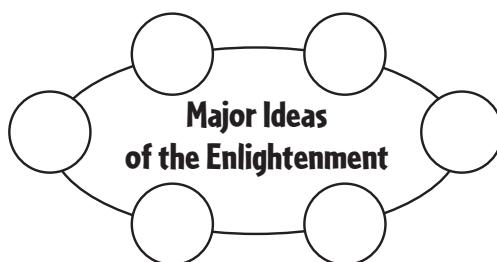


Chapter 17, Section 2 (Pages 546–553)

The Enlightenment

Big Idea

Enlightenment thinkers, or philosophers, believed all institutions should follow natural laws to produce the ideal society. As you read, use a diagram like the one below to list some of the main ideas introduced during the Enlightenment.



Read to Learn

Path to the Enlightenment (page 546)

Analyzing Information

Why did Locke think that giving people the right influences could make a difference in society?

The Enlightenment was an eighteenth-century philosophical movement of intellectuals who were greatly impressed with the achievements of the Scientific Revolution. They thought they could apply reason and the scientific method to gain an understanding of all life. Two men from the seventeenth century—John Locke and Isaac Newton—influenced the Enlightenment. Locke thought that people were born with blank minds. Therefore, they were molded by their observations and experiences. If given the right influences, people could be changed to create a new society.

Newton thought of the world as a machine, created by a mechanic, God. God then allowed the world-machine to run according to natural laws that could be uncovered through systematic investigation. Enlightenment thinkers believed that by applying Newton's methods, they could discover the natural laws that governed society. If all institutions followed these natural laws, the result would be an ideal society.



Notes

Read to Learn

Ideas of the Philosophes (page 548)

Making Inferences

How did the philosophes affect the United States Constitution?

The intellectuals of the Enlightenment were called **philosophes**. They came chiefly from the nobility and the middle class. They thought the role of philosophy was to change the world. A spirit of rational criticism was to be applied to everything, including religion and politics.

Montesquieu studied governments. He believed that England's government had three branches: the executive (the monarch), the legislative (Parliament), and the judicial (the courts). He believed that this **separation of powers** gave the government a system of checks and balances. American philosophes worked this idea into the United States Constitution.

Voltaire championed **deism**, a religious philosophy built on the idea that God had set the world in motion and allowed it to run without his interference. Diderot published a 28-volume *Encyclopédie* that spread Enlightenment ideas.

New Social Sciences (page 549)

Identifying the Main Idea

What did the Physiocrats believe?

The founders of the modern social science of economics are believed to be the Physiocrats, a French group, and Scottish philosopher Adam Smith. The Physiocrats believed that if individuals were free to pursue their own economic self-interest, all society would ultimately benefit. The state, therefore, should not interfere in the economy. This doctrine became known as **laissez-faire**. The best statement of laissez-faire was made by Adam Smith when he published *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776.

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The Spread of Ideas (page 551)

Comparing and Contrasting

How were Rousseau's thoughts different from other Enlightenment thinkers?

In his work *The Social Contract*, Rousseau presented the idea that through a **social contract**, an entire society agreed to be governed by its general will. Rousseau also argued that education should foster, not restrict, children's natural instincts. Unlike many Enlightenment thinkers, Rousseau believed that emotions, as well as reason, were important to human development. He sought a balance between heart and mind, emotions and reason.

Mary Wollstonecraft advanced the strongest statement for the rights of women. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft argued that if government based on the arbitrary power of a monarch was wrong, then men's power over women

was wrong. Wollstonecraft declared that because women have the power of reason, they deserved equal rights in education, as well as in economic and political life.

During the Enlightenment, ideas were spread through the **salon**. These were elegant gatherings in the homes of the wealthy upper class. They brought writers and artists together with aristocrats, government officials, and the wealthy middle class.

John Wesley, an Anglican minister, tried to make his preaching understandable to the lower classes. His Methodist movement influenced both the English and later the American movement to abolish slavery.

Section Wrap-up

Answer these questions to check your understanding of the entire section.

1. What is laissez-faire?

2. What Enlightenment movement was important to the abolition of slavery?

Persuasive Writing

Using information from the text and your knowledge of life today, argue in favor of Mary Wollstonecraft's position on women's rights or against it. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.
