

Power by Consent

Read how Enlightenment thinkers challenged unlimited rule.

10.2a "Enlightenment thinkers developed political philosophies based on natural laws, which included the concepts of social contract, consent of the governed, and the rights of citizens."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one sentence that states each thinker's main political idea, and circle phrases that show citizens' rights, consent, or limits on government power.

Ideas That Challenged Kings

- ① In his Second Treatise of Government, John Locke argued that people possess natural rights, including life, liberty, and property. These rights exist independently of a monarch's permission. People establish government by consent to protect their rights. If rulers seriously betray that trust, the people may resist and replace them. Locke challenged the claim that inherited royal power placed rulers beyond judgment.
- ② Baron de Montesquieu feared abuse when power was concentrated. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, he argued that political liberty required separating legislative, executive, and judicial powers. Lawmaking, carrying out laws, and judging cases should not all belong to the same hands. Institutions could restrain one another. These ideas influenced later constitutions, though Montesquieu's model was not identical to every modern three-branch government.
- ③ Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* described people forming a political community together. Sovereignty belonged to the people collectively, not an inherited ruler. Legitimate laws expressed the general will: their shared interest as citizens, rather than a private faction's wishes. Citizens were bound by those laws even when they personally disagreed. This was not simply Locke's protection of individual rights. All three thinkers questioned arbitrary rule, but they differed over how rights, authority, and the common good should fit together. Their theories gave later reformers tools for debate rather than a single agreed blueprint.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What natural rights did Locke name, and why did he think people form governments?

2 How would Montesquieu's separate branches of government help protect citizens from tyranny?

3 For Rousseau, who holds sovereignty, and what should legitimate laws express?

4 Identify one shared concern and one difference among these thinkers.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

A council claims unlimited power to ban public meetings. In four or five sentences, challenge that claim using ideas from two thinkers and one passage detail for each.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence that states each thinker's main political idea, and circle phrases that show citizens' rights, consent, or limits on government power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What natural rights did Locke name, and why did he think people form governments?	Locke named life, liberty, and property. He believed people form governments to protect these rights.
2	How would Montesquieu's separate branches of government help protect citizens from tyranny?	The branches could limit one another, preventing one person or group from holding total power.
3	For Rousseau, who holds sovereignty, and what should legitimate laws express?	The people collectively hold sovereignty. Legitimate laws express the general will, or their shared interest as citizens.
4	Identify one shared concern and one difference among these thinkers.	All questioned arbitrary rule. Locke emphasized natural rights and consent, Montesquieu separated powers, and Rousseau emphasized collective sovereignty and the general will.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The council should have to justify its power. Locke argued that government exists to protect people's rights, including liberty, and rests on consent. Citizens could ask whether the ban betrays that purpose. Montesquieu warned against concentrated power, so they could also argue that another institution should restrain the council. These arguments challenge unlimited authority without claiming either thinker designed today's exact legal process.

Accept accurate applications of any two thinkers supported by passage details. Do not require modern judicial review, a referendum on every rule, or agreement among all three philosophers.