

The Age of Enlightenment

Overview

Students will explore the Age of Enlightenment through a Power Point presentation and class discussion. Students will then further explore this period of history and its prominent figures by designing a dinner party for 12 Enlightenment thinkers. This project will encourage students to learn more about the period and the philosophers associated with it, as well as synthesize what they have learned while utilizing higher order thinking, group work skills, and creativity.

Essential Questions

- What was the Age of Enlightenment/Age of Reason and what led to this shift in thought?
- Who were the prominent historical figures during the Age of Enlightenment and in what ways were they similar and/or different in their philosophies?
- What impact did the Age of Enlightenment have throughout various countries on society, culture, politics, etc.?
- How did the Enlightenment philosophers influence American government?

Materials

- The Age of Enlightenment Power Point, available in the Database of K-12 Resources (in PDF format): <https://k12database.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/03/EnlightenmentPPT.pdf>
 - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”
 - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- Notes for the Age of Enlightenment, handout attached
- An Evening of Enlightenment assignment sheet, attached
- An Evening of Enlightenment Guest List, attached
- Sample Items for Party Planning, attached
- Internet, textbooks, library access, and/or other research materials
- Optional: Enlightenment Essay Assignment & Rubric, attached

Duration

- At least one class period for PowerPoint presentation and discussion
- Additional class and homework time (teacher’s discretion) will be needed for the completion and presentation of the “An Evening of Enlightenment” project.

Procedure

Enlightenment Art Brainstorm

1. As a warm up, project slide 2 of the accompanying PPT and tell students to consider the word enlightenment. Tell students to take a few brief moments to create an artistic response to the word and their thoughts by drawing a small picture, symbol, or other visual that they feel represents what the word means to them. Drawings can be literal or abstract. (Teachers can either provide paper and/or art supplies such as colored pencils, or have students do this on notebook paper using only pencils.) Instruct students to post their work at the front of the classroom once finished, and to view the other artistic responses that their classmates have produced. (Teachers may want to have a large piece of bulletin board paper with the word ENLIGHTENMENT in the middle on which students can post their work. This can then serve as a visual throughout the lesson and students can be instructed to add to it as they learn more.)
2. Once all students have created and viewed the art, discuss:

- Which artistic responses stand out to you and why? Which do you feel best capture the concept of enlightenment and why?
- Are there any common characteristics among the various pieces of art that you can identify? Explain.
- What came to mind when you first considered the word enlightenment?
- Did anyone think of the historical period, “The Age of Enlightenment?” What do you already know about this period? Do any of these artistic responses seem to relate to that period? Explain.

Introduction to the Enlightenment

3. Tell students that they are going to learning about the Age of Enlightenment (also referred to as just “Enlightenment” or the “Age of Reason”) throughout this lesson. Tell students that this was a time that represented a shift of thinking as intellectuals in late 17th- and 18th-century Europe began emphasizing the importance of reason and individualism rather than a sole reliance on tradition and faith. Its purpose was to reform society using reason, to challenge ideas grounded in tradition and faith, and to advance knowledge through the scientific method. Discuss:
 - Think about what you already know about European history in the 17th century. Why was this such a revolutionary shift given the time period?
 - What impact do you predict this shift had on society?
4. Explain to students that the Enlightenment was a revolution in human thought. It promoted scientific thought, skepticism, and intellectual interchange. This new way of thinking regarding rational thought was that one should begin with clearly stated principles, use correct logic to arrive at conclusions, test the conclusions against evidence, and then revise the principles in the light of the evidence. Enlightenment thinkers thus opposed superstition and intolerance. The ideas of the Enlightenment spread and had significant influence on the culture, politics, and government as America was colonized.
5. Project the art on [slide 3](#) and ask students to spend a few minutes silently examining it then discuss:
 - What do you see and first notice about this image?
 - What symbols can you identify and what might their meaning be?
 - In what ways does this image connect to the Enlightenment?
 - Can you identify any similarities between this art and the drawings you created at the start of class?
 - If you were going to give this art a title, what would it be and why?
6. Project [slide 4](#), which includes an accompanying quote for the art: “If there is something you know, communicate it. If there is something you don't know, search for it.” Ask students to reconsider the art with the quote in mind and further discuss:
 - What message does the quote convey?
 - In what ways was such communication and searching not taking place before the Enlightenment? In what ways did this change during and after the Enlightenment?
 - How does the quote connect to the art? What aspects of the art illustrate this idea?
7. Explain to students that the art they are viewing is an engraving that was found in the 1772 *Encyclopédie*, a publication created by Enlightenment thinking Denis Diderot with the aim of changing the way people think. The formal interpretation of this piece is that Truth is represented in the figure at the top center and is surrounded by light and unveiled by the figures to the right, Philosophy and Reason.
8. Provide students with an overview of the Enlightenment by sharing [slides 5-17](#) with them. Pass out the attached “Notes for the Age of Enlightenment” for students to fill out as you go through the PPT.

