The Enlightenment and the American Revolution

By the early 1700s, European thinkers felt that nothing was beyond the reach of the human mind. Through the use of reason, instead of thinkers, people and governments could solve every social, political, and economic problem. In essence, those writers, scholars, and philosophers felt they could change the world.

Scientific Revolution Sparks the Enlightenment

The Scientific Revolution of the 1500s and 1600s had transformed the way people in Europe looked at the world. In the 1700s, other scientists expanded European knowledge. For example, Edward Jenner developed a vaccine against smallpox, a disease whose effects still kill and maim many today.

Rousseau Stirs Things Up

In Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s most important work, The Social Contract, he argued that in order to be free, people should do what is best for their community. Rousseau had many supporters who were inspired by his passionate writings. European monarchs, on the other hand, were angry that Rousseau was questioning authority. As a result, Rousseau worried about persecution for much of his life. The “chains” below represent the social institutions that confined society.

"Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." —Rousseau, The Social Contract

Focus Question: What effects did Enlightenment philosophers have on government and society?

Prepare to Read

Build Background Knowledge

Remind students that during the Scientific Revolution, scientists used reason to explain why things happened in the physical universe. Then ask them to predict what other aspects of life people could study using the new scientific method.

Set a Purpose

WITNESS HISTORY Read the selection aloud or play the audio.

Witness History Audio CD

Rousseau Stirs Things Up

Ask students to explain in their own words what Rousseau meant by “chains.” What might have been some examples of such “chains” in his time? What are some examples today?

Focus Point out the Section Focus Question and write it on the board. Tell students to refer to this question as they read. (Answer appears with Section 1 Assessment answers.)

Preview Have students preview the Section Objectives and the list of Terms, People, and Places.

Reading Skill Have students use the Reading Strategy: Summarize work sheets.

Vocabulary Builder

Use the information below and the following resources to teach the high-use word from this section.

High-Use Word: philosophy, p. 185

A, the love of, or the search for, wisdom or knowledge. Jonathan’s philosophy of nature comes from his many hikes in the wilderness, where he observes wildlife.
deserved to be dethroned for violating the rights of the English. England in 1688. Locke later wrote that he thought James II an unpopular absolute monarch, left the throne and fled in political power known as the Glorious Revolution. James II, absolute monarchy. England during this time experienced a shift kind of government, he said, had limited power and was formed governments to protect their natural rights. The best he said, has an obligation to the people it governs. If a government fails its obligations or violates people's natural rights, the he said, has an obligation to the people it governs. If a government fails its obligations or violates people's natural rights, the people have the right to overthrow that government. Locke’s idea would one day influence leaders of the American Revolution. Locke’s idea about natural rights contradicted the theory of divine-right monarchy. The monarch here represents the Leviathan who rules above all of society. Hobbes’s and Locke’s views on government. Then ask In the 1700s, what type of government existed in most European states? (divine-right monarchy) How did Locke’s ideas challenge Europe’s traditional order? (His theory of natural rights contradicted the theory of divine rights.) What was the long-term effect of these ideas? (They influenced revolutions across the globe.) Independent Practice Pair students and have them write a dialogue between Locke and Hobbes on the dethroning of James II in England. Monitor Progress As students compose the dialogues, check to ensure they understand that Hobbes and Locke would have had different views on the dethroning.

Hobbes Writes the Leviathan The title page from Leviathan (1651) by Hobbes demonstrates his belief in a powerful ruler. The monarch here represents the Leviathan who rules above all of society. Hobbes believed that only a powerful government could ensure an orderly society. For him, such a government was an abso-ute monarchy, which could impose order and compel obedience. Locke Advocates Natural Rights John Locke had a more optimistic view of human nature. He thought people were basically reasonable and moral. Further, they had certain natural rights, or rights that belonged to all humans from birth. These included the right to life, liberty, and property. Locke proposed a radical idea about this time. A government, he said, has an obligation to the people it governs. If a government fails its obligations or violates people’s natural rights, the people have the right to overthrow that government. Locke’s idea about the right of revolution would also echo across Europe and Latin America in the centuries that followed. Locke’s ideas challenge Europe’s traditional order? (His theory of natural rights contradicted the theory of divine rights.) What was the long-term effect of these ideas? (They influenced revolutions across the globe.) Independent Practice Pair students and have them write a dialogue between Locke and Hobbes on the dethroning of James II in England. Monitor Progress As students compose the dialogues, check to ensure they understand that Hobbes and Locke would have had different views on the dethroning.

