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André is a university student in France in 1762. He is sitting in a coffeehouse in Paris, talking to a friend. A strong, rich smell of coffee and a buzz of political conversation reach him from nearby tables. André and his friend Louis begin talking about a new book called *The Social Contract*. It was written by the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (roo•SOH).

Louis attends a Catholic university. He says, “Do you believe it! This Rousseau is challenging the idea that kings have a God-given right to rule. Can you imagine a government in which the king’s power is questioned? Can you imagine France without Louis XV?”

Sunlight streams through the coffeehouse windows, and André feels its warmth on his back. “But really, it’s an interesting idea,” André replies. “Don’t you think people have the right to freedom? And if they do, shouldn’t that right be the same for all people, rich and poor? Why shouldn’t the people have power to choose a government that protects their rights?”

Louis seems impatient. “Well, even if I agreed, how exactly would that happen? You can’t just ask the king to stop being king, you know. The nobility won’t give up their titles just because Rousseau thinks they should. Are you saying the people should risk their lives to overthrow the king and the nobility?”

Both suddenly look around. They have heard that the coffeehouse has royal spies. The spies hope to catch people who threaten the government and to throw them in jail. André stirs his coffee quietly. He wonders if a political storm is brewing in France. But he is afraid to say more now.

How might these new ideas change the way the French want to be governed?

1. READING: Characterization  What character traits does André show that might represent the spirit of the Enlightenment?

2. WRITING: Persuasion  Imagine that you have grown up in France in the mid-1700s, governed by an absolute monarchy. The only society you have known is one of unequals—noble and commoner, rich and poor. Write a paragraph explaining how you think you might like to be governed now that you have learned of Rousseau’s ideas.

*CALIFORNIA STANDARDS  Writing 2.4  Write persuasive compositions.*