

## New Ideas Lead to Revolution (1700s)

### The Growing Middle Class

As European nations spent more and more money on exploration and discovery, the middle class composed of merchants, bankers, lawyers, and tradesmen rose to a position of importance and wealth. This was because the nobles and clergy would not take an interest in day-to-day business, and the peasants lacked the power to do so.

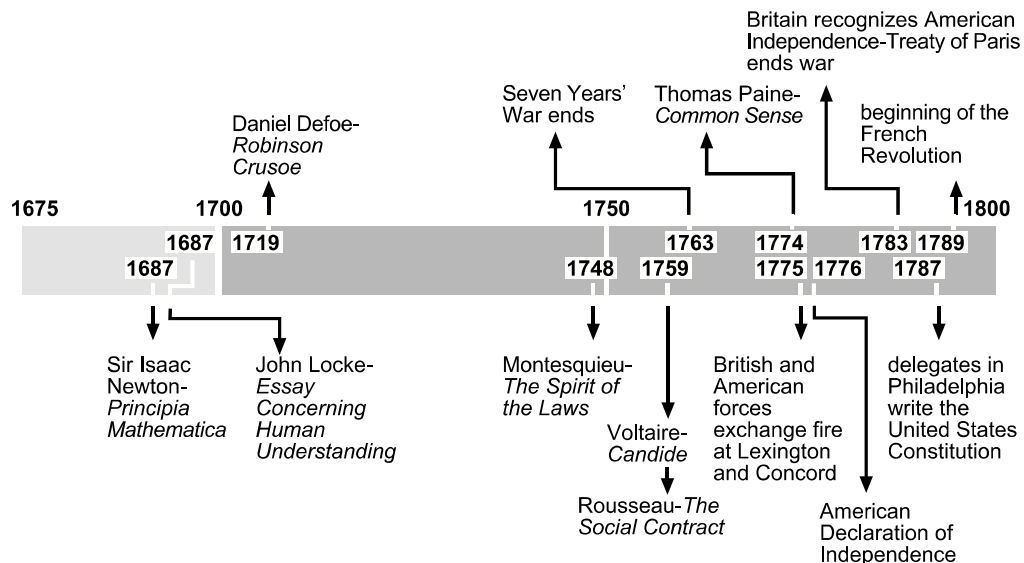
As countries such as England, France, Spain, and Holland built empires around the world, trading companies were set up which were run by middle-class merchants and bankers.

The middle class in England was represented in the House of Commons, which is similar to the House of Representatives in Congress. In France, members of the middle class were chosen to carry out policies of the government, such as tax collection.

The middle class, who paid taxes on their earnings to the government, was not only growing in size and wealth, it was gaining the strength to influence the way things were done.

The growing middle class brought about changes in the way people thought about themselves, their government, and the world around them. As the middle classes developed, they began to influence events in Europe and the world.

#### Timeline of New Ideas Lead to Revolution



## The Age of Enlightenment



French soldier

The 18<sup>th</sup> century is often called the *Age of Enlightenment* or the Age of Reason. People of the middle class began to ask questions. The result of these questions was that the role of religion and government was going to be challenged and changed forever.

Many of these changes were going to be made through **revolution**. The first revolution took place in 1776 in the English colonies in America. The second revolution occurred in 1789 in France. The French Revolution changed forever the system of government known as absolute monarchy. These revolutions were made possible by key people who were able to express the **frustrations** of the people and their hope for the future.

### Philosophies of Governing

John Locke was a **philosopher** who wrote about government. He said that all people have natural **rights** and that people set up governments to protect their natural rights. Locke wrote that there is a social **contract** between government and the people. If the government breaks the contract, Locke wrote, then the people have a right to form a new government. Thomas Jefferson studied Locke's ideas and used them when he wrote the Declaration of Independence.



Thomas Jefferson was directly influenced by Locke and Rousseau.

Baron de Montesquieu (Mon-te-scue), a French noble, wrote a book called *The Spirit of Laws*. He studied government. He wrote that government should have three parts: an executive branch to enforce laws, a legislature to make laws, and a court system to interpret laws. Jefferson studied the writings of Montesquieu. The United States of America formed its government based upon the writings of Montesquieu.

Voltaire was a Frenchman. He wrote plays which showed the foolishness of the French system of government in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Voltaire believed that religion is important, but that it should be kept separate from politics. In the United States, this is called *separation of church and state*. Voltaire also wrote that people have a right to say what they wish, even if the

government is **criticized**. Americans take freedom of speech for granted, but in the 18<sup>th</sup> century French people did not have this right. The first amendment to the Constitution of the United States **guarantees** freedom of speech.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Roo-so) was born in Switzerland. He believed that people were good before they formed governments. He said that government brings the worst out in people. However, unlike John Locke, Rousseau was against revolution. He believed that honest elections would guarantee an honest government. He believed that government should represent the *general will* of the people. This means that the government is supposed to reflect what the people want. Thomas Jefferson read the books of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Jefferson, like Rousseau, believed that to achieve good government through elections, it is important to educate the people.

### Enlightenment Philosophers

<b>John Locke</b>	English philosopher	opposed absolute monarchs; wrote that people have a right to life, liberty, and property; believed people set up governments to protect their natural rights
<b>Baron de Montesquieu</b>	French noble	wrote a book called <i>The Spirit of Laws</i> ; wrote that government should have three parts: executive, legislative, and judicial
<b>Voltaire</b>	French writer	wrote plays which showed the foolishness of the French system of government; an enemy of tyrants, he spent much of his life in exile; believed in separation of church and state
<b>Jean-Jacques Rousseau</b>	Swiss-born French writer and philosopher	believed people were good before they formed governments and that governments bring the worst out in people; believed that government should reflect what the people want

### Other Notable Figures of the Age of Enlightenment

Denis Diderot (Dee-der-o), a Frenchman, gathered together many of the ideas of the enlightenment and wrote them down in an encyclopedia. It took Diderot 30 years to complete his encyclopedia. It became popular throughout Europe.



*Sir Isaac Newton*

Sir Isaac Newton was a scientist. He discovered the laws of gravity and explained that the planets are kept in orbit because of gravity.

Edward Gibbon was an Englishman who served as a member of Parliament around the time of the American Revolution. He wrote a great history book called *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Daniel Defoe was a writer from England. He was one of the first to write novels. His greatest work, still popular today, is *Robinson Crusoe*.

Moliere was a French writer. He wrote comedies which made fun of the new middle class in France.

Mozart, like many great composers, came from Austria. His music has always been popular. Today, Mozart's music is representative of *classical music*.



*Mozart*



## The Revolt of the English Colonies in America

*“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

Thomas Jefferson wrote these words, which are at the beginning of the Declaration of Independence of the English colonies in North America. These words show that the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment were very important to the leaders of the English colonies in North America. Many historians believe that Thomas Jefferson, more than anyone else alive at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, understood these ideas.

### Thomas Jefferson...

- was a lawyer.
- was a governor of Virginia.
- was a minister to France, representing the United States.
- was Secretary of State under George Washington.
- was Vice President under John Adams.
- was the third President of the United States.
- was an architect—designed his own home, “Monticello.”
- studied chemistry, music, religion, philosophy, and education.
- founded the University of Virginia.
- died exactly 50 years after signing the Declaration of Independence.



What do these words from the Declaration of Independence tell us? The most important ideas are as follows:

- No one is better than anyone else.
- We are born with certain rights which cannot be taken away from us.
- We are free to live our lives without being told what to do by our government.
- Our freedom must never be taken away from us.
- We have a right to seek happiness in everything we do.

## Causes of the Revolution

The American colonies were first settled in the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For about 125 years, the English government left the colonies alone. When a war was fought in America between England and France in 1763, it cost a great deal of money. During this war, the colonies helped the English. This war is known in American history as the *French and Indian War*. The English won.



The English government decided that the people in the colonies should pay additional taxes to help keep an English army in America. People in the colonies were angry. They neither wanted English soldiers living among them once the war was over nor did they want to pay to keep them there. The people of the colonies felt that if they were going to pay taxes, they should be able to send elected representatives to the English Parliament. The English government disagreed.

Between 1765 and 1775, the English government passed some laws which made the colonies very angry. Here are some examples:

- English soldiers could live in colonists' homes.
- Colonists had to send all raw materials to England where goods were manufactured. Thus, colonists had to buy back goods made with their own raw materials.
- Colonists had to pay a special tax on everything they were forced to buy from England.

Unfortunately, most leaders in England did not want to accept the fact that there were problems in the colonies. Also, the English government did not follow a consistent policy towards the colonies. In other words, the English government did not follow a straight course.

The goal of the English government was to make sure the colonies knew who their boss was, but it was unable to decide how to reach its goal. By always changing its mind, the English government actually made things worse.

## The Fight for Freedom

The American Revolution began in 1775 at the Battle of Lexington near Boston. Many battles were fought. Americans began to unite and support the war effort. A man named Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet called *Common Sense*. It called upon all citizens to support the colonies. The revolution ended in 1787 when American and French soldiers defeated the English at Yorktown, Virginia. The peace treaty, the Treaty of Paris, was signed in September 1783.



Thomas Paine



Yorktown

Going into the revolution, the colonists faced many difficulties, including few weapons, an untrained army, and a shortage of supplies including bullets, food, and clothing. The colonists won their freedom for three major reasons: 1) George Washington was able to figure out how to defeat or wear down the British army; 2) France assisted with money, troops, a navy, generals, and supplies; and 3) the English government

mishandled the whole war. The English government did not understand the problems faced by their soldiers. Many soldiers and generals refused to fight against the colonists. Other important reasons for the colonists' victory were as follows.

- The colonists were fighting on land which they knew very well.
- The colonists believed in what they were fighting for.
- The colonists received help from enemies of England.
- English soldiers were fighting far away from home.

Four important results of the American Revolution were as follows:

1. The United States of America was formed.
2. A new type of government was created, called a *republic*. There was no king. The government was responsive to the people. The people were given rights in a written constitution.
3. The American Revolution gave people in Europe a chance to see that government does not have to be cruel.
4. The American Revolution inspired other revolutions and served as a model. This was especially true for the French people, who revolted against the French system of government in 1789.

## Review

As the 18<sup>th</sup> century progressed in Europe, two related things happened: 1) the middle class grew in wealth, status, and power, and 2) new ideas began to circulate in society which questioned the traditional roles of religion and state in people's lives. The ideas put forth during the Age of Enlightenment suggested that all people were born with common rights and that new, more representative forms of government were needed to secure these rights for everyone.



The freethinking mood of the Age of Enlightenment made possible events like the American Revolution. When the colonists found themselves being taxed without elected representation in the English Parliament, they acted upon the ideas of John Locke. Locke wrote that if a government breaks its contract with the people, the people have a right to form a new government. The colonists thought that they should only be taxed if they were allowed to have representatives in Parliament. Since the English government refused to grant them such representation, the

colonists felt they were justified in staging a revolution. The success of the American Revolution helped to pave the way for others, such as the French Revolution.