



The Age of Reason

The Scientific Revolution helped start a new era called the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason. People believed reason and logic could be used to study all areas of life, not just science. Scientists talked about the laws that govern nature, so philosophers looked for laws of human behavior. Some Enlightenment thinkers studied government and politics.

Thomas Hobbes and John Locke were two English political thinkers who started the Enlightenment. Both men had seen the Civil War and political changes of England in the 1600s. However, they came up with two very different ideas about government and human nature.



After seeing the violence of the English Civil War, Thomas Hobbes believed that all humans were naturally selfish. He thought that the best government was one with total control over the people. Hobbes thought that people needed government to keep law and order. Without it, they would fight each other all the time. To avoid this type of life, people invented government and gave up their rights to a strong ruler. Hobbes said that this agreement was a social contract.

John Locke had different ideas about government. He thought that people were responsible beings who had the natural ability to govern themselves. Locke said all people were born equal and had three natural rights: life, liberty, and property. He believed that a government's job was to protect these rights. The best government had limited power and was accepted by all people. If a government did not protect its citizens' rights, citizens could overthrow the government. Locke's idea that a government's power came from its people was the beginning of modern democracy.

In France in the mid-1700s, the Enlightenment reached its height. The Baron de Montesquieu, a French writer, studied politics. He admired Britain's government and spent a lot of time studying it. In his book, *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu wrote about the British system of government. The book talked about the ideas of executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government; separation of powers; and checks and balances. Later, Americans used these ideas to write the U.S. Constitution.

The thinkers of the Age of Reason did not like old beliefs. They thought things like the divine right of kings and strict class systems were unreasonable. Enlightenment thinkers came up with new ideas about government, religion, economics, and society. These theories inspired the American and French Revolutions and other revolutions of the 1800s.



The Age of Reason

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

1. Philosophers of the Enlightenment wanted to use _____ in all areas of life.

- A. government
- B. economics
- C. politics
- D. reason

2. _____ believed that without government, people would fight each other all the time.

- A. Locke
- B. Hobbes
- C. Montesquieu
- D. Smith

3. Locke believed that a government's power came from its _____.

- A. army
- B. power
- C. people
- D. science

4. Americans used _____'s ideas to write the U.S. Constitution.

- A. Montesquieu
- B. Hobbes
- C. Rousseau
- D. Voltaire

5. Enlightenment thinkers and theories inspired _____.

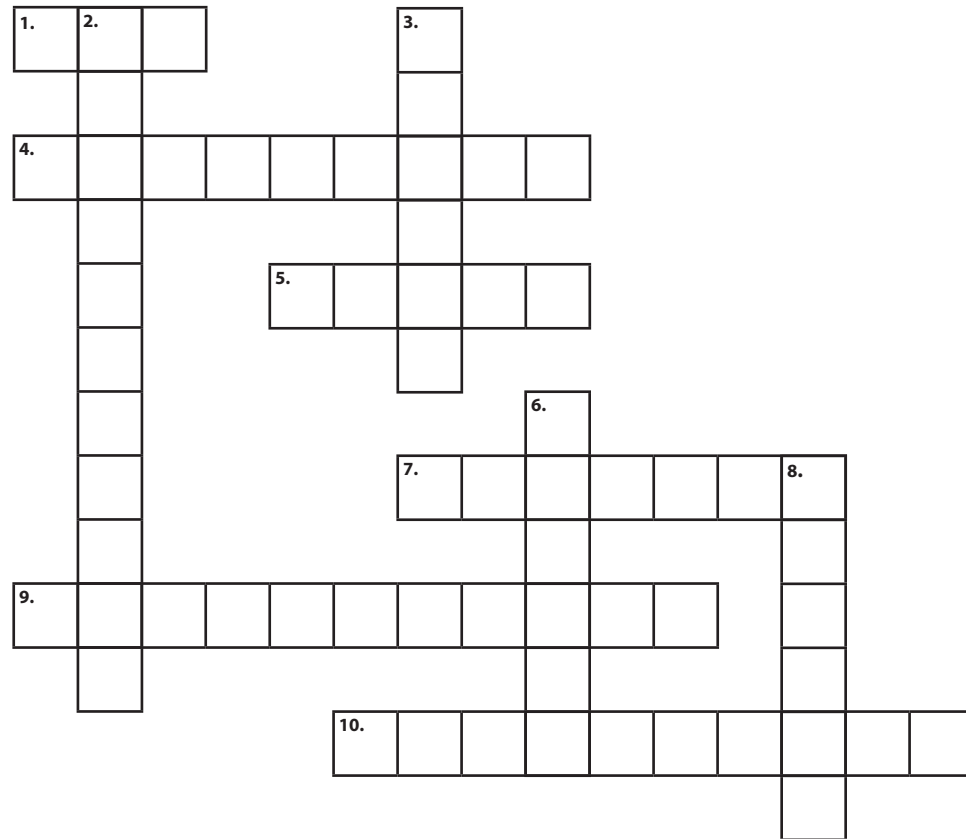
- A. the French Revolution
- B. the American Revolution
- C. other revolutions of the 1800s
- D. all of the above



