

Name _____

Hoffman
World Studies

Introduction to the Enlightenment/Age of Reason

Timeline Review:
Ancient Greece _____ Ancient Rome _____ Middle Ages _____ Renaissance _____ Enlightenment
1750bc-400bc _____ 133bc-500ad _____ 500ad-1300s _____ 1300s-1600s _____ 1600s-1800

Vocabulary Words to Know! Define these in your own words first and add to your definition after completing this assignment.

Natural rights

State of Nature

Human Nature

Activity

As we read the following passage, fill in the blank spaces with words to help you better understand the words in bold.

*"We hold these Truths to be self-evident _____ that all
Men are created equal, that they are endowed _____ by their
Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to
secure these Rights, Governments are instituted _____ among
Men deriving _____ their just Powers from the
Consent _____ of the Governed, that whenever any Form of
Government becomes destructive _____ of the Ends, it is the
Right of the People to alter or to abolish _____ it and to institute
new Government..."*
—Declaration of Independence, 1776

This excerpt from the Declaration of Independence includes some of the most important philosophical ideas that are the foundation of American Government. These ideas were very familiar to the American colonists during the Revolutionary War. But where did these ideas come from?

Long before the American Revolution, an Englishman named John Locke (1632-1704) was thinking about political philosophy. He developed the **natural rights** philosophy. The natural rights philosophy is based on imagining what life would be like if there were no government. Locke called this imaginary situation a **state of nature**. By this, Locke did not necessarily mean people living in a wilderness. A state of nature is a condition in which there is no government. For example, even with the existence of the United Nations, international relations between countries today operate in a state of nature. There is no superior power that can act effectively as a government of these individual countries.

Thinking about what life would be like if there were no government was very useful to philosophers such as Locke in answering questions like the following. Write your answers to each.

- What is human nature? That is, what traits of personality and character, if any, do all human beings have in common? For example, are all people selfish or do they tend to care for the good of others?
- What should be the purpose of government?
- How do the people running a government get the right to govern?
- How should a government be organized?
- What kinds of government should be respected and supported?
- What kinds of government should be resisted and fought?

Critical Thinking

Imagine that all the students at Mead High School were transported to a place with enough natural resources for you to live well, but where no one had lived before. When you arrive, you have no means of communicating with people in other parts of the world. With this imaginary situation in mind, answer the following questions with your group.

1. Upon arrival would there be any government or laws to control how you lived, what rights or freedoms you exercised, or what property you had? Why?
2. Would anyone have the right to govern you? Would you have the right to govern anyone else?
3. Would you have any rights at all? What would they be?
4. What might people who were stronger or smarter than others try to do? Why?
5. What might the weaker or less sophisticated people try to do? Why?
6. What might life be like for everyone living around you?

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The Age of Reason

The Scientific Revolution helped start a new era called the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason. People believed reason and logic could be used to study all areas of life, not just science. Scientists talked about the laws that govern nature, so philosophers looked for laws of human behavior. Some Enlightenment thinkers studied government and politics.

Thomas Hobbes and John Locke were two English political thinkers who started the Enlightenment. Both men had seen the Civil War and political changes of England in the 1600s. However, they came up with two very different ideas about government and human nature.



After seeing the violence of the English Civil War, Thomas Hobbes believed that all humans were naturally selfish. He thought that the best government was one with total control over the people. Hobbes thought that people needed government to keep law and order. Without it, they would fight each other all the time. To avoid this type of life, people invented government and gave up their rights to a strong ruler. Hobbes said that this agreement was a social contract.

John Locke had different ideas about government. He thought that people were responsible beings who had the natural ability to govern themselves. Locke said all people were born equal and had three natural rights: life, liberty, and property. He believed that a government's job was to protect these rights. The best government had limited power and was accepted by all people. If a government did not protect its citizens' rights, citizens could overthrow the government. Locke's idea that a government's power came from its people was the beginning of modern democracy.

In France in the mid-1700s, the Enlightenment reached its height. The Baron de Montesquieu, a French writer, studied politics. He admired Britain's government and spent a lot of time studying it. In his book, *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu wrote about the British system of government. The book talked about the ideas of executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government; separation of powers; and checks and balances. Later, Americans used these ideas to write the U.S. Constitution.

The thinkers of the Age of Reason did not like old beliefs. They thought things like the divine right of kings and strict class systems were unreasonable. Enlightenment thinkers came up with new ideas about government, religion, economics, and society. These theories inspired the American and French Revolutions and other revolutions of the 1800s.

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The Age of Reason

Chart - Ideas of the Enlightenment

Use the chart to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.

Thinker	Idea	Effect
Locke	natural rights: life, liberty, property	basic point of U.S. Declaration of Independence
Montesquieu	separation of powers	France, the United States and Latin American countries use separation of powers in their new constitutions.
Voltaire	freedom of thought and expression, freedom of religion	guaranteed in the U.S. Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen
Montesquieu	women's equality	women's rights groups formed

1. What was the effect of Locke's idea?

2. Which thinker wrote about women's equality?

3. What ideas led to rights being guaranteed in the U.S. Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen?