

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Until the 1700's, the people of France accepted the idea that their king ruled by divine right. They did not question teachings of the Catholic Church or the fact that wealthy nobles enjoyed special privileges. But by the end of the eighteenth century, these attitudes changed. This happened as a result of writings by a group known as the "philosophes."

The philosophes were reasonable men who felt there was much about life in Europe that was unfair and unjust. Since most philosophes were from France, and since France was ruled by an absolute monarch surrounded by a privileged nobility, the French way of life came under particular attack.

The chart which follows lists four leading thinkers of the 1700's. They published their thoughts during a period called the "Age of Reason," or "Enlightenment." Ideas from the Enlightenment were eventually accepted by countries in Europe and around the world. Many of these ideas spread to the United States and are today part of the American way of life.

Read the following statements by the philosophes. Decide whether each one is a true description of present-day American life. If it is true of the United States today, fill in the space with yes. If the idea or attitude is not true of present life in the U.S., put no in the space.

Philosophe	Statements	True in the U.S. today? (yes or no)
John Locke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) All men are free and equal at birth. (2) Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the ownership of property. (3) Citizens have the right to overthrow the government when their "natural rights" are violated. (4) Rulers are given the right to govern by the people, and unfair rulers can be forced from power. (5) Man is not born a good or evil person; he becomes one or the other according to his life experiences and the environment in which he lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____ (4) _____ (5) _____
Baron de Montesquieu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) An absolute ruler is an undesirable leader because one-man rule limits such basic rights as freedom of speech, press, and religion. (2) There should be a "separation of powers" in government between legislative, executive, and judicial branches. (3) Slavery, torture, religious persecution, and censorship are all wrong. (4) A man is innocent until a jury finds him guilty. (5) When one country increases its military power, so do other countries. Therefore, all nations should limit their military forces in order to reduce the threat of war. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____ (4) _____ (5) _____

Philosophe	Statements	True in the U.S. today? (yes or no)
Voltaire	(1) A man should not be persecuted. (2) An intelligent person should not accept all religious beliefs. We should only accept those beliefs about God that are based on reason and common sense. (3) Religious myths and ceremonies do nothing to make men better, and therefore should be ignored. (4) Clergymen are more interested in adding to the power of the Church than they are in making man better. (5) A scientist is a greater person than a conquering general. (6) All men should be treated as equals, and should have freedom of speech and freedom of the press. (7) Democracy is not a good form of government because the common people are not capable of governing themselves. The best government is one headed by a good and fair king.	(1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____ (4) _____ (5) _____ (6) _____ (7) _____
Jean Jacques Rousseau	(1) It is unfair that some people are rich while others are poor. (2) The rich should not enjoy special privileges. (3) Compared to man during the Stone Age, modern man is unhappy, insecure, and greedy. (4) Social and political reforms must be made before man can be a good person. (5) Democracy is a desirable form of government.	(1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____ (4) _____ (5) _____

(1) If the philosophes were alive today, do you think they would be generally satisfied or dissatisfied with social conditions and the type of government we have in the United States? Explain your answer.

(2) Which 3 statements by the philosophes do you believe contain ideas that are of great importance to mankind today? Copy the statements in the following spaces.

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(3) Choose 1 statement and tell why you disagree with it.
statement: _____

reason for disagreement: _____

- (4) Not all of the philosophes held the same beliefs. But most agreed that:
- (a) reason should be used at all times
 - (b) the search for new knowledge and ideas needs to continue
 - (c) improvements must be made in the system of justice in order to end unfair jail sentences, the torture of prisoners, and terrible conditions in prisons
 - (d) slavery and warfare must be done away with
 - (e) freedom of religion, speech, and the press should be enjoyed by all
 - (f) everyone deserves liberty and equality
 - (g) there should be public education for all, not just schools for children of the rich

Based on these beliefs, do you think the philosophes would have approved or disapproved of the following? Fill in the space with A for approved or D for disapproved.

1. _____ Kings ruling by divine right.
2. _____ Peter the Great increasing religious freedom in Russia.
3. _____ Peter the Great building a navy and making improvements in the Russian army.
4. _____ Philip II sending the Spanish Armada to England.
5. _____ Henry IV of France giving religious freedom to the Huguenots.
6. _____ Sir Isaac Newton discovering the law of gravity.
7. _____ Louis XIV building the magnificent palace at Versailles.
8. _____ French nobles going hunting and boating, and enjoying the ballet, sporting events, and horse shows.
9. _____ Louis XIV ruling as an absolute monarch.
10. _____ Russian czars building schools and hospitals.
11. _____ Religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants.
12. _____ Ferdinand and Isabella making Spain a Catholic nation-state.
13. _____ The starting of a system of common law and the beginning of trial by jury in England.
14. _____ King John signing the Magna Carta which limited the power of the English king.
15. _____ France and England fighting against one another in the Hundred Years' War.
16. _____ The English people being represented by Parliament.
17. _____ "Bloody Mary," the queen of England, burning 300 Catholics at the stake.
18. _____ The Renaissance sweeping across Western Europe.
19. _____ The Glorious Revolution in England which resulted in the adoption of a Bill of Rights.
20. _____ Galileo becoming the founder of experimental science.

To SP: (0)
From Tim

Modern World History
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Background on Enlightenment

The Enlightenment (mid 1600s to late 1700s) was a movement in thought characterized by the belief that the methods of science established during the Scientific Revolution could be used to examine and understand all aspects of life. Nothing was to be accepted by faith; instead, everything was to be submitted to the rational, critical, scientific way of thinking. Just like Newton discovered laws explaining how the physical universe worked, Enlightenment thinkers sought laws on how society worked. With this knowledge, they believed they could improve society and that progress would result from enlightened thinking.

Enlightenment thinkers criticized religious intolerance, superstition, fanaticism, societal inequality, class and gender dependent educational system (which excluded women and poorer classes), and government's abuse of individual's rights. Montesquieu argued that a government's power should be divided - or separated - by orders so as to prevent abuse of power and/or social inequality. Voltaire argued that strong religious faith leads to intolerance of other groups (resulting in wars, killing, etc.). Madame du Chatelet sought participation of women in such affairs as science, education, etc.

The pervasive appeal of the Enlightenment, as expressed by Voltaire, was:

1. autonomy of reason
2. perfectibility and progress
3. confidence in the ability to discover causality
4. principles governing nature, man and society
5. assault on authority
6. cosmopolitan solidarity of enlightened intellectuals
7. disgust with nationalism.