

Ideas Into Action

Trace how Enlightenment ideals fueled reform and also met limits.

10.2b "Individuals used Enlightenment ideals to challenge traditional beliefs and secure people's rights in reform movements, such as women's rights and abolition; some leaders may be considered enlightened despots."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline an argument for reform. Mark R beside one reform effort and L beside a limit on change.

Reformers and Rulers

- ① Mary Wollstonecraft challenged unequal education in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). She argued that women were rational beings who deserved serious education. Treating reason as a human capacity challenged claims that women were naturally unfit for independent judgment. Her writing did not immediately secure equal rights, but it used Enlightenment reasoning to contest a traditional hierarchy.
- ② William Wilberforce helped lead Parliament's campaign against the British slave trade. His Christian convictions joined wider arguments about humanity and rights. Abolitionists, including Black campaigners, gathered testimony, circulated petitions, and challenged the treatment of people as property. Parliament banned the British slave trade in 1807, but slavery continued. The 1833 abolition law took effect in 1834 in most British colonies. Many formerly enslaved people then faced compulsory apprenticeship until 1838. Reform came through a broad struggle, including resistance by enslaved people, rather than one politician's efforts alone.
- ③ Catherine the Great corresponded with Enlightenment writers and supported education in Russia. Her Instruction for a proposed law code drew on reform ideas, but did not become a new code ending inequality. She remained an autocrat with concentrated political power. Serfdom continued, and nobles retained extensive control over serfs. She is called an enlightened despot because selected reforms coexisted with absolute rule. These examples show that ideals could challenge injustice without immediately overcoming entrenched power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What Enlightenment idea did Wollstonecraft use when she argued that women were rational human beings?

2 Name two actions abolitionists took to press Parliament to end the British slave trade.

3 Why is Catherine called an enlightened despot? Identify a reform effort and a limit.

4 How did Wollstonecraft and abolitionists each challenge a traditional hierarchy?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

In four or five sentences, challenge an unfair school or community rule using an Enlightenment ideal. Propose an action and explain a possible obstacle.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline an argument for reform. Mark R beside one reform effort and L beside a limit on change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What Enlightenment idea did Wollstonecraft use when she argued that women were rational human beings?	She used the idea that human reason matters. Because women could reason, she argued that they deserved serious education and a larger public role.
2	Name two actions abolitionists took to press Parliament to end the British slave trade.	They gathered testimony, circulated petitions, and pressed Parliament to act. Any two are acceptable.
3	Why is Catherine called an enlightened despot? Identify a reform effort and a limit.	She supported education and proposed legal reform, but retained autocratic power and did not end serfdom.
4	How did Wollstonecraft and abolitionists each challenge a traditional hierarchy?	Wollstonecraft used women's capacity for reason to challenge unequal education. Abolitionists used religious and humanitarian arguments about rights to challenge treating people as property.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In my town, a rule keeps girls from joining the public debate club. I would argue that girls and boys can both reason and should have an equal chance to speak. Students could collect signatures and ask the town council to change the rule. Some adults might defend the rule as a long-standing custom. The council should reject that custom because it denies capable students an equal opportunity.

Accept responses that clearly connect an Enlightenment ideal, such as reason, equality, dignity, or rights, to a specific challenge to an unfair rule. A strong response includes a realistic action and identifies opposition or a limit.