Who Holds Power?

Enlightenment ideas and their effects on government and society

9-12.WC.43 "Analyze the ideas and effects of the major ideas of Enlightenment philosophers including, but not limited to: • Thomas Hobbes • John Locke • Voltaire • Baron de Montesquieu • Jean-Jacques Rousseau • Adam Smith"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one key idea for each thinker, then circle an effect that idea could have on society or government.

Six Ways to Rethink Power

1. When a government fails to protect a city, who should take charge? Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European writers offered sharply different answers. Thomas Hobbes had lived through civil war in England. He argued that without a powerful ruler, fear and violence could make ordinary life unsafe. People should grant a sovereign broad authority in return for peace. John Locke also described an agreement between people and government, but he put limits on rulers. Government exists to protect natural rights, including life, liberty, and property. If it violates those rights, citizens may replace it. Their disagreement turns on which danger matters more: disorder or unchecked power.

2. Other writers asked how citizens could resist abuse without returning to chaos. Voltaire attacked censorship and religious intolerance, arguing that open debate and freedom of belief could challenge injustice. Baron de Montesquieu proposed dividing government power among branches so each could check the others. Jean-Jacques Rousseau focused on who has authority to make laws. He argued that legitimate laws should express the general will, the common interest of the citizens rather than a ruler's private interest. These thinkers did not offer the same blueprint: one emphasized expression, another institutional limits, and another the people's collective authority.

3. Adam Smith examined another kind of power: control over trade. He argued that competition and voluntary exchange could often coordinate economic activity better than detailed government direction, though he also supported some public services. These arguments reached beyond books. Locke's ideas about rights and consent influenced the American Declaration of Independence, while Montesquieu's separation of powers influenced the U.S. Constitution. Rousseau's language about popular sovereignty shaped debates during the French Revolution, although revolutionaries disagreed over what the people's will required. Enlightenment arguments offered tools for changing institutions, not a single plan that every society followed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How would Hobbes and Locke respond differently to a ruler who claims broad power is needed to keep order?

2. How do Voltaire's and Montesquieu's ideas offer different ways to challenge abuses of power?

3. How does Rousseau's idea about legitimate laws differ from Locke's test for a legitimate government?

4. If leaders followed Smith's ideas about trade, what might change for buyers and sellers? Use a detail from the passage to explain.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A new town council must decide whether to allow a weekly open-air market beside its public library. Write five or six sentences recommending a plan that applies two thinkers from the passage, explains how their ideas work together or conflict, and predicts one effect of your plan.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.WC.43

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one key idea for each thinker, then circle an effect that idea could have on society or government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How would Hobbes and Locke respond differently to a ruler who claims broad power is needed to keep order?	**Hobbes would favor broad authority if it kept people safe from violence. Locke would insist that the ruler protect natural rights and could be replaced for violating them.**
2	How do Voltaire's and Montesquieu's ideas offer different ways to challenge abuses of power?	**Voltaire's open debate and freedom of belief allow people to speak against injustice. Montesquieu's divided branches allow parts of government to check one another.**
3	How does Rousseau's idea about legitimate laws differ from Locke's test for a legitimate government?	**Rousseau said laws should express the citizens' common interest. Locke said government must protect natural rights or citizens may replace it.**
4	If leaders followed Smith's ideas about trade, what might change for buyers and sellers? Use a detail from the passage to explain.	**Buyers and sellers would rely more on voluntary exchange and competition and less on detailed government direction. Sellers might have more freedom to offer goods, giving buyers more choices.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend that the town permit a weekly open-air market beside the library. Following Smith, the council should let sellers set their own prices so competition can give shoppers more choices. The council should still fund trash pickup as a public service. Following Montesquieu, an elected council could approve market rules while a separate local board hears complaints about unfair enforcement. Smith's emphasis on flexible exchange and Montesquieu's limits on concentrated power can work together here. This plan could increase trade without leaving one group in charge of every decision.

Accept reasonable inferences supported by the passage. For Part 3, look for an original plan, accurate applications of two thinkers, a clear relationship between their ideas, and a plausible predicted effect.