

**The Rise of Democratic Ideas****Section 4**

# The Enlightenment and Democratic Revolutions

**Terms and Names**

**Enlightenment** Intellectual movement that started in Europe

**social contract** Agreement between citizens and the government

**natural rights** Rights all people have

**separation of powers** Division of government into separate branches

**American Revolution** Americans' fight for independence from Britain

**representative government** Government in which citizens elect representatives to make laws

**federal system** Government in which powers are divided between federal and state governments

**French Revolution** French people's fight for democratic freedoms

**United Nations** International organization established in 1945

**Before You Read**

In the last section, you read about the development of democracy in England.

In this section, you will learn how new ways of thinking about the rights of people led to the American and French revolutions.

**As You Read**

Use an outline to organize the main ideas and details in the section.

**ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS AND IDEAS (Pages 24-25)****What was the Enlightenment?**

The **Enlightenment** was an intellectual movement that developed in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. Thinkers of this movement had been influenced by the Scientific Revolution. They hoped to use reasoning instead of traditional beliefs to discover natural laws that govern society.

One Enlightenment thinker was Thomas Hobbes. He believed that the best form of government was absolute monarchy. He

said people should form a type of **social contract**, or agreement, with a ruler. They would submit to a ruler to prevent disorder.

John Locke took a different view. He said all people had **natural rights**. These were the rights to life, liberty, and property. He said people form governments to protect these natural rights. He also said people have a right to rebel against a government that does not protect their rights.

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French Enlightenment thinkers included Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Baron de Montesquieu. Voltaire fought for tolerance, freedom of religion, and free speech. Rousseau said the only legitimate government was one in which the people chose what was best for the community.

Montesquieu believed that government should be kept under control to protect people's freedoms. He believed that could best be done through a **separation of powers**. This meant dividing the government into branches that would include a lawmaking body, an executive branch to carry out the laws, and courts to interpret laws.

1. According to Locke, why are governments formed?

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### **THE BEGINNINGS OF DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA (Pages 25-27)**

#### **Why did Americans fight for independence?**

Enlightenment ideas had a strong impact on the colonists in Britain's North American colonies. The colonists helped Britain defeat France in the French and Indian War. The victory gave Britain all of North America east of the Mississippi River. To help pay for the war, the British Parliament placed taxes on the colonists. The colonists opposed these taxes because they were not represented in Parliament. This was just one of a series of measures that the colonists thought violated their rights.

The colonists fought for independence in the **American Revolution**. They issued a Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. After years of war, the British army surrendered in 1781.

In 1787, a group of American leaders met in Philadelphia. They met to set up a

new plan for governing the nation.

Enlightenment ideas helped shape this plan. The U.S. Constitution included a **representative government**, as advocated by Rousseau. This is a government in which citizens elect representatives to make laws for them. The Constitution created a **federal system**. In this system, the powers of government are divided between the federal government and state governments. The Constitution also included a separation of powers between branches in the federal government. This was based on the ideas of Montesquieu.

2. What kind of government did Americans create?

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### **THE FRENCH REVOLUTION**

(Pages 27-28)

#### **Why did the French revolt?**

In the late 1780s, there was great unrest in France. The middle class was dissatisfied with Louis XVI's weak leadership. The Enlightenment raised questions about people's rights. The economy was failing, and the peasants were hungry and restless.

In 1789 the common people formed the National Assembly. They felt that they were not represented in their government. Soon people from other classes joined them. Peasants in Paris began an uprising to win democratic freedoms. This fight is known as the **French Revolution**.

The National Assembly made many reforms. It adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. This document guaranteed certain rights to all French people. The Assembly also ended the feudal system and drafted a constitution that made France a limited monarchy.

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The work of the Assembly did not last long, however. A radical lawmaking body took charge. Soon, a Reign of Terror took place. Many who opposed the revolution were killed for their beliefs. In 1799, a military leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, took control and created a dictatorship. Democracy in France did not develop until the mid-1800s.

3. What was the French Revolution?

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**THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY  
CONTINUES (Pages 28-29)*****How does the United Nations  
promote democracy?***

It took centuries for democracy to develop throughout the world. Today, most people look upon it as the best form of government.

An international organization called the **United Nations (UN)** was established in 1945. Its goal is to keep world peace and to make people's lives better. In 1948 the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document includes such democratic ideas as the right to life, liberty, and security. It also includes rights to equal protection under the law and to the freedom to assemble.

There are many places in the world today where people do not have these rights. Recent struggles for democracy have taken place in a number of nations, including the republics of the former Soviet Union, South Africa, and East Timor.

4. What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

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As you read about the Enlightenment, take notes to show each thinker's main ideas about government.

<b>Enlightenment Thinker</b>	<b>Ideas About Government</b>
1. John Locke	
2. Baron de Montesquieu	

As you read about democratic revolutions, take notes to fill in the Venn diagram below to compare the American Revolution to the French Revolution.