“An Evening of Enlightenment”

9. Tell students that they are going to work in groups of 5 to further explore Enlightenment thinkers by planning a dinner party. Hand out the attached “An Evening of Enlightenment” assignment sheet and go over the details with students. Teachers should also provide one copy of the Guest List to each group.

(Teachers should determine whether to assign groups or allow students to choose who they work with. While the project is written for groups of five, groups can be smaller or larger but teachers will need to alter the assignment in terms of the number of guests at the party.)

Teachers should encourage students to have fun and be creative, but also to remember to be purposeful in their choices, all of which should represent the Age of Enlightenment. For example, if a group chooses to design their party in a tent in a garden, with gold and white as a color scheme, they should have a reason for these choices, such as they feel these colors represent truth and reason. Teachers may also want to encourage students to browse the internet for inspiration boards and/or party planning ideas (i.e., weddings, event planning, etc.) There are also a few sample items attached (a room blueprint and seating chart, a menu and a picture of a decorated party table.)

Let students know the due date of the project, as well as how much class time and homework time will be allocated for completion of the project.

- **Teacher Note:** The list of potential Enlightenment guests can be edited should teachers have specific philosophers they want students to focus on. Teachers may also want to include people from additional countries. For example, Enlightenment ideas were seen in Latin American countries, where people were inspired by both the words and deeds of the Enlightenment to embark in their own fights for individual rights and political independence (i.e., the political reforms and revolutions promoted by Simón Bolívar and Father Hidalgo.)
10. On the due date, teachers should allow time in class for each group to present their party plans to the class. Students should summarize each aspect of their party, explaining why they made the choices they made, with each group member presenting at least one aspect of the party’s design features. Each group will also read their dialogue out loud, with each group member reading at least one role. (Teachers can encourage students to be as elaborate and creative in their presentations as they see fit. For example, students might want to play some of their music choices, actually set up/decorate a “mock” party table, dress and perform their dialogue, etc.)
11. As a culmination to the lesson, discuss:
- Society found itself in need of a revolution in thought to which the Enlightenment answered. In your opinion, are we in need of a similar revolution of thought today? Explain. (This discussion might address issues such as our political climate and the lack of civil political discourse, the “Age of the Internet” and how readily accessible information is – both accurate and inaccurate information, changes in society regarding rights, etc.)
 - Reconsider the quote from earlier: “If there is something you know, communicate it. If there is something you don't know, search for it.” How does this apply to modern society? How are we doing in terms of communication and searching for knowledge (i.e., fact checking)?
12. As an optional homework assignment, see the attached Enlightenment Essay Assignment & Rubric.

An Evening of Enlightenment

Using and expanding upon what you have learned about the people and ideas from the Age of Enlightenment, your group will plan a dinner party for 12 Age of Enlightenment thinkers. You are required to include *Thomas Hobbes, Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, Montesquieu Rousseau, and Voltaire* as guests. You will choose the remaining **five guests** and plan the party by taking the following steps:



