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# THE ENLIGHTENMENT: THE 1700s

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With roots in both the Scientific Revolution and the seventeenth-century beliefs of the English philosopher John Locke, the Enlightenment offered new ideas about how to change the world. Curiosity and reason guided the intellectuals of the movement, called philosophes, as they considered government, religion, human behavior, and economics. The philosophes were not alone in their desire to actively pursue knowledge; women, political officials, economists, and educators all were eager to encourage responsible government, expanded education, and rational human interaction.

## KEY TERMS

deism	original state of nature
general will	philosophe
laissez-faire	physiocrat
natural law	Pietism
natural rights	Rococo
neoclassicism	salon
mercantilism	separation of powers
Methodism	<i>tabula rasa</i>
old order	

## KEY CONCEPTS

- ❖ Thinking about the ideal society, the philosophes studied a variety of government systems. They were especially concerned with the problems created by absolutism.
- ❖ A broad education with a focus on literacy became important to the upper and middle classes as people tried to understand and improve their world. The physiocrats rejected mercantilism in favor of laissez-faire capitalism.
- ❖ Women gained recognition during the Enlightenment as they hosted salons and wrote about their concerns. Changes in art and music during this time reflected both the interests of the aristocracy and the desire to emulate the logic and reason of ancient Rome. Partly in reaction to deism, Christianity changed as Europeans strove for more religious devotion.

For a full discussion of the Enlightenment, see *Western Civilization*, 7th and 8th editions, Chapter 17.

## LIFE UNDER THE OLD ORDER

The world of early eighteenth-century Europe was one of control by governments and the Catholic Church together. As a part of this control, both institutions stressed the importance of the past and tradition. But based on ideas that had emerged in the seventeenth century, political and religious powers would soon be shaken to their foundations.

The Scientific Revolution, encouraged especially by Charles II in England and Louis XIV in France, had offered a new view of the world beginning in the late seventeenth century. In analyzing the physical world, scientists laid the groundwork for analyzing other topics, such as politics and human behavior. For example, Isaac Newton believed that the universe was created according to natural laws, laws that could be understood by careful study. His mathematical calculations in the studies of motion, gravity, and light, and his prominence as a leader of England's scientific community, encouraged others to look for patterns in a wide range of areas, such as government authority.

John Locke, the great pre-Enlightenment thinker, had provided a foundation for the philosophes. His belief in the *tabula rasa*—the blank slate, the mind without mental content at birth—emphasized the importance of education and experience. A reasonable, orderly study of the world, he believed, would lead to the creation of better human beings and, thus, a better society.

## COMMON INTERESTS AND BELIEFS

Although the Enlightenment was centered in France, the philosophes were spread across Europe. They were interested in numerous topics and held a wide variety of beliefs, but they shared several assumptions that undergirded most of their thinking.

First, they believed that the Old Order, referred to by the French term *ancien régime*, was repressive and that political and religious

authorities used brute force and tradition to sustain an autocracy that perpetuated despotism, social and legal inequality, religious intolerance, and ignorance. For there to be progress, the philosophes believed, the traditional power of church and state had to be challenged.

Second, they believed that it was possible to change the political and social orders. Drawing on classical philosophy, especially that of Aristotle, Renaissance humanism, and Locke's writings, the philosophes held that every human being possessed natural rights, rights that cannot be usurped by any government. The Lockean rights of life, liberty, and property could be safeguarded only when human institutions conformed to logic and reason. To ensure these rights, the philosophes called for an end to the Old Order and the creation of a new world of progress and hope.

### AP Tip

It is essential that you understand the importance of cause and effect in history. The impact of the Scientific Revolution and the work of John Locke on the Enlightenment form an important area of European history, one that frequently appears on the AP exam. You should be able to analyze—break into parts and discuss the interaction of the parts—the causes of the Enlightenment, especially its roots in seventeenth-century England and its response to autocratic methods of control by both state and Church.

## MAJOR PHILOSOPHES

To build a new world, the philosophes proposed a number of reforms. Some—for example, the baron de Montesquieu and Voltaire—suggested political reforms, while social reforms were laid out by Rousseau and Wollstonecraft.