Hobbes and Locke Have Conflicting Views Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, two seventeenth-century English thinkers, set forth ideas that were to become key to the Enlightenment. Both men lived through the upheavals of the English Civil War. Yet they came to very different conclusions about human nature and the role of government. Hobbes Believes in Powerful Government Thomas Hobbes outlined his ideas in a work titled Leviathan. In it, he argued that people were naturally cruel, greedy, and selfish. If not strictly controlled, they would fight, rob, and oppress one another. Life in the “state of nature”— without laws or other control—would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” To escape that “brutish” life, said Hobbes, people entered into a social contract, an agreement by which they gave up their freedom for an organized society. Hobbes believed that only a powerful government could ensure an orderly society. For him, such a government was an absolu-ute monarchy, which could impose order and compel obedience. Hobbes believed that only a powerful government could ensure an orderly society. For him, such a government was an abso-ute monarchy, which could impose order and compel obedience. Hobbes’s and Locke’s views on government. Then ask In the 1700s, what type of government existed in most European states? (divine-right monarchy) How did Locke’s ideas challenge Europe’s traditional order? (His theory of natural rights contradicted the theory of divine rights.) What was the long-term effect of these ideas? (They influenced revolutions across the globe.) Independent Practice Pair students and have them write a dialogue between Locke and Hobbes on the dethroning of James II in England. Monitor Progress As students compose the dialogues, check to ensure they understand that Hobbes and Locke would have had different views on the dethroning.

Hobbes and Locke Have Conflicting Views Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, two seventeenth-century English thinkers, set forth ideas that were to become key to the Enlightenment. Both men lived through the upheavals of the English Civil War. Yet they came to very different conclusions about human nature and the role of government. Hobbes Believes in Powerful Government Thomas Hobbes outlined his ideas in a work titled Leviathan. In it, he argued that people were naturally cruel, greedy, and selfish. If not strictly controlled, they would fight, rob, and oppress one another. Life in the “state of nature”— without laws or other control—would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” To escape that “brutish” life, said Hobbes, people entered into a social contract, an agreement by which they gave up their freedom for an organized society. Hobbes believed that only a powerful government could ensure an orderly society. For him, such a government was an abso-ute monarchy, which could impose order and compel obedience. Locke Advocates Natural Rights John Locke had a more optimistic view of human nature. He thought people were basically reasonable and moral. Further, they had certain natural rights, or rights that belonged to all humans from birth. These included the right to life, liberty, and property. Locke proposed a radical idea about this time. A government, he said, has an obligation to the people it governs. If a government fails its obligations or violates people’s natural rights, the people have the right to overthrow that government. Locke’s idea about the right of revolution would also echo across Europe and Latin America in the centuries that followed. Hobbes and Locke Have Conflicting Views Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, two seventeenth-century English thinkers, set forth ideas that were to become key to the Enlightenment. Both men lived through the upheavals of the English Civil War. Yet they came to very different conclusions about human nature and the role of government.
The Philosophes

Instruct
- **Introduce:** Vocabulary Builder
  Have students read the Vocabulary Builder term and definition. Ask students to define *philosophy* in their own words. Then ask students to explain who the philosophes were.

- **Teach** Create a two-column chart on the board, labeling one column “Thinker” and the other “Main Ideas.” Ask volunteers to fill in the chart with the thinkers discussed in the section and each thinker’s ideas and accomplishments. Then have students use the chart to summarize the main ideas of the Enlightenment. Using the Think-Write-Pair-Share strategy (TE, p. T23), ask students to discuss what made these ideas revolutionary in the 1700s.

- **Quick Activity** Display Color Transparency 101: Enlightenment Ideas About Government. Use the lesson suggested in the transparency book to guide a discussion. Ask how the philosophes helped create new assumptions about the proper use of power and the attributes of a just government.

Independent Practice
- **Biography** To help students better understand the courage it took to criticize powerful institutions, have them read Voltaire and complete the worksheet.

