Lesson 2

MAIN IDEAS

1 Government Inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment, some European monarchs undertook important reforms.

2 Culture Enlightenment ideas helped spark the American Revolution.

3 Government Enlightenment ideas continued to influence the United States and the world.

TAKING NOTES

Reading Skill: Summarizing

To summarize is to restate a passage in fewer words. After you read Lesson 2, write a sentence or two summarizing each of the three main sections. Use a chart like the one below to record your sentences.

Democratic Ideas Develop

\[\text{Philosophers of Democracy} \] This 18th-century box lid honors three important political thinkers—Voltaire, John Locke, and Benjamin Franklin.

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CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

7.11.5 Describe how democratic thought and institutions were influenced by Enlightenment thinkers (e.g., John Locke, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, American founders).

7.11.6 Discuss how the principles in the Magna Carta were embodied in such documents as the English Bill of Rights and the American Declaration of Independence.

HI 3 Students explain the sources of historical continuity and how the combination of ideas and events explains the emergence of new patterns.
Democratic Ideas Develop

Build on What You Know  As you have read, Enlightenment ideas were sweeping Europe. Some of the most dramatic changes in history would be required to put these ideas into practice.

Enlightened Monarchs Attempt Reforms

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  Why did some European monarchs undertake important reforms?

A few European monarchs paid close attention to the political ideas of Enlightenment thinkers. They became enlightened despots. A despot is a ruler who has absolute power; enlightened despots wanted to use their power in a just and enlightened way. Frederick II of Prussia, Joseph II of Austria, and Catherine the Great of Russia were the boldest of these rulers.

Frederick II of Prussia  Frederick II is also known as Frederick the Great. He ruled Prussia (what is now Poland and northern Germany) with absolute power from 1740 until 1786. But Frederick pleased Enlightenment thinkers when he called himself “the first servant of the state” and made several reforms.

Frederick broadened religious toleration, made the legal system more just, and allowed greater freedom of the press. He also helped improve education and outlawed torture. But Frederick did not see people as equals. He made no reforms to aid serfs, who were the lowest class in feudal society. Also, while he welcomed Catholics into his Protestant kingdom, he did not help Jews, who were oppressed in most German states.

Connect to Today

Frederick’s Palace  Sansoucci Palace, completed in 1747 and located in Potsdam, was Frederick’s summer home.
**Joseph II of Austria** In contrast to Frederick, Joseph II of Austria made widespread reforms. These reforms were based on the principles of equality and freedom. During his reign, from 1780 to 1790, he abolished *serfdom* and allowed freedom of the press and freedom of worship, even for Jews.

Like Frederick, Joseph outlawed torture and reformed the justice system. He also abolished the death penalty. No other enlightened despot made such sweeping and widespread changes. But many of these changes were opposed by the nobles and did not last past Joseph’s death.

**Catherine the Great of Russia** Catherine II, or Catherine the Great, ruled Russia from 1762 to 1796. She too saw herself as an enlightened ruler. She studied the ideas of the philosophes. Early in her reign, she set guidelines for governing based partly on the ideas of Montesquieu. Catherine also encouraged scientific farming methods and developed Russia’s natural resources. She opened hospitals and schools, including one for girls, and supported the arts.

Catherine also had plans to end serfdom. However, when a serf revolt threatened her rule, she crushed the uprising and changed her views. The revolt convinced Catherine that she needed the support of the nobles to keep her throne. So she gave the nobles absolute power over the serfs.

**Vocabulary Strategy**

*Serfdom* means being bound to the land from one generation to the next. The word is formed by adding the suffix *-dom*, which means “the condition or state of,” to the term *serf*, a peasant legally bound to live and work on a lord’s estate. Other words using *-dom* include *officialdom, dukedom*, and *stardom*.

**REVIEW** How did enlightened despots try to put Enlightenment ideas into practice?
Democracy in America

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did Enlightenment ideas help spark the American Revolution?

On a stormy day in June 1752, Benjamin Franklin was conducting an experiment on lightning and electricity in Philadelphia. He was jolted by a spark from a brass key attached to his kite’s string. In the 1770s, a different kind of spark led to a political jolt whose impact is still felt. Americans revolted against Great Britain and then created a democracy based mainly on Enlightenment ideas.

American Thinkers Many Americans studied the ideas of the Enlightenment. Some, including Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, visited Europe. They even exchanged letters with the philosophes. Franklin and Jefferson believed reason was the key to understanding both the natural and the social orders of the world.

Franklin was a creative inventor and scientist, a witty writer, and an experienced publisher and statesman. Jefferson also had wide interests and a firm belief in an individual’s ability to reason. He was a scholar, architect, philosopher, inventor, statesman, and educator. He believed that education was the key to freedom of the mind. Jefferson, like Franklin, helped promote freedom of religion.

Colonial leaders, including Jefferson and Franklin, used Enlightenment ideas about political rights and unjust rule to defend their growing opposition to British rule. In the 1770s, tensions mounted between the colonies and Britain.
Revolution and the Declaration of Independence  Conflict erupted when Great Britain tried to tax the colonies. The colonists felt they should not have to pay taxes unless they were represented in Parliament. They felt the British government was not protecting their rights. And it was not allowing representation of their interests.

On July 4, 1776, the colonies declared independence from Britain. Jefferson was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence. He used his understanding of Enlightenment ideas and his great gifts as a writer to explain the colonies’ decision to choose independence.

The declaration begins with an echo of Locke’s belief in natural law and human rights when it states that “all men are created equal.” It also reflects Locke’s thinking when it says that people have the right to form a new government if the old one fails to protect their rights. In addition, the declaration includes a list of violations of the colonists’ rights by the British king. In this way, the declaration builds on the democratic principles of the Magna Carta, the first document to limit the power of the sovereign. (See Chapter 10.)

How does the Declaration of Independence reflect Enlightenment ideas?

Background: The Declaration of Independence was mainly the work of one person—Thomas Jefferson. He was familiar with Enlightenment ideas and used them in the document. It was adopted on July 4, 1776.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed\(^1\) by their Creator with certain unalienable\(^2\) Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness; that, to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.

\(^1\) endowed: provided.
\(^2\) unalienable: unable to be taken away.

How does this passage reflect the ideas of John Locke?

DOCUMENT–BASED QUESTION

How does this passage reflect the ideas of John Locke?
**Spread of Democratic Principles**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did Enlightenment ideas continue to influence the United States and the world?

In 1783, the Americans were the victors in the war that followed their declaration of independence. Soon, they would again draw upon Enlightenment ideas. This time, they would create a lasting government that would guarantee the rights and liberties for which the American Revolution was fought. However, women and African Americans would fight for years to have these rights apply to them.

**Creating the U.S. Constitution** The first government of the United States operated under the Articles of Confederation. But the articles were too weak. In 1787, a convention was called to strengthen the federal government. Some of the nation’s best political thinkers gathered in Philadelphia. They included Franklin, George Washington, and James Madison. They debated for months in sweltering summer heat. Finally, they agreed on the U.S. Constitution. Enlightenment ideas were the basis of many of the Constitution’s principles.

In 1791, a bill of rights was added. It was modeled after the English Bill of Rights of 1689, which guaranteed basic freedoms to English citizens. The U.S. Bill of Rights gave protection to rights such as freedom of speech, religion, and the press. (See chart below.)

The success of the American Revolution and its ideas gave hope to people elsewhere that a better world was possible. It led to other revolutions and to the creation of other democratic governments.

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**Development of Democratic Ideas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Magna Carta (1215)</th>
<th>English Bill of Rights (1689)</th>
<th>Declaration of Independence (1776)</th>
<th>Declaration of the Rights of Man . . . (1789)</th>
<th>U.S. Constitution with the Bill of Rights (1791)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious freedom</td>
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<td>Free speech</td>
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<td>Right to petition government</td>
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<td>Trial by jury</td>
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<tr>
<td>No taxation without representation</td>
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<td>Protection of the law</td>
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**The French Revolution** In 1789, the French rebelled against the oppressive rule of Louis XVI. They created a revolutionary government. It adopted the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. This document laid out the rights to “liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.” These rights, like those in the U.S. Constitution, would not be given to women without many years of struggle. Still, the democratic ideas that inspired the American and French revolutions spread widely in the decades that followed.

**REVIEW** In what ways did the U.S. government use Enlightenment ideas?

**Lesson Summary**
- Enlightened despots in Europe tried to make reforms without giving up power.
- Americans used Enlightenment ideas to justify their break from Britain.
- The U.S. government is built on Enlightenment ideas and is a model for other democracies.

**Why It Matters Now . . .**
Even today, Enlightenment ideals influence people around the world who are trying to gain and to protect individual rights and freedoms.

**Using Your Notes**
**Summarizing** Use your completed chart to answer the following question:

2. What was the most important legacy of Enlightenment ideas? Explain. (7.11.5)

**Terms & Names**
1. Explain the importance of enlightened despot
   Declaration of Independence
   *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*

**Main Ideas**
3. How were Prussia, Austria, and Russia affected by Enlightenment thinkers? (7.11.5)
4. How did the Enlightenment thinkers in America influence the shape of modern democracies? (7.11.5)
5. How did the United States’ experiment in government affect the spread of democracy? (HI 3)

**Critical Thinking**
6. Drawing Conclusions Why might it have been easier for Americans than for the French to be the first to put the Enlightenment ideas into action? (7.11.5)
7. Understanding Effects What was the effect of the Magna Carta on the English Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence? (7.11.6)

**Activity**
**Internet Activity** Use the Internet to find out more about a political leader mentioned in this lesson. Then write a brief biography of that person. (7.11.5)

**INTERNET KEYWORD** leader’s name