Ideas on the Move

Trace how Enlightenment ideas began and spread.

6.H.9 "Explain the origin and spread of scientific, political, and social ideals associated with the Age of Enlightenment/Age of Reason."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a source of Enlightenment ideas, circle ways people shared them, and draw an arrow from one idea to a way it traveled.

From Questions to Change

1. In the 1600s, European thinkers were testing old claims about nature. Scientists such as Isaac Newton used observations and mathematics to describe how objects move. They shared findings in letters and printed reports, allowing others to check their work. Their methods helped inspire the Enlightenment, a movement that grew in Europe in the late 1600s and 1700s. Many thinkers began asking whether careful reasoning could also improve government and daily life. They questioned claims rather than accepting them simply because a ruler or an old book said they were true.

2. In France, Montesquieu argued that dividing government power among different branches could help prevent abuse. John Locke, writing in England, argued that people had rights and that governments should protect them. These political ideas challenged the belief that kings should have unlimited power. Enlightenment thinkers also discussed social life. Some argued that education should reach more people, including girls. In Paris, guests debated these ideas at salons, gatherings often hosted by women. Printers made books and short pamphlets that carried arguments to readers in other towns and countries.

3. Ideas crossed the Atlantic in books, letters, and newspapers. Some leaders of the American Revolution drew on ideas about rights and the purpose of government when they argued for independence from Britain. Enlightenment ideas also influenced debates during the French Revolution. Yet the promise of equal rights had limits: women and enslaved people were often denied those rights. Some people used Enlightenment arguments to challenge slavery and unequal treatment. As ideas spread, readers did not simply repeat them. They argued over who should benefit and what changes should follow.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did scientists' methods help give rise to Enlightenment thinking about government?

2. How did salons and printed pamphlets help political and social ideas spread?

3. How did ideas about rights reach leaders of the American Revolution, and how did those leaders use them?

4. As Enlightenment ideas spread, how did some people use them to question who received rights?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a short letter from a reader in the 1700s to a friend in another town. Choose one scientific, political, or social idea from the passage, explain where it came from and how it reached you, then ask a new question it might raise in your friend's town.

ANSWER KEY

Ideas on the Move

GRADE 6 · 6.H.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a source of Enlightenment ideas, circle ways people shared them, and draw an arrow from one idea to a way it traveled. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did scientists' methods help give rise to Enlightenment thinking about government?	**Scientists tested claims using observation and mathematics. Their methods inspired thinkers to use careful reasoning to question claims about government.**
2	How did salons and printed pamphlets help political and social ideas spread?	**People debated ideas at salons, while printed pamphlets carried arguments to readers in other towns and countries.**
3	How did ideas about rights reach leaders of the American Revolution, and how did those leaders use them?	**Books, letters, and newspapers carried ideas across the Atlantic. Some revolutionary leaders drew on ideas about rights when arguing for independence from Britain.**
4	As Enlightenment ideas spread, how did some people use them to question who received rights?	**They used Enlightenment arguments to challenge slavery and unequal treatment, since women and enslaved people were often denied the rights being discussed.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Elise, A pamphlet from France reached our town by post. It described Montesquieu's idea that dividing government power could help prevent abuse. I copied his argument into this letter so you can share it with your neighbors. Would dividing duties among your town's leaders make it harder for any one person to control every decision?

Accept letters that accurately trace a passage idea to its source and give a plausible way it spread. The final question should apply the idea to the friend's town rather than repeat a question from Part 2.