**A Time of New Ideas**

**Enlightenment Thinkers Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Pd. \_\_**

In the 1700’s a movement developed in Europe called the **Enlightenment**. The Enlightenment was a period of time when people developed new ideas about peoples’ basic rights and how much control they should have over their government and their futures.

1. What ideas was the Enlightenment about? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**The Social Contract**

If there was no government at all, people would live in a **state of nature** with no rules and complete freedom—but without any protection from each other, which means we could do *whatever* we wanted. One Enlightenment idea supported by **John Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Thomas Hobbes** was the **social contract**. In a social contract, citizens agree to give up some freedom they would have in a state of nature (like the freedom to rob and kill people), and in exchange the government protects citizens’ right to life, liberty, and property. To Enlightenment thinkers, the relationship between a government and its citizens was like an agreement, or a contract. Citizens agree to obey a set of rules, and the government agrees to protect citizens’ rights.

1. What form of government would a **state of nature** most likely be found in? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| **How is the relationship between government and the people (“the social contract”) like an agreement?** | **Which Enlightenment Thinkers agreed with the Social Contract?** |
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**Natural Rights**

Enlightenment thinkers like **John Locke** believed that human beings are born with fundamental, basic rights that no person can take away from you. These **natural rights** included the right to life, liberty, and property. **Life** refers to the fact that people want to live and will fight to survive. **Liberty** means that people want to be as free as possible to make their own decisions. **Property** represents the fact that people want to own things that help them survive, such as land, food, and tools. Locke believed these rights aren’t given to people—people are born with them. In order for people to enjoy these natural rights, other rights needed to be protected. Enlightenment thinkers believed people should have the right to express themselves, to move around freely, and to petition the government.

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| **Explain Natural Rights In Your Own Words:** | **Which Enlightenment Thinker believed in Natural Rights?** | **List an example of a Natural Right:** |
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**Consent of the Governed**

Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke believed that governments had a responsibility to hold up their end of the social contract. If a government failed, then citizens would no longer agree to be governed and they would have the right to revolt. This idea is known as **consent of the governed**. Traditionally, a government protected citizens from foreign invaders, but the government also had absolute authority over the people. A king ruled his citizens whether they consented or not. To Enlightenment thinkers, this was unacceptable. Nowadays, citizens show approval or disapproval of their government by voting, petitioning the government, or peacefully protesting.

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| **Explain Consent of the Governed in Your Own Words:** | **Which Enlightenment Thinker believed in Consent of the Governed?** | **List an example of how citizens show their consent (approval) or disapproval:** |
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**Separate...**

**Montesquieu** studied the laws, customs, and governments of European countries to see how they created and enforced laws. He admired the government of England. The English government had three parts: a king to enforce laws, Parliament to create laws, and courts to interpret laws. The government was divided into parts, or branches and each part had its own purpose and unique responsibilities. Today, our government is divided into three branches, the legislative (law-making), executive (law enforcer), and judicial (law interpreter). Montesquieu called this the **separation of powers.**

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| **Explain the Separation of Powers in Your Own Words:** | **Which Enlightenment Thinker believed in Separation of Powers?** | **Explain how our government’s powers are separated:** |
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**…but Equal**

Dividing the powers of government was just the first step. Each part of the government needed to be balanced with the other parts. Montesquieu thought that each of the parts, or branches, of government should be equal. He worried that if one branch had more power than the others, people would suffer and lose their freedoms. To avoid this, he suggested that each branch have the ability to limit the power of the other two branches. For example, in the U.S, if Congress tried to pass a bill that the President didn’t like, he could veto, or refuse to sign the bill into law, but if Congress had enough votes, they could override the President’s veto, passing the law anyway. Today, we call this the system of **checks and balances**.

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| **Explain Checks and Balances in Your Own Words:** | **Which Enlightenment Thinker believed in Checks and Balances?** | **List an example of how one branch of government can check the power of another:** |
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**Influence on America**

The brightest Enlightenment thinkers, with names like Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Locke, became very famous. They influenced leaders in Europe, and became popular with Americans who wanted independence. John Locke’s ideas of natural rights and consent of the governed helped to inspire Americans to break ties with England and had a large influence the Declaration of Independence.

When our Founding Fathers created a government for the new United States, they embraced many Enlightenment ideas. James Madison, the “Father of the Constitution,” liked Montesquieu’s idea that each branch of government should have a clear responsibility and that each branch should be able to limit the power of another so much that he included them in the U.S. Constitution. As a result, the U.S. Constitution clearly explains what each branch is supposed to do: **Congress** makes laws, the **President** enforces laws, and the **Courts** interpret laws. Each branch has the power to check, or limit, the other branches. This keeps all branches of government balanced and equal.

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| **Enlightenment Thinker:** | **Which American Document Did he Influence?** |
| **John Locke** |  |
| **Montesquieu** |  |