### THE BARON DE MONTESQUIEU

Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, was a French noble who studied forms of government, looking at how they responded to natural rights. Author of *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Montesquieu believed that men were born equal but that they lost that equality under oppressive government and social systems. Therefore, protection by law was key to a reasonable form of government. He especially appreciated the English parliamentary system, deriving from it the political theory for which he is most known, the separation of powers. The separating of powers into executive, legislative, and judicial branches lead to another theory for which Montesquieu is well-known, the system of checks and balances.

## VOLTAIRE

Another French philosophe who admired the British system of government was François-Marie Arouet, known as Voltaire. The well-educated son of a middle-class family, he showed his intelligence early when, after studying law, he gained widespread fame as a writer of philosophy. His fiery temper and ardent fight against the Catholic Church and the French government frequently got him in trouble. After a quarrel with a French nobleman, he fled to England, where his passion and wit made him popular among the British nobility. During his more than two years there, he came to appreciate much about the English political system, writing *Philosophic Letters on the English* (1734, 1778), in which he praised England's religious toleration and constitutional monarchy.

## JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

The Swiss-born Rousseau continued the search for the best governmental system. His conclusion, laid out in *The Social Contract* (1762), was quite different from Montesquieu's and Voltaire's. Coming from a difficult family background, Rousseau had a vision of the ideal society and government that rested on the premise that people had natural rights and were happy in their original, natural states. However, as inequalities arose, people entered into a social contract with one another, surrendering their rights to the community and submitting to the "general will," or will of the group. If their government failed in its purpose, the people had the right to overthrow and replace it.

Rousseau patterned his basic ideas of natural rights on John Locke's, but there were differences. Locke was more concerned with individual rights and limiting government. Rousseau, on the other hand, held that the individual's rights should be subordinated to the interests of the community, emphasizing the general will as supreme in creating true freedom.

Rousseau also delved into social issues such as education and women's role in society. In his book *Emile* (1762), Rousseau expounded his belief that people were born good but that society corrupted them, and that people were happiest when they balanced reason and emotion. The purpose of education, then, was to bring a person back to his true moral state. On the other hand, Locke believed that because people had no inherent morality (*tabula rasa*), education actually defined a person. Rousseau also included in *Emile* his thoughts on women: they could be educated in certain areas but were at their best when they were submissive to men, which, he believed, was their natural role.

## DAVID HUME

A Scottish philosophe, Hume believed, as other Enlightenment intellectuals did, that society could be improved. His theories, like Rousseau's, included some ideas that would become popular with nineteenth-century Romantics. As Rousseau emphasized the balance of reason and emotion, Hume also looked at how to blend the two. In his *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–1740), Hume discussed his “science of man,” a framework that could be used to study human beings. He wrote that reason alone could not be the basis of the analysis of any facet of life; people needed faith to balance how they understood their world. Like Locke, Hume believed that people have natural rights and should have some influence on their government. But unlike Locke, Hume held that authority and liberty should work together to make the best political system, that authority per se was not bad unless it was extremely tyrannical.

## DENIS DIDEROT

Diderot, a French philosophe and writer, brought together the writings of many philosophes in his twenty-eight-volume *Encyclopedia* (1751–1765), which included works that decried autocracy and religious superstition and supported natural law and toleration. Because the *Encyclopedia* included many entries critical of the old order, Diderot faced governmental censorship. Yet, because of the work, the belief in toleration and natural rights, especially the right to education, grew widespread during the Enlightenment.

## ADAM SMITH

Smith, another Scotsman, also contributed to the new approach to thinking during the Enlightenment, but in a very different way. Smith believed—as did the French physiocrats—that the best economic system was not the old order mercantilism but a new way of trading, free trade. Led by François Quesnay, the physiocrats held that just as there were natural political and social laws, there were also natural economic laws. One economic law was laissez-faire, an economic system in which the “invisible hand” of the market, the law of demand and supply, would rule. With laissez-faire, there would be no external control by the government of the economy as there had been with mercantilism, and social and economic order would result. Smith codified and amplified the physiocrats' theories in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), not only emphasizing the importance of a free market but also declaring that the true wealth of a nation was in the work of its people, not in the gold and silver bullion so important to the countries dependent on mercantilism. Like so many other enlightened thinkers, Smith believed in the freedom of the individual to make choices.

Until this point there has been no mention of the impact of women thinkers. Interestingly, although women had a role in the salon culture and the promulgation of Enlightenment ideals (discussed in the section titled “Eighteenth Century Society”), there were few women actually involved in writing during the Enlightenment.

## MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

An Englishwoman, Wollstonecraft was an outstanding proponent of enlightened ideals, especially focusing on the roles and rights of women. During this period, some men held that women had certain rights or were capable of some learning. But Wollstonecraft took on the issue headlong. Because of financial problems in her family, Wollstonecraft's education had been haphazard. Yet she read widely, so once she was ready to espouse her beliefs, she had a vast literary foundation from which to draw. Her concerns about the rights of women were developed over that same lifetime of blessings and difficulties. In *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), she wrote, as had Hume and Rousseau, that reason should be balanced with instinct. Therefore, the purpose of educating girls was to encourage in them a personal strength and the ability to be independent of men. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft continued her argument about the importance of education, along with another main theme—that God had made women equal to men in abilities and rights. Interestingly, although both she and Rousseau believed in natural rights, including various freedoms, Wollstonecraft's belief that women were equal to men and had the right to independence was in direct contrast to Rousseau's view of women in *Emile*.

### AP Tip

As you study any time period, continually compare and contrast the variations within it. To best understand the Enlightenment, make a chart in which you list information on the philosophes, their writings, and their beliefs. Also, make note of ways in which they were both similar and different. This will give you a better grasp of each person, which will help you in answering multiple-choice questions, as well as provide the specifics necessary for a well-crafted essay.

## EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SOCIETY

Society during the Enlightenment changed in many ways. One development directly linked to the Enlightenment was the growth of salons. Gatherings of philosophes and those interested in discussing how to create a better world, salons were an integral factor in the spread of enlightened ideas. Held in upper-class homes, they were generally hosted by women such as Madame Geoffrin, who gained recognition and more social influence through them.

Another change during this time was an interest—encouraged by many philosophes—in improving laws and making punishments more fairly fit crimes. Cesare Beccaria led a movement to press for the use of prisons for rehabilitation, not just punishment.

The lives of common people changed little. They still worked hard in much the same type of agrarian work as they had for several hundred years, looking forward to the holy days and feasts that had always been their outlet. Yet some differences were gradually developing. Medical care was improving as doctors and surgeons received better training, although hospitals remained dangerous places where diseases spread rapidly from patient to patient. There were also greater opportunities to receive an education. Although university education was generally out of their reach, the lower classes could get a basic education, especially from their parish churches. With some education and access to the many new periodicals and broadsheets spurred by the greater literacy, the common people expanded their understanding of the world.

Probably the greatest social change came in the area of religion. Many philosophes espoused deism, which describes God as a great watchmaker who created the universe, then left it on its own, allowing it total self-determination. Philosophes also often encouraged religious toleration, especially by the monarchs who came to them for advice, the enlightened despots. But this religious toleration was not widespread and generally did not extend to Jews.

However, other religions moved decisively away from logic and reason. The Roman Catholic Church still held to its doctrines and belief in an all-powerful God. Within the Protestant faiths, two popular movements arose. Pietism, which began in the Germanic states, encouraged a personal relationship with God. Along that same line, John and Charles Wesley led a revival in England, beginning what would become known as Methodism. The heart of this new faith was the importance of having a deep relationship with God. Thus, religion during the Enlightenment saw movements both toward and away from logic.

## EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CULTURE

From literature and music to art, eighteenth-century culture developed alongside and in response to the ideas of the Enlightenment. Logic, faith and new views of the world were shown through the work of great writers, composers, and artists.

### LITERATURE

Writers did much to expand literature. Encouraged by and encouraging the growth of literacy, more periodicals were founded. Historians looked to the past for lessons that could lead to a better world. A new form of story-telling—novels—appeared, initially in England. Interestingly, novels provided women not only the stories they wanted to read, but also the opportunity to write them.

### MUSIC

The focus of music during the eighteenth century was both religious and secular. New forms of music, such as the opera and the symphony, were created in Italy, England, Austria and the German states. Johann Sebastian Bach, the epitome—and virtually the end—of Baroque music, focused on religious compositions. German-born

George Frederick Handel, famous for *Messiah*, found enormous success in England, where he was patronized by the courts of George I and George II. Probably the greatest composer of this time was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. A child prodigy who played for the court of Maria Theresa, Mozart mastered many musical forms.

## ART

Art most dramatically represented the changing views of the eighteenth century. The death of Louis XIV in 1715 marks the beginning of the Rococo style, a reaction by the nobility to the classical baroque of the palace at Versailles. As the Enlightenment highlighted reason, Neoclassicism emphasized the values of ancient Greece and Rome. It was the dominant artistic style of the last quarter of the century.

