

Ideas Into Government

Trace Enlightenment ideas from philosophers to founding documents.

SS.7.CG.1.4 "Analyze how Enlightenment ideas, including Montesquieu's view of separation of powers and John Locke's theories related to natural law and Locke's social contract, influenced the Founding."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Locke's ideas, circle Montesquieu's idea, and write L or M beside each sentence that explains an idea's influence on the Founding, so you can trace ideas into government.

From Ideas to the Founding

- ① In the eighteenth century, many colonists questioned how government should work. English philosopher John Locke wrote that people have natural rights, including life, liberty, and property. He believed natural law, rules discoverable through reason, supported these rights. Locke also described a social contract. People agree to form a government to protect their rights, and government receives its power from the people. If rulers repeatedly violate rights, Locke argued, the people may change or replace that government.
- ② French thinker Montesquieu feared that freedom was unsafe when one person or group held all government power. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, he argued for separation of powers. Legislative bodies make laws, executive leaders carry out laws, and courts judge cases under laws. These powers should be placed in different branches that can limit one another. His idea was not that branches would never work together. Instead, each branch could help prevent another branch from becoming too powerful.
- ③ During the American Revolution, these ideas helped shape the Founding. The Declaration of Independence says people have rights and that governments get their just powers from the consent of the governed, ideas connected to Locke. It also lists abuses by King George III to explain why colonists sought a new government. Later, the Constitution divided national power among Congress, the president, and the federal courts, reflecting Montesquieu. The Constitution also includes ways branches can check one another, such as a presidential veto and Congress's power to override it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 According to Locke, what did natural law support, and what was government supposed to protect?

2 Which two ideas in the Declaration of Independence does the passage connect to Locke?

3 How did Montesquieu's separation of powers influence the structure of the Constitution?

4 How do the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution reflect different Enlightenment ideas discussed in the passage?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine your town is writing a new charter. Write six sentences that explain how it will protect natural rights, gain power from the people, and divide power among branches that can check one another.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline Locke's ideas, circle Montesquieu's idea, and write L or M beside each sentence that explains an idea's influence on the Founding, so you can trace ideas into government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	According to Locke, what did natural law support, and what was government supposed to protect?	Natural law supported people's natural rights, including life, liberty, and property. Government was supposed to protect those rights.
2	Which two ideas in the Declaration of Independence does the passage connect to Locke?	The Declaration says people have rights and that governments receive their just powers from the consent of the governed.
3	How did Montesquieu's separation of powers influence the structure of the Constitution?	The Constitution divided national power among Congress, the president, and the federal courts. The branches could limit or check one another so that no branch became too powerful.
4	How do the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution reflect different Enlightenment ideas discussed in the passage?	The Declaration reflects Locke's ideas about rights and consent of the governed. The Constitution reflects Montesquieu's idea of separating power among branches with checks on one another.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our town charter would say that residents have natural rights to life, liberty, and property. Residents would choose officials and give the government power to protect those rights. A council would make local laws. A mayor would carry out laws, while independent judges would decide court cases. The council could override a mayoral veto, so no branch controls every decision. This social contract and separation of powers would protect residents from unfair government.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately connect Locke to natural rights, consent, or the social contract, and Montesquieu to separate branches and checks. For the open response, look for all three required ideas and a logical explanation of how the proposed government would work.