- 1. RESEARCH:** Each member of your group should choose a different guest to include in the party from the list provided. Research that person and take notes on his/her:
 - Experiences
 - Influences
 - Values, beliefs and philosophies
 - Connections to other Enlightenment thinkers (who is his/her beliefs similar to? Different from?)
- 2. TEACH:** You will be responsible for teaching the other members of your group about this person. Everyone in the group should take detailed notes on each philosopher presented. Together, discuss the similarities and differences between the philosophers you present to one another, as well as between them and the philosophers we discussed in class (i.e., Locke, Hobbes, Montesquieu Rousseau, Voltaire, etc.)
- 3. BRAINSTORM & DESIGN:** After everyone has presented their Enlightenment thinker, work together to brainstorm what type of party to throw for your group of 12 Enlightenment guests.
 - **Decorations/theme:** Think creatively about the Age of Enlightenment. What type of decorations or party theme might you want to utilize? (Consider things like a color scheme, possible décor such as flowers, table clothes, hanging decorations, etc. Will there be party favors? Be creative.)
 - **Space:** Where will your party be held (garden, banquet hall, castle, tent, forest, etc.?) How will your dinner party be arranged? What type of tables will you use & how many guests will be seated at each? (Remember, tables can be round, square, rectangle, banquet, etc.)
 - **Seating chart:** Who should sit by one another the night of the party and why? Create a seating chart that shows the type and placement of each table within your chosen space and note who will sit at each seat.
 - **Food and drink:** What food and beverages will be served at the party and why? Will the dinner be seated, buffet, something else...any why is this choice most appropriate? Design a menu that shows your final choices. The menu choices and/or design can be literal or abstract.
 - **Entertainment:** What type of entertainment will accompany the event? Will there be music playing, some type of performance, a speech or reading, a dramatic presentation, etc? Perhaps guests will play a game, or be guided to participate in a particular discussion - if so, what and why?
- 4. DIALOGUE:** Write a dialogue that one might hear on the night of your party. The dialogue must be between at least five of the guests and when spoken, should last around 2-3 minutes or more. While the dialogue can be creative and/or humorous, it must show an understanding of each speaking philosopher's views and should include things specific to his/her time period.

FINAL PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS:

You will present your final party design on poster board. Make sure to creatively design and display your menu, blueprint of the space arrangement and the seating chart on the presentation board.

There should also be a section on the board that shares your ideas for the party theme and decorations, and you might also consider decorating the poster board itself in this fashion. (You can even include fabric swatches, flower samples, etc.)

There should also be a section that notes your decisions regarding entertainment.

Final information on the poster board can be sketched/drawn, designed and printed via a computer, or it can make use of collage items (i.e., pictures from magazines.) Be creative and have fun, but remember, all of your choices should be chosen thoughtfully in consideration of your Enlightenment guests.

Your group will summarize your party design choices and guest list in class on the due date, as well as read aloud your dialogue out loud. **Each group member must present at least one aspect of the party design and all group members must read for one of the thinkers you chose to put into your dialogue.**

DUE DATE: _____

Questions/Notes:

An Evening of Enlightenment Guest List

Required guests

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) - A philosopher and political theorist whose 1651 treatise *Leviathan* effectively kicked off the English Enlightenment. The controversial *Leviathan* detailed Hobbes's theory that all humans are inherently self-driven and evil and that the best form of government is thus a single, all-powerful monarch to keep everything in order.

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) - American thinker, diplomat, and inventor who traveled frequently between the American colonies and Europe during the Enlightenment and facilitated an exchange of ideas between them. Franklin exerted profound influence on the formation of the new government of the United States, with a hand in both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) - American thinker and politician who penned the Declaration of Independence (1776), which was inspired directly by Enlightenment thought.

John Locke (1632–1704) - An English political theorist who focused on the structure of governments. Locke believed that men are all rational and capable people but must compromise some of their beliefs in the interest of forming a government for the people. In his famous *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), he championed the idea of a representative government that would best serve all constituents.

Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755) - The foremost French political thinker of the Enlightenment, whose most influential book, *The Spirit of Laws*, expanded John Locke's political study and incorporated the ideas of a division of state and separation of powers. Montesquieu's work also ventured into sociology: he spent a considerable amount of time researching various cultures and their climates, ultimately deducing that climate is a major factor in determining the type of government a given country should have.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) - An eclectic Swiss-French thinker who brought his own approach to the Enlightenment, believing that man was at his best when unshackled by the conventions of society. Rousseau's epic *The Social Contract* (1762) conceived of a system of direct democracy in which all citizens contribute to an overarching "general will" that serves everyone at once. Later in his life, Rousseau released *Confessions* (1789), which brought a previously unheard-of degree of personal disclosure to the genre of autobiography. The frank personal revelations and emotional discussions were a major cause for the shift toward Romanticism.

