultimately of society could be brought about by observation and reason, not just by faith.

IV. Results of the Great Awakening
   A. rejection of the cold rationalism of Puritanism—more reliance on the "heart" than the "head"
   B. creation of new colleges to train "New Light" ministers—Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth
   C. sharpening of the differences between those who define religion as a rational process and those who focus on experience
   D. development of the Revivalism tradition in American religion (producing a huge group of converts all at once rather than just a few people here and there)