Developed during the reign of Louis XV, Rococo focused on the idealized life of the French nobility, with its power and fashion centered at Palais-Royal, the court of Louis' regent, Philippe d'Orléans. Love, fantasy, and domestic life were the subjects of its major artists. Jean-Antoine Watteau's *Departure from Cythera* is a great example of a fantastical image of the carefree lives of aristocracy. One of the most widely recognized Rococo paintings is *The Swing*, by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, showing a young woman and her lover caught up in the frivolity of the time. Fragonard also documented the increase in literacy in *Young Girl Reading*. The growing influence of women was shown in the work of Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun, who painted portraits of eminent women of the time. The favorite artist of Marie Antoinette, Louis XVI's wife, she painted some thirty portraits of the queen.

Neoclassicism directly reflected Enlightenment ideals by linking the logic and reason of the classical world to late-eighteenth century events. Spurred by excavations in Italy, the publication of such works as *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and the revolutionary movements in America and France, young artists from across Europe traveled to Italy to study. Preeminent among these young painters was Jacques-Louis David. After returning to France, he painted his seminal work, *Oath of the Horatii*, emphasizing the importance of loyalty and morality. David later painted in support of the French Revolution, most famously a work meant to garner support for the revolution, *The Death of Marat*.

### AP Tip

Art appears on the AP European History exam in both multiple-choice and essay questions. When studying it, focus less on the artistic components and more on how each artist and artistic work reflected the culture.

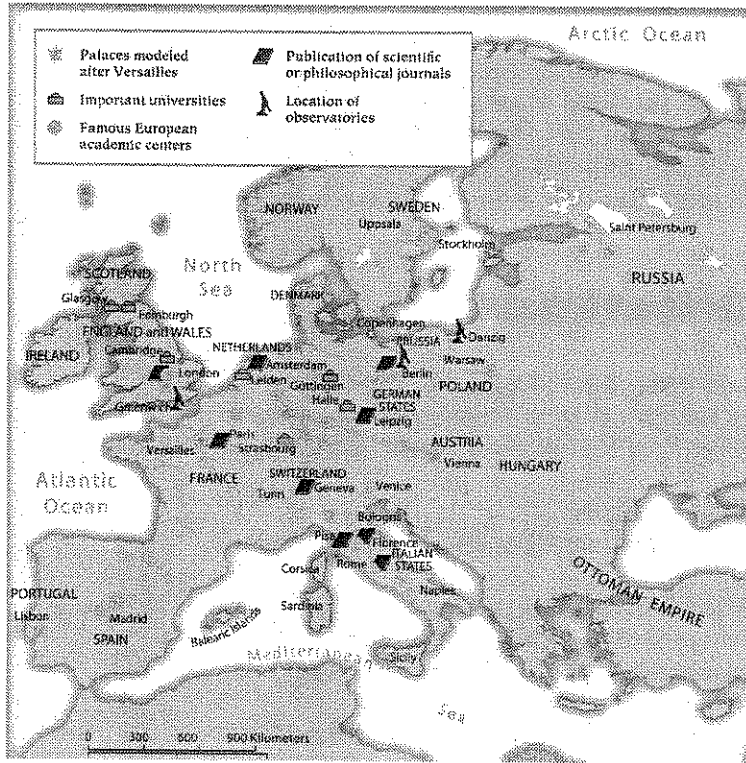


## THE IMPACT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The Enlightenment had a significant impact on governments around the world. Several monarchs, the so-called enlightened despots, gained many of their ideas for reform directly from the philosophes. The American and French revolutions drew from the work of the philosophes both their inspiration and some facets of their eventual governmental structures.

### **Multiple-Choice Questions**

1. Although an Enlightenment philosophe, Rousseau also held beliefs that would lead to the nineteenth-century intellectual movement known as Romanticism. Which of his beliefs showed his Romantic tendency?
  - (A) Humans can achieve true freedom.
  - (B) The Old Order must be not only questioned but totally removed.
  - (C) Education is essential to improving society.
  - (D) People should be actively involved in their government.
  - (E) It is important to have a balance of reason and emotion.
  
