

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Enlightenment and Revolutions, 1550–1800

Lesson 2 The Ideas of the Enlightenment

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Why do new ideas often spark change? How do new ways of thinking affect the way people respond to their surroundings?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

generation a group of individuals born and living at the same time

arbitrary at one’s discretion; random

Content Vocabulary

philosophe French for “philosopher”; applied to all intellectuals during the Enlightenment

separation of powers a form of government in which the executive, legislative, and judicial branches limit and control each other through a system of checks and balances

deism an eighteenth-century religious philosophy based on reason and natural law

laissez-faire the concept that the state should not impose government regulations but should leave the economy alone

free enterprise system a system in which private businesses are able to compete with each other with little control by the government

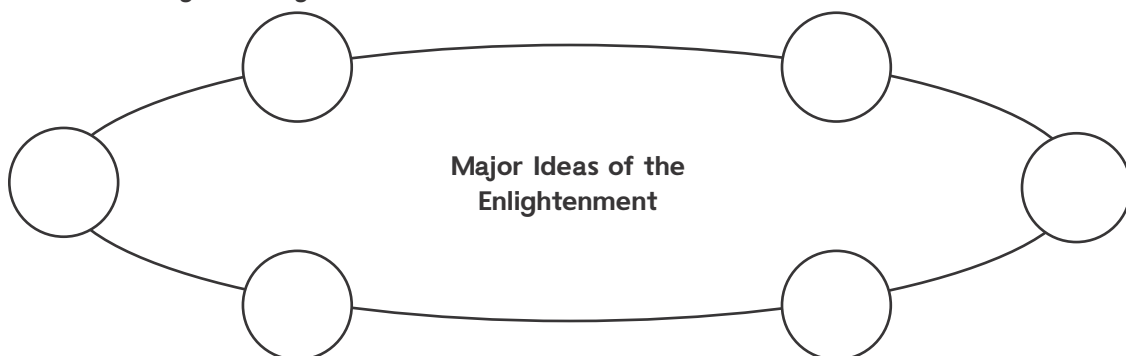
social contract the concept that an entire society agrees to be governed by its general will and all individuals should be forced to abide by it since it represents what is best for the entire community

salons the elegant urban drawing rooms where, in the eighteenth century, writers, artists, aristocrats, government officials, and wealthy middle-class people gathered to discuss the ideas of the philosophes

rococo an artistic style that replaced baroque in the 1730s; it was highly secular, emphasizing grace, charm, and gentle action

TAKING NOTES: *Summarizing*

ACTIVITY As you read, use a diagram like the one below to list some of the concepts introduced by intellectuals during the Enlightenment.



Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic of a network or starburst, consisting of several thin lines radiating from a central point, with a small circle at the center.

The Enlightenment and Revolutions, 1550–1800

Lesson 2 The Ideas of the Enlightenment, *continued*

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Enlightenment thinkers, or philosophers, applied the scientific method to society and people. They reexamined all aspects of life—from government and justice to religion and women’s roles. They created a movement that influenced the entire Western world.

Ideas of the Philosophes

Guiding Questions *What role did philosophes play in the Enlightenment? How did the belief in logic and reason promote the beginnings of the social sciences?*

The Enlightenment was an eighteenth-century philosophical movement of intellectuals. They were very impressed with the achievements of the Scientific Revolution. One of the favorite words of these intellectuals was *reason*. By this, they meant the use of the scientific method to understand all life. They hoped that by using the scientific method, they could make progress toward creating a better society. *Reason, natural law, hope, and progress* were common words used by thinkers of the Enlightenment. The ideas of the Enlightenment would become a force for reform and even revolution.

The ideas of two seventeenth-century Englishmen, John Locke and Isaac Newton, especially influenced Enlightenment intellectuals. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke argued that every person was born with a *tabula rasa*, or blank mind. Locke’s ideas suggested that people were formed by the experiences that came through their senses from the surrounding world. Enlightenment thinkers began to believe that if environments were changed and people had the right experiences, people could be changed. The change could result in a new, and better, society.

