

DOCUMENT-BASED ACTIVITIES ON THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Using Primary Sources and the Internet



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DOCUMENT-BASED ACTIVITIES ON THE ENLIGHTENMENT

TEACHER INTRODUCTION

Description:

This unit aims to teach students about Enlightenment principles and thinkers through in-depth analysis of important texts from the 16th and 17th centuries. Students will be exposed to thinkers such as Condorcet, Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Paine, Jefferson, Defoe, and Wollstonecraft; they will also consider the influence of Enlightenment thinking on society and government. One important note: Many of the readings from the Enlightenment can be quite difficult, even for advanced high school students. The goal of this unit, therefore, is more to aid in student comprehension of the documents and the concepts they express rather than to have students read the material entirely on their own and then draw historical conclusions.

Unit objectives:

Knowledge: students will

- review the origins of Enlightenment thought
- understand the importance of reason and rational analysis in Enlightenment thinking
- explore how 18th-century thinkers applied Enlightenment ideas to their analyses of society, government, religion, and gender
- assess how Enlightenment thought influenced key political documents of the era

Skills:

- analyze, evaluate, and interpret primary source documents
- communicate effectively the results of their analysis in discussion and written argument
- use relevant and adequate evidence to draw conclusions

Prior Knowledge Required:

Students should know the main developments of the Scientific Revolution, and have a solid understanding of the importance of the scientific method. They should also be familiar with the Glorious Revolution.

Lesson Format:

Each lesson consists of two parts: a teacher page containing an introduction, objectives, URL(s) used in the lesson, teaching strategies, wrap-up questions, and an extension activity; and a reproducible student page with a brief introduction which sets the context for the lesson, URL(s) used, and questions to be answered about the source.

Assessment:

Based on the time available, you may want to select which answers you want to assess in each activity. Most questions require short answers. Others will require a response of anywhere from a paragraph to a full page (or longer if preferred). Suggested rubrics are included in the Appendix.

Additional Sources:

The Appendix contains answer keys, rubrics, an annotated list of Web sites on the Enlightenment, and supplementary materials available from www.socialstudies.com.

OVERVIEW: THE ENLIGHTENMENT

When historians discuss the “Enlightenment,” they are usually referring to 18th-century Europe (France and England in particular), although other parts of the world (especially the U.S.) are often included as well. The Enlightenment was a period of intellectual ferment that gave rise to a range of new theories about society, government, philosophy, economics, and religion. However, the period produced more than just abstract theorizing: it offered a whole new way of conceptualizing the world and one’s place in it. This change in perception in many ways marks the beginning of the modern era, as institutions and traditions of the past began to shift—and even crumble—in the face of new ideas and approaches.

The Enlightenment grew largely out of the Scientific Revolution. Enlightenment thinkers greatly admired many of the Revolution’s leading figures, but the work of Isaac Newton provided the greatest inspiration. Newton’s approach to scientific research stressed gathering facts through observation and experience, then applying reason and logic to analyze those facts. A key assumption about Newton’s method provided the general basis for the intellectual exploration of the Enlightenment: if this method worked for finding scientific truth, why couldn’t it be applied to social sciences as well so that truths about society itself could be discovered?

There was also a cultural side to the Enlightenment. Many leading Enlightenment figures gained notoriety for their participation in the *salons* in France, which set the standards for high culture in Europe at the time. These thinkers came to be known as the *philosophes* and included among their number notables such as Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. They gained fame in the *salons* not so much for their adherence to the scientific method and the theories they came up with as for their general questioning of established institutions and social attitudes.

The Enlightenment introduced a new secularism into society, and the established church became one of the major targets of criticism. Enlightenment philosophy emphasized experience and reason, while the Church asked worshipers to accept its

principles on faith, so in some ways a conflict here was inevitable. Enlightenment thinkers generally did not abandon their belief in God, but instead formulated a theory known as *deism*, in which God was seen as the “great watchmaker” whose creation—the universe—operated as smoothly as a fine Swiss watch. The task, as Enlightenment thinkers envisioned it, was to try to discover the principles that governed the functioning of this “watch.” *Deism* thus centered around a belief in a God who operated according to reason and whose existence could be seen in the natural order and logic of all that He had created. Although *deism* affirmed the existence of God, it discarded virtually all Church traditions and practices as irrational and unnecessary, a fact which led many to criticize the *philosophes* as anti-Christian, or even to portray them as atheists.

The influence of Enlightenment thinking can be seen from the 18th century up even to the present day. Many of the ideals of the American and French Revolutions drew heavily upon Enlightenment thought, as did many similar uprisings in the 19th and 20th centuries. Our institutions of government incorporate many of the ideas first espoused by Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. Many of the humanitarian principles that people hold today also can be traced back in part to ideas from the Enlightenment. By presenting people with a new perspective from which to view the world—and also by showing them how to make sense of what they saw—Enlightenment thinkers laid the groundwork for modernity.

Progress and Perfectibility: Condorcet Teacher Page

Overview:

The Marquis de Condorcet was a renowned mathematician and an esteemed member of the Academie des Sciences. During the French Revolution, he initially supported the liberals, but later joined with the Girondists—a move that would eventually lead to his downfall when the Jacobins took over. He made the mistake of criticizing the Jacobin-written constitution; consequently, a warrant was issued for his arrest. He went into hiding but was later captured and died in his cell in 1794. The essay “The Future Progress of the Human Mind” is excerpted from *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Spirit*, which he wrote while in hiding. The selection provides a good overview of Enlightenment ideals, and should give students a sense of how new approaches from the Scientific Revolution found application in other areas of inquiry in the Enlightenment.

Objectives:

Students will:

- explore the Enlightenment ideals of progress, perfectibility, and reason
- understand the connection between the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment
- assess Condorcet’s ideas on education, equality, and women

Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

“The Future Progress of the Human Mind” can be found at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/condorcet-progress.html>

Strategies:

Review the Scientific Revolution with students, focusing in particular on the evolution of the scientific method. You may also want to discuss the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution (specifically with regard to question three) and Malthus’s theory of population (question four).

Most questions can be answered in two to four sentences. Questions eight and nine can range in length from a paragraph to a full page, depending on time available.

Have students complete the worksheet.

Wrap-Up:

Discuss students' answers to the questions on the worksheet. In lieu of having students turn in written answers to questions eight and nine, you instead may want to use these questions to engage the class in a discussion or formal debate.

Extension Activity:

Ask students if "progress" is an ideal that applies to society today. Have students give examples in a class discussion, or hold a formal debate on the issue.

Progress and Perfectibility: Condorcet Student Worksheet

Introduction:

The Marquis de Condorcet was a renowned mathematician who played an active role early on in the French Revolution, leading a redesign of the educational system and helping to write the first French constitution. However, when the Radicals (Jacobins) took over the Revolution, he went into hiding, which is when he wrote the selection you will read in this lesson. This piece reveals many Enlightenment ideals: an unbending faith in “reason” as the means to discover all “truths,” continual advancements both in science and in social mores and attitudes, and a belief that humans can realistically strive for “perfectibility” in all areas of life.

Directions:

“The Future Progress of the Human Mind”

Go to <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/condorcet-progress.html> and answer the following questions:

1. Condorcet begins by discussing trends in science: men of his time were learning more and more facts, becoming adept at classifying them and stating them clearly and simply in general terms, and developing increasingly precise “methods of observation and exact measurement.” He sees these conditions as leading to the opening of a “new avenue for genius.” First, what does he mean by this phrase, and second, why does he think this new “avenue” will arise?
2. How does Condorcet’s belief in this “new avenue for genius” mesh with his belief in “universal education”?
3. Next, Condorcet states that “If we now turn to the mechanical arts, we shall see that their progress can have no other limit than the reach of the scientific theories on which they depend; that the methods of these arts are capable of the same improvement, the same simplifications as methods in the sciences.” What does he mean by “mechanical arts”? What does he see as the ultimate effect of improvements in these “mechanical arts”?

4. Condorcet next poses a rhetorical question: “Will there not come a time when...the increase in population surpassing its means of subsistence, the result would necessarily be—if not a continuous decline in well-being and number of people, a truly retrograde movement—at least a kind of oscillation between good and bad?” What reasoning does he use to counter this argument?

5. What do you think the concept of “happiness” implies for Condorcet?

6. Condorcet talks next about the “inequality of the sexes.” Why does he think that eliminating this inequality is “most important for human happiness”?

7. Why does Condorcet believe that the “progress of reason and social order” will result in better physical health for the larger population?

8. One of the main intellectual conclusions that gave rise to the Enlightenment was that the use of reason, logic, and precision that had been instrumental in the Scientific Revolution could also be applied to non-scientific pursuits such as politics, philosophy, societal conditions, and even religion. Do you think this was a valid assumption to make? Can scientific methods really be applied effectively to social problems and attitudes? Explain your reasoning.

9. Do you think Condorcet in this piece provides a blueprint for making a better society or a vague vision of an unattainable utopia? Explain your reasoning.

Society and Government: Locke, Rousseau, the “State of Nature,” and the Social Compact Teacher Page

Overview:

In this lesson, students look at how Enlightenment rationalism influenced Locke’s and Rousseau’s theories on social and political behavior. They begin by reading Locke’s ideas on the “state of nature,” compare his views on how societies arise to those of Rousseau, and understand Rousseau’s theory of the “social compact.”

Objectives:

Students will:

- understand how Enlightenment thinkers applied rational analysis to come up with theories about the origins of society and government
- assess different ideas on the exercise of collective power
- speculate on what Locke’s and Rousseau’s ideas implied about existing forms of society and government

Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

“Of the State of Nature,” Chapter 2 of Locke’s *An Essay concerning the true original, extent and end of civil Government (1690)*, can be found at <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/D/1651-1700/locke/ECCG/govern02.htm>

Excerpts from Rousseau’s writings on the idea of the social compact are available at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Rousseau-soccon.html>

Strategies:

Begin by asking the class how they think societies formed in the first place. Have them speculate on what life was like before people lived in societies.

Have students complete the worksheet. Many of the questions are speculative in nature, and student answers could range in length from a paragraph to a full page or more, depending on the time available. You may even want to complete the entire worksheet as a class, and rely on discussion rather than individual study to help get these ideas across.

Wrap-Up:

After students have completed the worksheet, discuss the answers as a class, then pose the following questions:

1. Ask students if they think a “state of nature” ever truly existed, or if it only works as a philosophical concept.

2. Have the class assess Locke's and Rousseau's views on equality. Do students agree with the basic assumptions each man made, or were there important factors that they failed to take into account?

Extension Activities:

1. Have students compare and contrast Locke's views on the state of nature with those of Thomas Hobbes.
2. Napoleon once said that the French Revolution could never have occurred without Rousseau. Have students consider the meaning of this statement and assess whether they think the social compact necessarily led to democracy and radicalism.

**Society and Government:
Locke, Rousseau, the “State of Nature,” and the Social Compact
Student Worksheet**

Introduction:

One of the primary questions Enlightenment thinkers applied rational analysis to was the basic nature of society and politics: How and why did societies arise in the first place? What did the conditions of their formation imply about political power? What responsibilities does a state have to its citizens, and vice versa? In this lesson, you will learn about two key concepts: the idea of a “state of nature” (i.e., the conditions under which people lived before they formed societies), and the “social compact” (a means by which people formed societies and governments).

Directions:

“On the State of Nature”: Locke

Go to <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/D/1651-1700/locke/ECCG/govern02.htm> and answer the following questions:

1. In the first section (number four), Locke says that in a state of nature all men have “perfect freedom,” but this is not a freedom to do whatever they please. What specifically does he say men in the state of nature have the freedom to do?
2. Why does Locke believe that men in the state of nature are equal? Do you agree with his reasoning here?
3. Go to section number six. Locke reiterates how the state of nature is a “state of liberty, yet it is not a state of licence.” In other words, the state of nature is not simply anarchy, but “has a law of Nature to govern it.” What is this “law” to which Locke refers? What conclusions about society does he think follow from this “law”?

4. Why does Locke think that this “law” will lead each man to conclude that “when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he as much as he can to preserve the rest of mankind”? In your own words, paraphrase the meaning of this statement.

5. Go to section seven. Locke says here that “the law of Nature would...be in vain if there were nobody in that state of Nature had a power to execute that law, and thereby preserve the innocent and restrain offenders.” He concludes that because men in the state of Nature are equal, everyone has the right to “punish another for any evil he has done.” Do you agree with his conclusion here? Explain your reasoning.

“The Social Compact”: Rousseau

Go to <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Rousseau-soccon.html> and scroll down to “Chapter vi: The Social Compact.” Answer the following questions:

6. Rousseau begins here by claiming that a man in the state of nature at some point encounters “obstacles” that are too large for him to overcome on his own. Only by banding together with other men can one achieve “a sum of forces great enough to overcome” the obstacle. However, banding together poses a different problem, which Rousseau characterizes as “...[finding] a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and which in each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.” Do you agree with this statement? Is it possible to effectively take part in and give support to an “association” yet still retain all of one’s individual freedom? Can a person “unite” with others without sacrificing any of their individuality?

7. Rousseau next talks about the “clauses” of the social compact, and makes a distinction between “natural liberty” (that enjoyed by men in the state of nature) and “conventional liberty” (liberty created when men come together in association). He then concludes that the social compact actually only has one “clause”—“the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community.” In your own words, paraphrase what you think this statement means, then explain why Rousseau believes the social compact in its essence insures equality for those who enter into it.

8. Explain how Rousseau contrasts the following sets of terms: “city” versus “republic”; “citizens” versus “subjects.” How does the way in which he defines these terms reveal his views on the nature of power under the social compact?

9. Compare Locke and Rousseau. In what ways are their views on the “state of nature” similar? In what ways are they different?

10. Write a paragraph or more showing how the ideas expressed in the selections by Locke and Rousseau could be used to argue against monarchy as a legitimate form of government.

The Powers of Government: Montesquieu Teacher Page

Overview:

This lesson expands on Enlightenment ideas on politics, focusing in particular on Montesquieu's views on how power should be distributed among the different parts of government. Though Montesquieu's ideas led to what we recognize in U.S. government today as the "separation of powers," this selection from *The Spirit of the Laws* shows how he actually was not in favor of the republican form of government we have now, but instead preferred a constitutional monarchy. However, students should also be able to get a good sense of how Montesquieu influenced American political thought.

Objectives:

Students will:

- understand Montesquieu's views on distribution of powers in government
- compare Montesquieu's views with the U.S. government concept of separation of powers
- speculate on the general nature of power in government

Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

The selection from *The Spirit of the Laws* is at
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/montesquieu-spirit.html>

Strategies:

Discuss the following types of governments with the whole class, paying attention to who wields the bulk of governmental power in each one: democracy, republic, oligarchy, monarchy, military, totalitarian, constitutional monarchy, theocracy. This discussion will help students to answer question nine.

Have students complete the worksheet.

Wrap-Up:

Discuss students' answers to question nine, and pose the following questions:

1. Is there really such a thing as an "ideal" form of government?
2. Did the framers of the U.S. Constitution adopt Montesquieu's ideas wholesale or did they alter them to suit their needs?

Extension Activity:

Have students read the English Constitution and determine how closely that document follows Montesquieu's ideas about the allocation of power in government.

The Powers of Government: Montesquieu Student Worksheet

Introduction:

The Baron de Montesquieu was a French nobleman and judge whose primary contributions to Enlightenment political thought came in his 1748 treatise *The Spirit of the Laws*. His political theories significantly influenced the framers of the U.S. Constitution. In this lesson, you will read a selection from *The Spirit of the Laws* in which Montesquieu talks about the nature of governmental power and the dangers that can result if this power is not used properly.

Directions:

Excerpts from *The Spirit of the Laws*

Go to <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/montesquieu-spirit.html> and answer the following questions:

1. What does Montesquieu say are the “three sorts of power”? What does he see as the function of each one of these powers?
2. Montesquieu claims that “the political liberty of the subject is a tranquility of mind.” In your own words, paraphrase what you think he means by this.
3. What does Montesquieu think the result will be whenever any two or all three of these powers are held by one person or group of people? Why does he think this?
4. Where does Montesquieu think the executive power of government should rest? What reasoning does he use to support this assertion?

5. Why do you think Montesquieu spends a significant amount of time discussing when and how a legislative body should meet? What conclusion does he ultimately draw regarding this issue?

6. Why does Montesquieu believe that the executive power should be able to “stop the encroachments of the legislative body,” but not vice versa? In your own words, explain his reasoning.

7. Why do you think Montesquieu had more faith that the executive power would be less “corruptible” than the legislative power?

8. Montesquieu ends by saying, “even the excess of reason is not always desirable, and...mankind generally find their account better in mediums than extremes.” What do you think he means by this? In your opinion, is this view consistent with general Enlightenment beliefs?

9. Which type of government do you think conforms most closely to the type Montesquieu describes in this selection: democracy, republic, oligarchy, monarchy, military, totalitarian, constitutional monarchy, or theocracy? Explain your reasoning.

Deism: Paine and Jefferson Teacher Page

Overview:

This lesson provides some interesting perspectives on deism, which was not officially the religious system of the *philosophes*, but functioned as such in many ways. The first selection they read is from Thomas Paine, who uses his deist philosophy to belittle many common Christian beliefs and practices. The second source is a letter from Thomas Jefferson to his friend Dr. Benjamin Rush, in which Jefferson responds—quite angrily at times—to those who he feels have criticized him for being anti-Christian and overly secretive in his religious beliefs.

Objectives:

Students will:

- understand how Enlightenment thinkers applied reason to religion
- compare deism to other forms of religious belief and worship
- consider the political implications of deism

Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

“Of the Religion of Deism Compared with the Christian Religion” can be found at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/paine-deism.html>

Thomas Jefferson’s letter to Benjamin Rush is at <http://www.angelfire.com/co/JeffersonBible/jeffbsyl.html>

Strategies:

Ask students if they think reason and faith are contradictory, or if it is even proper to apply logical analysis to deeply held spiritual beliefs.

Have students complete the worksheet.

Wrap-Up:

Review the answers to the worksheet with the whole class, then pose the following questions:

1. Paine was often accused of being an atheist. Do you think this was a fair charge? Why might people have believed this of him?
2. How might Jefferson’s deist beliefs have affected his political beliefs? Do you think his political beliefs influenced his religious beliefs?

Extension Activity:

Have students read the poem “The Spacious Firmament” (<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/history/virtual/reading/core4-05r06.htm>) by Joseph Addison and analyze how deism informs the piece (the poem emphasizes God as a “divine watchmaker” of sorts).

Deism: Paine and Jefferson Student Worksheet

Introduction:

Thomas Paine is one of the more colorful characters in history, and is best known in America for writing the classic pamphlet *Common Sense*, which helped fuel revolutionary fervor in America in the 1770s. Paine was also a key theorist of *deism*, a religious system that found some of its first expression in the writings of Rousseau and Voltaire. Deists took the technique of rational analysis and applied it to religion, coming up with conclusions that were not to the liking of many followers of Christianity. In the first selection here, Paine defines deism, contrasts it to Christianity, and brings up many deist objections to religious theory and practice at the time. Focus less on his analysis of specific parts of the Bible; pay attention to his general arguments about Christianity versus deism. Thomas Jefferson was also a deist, and his beliefs informed both his personal and political life, as you will see in a letter he wrote to his good friend and fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence, Dr. Benjamin Rush.

Directions:

“Of the Religion of Deism Compared with the Christian Religion”

Go to <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/paine-deism.html> and answer the following questions:

1. Why does Paine claim that a person of any religious denomination is actually a deist? Why do you think he makes this claim?
2. What does Paine see as the ultimate proof of the existence of God?
3. Why does Paine claim that “there is a happiness in Deism, when rightly understood, that is not to be found in any other system of religion”?

4. What problems does Paine have with the Bible and other such written religious works?

5. Why does Paine claim that “priestcraft was always the enemy of knowledge”?

6. Why does Paine object to the “dogma of redemption”?

7. At the end of this selection, Paine states that “the religion of Deism is superior to the Christian Religion.” In your own words, summarize Paine’s argument supporting this assertion.

Thomas Jefferson: Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush

Go to <http://www.angelfire.com/co/JeffersonBible/jeffbysl.html> and answer the following questions:

8. What is Jefferson’s stated purpose in writing this letter?

9. How does Jefferson describe his own Christianity?

10. Why is Jefferson “averse to the communication of my religious tenets to the public”?

The Rights of Women Teacher Page

Overview:

This lesson shows students where women fit into the Enlightenment worldview. Enlightenment thinkers rarely considered the status of women, except when it came to the subject of education. Many felt that the moral development was crucial to the progress of society, and that the best way to achieve such development was through education. Many Enlightenment thinkers therefore advocated education for women, but only to a limited extent. The first source in this lesson from author Daniel Defoe shows the desire of such thinkers to educate women not so that they could become scientists and political leaders, but so that they could be capable of “all parts of conversation.” The second selection in the lesson is from Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, written more than 70 years later than Defoe’s piece. Wollstonecraft urges that women receive far greater educational opportunities than those mentioned by Defoe, but she stops well short of claiming equality between the sexes.

Objectives:

Students will:

- understand the perceived role of women in upper and middleclass 17th-century society
- assess how thinkers applied Enlightenment ideas to the status of women in society
- offer opinions on whether achieving equality (even a limited one) was one of the goals of Enlightenment thinkers

Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

Daniel Defoe’s “On the Education of Women” is located at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1719defoe-women.html>

“The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed,” Chapter II from Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, can be found at <http://www.bartleby.com/144/2.html> or at http://www.baylor.edu/BIC/WCIII/Essays/rights_of_woman.html

Strategies:

Have the class discuss what they think the “rights of women” are in society today, and if these rights differ at all from those enjoyed by men. Ask students which right or rights they consider to be the most important.

Have students complete the worksheet.

Wrap-Up:

As a class, review answers to the questions on the worksheet, then have students discuss the following topic:

Enlightenment thinkers subscribed to the view that the physical differences between men and women acted as a permanent barrier to full social equality between the sexes. Is there social equality for men and women today? If not, is it possible for such equality to exist? Is such equality a desirable goal for a society?

Extension Activity:

Have students compare Wollstonecraft's views on the status of women in society to those expressed in other important documents that followed later, such as the Seneca Falls Declaration (1848, located at <http://www.constitution.org/woll/seneca.htm>) or John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjection of Women* (1869, located at <http://www.constitution.org/jsm/women.htm>).

The Rights of Women Student Worksheet

Introduction:

One of the offshoots of Enlightenment philosophy was a changed view of the role of women in society. Enlightenment thinkers held reason supreme and valued education as the best way to develop a person's reason. They also viewed education as crucial for moral development and for society to function as close to ideal as possible. Many thinkers, therefore, advocated education for women; however, they differed on the specific things they believed women should be taught, and most male thinkers did not extend their arguments to advocate full equality for women.

In this lesson, you will first read an essay written by Daniel Defoe, best-known for writing the classic novel *Robinson Crusoe*. You will then read a selection from Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, written in 1792, largely in response to the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" that had come out of the ferment of the French Revolution one year earlier. In the selection, Wollstonecraft (mother of author Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, who wrote *Frankenstein*) mentions "virtue" several times. This is not "virtue" in the modern sense of the word, but rather a larger philosophical concept. A "virtuous" person was not only moral in their conduct but strove for the larger improvement of society as a whole; such a person would be committed to the acquisition and spreading of knowledge so as to contribute to social "progress."

Directions:

Daniel Defoe: (On) The Education of Women (1719)

Go to <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1719defoe-women.html> and answer the following questions:

1. Is Defoe for or against the education of women? What does he mean when he says, "We reproach the sex every day with folly and impertinence; while I am confident, had they the advantages of education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than ourselves"? In your own words, paraphrase the meaning of this statement.
2. How does Defoe use God to justify the education of women?

3. What specific things does Defoe believe women should be taught?

4. What does Defoe see as the ultimate goal of educating women?

5. Do you think Defoe believed that men and women should be afforded an equal place in society? Use examples to justify your answer.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: Mary Wollstonecraft

Go to http://www.baylor.edu/BIC/WCIII/Essays/rights_of_woman.html. This selection is about eight pages long, but you will only be focusing on the first two pages. Read these pages and answer the following questions:

6. What does Wollstonecraft see as the reason that women are “kept in ignorance”? What does she claim that women are taught to do from infancy?

7. What does Wollstonecraft claim is the result of the “most perfect education”? What does she see as the only way that people can become “virtuous”?

8. Wollstonecraft says that “if...women do not resign the arbitrary power of beauty—they will prove that they have less mind than man.” What does she mean by this statement?

9. Why does Wollstonecraft believe that “the little knowledge which women of strong minds attain, is, from various circumstances, of a more desultory kind than the knowledge of men”?

10. Do you think Wollstonecraft believed that men and women should be afforded an equal place in society? Use examples to justify your answer.

11. In a paragraph, summarize the differences between Defoe’s view of women and Wollstonecraft’s view of women.

Culminating Activity

Read the following excerpts from the English Bill of Rights (1689), the Declaration of Independence (1776), and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1791). For each document, find phrases that clearly reflect the influence of Enlightenment thinking and explain how each phrase shows the influence of Enlightenment thinking, then compare and contrast the three documents.

1. English Bill of Rights (1689)

...in order to such an establishment as that their religion, laws and liberties might not again be in danger of being subverted...the said Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons, pursuant to their respective letters and elections, being now assembled in a full and free representative of this nation...do in the first place (as their ancestors in like case have usually done) for the vindicating and asserting their ancient rights and liberties declare:

That the pretended power of suspending the laws or the execution of laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament is illegal;

That the pretended power of dispensing with laws or the execution of laws by regal authority, as it hath been assumed and exercised of late, is illegal...

That it is the right of the subjects to petition the king, and all commitments and prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal...

That the freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament...

And that for redress of all grievances, and for the amending, strengthening and preserving of the laws, Parliaments ought to be held frequently.

And they do claim, demand and insist upon all and singular the rights and liberties asserted and claimed in the said declaration are the true, ancient and indubitable rights and liberties of the people of this kingdom, and so shall be esteemed, allowed, adjudged, deemed and taken to be...

2. The Declaration of Independence (1776)

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

3. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1791)

The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties; in order that the acts of the legislative power, as well as those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all political institutions and may thus be more respected, and, lastly, in order that the grievances of the citizens, based hereafter upon simple and incontestable principles, shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all.

Articles:

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.
4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (continued)

5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law.
6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.
7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.
8. The law shall provide for such punishments only as are strictly and obviously necessary, and no one shall suffer punishment except it be legally inflicted in virtue of a law passed and promulgated before the commission of the offense.
9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.
10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.
11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.
12. The security of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces. These forces are, therefore, established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those to whom they shall be intrusted.
13. A common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces and for the cost of administration. This should be equitably distributed among all the citizens in proportion to their means.
14. All the citizens have a right to decide, either personally or by their representatives, as to the necessity of the public contribution; to grant this freely; to know to what uses it is put; and to fix the proportion, the mode of assessment and of collection and the duration of the taxes.
15. Society has the right to require of every public agent an account of his administration.
16. A society in which the observance of the law is not assured, nor the separation of powers defined, has no constitution at all.
17. Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be deprived thereof except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it, and then only on condition that the owner shall have been previously and equitably indemnified.

