Ideas Across Borders

Trace Enlightenment ideas into revolutions and new governments.

WH.5.2 "Explain the key ideas of the Enlightenment in European history, and describe its impact upon political and religious thought in Europe and the Americas, including the foundation of American government and subsequent revolutions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three Enlightenment ideas, circle a later political or religious change that reflects each one, and write matching numbers beside each idea and change.

From Coffeehouses to Revolutions

1. Imagine a pamphlet passed from hand to hand in an eighteenth-century coffeehouse. Enlightenment writers argued that people could use reason to test old claims about power and belief. John Locke said people possess natural rights and that governments need the consent of the governed to protect them. Montesquieu warned that concentrated power invites abuse and proposed dividing government power. Voltaire criticized religious persecution and defended tolerance. These ideas challenged the notion that kings and churches should rule without being questioned.

2. Across the Atlantic, colonial leaders used Locke's ideas to argue in the Declaration of Independence that government rests on consent and must protect rights. The United States Constitution divided federal power among legislative, executive, and judicial branches, reflecting Montesquieu's concern about concentrated authority. The First Amendment barred Congress from establishing a religion and protected free exercise of religion. Yet these promises did not apply equally in practice: slavery continued, and women could not vote in national elections.

3. In France, revolutionaries challenged royal power and inherited privilege. Their 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen proclaimed liberty and equality before the law, but it did not grant women equal political rights. French revolutionaries also removed some privileges of the Catholic Church, though their policies toward religion varied. In the French colony of Saint-Domingue, enslaved people fought for freedom; after years of war, Haiti gained independence in 1804. Their revolution exposed the gap between claims of universal rights and slavery.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Locke's view of government challenge the idea that kings could rule without being questioned?

2. How did the United States Constitution address the danger Montesquieu saw in government?

3. How did changes in the United States and France each affect religion's place in government?

4. Why did the Haitian Revolution expose a gap in claims about universal rights?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence speech by a fictional 1790s reformer in Europe or the Americas. Use two Enlightenment ideas to propose one political reform and one religious reform, then explain an obstacle to making those reforms fair to everyone.

ANSWER KEY

Ideas Across Borders

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three Enlightenment ideas, circle a later political or religious change that reflects each one, and write matching numbers beside each idea and change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Locke's view of government challenge the idea that kings could rule without being questioned?	**Locke held that government needs the people's consent and must protect their rights, rather than claiming unquestioned authority.**
2	How did the United States Constitution address the danger Montesquieu saw in government?	**It divided federal power among three branches instead of concentrating it in one place.**
3	How did changes in the United States and France each affect religion's place in government?	**The First Amendment barred Congress from establishing a religion and protected free exercise. French revolutionaries removed some privileges of the Catholic Church.**
4	Why did the Haitian Revolution expose a gap in claims about universal rights?	**Enslaved people had to fight for freedom despite declarations that proclaimed liberty and equality.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our government should answer to the people, because legitimate power depends on their consent. We should elect representatives who can replace leaders who abuse that power. No church should receive government privileges, and people should be free to worship as they choose. These reforms will not be fair while enslaved people are denied freedom and a voice in government.

Accept historically plausible reforms that connect two Enlightenment ideas to a political and a religious change. The obstacle should identify a group excluded from rights or another specific barrier to equal treatment.