

The Enlightenment

Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.

—Jean Jacques Rousseau

From the late 1600s to the late 1700s, a group of philosophers had a great influence on political events. These thinkers were part of a movement called the Enlightenment. Most Enlightenment thinkers supported human rights and religious and political freedom. Because the Enlightenment challenged long-standing authorities such as kings, it encouraged the American and French Revolutions. The Enlightenment also influenced European rulers to make reforms in their countries. Among these reforming rulers were Frederick II of Prussia and Catherine the Great of Russia.

Thinker	Idea
Thomas Hobbes English 1588–1679	social contract People are joined to their government by a contract. They agree to give up some rights in return for law and order.
John Locke English 1632–1704	natural rights People have rights to life, liberty, and property.
Baron Charles de Montesquieu French 1689–1755	separation of powers Divisions of government should control each other.
Voltaire French 1694–1778	religious freedom People should not be punished for their beliefs.
Jean-Jacques Rousseau French 1712–1778	natural goodness People in their “natural state” are good; civilization makes them slaves.

Enlightenment Thinkers

The ideas of Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau contributed to the creation of modern democracy.

Who believed in separation of government powers?



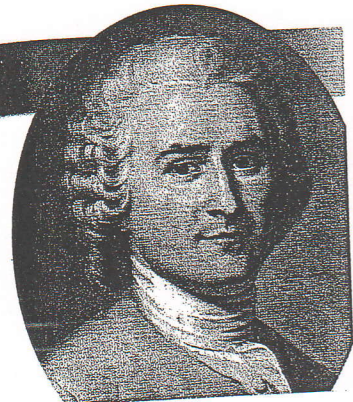
John Locke
1632–1704

- Government's power is limited.
- People have natural rights, such as life, liberty, and property.



Charles-Louis Montesquieu
1689–1755

- The powers of government should be separated into separate branches.



Jean-Jacques Rousseau
1712–1778

- Governments should express the will of the people.
- People enter into a social contract with their government, giving it the right to create and enforce laws.

BIOGRAPHY

John Locke

Would you risk arrest for your beliefs in people's rights?

When did he live? 1632–1704

Where did he live? England and the Netherlands

What did he do? Locke worked as a professor, physician, and government official. He wrote about the human mind, science, government, religion, and other topics.








Why is he important? Locke believed in the right of common people to think and worship as they pleased and to own property. He also had great faith in science and people's basic goodness. Not everyone liked his ideas. At one point Locke fled to Holland to avoid arrest by political enemies. Locke's ideas have inspired political reforms in the West for some 300 years.

Drawing Inferences Why do you think some people disliked Locke's ideas?

KEY IDEAS

“Men being, as has been said, by nature, all free, equal, and independent, no one can be . . . subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent. The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty . . . is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community.”

—John Locke, from *Second Treatise of Civil Government*

Thinker	Effect
Hobbes 	Hobbes's ideas supported absolute rulers.
Locke 	Locke's ideas influenced the American Declaration of Independence.
Montesquieu 	Montesquieu's ideas shaped new governments in the United States, France, and Latin America.
Voltaire 	Voltaire's ideas influenced enlightened European rulers and the American and the French bills of rights.
Rousseau 	Rousseau's ideas inspired the leaders of the French Revolution.