2. During the eighteenth century, Pietism and Methodism stressed
  - (A) a personal experience with God
  - (B) a religion of the head more than the heart
  - (C) the belief in a God who created the universe and then left it alone
  - (D) the basic doctrines of the Anglican Church
  - (E) the importance of attending weekly Mass
  
3. All of the following statements describe Rococo art EXCEPT
  - (A) Rococo art showed the dignity and simplicity of the aristocracy
  - (B) the upper-class life of pleasure and love was clearly shown
  - (C) Rococo religious and political architecture tended to be more delicate and decorative than Baroque architecture
  - (D) Rococo tended to emphasize nature's nonlinear qualities
  - (E) in viewing the lives of nobles, Rococo art depicted a world of elegance and sensuality



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4. The map above supports which of the following statements about the Enlightenment?
  - (A) France, especially Paris, was the center of the Enlightenment.
  - (B) The Ottoman Empire had no contact with the Enlightenment.
  - (C) Important universities were scattered across western and central Europe.
  - (D) The Dutch aided the spread of enlightened ideas through the publication of scientific and philosophical journals.
  - (E) Austria–Hungary had less direct interaction with Enlightenment thought than did Italy.
  
5. Where did the work of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and other composers move the musical center of Europe?
  - (A) from France to Germany and Russia
  - (B) from England and France to Italy
  - (C) from the Austrian Empire to England
  - (D) from Germany and Italy to the Austrian Empire
  - (E) from Italy and England to Germany
  
6. Montesquieu’s political theory of the separation of powers is inextricably tied to
  - (A) deism
  - (B) Newton’s *Principia*
  - (C) the physiocrats
  - (D) his theory of human development
  - (E) checks and balances

7. In what area was eighteenth-century medicine especially threatening to the lives of patients?
- (A) doctor training
  - (B) hospital cleanliness
  - (C) pharmacist independence
  - (D) midwives delivering babies
  - (E) the licensing of surgeons
8. Which of the following books supported the basic tenets of the physiocrats?
- (A) Voltaire's *Philosophic Letters*
  - (B) Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*
  - (C) Denis Diderot's *Encyclopedia*
  - (D) Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*
  - (E) Marie-Jean de Condorcet's *The Progress of the Human Mind*
9. All of the following helped lead to the Enlightenment EXCEPT
- (A) scientists' study of the physical world
  - (B) John Locke's belief in the idea of a *tabula rasa*
  - (C) the widespread impact of Rousseau's theory of general will
  - (D) Isaac Newton's mechanized view of the universe
  - (E) European monarchs' support of scientific societies
10. All of the following statements about Mary Wollstonecraft are true EXCEPT
- (A) a strong advocate for women's education, Wollstonecraft argued that women should focus on learning how to care for a household
  - (B) a belief in natural rights was central to her philosophies
  - (C) Wollstonecraft held that women were equal to men, not subservient to them
  - (D) although she had a difficult early life, she learned to read
  - (E) Wollstonecraft, an Englishwoman, wrote *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, in which she argued for reason balanced with instinct
11. Enlightenment philosophes encouraged religious change when they
- (A) pushed people to remain loyal to the Roman Catholic Church
  - (B) spoke against deism, the religion of the French royal family
  - (C) offered a philosophy centered on multiple gods rather than a single god
  - (D) wrote that all should have religious toleration except Jews
  - (E) advocated belief in God as the great watchmaker
12. Unlike Rococo art, Neoclassical art
- (A) showed women
  - (B) focused on the revolutionary movement in America
  - (C) emphasized the importance of reason and morality
  - (D) showed a love of literature
  - (E) offered images of royalty, including Louis XIV and Louis XV

13. Literature during this period saw all of the following EXCEPT
  - (A) the development of the novel
  - (B) a change in the writing of history
  - (C) a growing interest in Catholic literature
  - (D) the startup of daily newspapers in many towns
  - (E) the founding of magazines on a wide variety of topics, from politics to family life
  
14. Like Montesquieu, Voltaire admired the political system in
  - (A) England
  - (B) France
  - (C) Russia
  - (D) Spain
  - (E) Italy
  
15. David Hume believed
  - (A) man could be studied
  - (B) Locke's theory on natural rights was incorrect
  - (C) reason and faith could not coexist
  - (D) society was in such disarray that little could be done to improve it
  - (E) emotion was more important than reason

## Free-Response Questions

1. Analyze the ways in which the Enlightenment challenged the absolute control of both European monarchs and the Roman Catholic Church.
  
2. To what extent did eighteenth-century art and architecture reflect their time?