Voltaire (1694–1778) - A French writer and the primary satirist of the Enlightenment, who criticized religion and leading philosophies of the time. Voltaire's numerous plays and essays frequently advocated freedom from the ploys of religion, while *Candide* (1759), the most notable of his works, conveyed his criticisms of optimism and superstition into a neat package.

Potential Guests

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) - An enormously influential German composer who rose to prominence in the early 1700s. Best known by his contemporaries as an organist, Bach also wrote an enormous body of both sacred and secular music that synthesized a variety of styles and in turn influenced countless later composers.

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) - An English philosopher and statesman who developed the inductive method or Baconian method of scientific investigation, which stresses observation and reasoning as a means for coming to general conclusions. Bacon's work influenced his later contemporary René Descartes.

Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794) - An Italian politician who ventured into philosophy to protest the horrible injustices that he observed in various European judicial systems. Beccaria's book *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764) exposed these practices and led to the abolition of many. He was also one of the first voices opposing the death penalty as punishment for breaking the law.

John Comenius (1592–1670) - A Czech educational and social reformer who, in response to the **Thirty Years' War**, made the bold move of challenging the necessity of war in the first place. Comenius stressed tolerance and education as alternatives for war, which were revolutionary concepts at the time.

Marquis de Condorcet (1743 – 1794) - French philosopher, mathematician, and early political scientist whose *Condorcet method* in voting tally selects the candidate who would beat each of the other candidates in a run-off election. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he advocated a liberal economy, free and equal public education, constitutionalism, and equal rights for women and people of all races.

René Descartes (1596–1650) - A French philosopher and scientist who revolutionized algebra and geometry and made the famous philosophical statement “I think, therefore I am.” Descartes developed a **deductive** approach to philosophy using math and logic that still remains a standard for problem solving.

Denis Diderot (1713–1784) - A French scholar who was the primary editor of the *Encyclopédie*, a massive thirty-five-volume compilation of human knowledge in the arts and sciences, along with commentary from a number of Enlightenment thinkers. The *Encyclopédie* became a prominent symbol of the Enlightenment and helped spread the movement throughout Europe.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) - A German author who wrote near the end of the Aufklärung, the German Enlightenment. Goethe’s morose *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) helped fuel the *Sturm und Drang* movement, and his two-part *Faust* (1808, 1832) is seen as one of the landmarks of Western literature.

Olympe de Gouges (1748–1793) - A French feminist and reformer in the waning years of the Enlightenment who articulated the rights of women with her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* (1791).

Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) - A Dutch scholar who, like Czech John Comenius, lived during the Thirty Years’ War and felt compelled to write in response to it. The result, a treatise on war and international relations titled *On the Law of War and Peace* (1625), eventually became accepted as the basis for the rules of modern warfare.

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) - A German-English composer of the late Baroque period whose *Messiah* remains one of the best-known pieces of music in the world. Handel was an active court composer, receiving commissions from such notables as King George I of England, for whom his *Water Music* suite was written and performed.

David Hume (1711–1776) - A Scottish philosopher and one of the most prominent figures in the field of skepticism during the Enlightenment. Hume took religion to task, asking why a perfect God would ever create an imperfect world, and even suggested that our own senses are fallible, bringing all observations and truths into question. Hume’s skepticism proved very influential to others, such as Immanuel Kant, and was instrumental in the shift away from rationalist thought that ended the Enlightenment.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) - A German skeptic philosopher who built on David Hume’s theories and brought the school of thought to an even higher level. Kant theorized that all humans are born with innate “experiences” that then reflect onto the world, giving them a perspective. Thus, since no one actually knows what other people see, the idea of “reasoning” is not valid. Kant’s philosophies applied the brakes to the Enlightenment, effectively denouncing reason as an invalid approach to thought.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) - Generally considered the founder of the Aufklärung, or German Enlightenment, who injected a bit of spirituality into the Enlightenment with writings regarding God and his perfect, harmonious world. Also a scientist who shared credit for the discovery of calculus, Leibniz hated the idea of relying on empirical evidence in the world. Instead, he developed a theory that the universe consists of metaphysical building blocks he called monads.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) - A genius Austrian composer who began his career as a child prodigy and authored some of the most renowned operas and symphonies in history. Mozart’s music has never been surpassed in its blend of technique and emotional breadth, and his musical genius places him in a category with a select few other composers.

Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) - An English scholar and mathematician regarded as the father of physical science. Newton’s discoveries anchored the Scientific Revolution and set the stage for everything that followed in mathematics and physics. He shared credit for the creation of calculus, and his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* introduced the world to gravity and fundamental laws of motion.

Thomas Paine (1737–1809) - English-American political writer whose pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776) argued that the British colonies in America should rebel against the Crown. Paine's work had profound influence on public sentiment during the American Revolution, which had begun just months earlier.

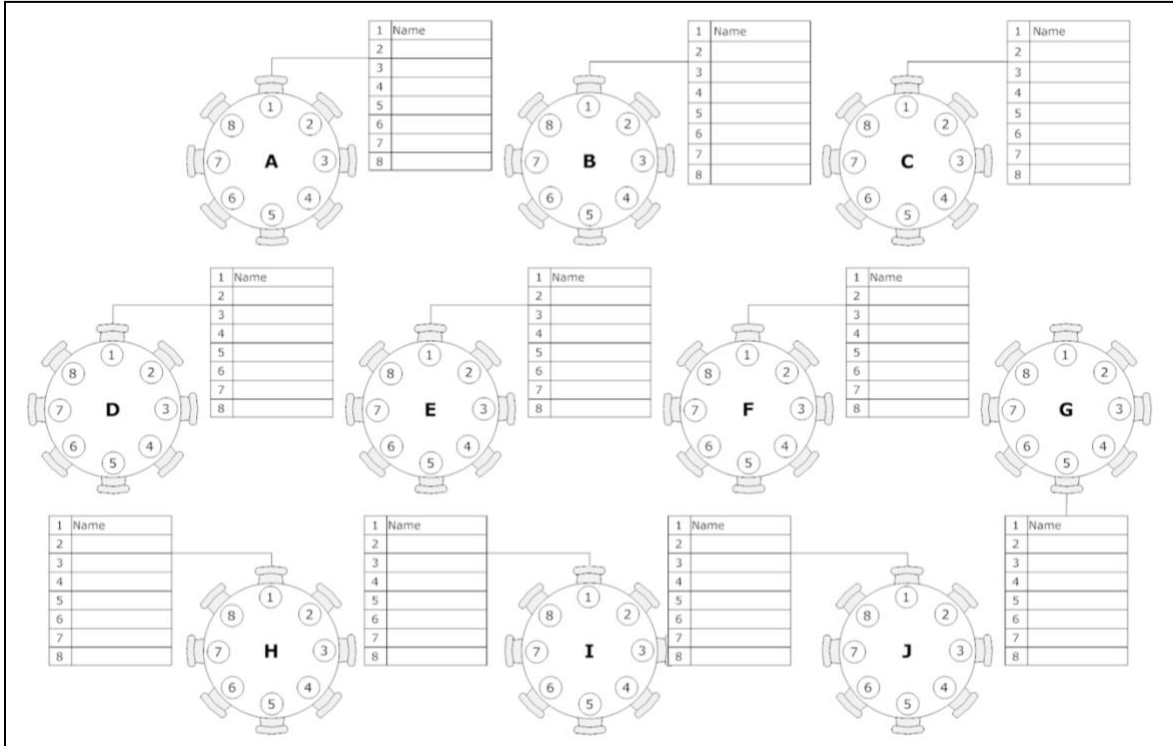
François Quesnay (1694–1774) - A French economist whose *Tableau Économique* (1758) argued against government intervention in the economy and inspired Scottish economist Adam Smith's seminal *Wealth of Nations* (1776).

Adam Smith (1723–1790) - An influential Scottish economist who objected to the stifling mercantilist systems that were in place during the late eighteenth century. In response, Smith wrote the seminal *Wealth of Nations* (1776), a dissertation criticizing mercantilism and describing the many merits of a free trade system.