APPENDIX

Answer Key

Lesson 1: Progress and Perfectibility: Condorcet

1. The “new avenue for genius” implies that great discoveries will no longer be made just by scholars, but by people of “ordinary intelligence” as well. He believes this because he sees improvements in scientific classification and definition as having made discovery accessible not just to the intelligentsia, but to virtually everyone.
2. “...by giving more people the elementary knowledge that can inspire them with a taste for more advanced study and give them a capacity for making progress in it...and that, therefore, the number of men destined to push back the frontiers of the sciences by their discoveries will grow in the same proportion.”
3. “Mechanical arts” refers to “manufactures”: items produced by artisans. Here, it almost seems that Condorcet envisions the wider reach of the Industrial Revolution, barely in its infancy at the time he wrote this essay. You may want to discuss this issue further with your students./ Improvements in the “mechanical arts” will lessen the “time and labor needed to produce [manufactures]” and will cause “...accidents... and unhealthy conditions in general” to disappear.
4. He states that “we must suppose that before that time, the progress of reason will have gone hand in hand with progress in the arts and sciences”; consequently, men will come to realize that “their object is the general welfare of the human species” and thus they would take steps so that “the possible quantity of the means of subsistence would therefore have a limit, and consequently so could the attainable level of population, without resulting in the destruction...of part of the living.”
5. “Happiness” in Condorcet’s view seems to imply a larger intellectual life for everyone, less labor, freedom from want, and a greater “equality” among members of society.
6. It will “promote the progress of education, because [education] will be extended to both sexes more equally.”
7. Preventive medicine will advance and “will eventually banish communicable or contagious illnesses and those diseases in general that originate in climate, food, and the nature of work.”
8. Answers will vary.
9. Answers will vary.

Lesson 2: Society and Government: Locke, Rousseau, the “State of Nature,” and the Social Compact

1. Men in the state of nature have the freedom to “order their actions, and dispose of their possessions as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of Nature, without asking leave or depending upon the will of any other man.”
2. Equality exists in the state of nature because men are “creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties.”
3. The law of nature is reason/Men should not “harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions,” and no man has the authority to “destroy one another.”

4. Essentially, Locke is saying that preserving the well-being of others (except when it conflicts with self-preservation) is in the interest of all who wish to live by the law of reason. Students will probably not draw this exact conclusion, so this question may be a good one to have the whole class discuss and come to a mutual understanding of the statement.
5. Answers will vary.
6. Answers will vary.
7. Rousseau seems to be saying that in the social compact, people transfer their “individual” rights they have in the state of nature to the “association.” He believes this ensures equality because “the conditions are the same for all; and this being so, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others,” since that would go against the very reason that person joined the “community” in the first place.
8. “City”—individuals living near one another but not united politically; “republic”—a group of individuals united politically under the social compact. “Citizens”—individuals who share in the collective power created by the social compact; “subjects”—people who are bound to follow the laws of the state. These definitions show how Rousseau envisions the power created by the social compact as something people both share in and are bound to follow, thus illustrating both the benefits and obligations of the social compact.
9. Possible answers: They are similar in that they both believe men are equal in the state of nature, and that societies originally arose by mutual consent. Locke, however, sees men as coming together in order to enforce the “law of nature” and punish transgressors in order to insure that “reason” prevails; Rousseau sees men coming together in order to overcome obstacles that they could not conquer individually, and for mutual protection and defense.
10. Answers will vary, but most arguments should draw on the idea that all people are equal in the state of nature (and thus no “divine right” could possibly exist), and that under the social compact no individual person has power over any other person or persons.

Lesson 3: The Powers of Government: Montesquieu

1. Legislative, executive “in respect to things dependent on the law of nations,” executive “in regard to things that depend on civil law” (or, alternately, the judicial power)/Legislative—“the prince or magistrate enacts temporary or perpetual laws, and amends or abrogates those that have already been enacted”; Executive 1—prince/magistrate “makes peace or war, sends or receives embassies; establishes the public security, and provides against invasions”; Executive 2/Judicial—prince/magistrate punishes criminals, or determines the disputes that arise between individuals.
2. Essentially, in order to have liberty people must be assured of their safety; “one man need not be afraid of another.”
3. Combining the powers will result in “tyrannical laws” executed in a “tyrannical manner.”/Dividing the powers of government keeps each part of a government from getting too strong and tending towards oppression, “arbitrary control,” “violence,” “plunder,” etc. The key phrase here is “arbitrary power,” since the opposite of that

would be power controlled by reason, and hence would be in line with Enlightenment ideals.

4. Montesquieu thinks executive power should “be in the hands of a monarch” because executive powers require “expedition” and are “better administered by one than by many.”
5. He is very concerned that the legislature should have precisely no more or less power than it needs, and he sees this as closely related to when and why the legislature should be in session. If it went too long without meeting, then “either there would be no longer any legislative resolutions, and the state would fall into anarchy; or that these resolutions would be taken by the executive power, which would render it absolute.” If it met perpetually and never adjourned, the situation would be “troublesome” and absorb too many of the energies of the executive. The legislature also should not be able to call itself to assembly, since it is “supposed to have no will but when it is assembled”; if it could call itself to session, it might “encroach on the executive power.” Ultimately, Montesquieu concludes that the executive should be charged with the power to convene the legislature, and to determine for how long the legislature should meet.
6. Since the executive power is “generally employed in momentary [i.e, temporary] operations,” it is naturally limited and does not need to be checked by the legislative power. However, should the legislative power be unchecked it would “become despotic” and “arrogate to itself what authority it pleased [and] would soon destroy all the other powers.”
7. Answers will vary, but students could point out that Montesquieu was a nobleman and would naturally be more comfortable with the executive power (which he almost certainly believed would be the domain of a nobleman) than the legislative power (which he may have disdained somewhat as a coarse expression of the lower classes).
8. Answers will vary.
9. Answers will vary.

Lesson 4: Deism: Paine and Jefferson

1. Paine claims people of all religious denominations are deists because they all believe in God. He probably does this as an argumentative tactic in order to convince his audience that he is not hostile to them and that they share important beliefs.
2. For Paine, “creation itself” proves the existence of God.
3. Deism is “happier” than other religions because it is based on reason, and does not force followers to “stifle reason” in order to accept its tenets.
4. Paine sees these written religious works as “pretended revelation,” that controvert reason and lead people to wander from “the straight path of duty and happiness, and become by turns [victims] of doubt and [dupes] of delusion.”
5. Priestcraft is against knowledge because it “supports itself by keeping people in delusion and ignorance.” In other words, the power of the church and its officials rests on having people believe the “allegories” in the Bible; but since these go against reason, it is in the best interest of the church and its priests to keep people ignorant and unquestioning.

6. Paine sees redemption as offering a “cheap, easy, and lazy way of getting to heaven” because it teaches people to “ascribe all their crimes and vices to the temptations of the devil, and to believe that Jesus, by his death, rubs all off, and pays their passage to heaven gratis.”
7. Essentially, his argument is that deism is superior because it is based on reason, and does not try to subvert it as Christianity does.
8. In this letter, Jefferson offers a response to “those who know nothing of my opinions” who he believes have unfairly portrayed him as having an “anti-Christian system” of belief.
9. He states, “To the corruptions of Christianity I am indeed opposed, but not to the genuine precepts of Jesus himself. I am a Christian, in the only sense in which he wished anyone to be: sincerely attached to his doctrines in preference to all others, ascribing to himself every human excellence, and believing he never claimed any other.”
10. Such communication would “countenance the presumption of those who have endeavored to draw them before that tribunal, and to seduce public opinion to erect itself into that inquisition over the rights of conscience which the laws have so justly proscribed.” In other words, to publicly air his religious beliefs would both lend credence to those who have criticized him and also be subject to misinterpretation and mischaracterization by his foes so that they could turn public opinion against him.
11. Jefferson believes that answering such questions would violate an individual’s legal freedom to worship as they choose because it would discourage people from viewing their relationship with God as personal and sacred, and instead lead them to alter this relationship based on public reaction to their beliefs.
12. Answers will vary, but the main difference is that Paine is virulently anti-Christian, while Jefferson still sees himself as a Christian because he follows the “precepts” of Jesus.

Lesson 5: The Rights of Women

1. Defoe is for the education of women/He argues here that blaming women for their “folly and impertinence” isn’t fair because it is entirely due to their lack of education; also, if men were denied education, they would probably commit far more “folly and impertinence” than uneducated women.
2. He says that “If knowledge and understanding had been useless additions to the sex, God Almighty would never have given them capacities; for he made nothing needless.”
3. “Music and Dancing,” languages, “graces of speech,” ability to “read books, and especially history,” and to “be able to know and judge of things when they hear of them.”
4. For Defoe, the ultimate goal of educating women is to make them “capable of all sorts of conversation.”
5. Defoe did not believe men and women should be afforded an equal place in society; at the end of the piece he states, “Not that I am for exalting female government in the least.” Also, it is notable what he leaves off his list of subjects for women to study:

science, politics, oratory, and many other pursuits that at the time were considered exclusively “male” domains.

6. She believes women are kept in ignorance “under the specious name of innocence.” She is referring to the common argument of the time that women should not be educated because it would ruin their natural “innocence” and have an overall detrimental effect on their character.
7. She sees the “most perfect education” as something that will “enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent.”/People can only become “virtuous” through “the exercise of [their] own reason.”
8. The only tangible power available to most women in her time was the power of beauty, which Wollstonecraft sees as seductive but empty. Beauty can help a woman make a man do what she wants him to, but it is an ephemeral and superficial quality that works to the detriment of the mind.
9. She claims this is because such knowledge “is acquired more by sheer observations on real life, than from comparing what has been individually observed with results of experience generalized by speculation.” In other words, women’s knowledge in this sense is coming not from the Enlightenment method based on reason and logical analysis; instead, women observe but do not have the education to properly analyze what they see.
10. She comes closer to advocating equality than Defoe, but stops well short of pushing for full equality, stating that “Let it not be concluded that I wish to invert the order of things; I have already granted, that, from the constitution of their bodies, men seem designed by Providence to attain a greater degree of virtue.”
11. Answers will vary.

Argumentative Paragraph/Essay Rubric

Structure-Introduction - states thesis/main idea - introduces main points	<p><u>Level 1 (50-59)</u> - simple opening statement - limited identification of main points</p>	SCORE
<u>Weighting</u>	<p><u>Level 2 (60-69)</u> - thesis stated but unclear - main points unclear</p> <p><u>Level 3 (70-79)</u> - thesis is stated but somewhat unclear - main points introduced with moderate clarity</p> <p><u>Level 4 (80-100)</u> - thesis is precisely stated - main points clearly introduced</p>	
Structure-Conclusion – summarizes thesis/main idea – summarizes main points	<p><u>Level 1 (50-59)</u> - abrupt ending; limited summarizing of main points</p>	SCORE
<u>Weighting</u>	<p><u>Level 2 (60-69)</u> - thesis summarized but unclear - main point summarized but unclear</p> <p><u>Level 3 (70-79)</u> - thesis summarized but somewhat unclear - main points summarized but unclear</p> <p><u>Level 4 (80-100)</u> - thesis clearly summarized - main points clearly summarized</p>	

Supporting Reasons or Arguments - arguments are related to the main idea logically	<u>Level 1 (50-59)</u> - arguments are unrelated	SCORE
<u>Weighting</u>	<u>Level 2 (60-69)</u> - arguments are unclear and not logically related to the main idea <u>Level 3 (70-79)</u> - arguments are usually clear and logically related to the main idea <u>Level 4 (80-100)</u> - arguments are quite clear and logically related to the main idea	

Evidence and Examples - relevant supporting evidence - sufficient quantity of facts used	<u>Level 1 (50-59)</u> - limited support of points, evidence mostly irrelevant - limited or unrelated facts used	SCORE
<u>Weighting</u>	<u>Level 2 (60-69)</u> - some points have been supported, some evidence not relevant - insufficient or missing some facts <u>Level 3 (70-79)</u> - most points have been supported with relevant evidence - sufficient use of facts <u>Level 4 (80-100)</u> - each point has been supported with relevant evidence - substantial facts used	

<p>Mechanics of Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - correct grammar and spelling used - use of correct citation method 	<p><u>Level 1 (50-59)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grammar and spelling used with limited accuracy and effectiveness - citation method not followed or absent 	SCORE
<p><u>Weighting</u></p>	<p><u>Level 2 (60-69)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grammar and spelling used with some accuracy and effectiveness - citation method used but with significant errors <p><u>Level 3 (70-79)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grammar and spelling used with considerable accuracy and effectiveness - minor errors in citation method <p><u>Level 4 (80-100)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - correct grammar and spelling used with accuracy and effectiveness almost all of the time - precise use of citation method 	

<p>Additional Criteria</p>	
<p><u>Weighting</u></p>	

Debate Rubric

Clear articulation of position	<p><u>Level 1</u> - position is not clearly stated</p> <p><u>Level 2</u> - position is recognized, but only clarified through prompting</p> <p><u>Level 3</u> - a clear position is stated</p> <p><u>Level 4</u> - a clear position is stated and fully articulated</p>	SCORE
Provides support for position	<p><u>Level 1</u> - limited support for initial position</p> <p><u>Level 2</u> - support for initial position is present but lacks clarity of presentation</p> <p><u>Level 3</u> - support for initial position is clearly presented and reasoned based on evidence</p> <p><u>Level 4</u> - supporting arguments for position are both reasoned and persuasively presented</p>	SCORE
Considers other positions	<p><u>Level 1</u> - limited sensitivity to other positions</p> <p><u>Level 2</u> - other positions acknowledged but not considered</p> <p><u>Level 3</u> - other positions acknowledged and considered</p> <p><u>Level 4</u> - other positions considered and effectively incorporated or countered</p>	SCORE

Effectively critiques positions		SCORE
	<p><u>Level 1</u> - limited sensitivity to other positions</p> <p><u>Level 2</u> - other positions acknowledged but not considered</p> <p><u>Level 3</u> - other positions acknowledged and considered</p> <p><u>Level 4</u> - other positions considered and effectively incorporated or countered</p>	

Oral Presentation Rubric

Your Name: _____ Topic: _____

Criteria	Possible Points	Self-Assessment	Teacher Assessment
Provided depth in coverage of topic.	10		
Presentation was well planned and coherent.	10		
Presenters were models of thoughtfulness. Personal experience integrated where relevant and appropriate. Explanations and reasons given for conclusions.	10		
Communication aids were clear and useful.	10		
Bibliographic information for others was complete.	10		
Total Possible Points	50		

Rate each category according to the following scale:

- 9–10 = excellent
- 7–8 = very good
- 5–6 = good
- 3–4 = satisfactory
- 1–2 = poor
- 0 = unsatisfactory

Related Enlightenment Web Sites

Rousseau Association

The Rousseau Association, a bilingual, international, interdisciplinary society devoted to the study of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, maintains this Web site about the man and his work. The site includes links to biographical information as well as primary source documents such as online texts of Rousseau's written works, audio files of his music, and images of Rousseau and his "world."

<http://www.wabash.edu/rousseau/>

History of Western Philosophy from 1776 to 1492: John Locke

Philosophy professor Bill Uzgalis created this Web site about the history of philosophy for his students. The site includes an extensive section on John Locke that includes a detailed timeline of his life, links to online texts of his works, and information about secondary materials on the philosopher.

<http://www.orst.edu/instruct/phl302/philosophers/locke.html>

Shaping of the Modern World: The Enlightenment

Brooklyn College's virtual course "The Shaping of the Modern World" includes an in-depth unit on the Enlightenment. The unit links to online primary sources and multimedia resources and includes a detailed outline and discussion questions about the Enlightenment.

<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/history/virtual/core4-5.htm>

Deism

Sponsored by the World Union of Deists, this Web site offers answers to frequently asked questions about Deism, essays by Thomas Paine and other Deist thinkers, and sample articles about Deism from the Union's bi-monthly publication *Think!*. The site also includes several hard-to-find essays by Paine.

<http://www.deism.com/>

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