- **Viewpoints** To help students learn about different viewpoints on education at the time, have them read Enlightenment Views on Education and complete the worksheet.

Monitor Progress
As students fill in their tables, circulate to make sure they understand each thinker’s ideas. For a completed version of the table, see

Answers

**BIOGRAPHY** Voltaire

- François-Marie Arouet, known as Voltaire (1694–1778) was an impassioned poet, historian, essayist, and philosopher who wrote with cutting sarcasm and sharp wit. Voltaire was sent to the Bastille prison twice due to his criticism of French authorities and was eventually banned from Paris. When he was able to return to France, he wrote about political and religious freedom. Voltaire spent his life fighting enemies of freedom, such as ignorance, superstition, and intolerance. What did Voltaire attack in his writings?

- Voltaire was a philosopher who wrote with cutting sarcasm and sharp wit. Voltaire was sent to the Bastille prison twice due to his criticism of French authorities and was eventually banned from Paris. When he was able to return to France, he wrote about political and religious freedom. Voltaire spent his life fighting enemies of freedom, such as ignorance, superstition, and intolerance. What did Voltaire attack in his writings?

The Philosophes

In the 1700s, there was a flowering of Enlightenment thought. This was when a group of Enlightenment thinkers in France applied the methods of science to understand and improve society. They believed that the use of reason could lead to reforms of government, law, and society. These thinkers were called *philosophes* (see lesson 208103), which means “philosophers.” Their ideas soon spread beyond France and even beyond Europe.

**Montesquieu Advances the Idea of Separation of Powers**

An early and influential thinker was Baron de Montesquieu (MAHN tuh kyoo). Montesquieu studied the governments of Europe, from Italy to England. He read about ancient and medieval Europe, and learned about Chinese and Native American cultures. His sharp criticism of absolute monarchy would open doors for later debate.

In 1748, Montesquieu published *The Spirit of the Laws,* in which he discussed governance throughout history. Montesquieu felt that the best way to protect liberty was to divide the various functions and powers of government among three branches: the legislative, executive, and judicial. He also felt that each branch of government should be able to serve as a check on the other two, an idea that we call checks and balances. Montesquieu’s beliefs would soon profoundly affect the Framers of the United States Constitution.

**Voltaire Defends Freedom of Thought**

Probably the most famous of the philosophes was François-Marie Arouet, who took the name Voltaire. “My trade,” said Voltaire, “is to say what I think,” and he did so throughout his long, controversial life. Voltaire used biting wit as a weapon to expose the abuses of his day. He targeted corrupt officials and idle aristocrats. With his pen, he battled inequality, superstition, and superstition. He detested the slave trade and deplored religious prejudice.

Voltaire’s outspoken attacks offended both the French government and the Catholic Church. He was imprisoned and forced into exile. Even as he saw his books outlawed and even burned, he continued to defend the principle of freedom of speech.

**Diderot Edits the Encyclopedia**

Denis Diderot (DEE duh roh) worked for years to produce a 28-volume set of books called the *Encyclopedia.* As the editor, Diderot did more than just compile articles.
His purpose was “to change the general way of thinking” by explaining ideas on topics such as government, philosophy, and religion. Diderot's Encyclopedia included articles by leading thinkers of the day, including Montesquieu and Voltaire. In these articles, the philosophers denounced slavery, praised freedom of expression, and urged education for all. They attacked divine-right theory and traditional religions. Critics raised an outcry. The French government argued that the Encyclopedia was an attack on public morals, and the pope threatened to excommunicate Roman Catholics who bought or read the volumes.

Despite these and other efforts to ban the Encyclopedia, more than 4,000 copies were printed between 1751 and 1760. When translated into other languages, the Encyclopedia helped spread Enlightenment ideas throughout Europe and across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas.

Rousseau Promotes The Social Contract. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), believed that people in their natural state were basically good. The Social Contract.

Rousseau felt that society placed too many limitations on people’s behavior. He believed that some controls were necessary, but that they should be minimal. Additionally, only governments that had been freely elected should impose these controls.

Rousseau put his faith in the “general will,” or the best conscience of the people. The good of the community as a whole, he said, should be placed above individual interests. Rousseau has influenced political and social thinkers for more than 200 years. Woven through his work is a hatred of all forms of political and economic oppression. His bold ideas would help fan the flames of revolt in years to come.

Women Challenge the Philosophes. The Enlightenment slogan “free and equal” did not apply to women. Though the philosophes said women had natural rights, their rights were limited to the areas of home and family.

By the mid- to late-1700s, a small but growing number of women protested this view. Germaine de Staël and Mary Wollstonecraft were leading figures of the American and French Revolutions.

In 1762, Rousseau set forth his ideas about government and society in The Social Contract. Rousseau felt that society placed too many limitations on people’s behavior. He believed that some controls were necessary, but that they should be minimal. Additionally, only governments that had been freely elected should impose these controls.

Rousseau put his faith in the “general will,” or the best conscience of the people. The good of the community as a whole, he said, should be placed above individual interests. Rousseau has influenced political and social thinkers for more than 200 years. Woven through his work is a hatred of all forms of political and economic oppression. His bold ideas would help fan the flames of revolt in years to come.

Women Challenge the Philosophes. The Enlightenment slogan “free and equal” did not apply to women. Though the philosophes said women had natural rights, their rights were limited to the areas of home and family.

By the mid- to late-1700s, a small but growing number of women protested this view. Germaine de Staël and Mary Wollstonecraft were leading figures of the American and French Revolutions.

In 1762, Rousseau set forth his ideas about government and society in The Social Contract. Rousseau felt that society placed too many limitations on people’s behavior. He believed that some controls were necessary, but that they should be minimal. Additionally, only governments that had been freely elected should impose these controls.

Rousseau put his faith in the “general will,” or the best conscience of the people. The good of the community as a whole, he said, should be placed above individual interests. Rousseau has influenced political and social thinkers for more than 200 years. Woven through his work is a hatred of all forms of political and economic oppression. His bold ideas would help fan the flames of revolt in years to come.

Women Challenge the Philosophes. The Enlightenment slogan “free and equal” did not apply to women. Though the philosophes said women had natural rights, their rights were limited to the areas of home and family.

By the mid- to late-1700s, a small but growing number of women protested this view. Germaine de Staël and Mary Wollstonecraft were leading figures of the American and French Revolutions.

In 1762, Rousseau set forth his ideas about government and society in The Social Contract. Rousseau felt that society placed too many limitations on people’s behavior. He believed that some controls were necessary, but that they should be minimal. Additionally, only governments that had been freely elected should impose these controls.

Rousseau put his faith in the “general will,” or the best conscience of the people. The good of the community as a whole, he said, should be placed above individual interests. Rousseau has influenced political and social thinkers for more than 200 years. Woven through his work is a hatred of all forms of political and economic oppression. His bold ideas would help fan the flames of revolt in years to come.

Women Challenge the Philosophes. The Enlightenment slogan “free and equal” did not apply to women. Though the philosophes said women had natural rights, their rights were limited to the areas of home and family.

By the mid- to late-1700s, a small but growing number of women protested this view. Germaine de Staël and Mary Wollstonecraft were leading figures of the American and French Revolutions.

In 1762, Rousseau set forth his ideas about government and society in The Social Contract. Rousseau felt that society placed too many limitations on people’s behavior. He believed that some controls were necessary, but that they should be minimal. Additionally, only governments that had been freely elected should impose these controls.

Rousseau put his faith in the “general will,” or the best conscience of the people. The good of the community as a whole, he said, should be placed above individual interests. Rousseau has influenced political and social thinkers for more than 200 years. Woven through his work is a hatred of all forms of political and economic oppression. His bold ideas would help fan the flames of revolt in years to come.

Women Challenge the Philosophes. The Enlightenment slogan “free and equal” did not apply to women. Though the philosophes said women had natural rights, their rights were limited to the areas of home and family.

By the mid- to late-1700s, a small but growing number of women protested this view. Germaine de Staël and Mary Wollstonecraft were leading figures of the American and French Revolutions.

In 1762, Rousseau set forth his ideas about government and society in The Social Contract. Rousseau felt that society placed too many limitations on people’s behavior. He believed that some controls were necessary, but that they should be minimal. Additionally, only governments that had been freely elected should impose these controls.