The Age of Reason

Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

1. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke had both seen the violence of the English Civil _____.
4. Locke's idea was the beginning of modern _____.
5. _____ thought the best government had limited power and was accepted by all the people.
7. Montesquieu wrote about the _____ system of government.
9. _____ described branches of government, separation of powers, and checks and balances.
10. Locke and Hobbes had different ideas about _____.

DOWN

2. The Enlightenment is also called the _____.
3. The Enlightenment reached its height in _____ in the mid-1700s.
6. Ideas like the _____ right of kings and class systems were considered unreasonable.
8. _____ thought that the best government was one with total control over the people.



The Age of Reason

Chart – Ideas of the Enlightenment

Use the chart to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.

Thinker	Idea	Effect
Locke	natural rights: life, liberty, property	basic point of U.S. Declaration of Independence
Montesquieu	separation of powers	France, the United States, and Latin American countries use separation of powers in their new constitutions
Voltaire	freedom of thought and expression, freedom of religion	guaranteed in the U.S. Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen
Wollstonecraft	women's equality	women's rights groups form

1. What was the effect of Locke's idea?

2. Which thinker wrote about women's equality?

3. What ideas led to rights being guaranteed in the U.S. Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen?

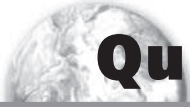


The Age of Reason

Extension Activities

Choose one of the following activities to complete. Write the answer in complete sentences.

1. Who was Adam Smith? What did he write about? Look in your textbook, on the Internet, or at the library to find out.
2. Would you rather have been a scientist during the Scientific Revolution or a political thinker during the Enlightenment? Explain your answer.
3. Look on the Internet or at the library to find out three facts about Mary Wollstonecraft.



Quiz: The Age of Reason

True/False

Decide if each statement is true or false, and write "true" or "false" in the blank.

- _____ 1. Montesquieu used American ideas to write the U.S. Constitution.
- _____ 2. Locke believed that a government's power came from its people.
- _____ 3. Hobbes believed that without government, people would govern themselves peacefully.
- _____ 4. The Enlightenment reached its height in England in the 1600s.
- _____ 5. Thinkers of the Age of Reason believed that the divine right of kings was a good idea.

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

6. Montesquieu described _____.
- A. branches of government
 - B. separation of powers
 - C. checks and balances
 - D. all of the above

7. _____'s idea was the beginning of modern democracy.
- A. Hobbes
 - B. Locke
 - C. Montesquieu
 - D. Wollstonecraft

Short Answer

Answer the following question in complete sentences.

8. What political event in England had a strong effect on Thomas Hobbes and John Locke?