The ideas of Isaac Newton also influenced eighteenth-century intellectuals. Newton believed that the physical world and everything in it was like a giant machine. His “world machine” operated according to natural laws. These natural laws could be discovered through investigation that followed an organized set of rules.

The Enlightenment thinkers saw that Newton was able to discover the natural laws that governed the physical world. Therefore, they reasoned, they could use his scientific methods to discover the natural laws that governed human society. If all institutions would then follow these natural laws, the result would be an ideal society.

The Role of Philosophy

The intellectuals of the Enlightenment were known by the French word **philosophe** (FEE•luh•ZAWF), meaning “philosopher.” Not all philosophes were French, however. Few of the philosophes were actually philosophers in the real meaning of the word. Instead, they were writers, professors, journalists, economists, and above all, social reformers. They wanted to change society for the better. Most were from the nobility and the middle class.

The English had provided the philosophical start for the movement, but most leaders of the Enlightenment were French. The French philosophes influenced intellectuals elsewhere and created a movement that affected the entire Western world.

To the philosophes, the role of philosophy was to change the world. The use of reason and the spirit of rational criticism (questioning) were to be used for everything in society, including religion and politics. In the first half of the eighteenth century, three French thinkers were especially important: Montesquieu (MAHN•tuhs•KYOO), Voltaire, and Diderot (dee•DROH).

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

networks

The Enlightenment and Revolutions, 1550–1800

Lesson 2 The Ideas of the Enlightenment, *continued*

Montesquieu

Charles-Louis de Secondat, the baron de Montesquieu, was a French noble. His famous work *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748) was a study of governments. In it, Montesquieu tried to find the natural laws that govern the social and political relationships of human beings.

Montesquieu stated that England’s government had three branches, or parts. The branches were the executive (the monarch), the legislative (Parliament), and the judicial (the courts of law). The government functioned through a **separation of powers**. That is, the three branches limit and control each other in a system of checks and balances. This system stops any part from gaining too much power. In that way, it provides the greatest freedom and security for the state.

The system of checks and balances through separation of powers was Montesquieu’s most lasting contribution to political thought. His work was translated into English and was read by American philosophes. They worked these these democratic-republican principles into the United States Constitution.

Voltaire

The greatest figure of the Enlightenment was François-Marie Arouet. He was known as Voltaire. Voltaire came from a prosperous middle-class family in Paris. His many writings brought him both fame and wealth.

Voltaire was well known for his criticism of Christianity. He often challenged the actions of the Church, one of the most powerful institutions of the time. He had a strong belief in religious toleration, and he fought religious intolerance in France. Voltaire supported **deism**. Deism is a religious philosophy that was based on reason and natural law. Deism is built on the idea of the Newtonian world-machine. In the Deists’ view, God was a like a mechanic who created the universe. To Voltaire and other philosophes, the universe was like a clock. God, the clockmaker, created the universe, set it in motion, and then allowed it to run without inference it. The universe ran according to its own natural laws.

Diderot

Denis Diderot went to the University of Paris. His father hoped Denis would have a career in law or in the Church. Instead, Diderot became a writer who wrote about many different subjects. Diderot’s most famous contribution to the Enlightenment was the *Encyclopedia, or Classified Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Trades*. He edited this 28-volume collection of knowledge. It was published between 1751 and 1772. Diderot wanted the *Encyclopedia* to change how people thought.

The *Encyclopedia* became a weapon against the old French society. Many of its articles attacked religious superstition and supported religious toleration. Other articles called for social, legal, and political changes. The *Encyclopedia* was sold to doctors, clergymen, teachers, and lawyers. It spread Enlightenment ideas.



Reading Progress Check

Identifying Central Issues What are two ways in which philosophes sought to change the world?

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Enlightenment and Revolutions, 1550–1800

Lesson 2 The Ideas of the Enlightenment, *continued*

New Social Sciences

Guiding Question *How did the belief in logic and reason promote the beginnings of the social sciences?*

The philosophes believed that Isaac Newton’s methods could be used to discover the natural laws that governed all areas of human life. This led to what we call the social sciences. The social sciences are areas of study such as economics and political science.

