**Name:**

**Date:**

**School:**

**Facilitator:**

1.03 Enlightenment Philosophers

**Explain the contributions of the philosophers below in one or two complete sentences.**

1. John Locke:
2. Voltaire:
3. Charles de Montesquieu:
4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

**Why are the following philosophical concepts important? Explain in one or two complete sentences.**

1. Natural rights:
2. Social contract:
3. Separation of power:
4. Popular Sovereignty:

**Read the excerpts from the Enlightenment Philosophers below. Write a brief summary of each (1-2 sentences).**

| Excerpt | Summary |
| --- | --- |
| *John Locke, Two Treatises of Government (1690)*  **Chapter II: Of the State of Nature**  4. To understand Political Power right, and derive it from its Original, we must consider what State all Men are naturally in, and that is, a State of perfect Freedom to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the Will of any other Man.  A State also of Equality, wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another |  |
| *John Locke, Two Treatises of Government (1690)*  **Chapter IX: Of the Ends of Political Society and Government**  131. But though Men when they enter into Society, give up the Equality, Liberty, and Executive Power they had in the State of Nature, into the hands of the Society, to be so far disposed of by the Legislative, as the good of the Society shall require; yet it being only with an intention in every one the better to preserve himself his Liberty and Property; (For no rational Creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse) the power of the Society, or Legislative constituted by them, can never be suppos'd to extend farther than the common good; ... And so whoever has the Legislative or Supream Power of any Common-wealth, is bound to govern by establish'd standing Laws, promulgated and known to the People, and not by Extemporary Decrees; by indifferent and upright Judges, who are to decide Controversies by those Laws |  |
| *John Locke, Two Treatises of Government (1690)*  **CHAPTER XIX: Dissolution of Government**  240. ... [T]he common Question will be made, Who shall be Judge whether the Prince or Legislative act contrary to their Trust? ... I reply, The People shall be Judge; for who shall be Judge whether his Trustee or Deputy acts well, and according to the Trust reposed in him, but he who deputes him, and must, by having deputed him have still a Power to discard him, when he fails in his Trust? If this be reasonable in particular Cases of private Men, why should it be otherwise in that of the greatest moment; where the Welfare of Millions is concerned, and also where the evil, if not prevented, is greater, and the Redress very difficult, dear, and dangerous? |  |
| *Voltaire, The Philosophical Dictionary, "Democracy" (1764)*  Popular government is in itself, therefore, less iniquitous, less abominable than despotic power.  The great vice of democracy is certainly not tyranny and cruelty... The real vice of a civilized republic is in the Turkish fable of the dragon with many heads and the dragon with many tails. The many heads hurt each other, and the many tails obey a single head which wants to devour everything.  Democracy seems suitable only to a very little country, and further it must be happily situated. Small though it be, it will make many mistakes, because it will be composed of men. Discord will reign there... but there will be no St. Bartholomew, no Irish massacres, no inquisition, no condemnation to the galleys for having taken some water from the sea without paying for it... |  |
| *Baron de Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws (1748)*  Democracy has, therefore, two excesses to avoid--the spirit of inequality, which leads to aristocracy or monarchy, and the spirit of extreme equality, which leads to despotic power, as the latter is completed by conquest.  ...  As distant as heaven is from earth, so is the true spirit of equality from that of extreme equality.  ...  In the state of nature, indeed, all men are born equal, but they cannot continue in this equality. Society makes them lose it, and they recover it only by the protection of the laws.  Such is the difference between a well-regulated democracy and one that is not so, that in the former men are equal only as citizens, but in the latter they are equal also as magistrates, as senators, as judges, as fathers, as husbands, or as masters. |  |
| *Baron de Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws (1748)*  **Book XI: Of the Laws Which Establish Political Liberty with Regard to the Constitution**  It is true that in democracies the people seem to act as they please; but political liberty does not consist in an unlimited freedom ...  We must have continually present to our minds the difference between independence and liberty. Liberty is a right of doing whatever the laws permit, and if a citizen could do what they forbid he would be no longer possessed of liberty, because all his fellow-citizens would have the same power.  ...  But constant experience shows us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it, and to carry his authority as far as it will go ...  To prevent this abuse, it is necessary from the very nature of things that power should be a check to power. A government may be so constituted, as no man shall be compelled to do things to which the law does not oblige him, nor forced to abstain from things which the law permits.  ...  The great advantage of representatives is, their capacity of discussing public affairs. For this the people collectively are extremely unfit, which is one of the chief inconveniences of a democracy. |  |
| *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract (1762)*  **Book I, Chapter I: Subject of the First Book**  Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. Many a one believes himself the master of others, and yet he is a greater slave than they. How has this change come about? I do not know. What can render it legitimate? I believe I can settle this question. |  |
| *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract (1762)*  **Book I, Chapter VII: The Sovereign**  Indeed, every individual may, as a man, have a particular will contrary to, or divergent from, the general will which he has as a citizen; his private interest may prompt him quite differently from the common interest  ...  ... [W]hoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body; which means nothing else than that he shall be forced to be free |  |
| *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract (1762)*  **Book I, Chapter VIII: The Civil State**  The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces in man a very remarkable change, by substituting in his conduct justice for instinct, and by giving his actions the moral quality that they previously lacked ... [H]e is obliged to act on other principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations... Let us reduce this whole balance to terms easy to compare. What man loses by the social contract is his natural liberty and an unlimited right to anything which tempts him and which he is able to attain: what he gains is civil liberty and property in all that he possesses. In order that we may not be mistaken about these compensations, we must clearly distinguish natural liberty, which is limited only by the powers of the individual, from civil liberty, which is limited by the general will |  |

The Enlightenment philosophers inspired democratic revolutions in thought and government across Europe and the world.

Writing in the 1600s, Locke paved the way for the philosophers of the 1700s. His work helped them codify the ideals of natural rights, tolerance, and rational government. Locke identified the natural rights that governments must protect. These rights were the foundation for Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence (1776), which established the first democracy in modern history.

Montesquieu also contributed ideas crucial to the U.S. democracy. He wrote of separating government powers into executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Such a structure, he explained, offers built-in checks and balances. His work is a guide on how to avoid the excesses of absolute power. He also wrote of challenges to democratic ideals.

Like the other three philosophers, Voltaire was wary—even disdainful of absolute monarchy. Voltaire decried monarchs who ignored the common good. An elitist, he did not think the common people could sustain a true democracy. But he did argue for democratic ideals like religious tolerance and freedom of expression.

Rousseau is most closely linked with a more extreme experiment in democracy—the French Revolution. The abuses of power by the French monarchy and ruling elite sparked the revolution. But Rousseau’s ideal of the “general will” inspired a frightening aberration: the bloody reign of terror led by Robespierre’s Committee of Public Safety.

**Use the information from this activity and your lesson to answer the questions below in 2-4 sentences.**

1. How could Rousseau’s concept of "general will" be used to eliminate the rights of the minority?
2. What are the challenges of transferring philosophical ideals into practical governments?
3. How are Enlightenment ideals evident in 21st-century life and political thought?
4. Which Enlightenment Philosopher expressed the most democratic ideas? Justify your answer.