Rousseau put his faith in the “general will,” or the best conscience of the people. The good of the community as a whole, he said, should be placed above individual interests. Rousseau has influenced political and social thinkers for more than 200 years. Woven through his work is a hatred of all forms of political and economic oppression. His bold ideas would help fan the flames of revolt in years to come.
Assess Progress

- Have students complete the Section Assessment.
- Administer the Section Quiz.
- To further assess student understanding, use Progress Monitoring Transparencies, 72.

Reteach

If students need more instruction, have them read the section summary.

Extend

Organize the class into small groups. Have each group think of areas in modern society that are based on or represent Enlightenment ideas. (Sample: government, human rights, education, gender roles) Have them choose one Enlightenment idea and discuss the similarities and differences between that idea and the present-day manifestation of the idea.

Answer

Smith believed the market would be more productive without government regulation.

New Economic Thinking

French thinkers known as physiocrats focused on economic reforms. Like the philosophes, physiocrats based their thinking on natural laws. The physiocrats claimed that their rational economic system was based on the natural laws of economics.

Laissez Faire Replaces Mercantilism

Physiocrats rejected mercantilism, which required government regulation of the economy to achieve a favorable balance of trade. Instead, they argued for a policy of laissez faire (luh zay FAHR), allowing businesses to operate with little or no government interference. Physiocrats also supported free trade and opposed tariffs.

Smith Argues for a Free Market

Scottish economist Adam Smith greatly admired the physiocrats. In his influential work The Wealth of Nations, he argued that the free market should be allowed to regulate business activity. Smith tried to show how manufacturing, trade, wages, profits, and economic growth were all linked to the market forces of supply and demand. Wherever there was a demand for goods or services, he said, suppliers would seek to meet that demand in order to gain profits.

Smith was a strong supporter of laissez faire. However, he felt that government had a duty to protect society, administer justice, and provide public works. Adam Smith’s ideas would help to shape productive economies in the 1800s and 1900s.

Why did Smith support laissez faire?

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: nba-1711

Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

Reading Skill: Summarize

Use your completed tables to answer the Focus Question: What effects did Enlightenment philosophers have on government and society?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. Summarize How did the achievements of the Scientific Revolution contribute to the Enlightenment?

4. Recognize Cause and Effect What did the philosophes do to better understand and improve society?

5. Synthesize Information Explain the connection between the policy of laissez faire and natural economic laws.

Writing About History

Quick Write: Explore a Topic On some essay tests, you may have a choice of topic. You should choose one that you feel most knowledgeable about. Choose from the following, and draft a single sentence that identifies the main idea:

(a) social contracts
(b) freedom of speech
(c) women in the mid-1700s

For additional assessment, have students access Progress Monitoring Online at Web Code nba-1711.
John Locke: Two Treatises of Government

English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) published Two Treatises of Government in 1689. Locke believed that all people had the same natural rights of life, liberty, and property. In this essay, Locke states that the primary purpose of government is to protect those natural rights. He also states that governments hold their power only with the consent of the people. Locke’s ideas greatly influenced revolutions in America and France.

But though men, when they enter into society give up the sovereignty, liberty, and executive power they had in the state of Nature into the hands of society . . . . the power of the society or legislative constituted by them can never be supposed to extend farther than the common good. . . . Whoever has the legislative or supreme power of any commonwealth, is bound to govern by established standing laws, promulgated and known to the people, and not by extemporary decrees, by indifferent and transient hands for quite contrary ends, and it devolves to the people; who have a right to resume their original liberty, and by the establishment of a new legislative (such as they shall think fit), provide for their own safety and security.

The reason why men enter into society is the preservation of their property; and the end while they choose and authorize a legislative is that there may be laws made, and rules set, as guards and fences to the properties of all the society, . . . .

Whenever, therefore, the legislative power shall transgress this fundamental rule of society, and either by ambition, fear, folly, or corruption, endeavor to grasp themselves, or put into the hands of any other, an absolute power over the lives, liberties, and estates of the people, by this breach of trust they forfeit the power the people had put into their hands for quite contrary ends, and it devolves to the people, who have a right to resume their original liberty, and by the establishment of a new legislative (each as they shall think fit), provide for their own safety and security.