

SS.7.C.1.1

Recognize how Enlightenment ideas including Montesquieu's view of separation of powers and John Locke's theories related to natural law and how Locke's social contract influenced the Founding Fathers.

SS.7.C.1.1 Benchmark Clarification 3: Students will evaluate the influence of Montesquieu's and Locke's ideas on the Founding Fathers.

The **Founding Fathers** read the ideas of **Enlightenment** thinkers. They read John Locke's work about **natural law** and the **social contract**, and Baron de Montesquieu's work about **separation of powers**.

Locke believed that the purpose of government is to protect **individual liberties** and the **natural rights** of life, liberty and property. The Founding Fathers included these ideas when they wrote the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence stated that the colonists wanted to be a free country, independent from England.

Montesquieu saw the dangers of a government ruled by one person with all the power. Montesquieu wrote that power in government should be divided into legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Each branch would have its own roles and responsibilities. This concept is called separation of powers.

James Madison and the other Founders used the ideas of natural law, social contract, and separation of powers to create the system of government in the U.S. Constitution. The Constitution continues to be the framework for the United States government today.

Founding Fathers - representatives from each of the 13 colonies who participated in writing the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution

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

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

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