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) - A Dutch-Jewish lens grinder who questioned tenets of Judaism and Christianity, which helped undermine religious authority in Europe. Although Spinoza personally believed in God, he rejected the concept of miracles, the religious supernatural, and the idea that the Bible was divinely inspired. Rather, he believed that ethics determined by rational thought were more important as a guide to conduct than was religion.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) - An English writer, philosopher, and advocate of women's rights.

Sample Items for Party Planning



Human Nature: Good or Evil? – Essay Assignment

As individuals we have choices about what direction our lives take us. Ultimately, what we choose is our decision: however, are our decisions influenced by what we are deep inside? Is there a common human nature in all of us: if so, is that nature good or evil?

Throughout history philosophers, great thinkers, and “every day” people have discussed human tendencies. From the early dynasties of the Chinese to the Enlightenment thinkers of eighteenth century Europe, this topic has been hotly debated. For this assignment, we focus in particular on the Enlightenment thinkers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, who proposed different opinions regarding human nature. Hobbes believed that humans were naturally selfish, greedy, and cruel, while Locke contended that people were naturally reasonable and moral.

Now it is your turn. You are to decide whether you agree with Hobbes or Locke. Do you believe people to be naturally good or naturally bad, and why? Write a 1-2 page paper that discusses this question and supports your ideas by citing the ideas presented by Hobbes or Locke. You may also discuss other thinkers and events throughout history as well as personal experiences to strengthen your argument. Formulate a thesis that states your beliefs and support your thesis with at least three paragraphs, each arguing a different point. State your thesis in your introductory paragraph and underline it. Questions to consider are listed below:

Focus Question: *Are humans naturally good or evil?*

Supplemental Questions: You must answer the *focus question* above AND number 1 below. You do not have to answer all questions listed below, but they should help when writing the paper if you need prompting.

1. With whom do you agree: Hobbes or Locke? Why? (REQUIRED)
2. Are people naturally cruel, greedy, and selfish or are people basically reasonable and moral? Explain.
3. If there are not established laws, would people fight, rob, and attack one another without constraint or a guilty conscience?
4. Do people know “right” from “wrong”? Explain.
5. Do people generally live in fear? Provide examples.
6. Are people in constant battle with others, that is, man v. man? Or, do people generally wish to cooperate with one another - that is, man with man?
7. Do people consider the ramifications of their actions and how those actions will affect others? Why or why not?
8. What would life and human relations be like in the absence of government?
9. What view is more realistic? (Hobbes v. Locke, Good v. Evil, Selfish v. Kind)

Human Nature Essay Rubric

Student: _____

Grading: This will be worth one test grade and will be graded on a 100 point scale.

30 Points: Focus Question answered with at least three supporting ideas and paragraphs

10 Points: Supplement Question #1 answered with justification

10 Points: Thesis statement evident

10 Points: Introductory Paragraph

10 Points: Conclusion Paragraph

10 Points: Spelling, Grammar, and Punctuation

10 Points: Organized and Logical

10 Points: Minimum Page Number Met

_____/ 30 Points: *Focus Question* answered with at least three supporting ideas and paragraphs

_____/ 10 Points: *Supplement Question #1* answered with justification

_____/ 10 Points: Thesis statement evident

_____/ 10 Points: Introductory Paragraph

_____/ 10 Points: Conclusion Paragraph

_____/ 10 Points: Spelling, Grammar, and Punctuation

_____/ 10 Points: Organized and Logical

_____/ 10 Points: Minimum Page Number Met

_____/ **100 Points Total**

Name: _____

What was the Scientific Revolution? _____

Rene Decartes:

Sir Isaac Newton:



What impact did REASON have on society?



The Enlightenment

The Fundamental Question:

The answer:

The key to the future:





Thomas Hobbes 1588-1679

Influences

Beliefs/philosophies:

Men are:

John Locke 1632-1704



Influences

Beliefs/philosophies:

Men are:

France: The Philosophes

Who were they?

Three Basic Tenants

1.

2.

3.

France: The Philosophes

Montesquieu (1689-1755)

Voltaire (1694-1778)

Rousseau (1712-1778)

Thomas Jefferson & Declaration of Independence.

American Enlightenment

Values/beliefs:

U.S. Constitution

James Madison and the Bill of Rights:

