

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

SS.7.CG.1.4 Analyze how Enlightenment ideas, including Montesquieu’s view of separation of powers and John Locke’s theories related to natural law and Locke’s social contract, influenced the Founding.

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2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated from SS.7.C.1.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changed from “Recognize how Enlightenment ideas including Montesquieu’s view of separation of powers and John Locke’s theories of natural law and how Locke’s social contract influenced the Founding Fathers.” to “<u>Analyze</u> how Enlightenment ideas including Montesquieu’s view of separation of powers and John Locke’s theories <u>related to</u> natural law and Locke’s social contract, influenced the Founding.” Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Recognize” changed to “Analyze” Benchmark Clarification Changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No changes Vocabulary Changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No changes

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

This section addresses the following topics:

1. Enlightenment Ideas
2. John Locke and Natural Rights Theory
3. Montesquieu's Ideas on Creating a "Just Government"

1. Enlightenment Ideas

"Enlightenment" is the term used to describe a Western philosophy that emphasizes reason as its primary basis. Enlightenment emerged from Europe in the 18th century, and represents a departure from the legitimacy of government that comes from a religious authority such as a theocracy or the divine right of kings. Core enlightenment values include an emphasis on liberty, individual rights and reason. Governments that reflect these values grant more freedom for the common people based on self-governance, natural rights, and natural law. Historians of America's founding argue that Enlightenment philosophy was read by those who signed key governing documents in the United States including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Key Enlightenment philosophers whose writings impacted the founding documents of the United States include Baron de Montesquieu and John Locke. Montesquieu is best known for advocating separation of powers and checks and balances for an effective government (reflected in the U.S. Constitution) while John Locke's views are best reflected in the U.S. Declaration of Independence, particularly regarding those components focusing on the law of nature and social compact.

2. John Locke and Natural Rights Theory

The founding fathers were deeply concerned about government abusing its power. It was reasoned that when a government abused its power, it deprived the citizens of their liberty. As liberty was a fundamental God given right, assurances had to be put in place to protect the people from government abusing its power.

The founding fathers consulted the works of many political philosophers when they developed government structures that protected the people from government abusing its powers. One of the most influential works was John Locke's Second Treatise of Civil Government (1690).

John Locke (1632-1704) was a British political philosopher who wrote extensively on the relationship between government and society. It was Locke's view that there was a social contract between the government and society in a civil (citizen based) government. This civil government was based on natural law, which is fundamentally tied to natural rights.

According to Locke, men lived in a "state of nature" which meant that one is allowed to conduct one's life as one best sees fit, free from the interference of others. There is no government in a state of nature, and people are assumed to be equally responsible for protecting each others' "life, health, liberty and possessions". The laws by which people lived were derived from God, and these laws included the notion that people were forbidden from harming one another. Thus, the state of nature is a state of liberty where persons are free to pursue their own interests provided that in doing so they do not harm one another.

Still, it is not uncommon for property disputes to arise. Under the state of nature there is no government to appeal one's grievances against a person who stole property or liberty (i.e. making a person a slave). Under the law of nature, men are allowed to defend their lives and their property, which includes the right to kill others

who threaten their property or liberty. This meant that there was no civil authority to settle disputes, and put the community at risk for an outbreak of war due to the lack of a civil government.

According to Locke, civil governments were established for the sake of protecting property. Because of the state of nature and law of nature from which civil governments were derived, a contract between the government and the governed had to be in place in order for that government to be legitimate. Property is the basis for Locke's argument for both a social contract and civil government because it is the protection of that property (property protection extends to a person so that one has dominion over their own bodies) that compels men to choose a civil government and abandon the notion of living in a state of nature. The social contract is a voluntary agreement between the people and the government.

These ideas show that people are born with God given (natural) rights that are protected by civil governments. Governments are created to protect that which belongs to the people. However, governments are limited in their regulation of human behavior to the extent to which the people themselves believe does not infringe on their God given freedoms. The people enter into a social contract voluntarily provided that the government is formed in a way that respects natural rights and is derived from the consent of the governed.

3. Montesquieu's Ideas on Creating a "Just Government"

The U.S. Constitution is organized around a separation of powers system that utilizes checks and balances. The power to legislate, enforce and adjudicate are separated into three different branches of government. These branches may not function with complete independence. The founding fathers feared that branches functioning independently might still abuse their power. Thus, while there are separate branches of government, each vested with specific powers, this does not mean that each branch operates without some level of oversight from one or both other branches.

Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755) was a French political philosopher whose written works on the theory of separation of powers and checks and balances had a strong influence on the founding fathers. His 1748 work, *The Spirit of the Laws* (French: "L'Esprit des Lois") was originally published anonymously and received high praise outside France, especially in Britain. Montesquieu argued that "government should be set up so that no man need be afraid of another", which was well received by the founding fathers, particularly James Madison, who believed that a clearly defined and balanced separation of powers system that utilized checks and balances would provide a stable foundation for the new government.

Montesquieu argued that government should be created to accommodate separate branches of government with equal but different powers. This way, power would not be concentrated with one individual or group of individuals. Liberty was threatened if power became concentrated in one place; thus, no branch of government could threaten the freedom of the people.

Lesson Summary

ESSENTIAL QUESTION		
How did the ideas of Montesquieu and Locke influence the Founding?		
BENCHMARK		
SS.7.CG.1.4 Analyze how Enlightenment ideas, including Montesquieu’s view of separation of powers and John Locke’s theories related to natural law and Locke’s social contract, influenced the Founding.		
CIVICS EOC REPORTING CATEGORY		
N/A		
OVERVIEW		
In this lesson, students will analyze how the two Enlightenment thinkers influenced the Founding.		
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will identify and describe the Enlightenment ideas of separation of powers, natural law, and social contract. Students will examine how Enlightenment ideas influenced the Founders’ beliefs about individual liberties and government. Students will evaluate the influence of Montesquieu’s and Locke’s ideas on the Founding Fathers. 		
BENCHMARK CONTENT LIMITS		
N/A		
CIVICS CONTENT VOCABULARY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baron de Montesquieu, checks and balances, consent of the governed, Enlightenment, individual liberty, influence, John Locke, natural law, natural rights, separation of powers, social contract 		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Close reading of complex text	Defining terms in context	Guided discussion
MATERIALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighters Influence Definition slide Influence from the Enlightenment: John Locke activity sheet Why Government? reading Declaration of Independence image John Locke and the Declaration of Independence activity sheet Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence slides Baron de Montesquieu reading 		

- Influence from the Enlightenment: Baron de Montesquieu activity sheet

B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

- ELA.7.R.3.2- Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.
- ELA.7.V.1.1- Integrate academic vocabulary appropriate to grade level in speaking and writing.
- ELA.7.V.1.3- Apply knowledge of context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials, and/or background knowledge to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words and phrases, appropriate to grade level.

Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To begin this lesson, project the definition of influence on the board using the “Influence Definition” slide. 2. Pose the following questions for discussion: How can you explain this term in your own words? Are there people in your life that influence your appearance, actions or words? Have you seen celebrities or friends wear or do something that you appreciate, so you do or wear the same thing or something similar? Have you heard something your parents or friends have said that you repeat or it has influenced what you have said? 3. Provide time for students to brainstorm independently and then share out. 4. Explain to students that the concept of influence had a significant impact on how the U.S. government was formed. Other writers and philosophers influenced the Founders while they wrote the documents that guide our government today. 5. Pass out the “Influence from the Enlightenment: John Locke” activity sheet. 6. Provide students with the following key points about the Enlightenment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The age of the Enlightenment occurred during the 18th century in Europe. ■ The Enlightenment focused on the ideas of reason, liberty, and individual rights. ■ Ideas from the Enlightenment impacted the ideas included in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. 7. Pass out the “John Locke” reading, “Why Government?” reading from iCivics. 8. Read aloud the first paragraph as a whole class. 9. Pose the following question for discussion: According to the text, whom did John Locke influence? (Thomas Jefferson) Instruct students to write the answer on their activity sheet. 10. Place students into pairs and review the vocabulary graphic organizer on the activity sheet. 11. Instruct students to read the remaining paragraphs and to complete the vocabulary graphic organizer on their activity sheet so that they define the concepts of ‘natural rights’ and ‘social contract’ by identifying evidence from the text, writing the definition in their own words and creating a visual representation (picture or symbol) of the concept. 12. Provide time for students to read and complete the graphic organizer. 13. Return student attention to the “Influence from the Enlightenment: John Locke” activity sheet and review the remaining questions on the activity sheet as a whole class: According to the reading, how are the concepts of social contract and the purpose of government related? What evidence in the text led you to your answer? 14. Provide time for the students to return to their reading and answer the questions. 15. Have students share out. 16. Remind students that in a social contract, citizens give up some of their freedoms in exchange for the government to protect their natural rights of life, liberty, and property. The protections, or laws, put into place to protect natural rights are natural laws. Have students add natural laws to their activity sheet. 17. In return, the government has a responsibility to hold up their end of the social contract. If the government does not hold up their end of the contract, citizens would no longer agree to be governed and they would have the right to revolt. This is known as ‘consent of the governed.’ Instruct students to add consent of the governed to their activity sheet.

DAY 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project this image of the “Declaration of Independence” from the National Archives, and explain the following key points about the Declaration of Independence and Thomas Jefferson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind students that, according to the reading, Thomas Jefferson was inspired by John Locke. ■ Thomas Jefferson was the primary author of the Declaration of Independence, the document that formally stated the colonies’ desire to be independent from England. ■ The Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War are what led to the colonies becoming the United States. 2. Pass out the “John Locke and the Declaration of Independence” activity sheet and project the following “Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence” slides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>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.</i> ■ <i>Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed</i> ■ <i>...whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it...</i> ■ <i>A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.</i> 3. Work as a whole class to identify how John Locke influenced these ideas. Read the excerpt aloud to the class and instruct the students to summarize the excerpt in their own words. Then, determine how John Locke influenced the excerpt. Instruct students to take notes on their activity sheet. 4. Pose the following questions for discussion: Based on these excerpts, what connection can you make between the ideas in the Declaration of Independence and John Locke’s ideas? How did John Locke influence Thomas Jefferson’s (and the other writers of the Declaration of Independence) ideas about natural rights and government? 5. Direct student attention to the question on the bottom of the activity sheet. Read the quote from President John Quincy Adams aloud and instruct students to answer the question. 6. Have students share out.
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DAY 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain to students that they are going to learn about another Enlightenment thinker that influenced the Founding. 2. Pass out the “Baron de Montesquieu” reading from iCivics and the “Influence from the Enlightenment: Baron de Montesquieu” activity sheet. 3. Read aloud the first paragraph as a whole class. 4. Pose the following question for discussion: According to the text, what document did Montesquieu influence? (U.S. Constitution) Have students write their answers on the activity sheet. 5. Instruct students to read the remaining paragraphs and to complete the vocabulary graphic organizer on their activity sheet so that they define the concepts of ‘separation of powers’ and ‘checks and balances’ by identifying evidence from the text, writing the definition in their own words and creating a visual representation (picture or symbol) of the concept. 6. Provide time for students to read and complete the graphic organizer.
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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Review the concept of separation of powers and checks and balances with the students and explain that Montesquieu believed that these concepts were important in a successful government.8. Return student attention to the “Influence from the Enlightenment: Baron de Montesquieu” activity sheet and review the remaining questions on the activity sheet as a whole class: According to the text, how did Montesquieu’s ideas influence the U.S. Constitution? What evidence in the text led you to your answer?9. Provide time for the students to return to their reading and answer the questions.10. Have students share out.11. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment):
Instruct students to write a well-crafted informative response using the following prompt:
<u>Prompt</u>
Using what you have learned from your readings, explain how John Locke and Baron de Montesquieu influenced the Founders. Provide a specific example for Locke and Montesquieu. |
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Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
Baron de Montesquieu	a philosopher who believed in separation of powers when establishing a government
checks and balances	a principle of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that allows each branch of government to limit the power of the other branches
consent of the governed	an agreement made by the people to establish a government and abide by its laws
Enlightenment	a period in European history when many educated people stressed the importance of learning and reasoning; education was considered the key to understanding and solving society's problems
individual liberty	a person's ability to be free and independent
influence	having an effect or impact on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of another or others
John Locke	a philosopher who believed in natural rights and social contract
natural law	laws passed by government to protect natural rights
natural rights	the belief that individuals are born with basic rights that cannot be taken away by governments; life, liberty, and property
separation of powers	the structure of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that sets up three branches with their own distinct powers and responsibilities
social contract	an implied agreement among the people of an organized society that defines the rights, duties, and limitations of the governed and the government

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Civics 360 Resources](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- *Democracy* by Sue Hurwitz

ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Influence from the Enlightenment: John Locke activity sheet

Sample Answers: John Locke and the Declaration of Independence activity sheet

Sample Answers: Influence from the Enlightenment: Baron de Montesquieu activity sheet

Written Response: Sample Scoring Rubric

SOURCES

Enlightenment mini lesson from iCivics:

<http://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/enlightenment-mini-lesson>

Why Government? lesson from iCivics: <https://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/why-government>

Montesquieu mini lesson from iCivics: <http://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/montesquieu-mini-lesson>

Ohio Department of Education Lesson Plan:

<http://dnet01.ode.state.oh.us/ims.itemdetails/lessondetail.aspx?id=0907f84c80531ceb>, Accessed May 2013.

John Locke: A Philosophical Founder of America:

<http://www.wallbuilders.com/libissuesarticles.asp?id=99156>

Declaration of Independence from National Archives:

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>