

Year 6 General Studies

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason was a period in the 1700s when European scientists and philosophers began examining the world through reason, or human intellect, rather than religious or spiritual faith. The Enlightenment's leading intellectuals included Sir Isaac Newton, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Denis Diderot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. They were inspired by 17th century thinkers such as John Locke, Francis Bacon, Pierre Bayle, Benedict de Spinoza and Rene Descartes. Their ideas touched many aspects of life including politics, economics, science and religion.

Ideas of The Enlightenment

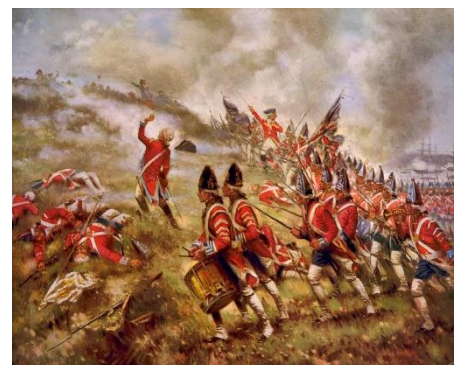
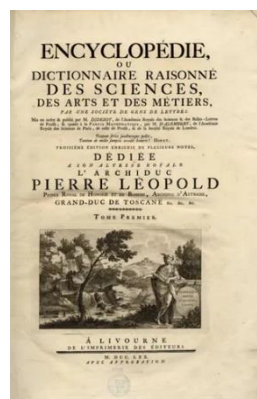
The ideas that blossomed during the 1500s and 1600s influenced many thinkers during the 1700s—the time of the Enlightenment. Some of the most famous Enlightenment thinkers were Denis Diderot, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, and Voltaire.

These thinkers, called philosophers, wrote many books, including a 35-volume encyclopedia. Some wrote books questioning religion. They objected to the church having power over everyone. The philosophers criticized the monarchs' laws. They also questioned the idea that God had given the monarchs their power.

Enlightenment thinkers applied science and reason to society's problems. They believed that all people were created equal. They also saw education as something that divided people. If education were available to all, they reasoned, then everyone would have a fair chance in life.

Results of the Enlightenment

Enlightenment ideas were popular and spread quickly. The Roman Catholic church and the monarchs tried to censor, or ban, the books and other works of the philosophers. The rulers were right to be alarmed. The Enlightenment led many people to think about their government and to think that they should change the government. They wanted to take power away from the kings and queens and give it to the ordinary people. This led to the American and French revolutions, when the monarchs lost their power.



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Questions

1. What was The Enlightenment?

2. The Enlightenment is also known at the Age of Reason.

True / False

**3. The Enlightenment led to two countries having famous revolutions.
Which countries were they?**

**4. What did philosophers think would provide everyone with a fair
chance in life?**

**5. Enlightenment thinkers applied science and reason to society's
problems. True / False**

**6. Why were rulers of Europe alarmed by the ideas of The
Enlightenment?**