The Physiocrats and the Scottish philosopher Adam Smith have been viewed as the founders of the modern social science of economics. The Physiocrats were a group of French economists. They were interested in finding the natural economic laws that controlled human society. They thought that all society would benefit if people were free to follow their own economic self-interest. This meant that the state should not stop natural economic forces by making laws to regulate the economy. Instead, the state should leave the economy alone. This belief became known by its French name, **laissez-faire** (LEH•SAY•FEHR). This means “to let (people) do (what they want).”

Adam Smith made the best statement about laissez-faire in 1776 in his famous work *The Wealth of Nations*. Like the Physiocrats, Smith believed in a **free enterprise system**. This meant that the government should not interfere (be involved) in economic matters. He thought government should have only three basic roles. First, it should protect citizens from enemies of the state (the function of the army). Second, the government should defend citizens from injustice (the function of the police). Finally, it should keep up certain public works that private individuals alone could not afford, such as roads and canals, but which are necessary for social interaction and trade.



Reading Progress Check

Summarizing What roles did Adam Smith believe the government should fulfill in society?

The Spread of Ideas

Guiding Question *How did Enlightenment ideas influence society and culture?*

A new **generation** of philosophes appeared by the late 1760s. Ideas about liberty and the condition of women were spread through an increasingly literate society.

The Social Contract

The most famous philosophe of the later Enlightenment was Jean-Jacques Rousseau (ru•SOH). In his *Discourse on the Origins of the Inequality of Mankind*, Rousseau argued that people had started laws and government to preserve their private property. Government had made them slaves in the process. Rousseau thought that people needed to regain their freedom.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a starburst or network pattern.

The Enlightenment and Revolutions, 1550–1800

Lesson 2 The Ideas of the Enlightenment, *continued*

In his major work *The Social Contract*, published in 1762, Rousseau presented his idea of the **social contract**. Through a social contract, an entire society agrees to be governed by the general will. People who want to follow their own self-interest must be forced to obey the general will. This means that liberty, or freedom, is reached by being forced to follow the general will. This is because the general will represents what is best for the entire community. So Rousseau thought that people needed to be forced to be free.

Rousseau believed that emotions and reason were important to human development. He looked for a balance between heart and mind, between emotions and reason. Many other Enlightenment thinkers did not agree with these ideas.

Women's Rights

For centuries, male intellectuals had argued that women were inferior to men. They believed male domination of women was necessary. By the eighteenth century, however, female thinkers began to express their ideas about improving the condition of women. Mary Wollstonecraft was an English writer. She made the strongest statement for the rights of women. Many see her as the founder of the modern European and American movements for women's rights.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft mentioned two problems with the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers. She noted that the same people who argued that women must obey men also said it was wrong for monarchs to have **arbitrary** power over their subjects. Wollstonecraft pointed out that the power of men over women was just as wrong.

Wollstonecraft also said that the Enlightenment was based on an ideal of reason in all human beings. She pointed out that women, like men, have reason. Therefore, women should have the same rights as men. Wollstonecraft declared that women should have equal rights in education and also in economic and political life.

The Growth of Reading

The spread of ideas to the educated elite of European society was also important to the Enlightenment. The growth of both publishing and the growth of the reading public were important developments in the eighteenth century. Books had previously been aimed at small groups of the educated elite. Now books were written for the new reading public of the middle classes. This new reading public included women and artisans (people who practiced a craft or trade) in the city. These readers enjoyed realistic social themes. The English writer Henry Fielding wrote novels about people without morals who survive by their wits, or intelligence. Fielding's best-known work is *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, which describes the adventures of a young scoundrel.

Magazines and newspapers were developed for the general public. They were an important part of the growth of publishing and reading in the eighteenth century. The first daily newspaper was printed in London in 1702. Newspapers were usually cheap, and some were available for free in coffeehouses. Coffeehouses also became places for the exchange of ideas.

Enlightenment ideas were also spread through the salon. **Salons** were the elegant drawing rooms, or rooms for entertaining guests, in the great houses of the wealthy people in the city. The term *salon* doesn't just refer to the rooms. It refers to the conversations that happened there. The conversations were often about the new ideas of the philosophes. Salons brought writers and artists together with aristocrats, government officials, and middle-class people. Women ran many salons. They were in a position to influence political opinion and helped spread the ideas of the Enlightenment.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Enlightenment and Revolutions, 1550–1800

Lesson 2 The Ideas of the Enlightenment, *continued*

Religion in the Enlightenment

Many philosophes attacked the Christian churches. However, most Europeans in the eighteenth century were still Christians. People also looked for a deeper personal devotion to God. The desire of ordinary Protestants for greater depths of religious experience led to new religious movements.

The most famous new religious and evangelical movement in England was Methodism. Methodism was the work of an Anglican minister named John Wesley. Wesley had a mystical experience in which God's grace assured him of salvation. This experience led him to become a missionary to the English people to bring them the news of salvation. Wesley often preached two or three times a day.

His sermons often caused people to have conversion experiences. Many converts then joined Methodist societies to do good works. One notable reform they influenced was the abolition of the slave trade in the early 1800s. After Wesley's death, Methodism became a separate Protestant group.



Reading Progress Check

Evaluating How did Mary Wollstonecraft use the Enlightenment ideal of reason to advocate rights for women?

Enlightenment and the Arts

Guiding Question *How did Enlightenment ideas influence society and culture?*

The ideas of the Enlightenment also had an effect on culture. Eighteenth-century Europe saw both traditional practices and important changes in art, music, and literature.

Architecture and Art

The palace of Louis XIV at Versailles, in France, had influenced other European rulers to build grand residences. These palaces were not usually built in the late seventeenth-century French classical style of Versailles. Instead, they were more often built in the Italian baroque style of the 1500s and 1600s.

One of the greatest architects of the eighteenth century was Balthasar Neumann. Neumann's two masterpieces are the Church of the Fourteen Saints in southern Germany and the Residence, the palace of the prince bishop of Würzburg. In these buildings, the secular and spiritual seem to come together. Many details of these buildings are elaborate and fanciful, and the colors are light and bright. The baroque and neoclassical styles dominated seventeenth-century art, and they continued into the eighteenth century. By the 1730s, a new artistic style known as **rococo** had spread all over Europe. The baroque style had been about greatness and power. The rococo style was more about grace, style, and gentle action. The rococo style made use of delicate designs colored in gold with graceful curves. The rococo style was highly secular, reflecting the Enlightenment culture of the time. The lightness and charm of this style suggest the search for pleasure, happiness, and love.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

networks

The Enlightenment and Revolutions, 1550–1800

Lesson 2 The Ideas of the Enlightenment, *continued*

The appeal of the rococo style is seen in the work of Antoine Watteau. In his paintings, gentlemen and ladies in elegant dress reveal a world of upper-class pleasure and joy. Yet, there is sadness underneath, too. The paintings suggest that pleasure, love, and life all pass quickly. One of Watteau's masterpieces, *the Embarkation for Cythera*, shows French rococo at its peak.

Music

Eighteenth-century Europe produced some of the world's most lasting music. Two geniuses of the second half of the eighteenth century were Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. They were innovators who wrote music called classical rather than the baroque of Bach and Handel. Haydn spent most of his adult life as musical director for wealthy Hungarian princes. He visited England where he experienced a world in which musicians wrote concerts for the public rather than for aristocratic patrons (customers). This "liberty," as he called it, led him to write two great works, *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. Both of these works expressing universal themes of beginnings and everyday life.

Mozart was a child prodigy. He gave his first harpsichord concert at age six and wrote his first opera at twelve. His failure to get a regular patron to support him financially made his life miserable. However, he put his strong feelings into the music he wrote. His works *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Don Giovanni* are three of the world's greatest operas. Haydn told Mozart's father that his son was the greatest composer Haydn knew.



Reading Progress Check

Making Inferences How do Haydn's interests as a composer reflect the influence of Enlightenment ideas?
