

Name _____

Date _____

The Enlightenment - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. The Scientific Revolution shifted the way scientists and mathematicians saw the world. Nicolaus Copernicus declared that Earth revolved around the sun. Sir Isaac Newton broke the universe down into mathematical laws. René Descartes championed rational thought as proof of man's and God's existence, writing, "I think, therefore I am." This newfound emphasis on observation, experimentation, and reason challenged longstanding assumptions about the world and set the stage for the Enlightenment.

With which of these statements would Sir Isaac Newton most likely agree?

A. Widely accepted ideas are usually widely accepted because they're true.



B.

The way the universe works is less mysterious than many think.

According to the passage, "Sir Isaac Newton broke the universe down into mathematical laws." This suggests he likely believed the universe was more explainable than previously thought.

C. Experimentation is an overly complicated way to gain an understanding of nature.

D. Science has too many limitations to use it as a basis for understanding reality.

2. The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, was a 17th- and 18th-century intellectual movement. During this period, European politics, religion, philosophy, and science were drastically reoriented. This era was a time of economic prosperity in Europe. This prosperity nurtured a sense of optimism that lent itself to deep thought and a questioning of norms. The Enlightenment was less a single, unified movement than it was a spread of ideas among intellectuals. While conclusions varied, Enlightenment thinkers were brought together by a belief that reason could lead humankind to a better world now rather than in the next life. This line of thinking was a direct challenge to the traditional authority of Christianity. It also called into question governments that claimed a God-given right to absolute power. Armed with the learnings of the Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment thinkers set out to reimagine political and social life.

Which group held the most power at the beginning of the Enlightenment?

- A. Scientists
- B. The military
- C. Philosophers



D.

The church

According to the passage, Enlightenment “thinking was a direct challenge to the traditional authority of Christianity.” The fact that governments “claimed a God-given right to absolute power” suggests the church controlled much of Europe.

3. English philosopher John Locke, a friend of Sir Isaac Newton, aimed to understand humankind in the same way Newton understood nature. Locke believed humans are born as a blank slate and build character through life experiences. Though he was religious, he rejected the possibility of innate goodness or original sin and promoted religious tolerance. In his 1690 work **Two Treatises of Government**, Locke outlined his political philosophy. He believed people have a natural right to life, liberty, and the ownership of property. He also saw government as a social contract between ruler and subjects. He believed power should not be absolute, but rather granted in exchange for protection of people’s rights. Some of this might sound familiar. That’s because Thomas Jefferson was heavily influenced by Locke’s political philosophy when he wrote the Declaration of Independence.

With which of these statements would John Locke most likely agree?

- A. Once elected, a ruler’s power to make decisions should not be questioned.
- B. Natural rights should be reserved for a select few Christians.
- C. Experience determines a person’s disposition and character.
- D. Government grounded in religious faith ensures a nation’s success.



C.

Experience determines a person’s disposition and character.

According to the passage, “Locke believed humans are born as a blank slate and build character through life experiences.”

4. The Enlightenment spread to France to a group of intellectuals known as the philosophes. One early philosophe named Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, had spent time living in England. There he took inspiration from John Locke's work and the English political and social structure. Montesquieu opposed France's absolute monarchy. Instead, he favored England's political system, in which the king's executive power was kept in check by the two houses of Parliament. In his 1748 treatise **The Spirit of Laws**, Montesquieu argued for separation of powers and a system of checks and balances in government. He believed this approach would prevent tyranny. The United States borrowed directly from Montesquieu in creating a government divided into three branches with a system of checks and balances.

Which of these words best describes Montesquieu's political philosophy on checks and balances and separation of powers?

- ☒ A. Influential
- Details like "The United States borrowed directly from Montesquieu in creating a government divided into three branches with a system of checks and balances" suggest that Montesquieu's political philosophy was influential.*
- B. Misguided
- C. Narrow-minded
- D. Abstract

5. A later philosophe named Jean-Jacques Rousseau openly criticized French political and social structure. The first line of his 1762 work **The Social Contract** reads, “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.” Rousseau believed no one should give up their natural rights to a king. Instead, individuals should enter a social contract in which their rights are given up to their community as a whole. Rousseau thought elected officials were not capable of properly reflecting the “general will” of the people. Because of this, he favored direct democracy over representative democracy. Rousseau outlined a “civil state” in which every citizen had a say in every political decision and voted to create laws for the “public good.” Rousseau’s political philosophy and treatises echo throughout parts of the United States Declaration of Independence. His work also directly inspired both the French and Haitian Revolutions.

With which of these statements would Jean-Jacques Rousseau most likely agree?

- A. In some situations, people are too disorganized to clearly see what is best for them.
- B. Life experience tends to teach people how to live more freely.
- C. Some monarchies have been led by benevolent kings and queens who advocated for their subjects.
- ☒ D. The people themselves are the only decision-making body that can be trusted.

According to the passage, “Rousseau thought elected officials were not capable of properly reflecting the ‘general will’ of the people” and “outlined a ‘civil state’ in which every citizen had a say in every political decision.”