

## What historical circumstances led to the Enlightenment?

Objective:

- Describe what the Enlightenment was and the historical context in which it took place.

### Introduction

► **Directions:** Match the vocabulary word with the definition.

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ absolute monarch      | A. the percentage of people who are able to read  |
| 2. _____ Catholic Church       | B. the process of making an area more city-like, usually through an increase in population  |
| 3. _____ government            | C. the organized Christian church led by Pope centered in Rome  |
| 5. _____ literacy rate         | E. something you are allowed to do because you are a person   |
| 6. _____ philosopher           | F. the power of the mind to think, understand, and make sense of the world  |
| 7. _____ reason                | G. the group of people that has power to make laws and important decisions for a community, state, or nation  |
| 8. _____ rights                | H. a king or queen with complete control  |
| 9. _____ Scientific Revolution | I. one who thinks about, questions, and studies the nature of life, truth, knowledge, and other important human matters   |
| 11. _____ urbanization         | K. a period of time from the 1500s through the 1700s in which scholars started to question their beliefs about the world and base their conclusions on observation and reason rather than spiritual belief or what organizations like the Catholic Church told them |



Contextualize

## What was the Enlightenment?

► **Directions:** Read the text and watch the video linked below, then respond to the accompanying questions

In Europe, in the mid-1600s to late 1700s scholars inspired by the Scientific Revolution started to ask questions like, “*What is the purpose of government?*,” “*What is the best way for a government to rule its people?*,” and “*Are people born with rights? If so, should they be protected by a government?*” The philosophers writing about these questions were part of the Enlightenment.

### The Enlightenment

a period of time (mid-1600s to the late 1700s) in **Western Europe** when **philosophers** and **writers** applied the scientific idea of **reason to answer political questions**. The Enlightenment is sometimes known as the **Age of Reason**.

The writers who took part in the Enlightenment are called **Enlightenment Thinkers**, sometimes known as *philosophes*, the French word for philosophers. Just as scientists challenged the claims of the Catholic Church, Enlightenment Thinkers often challenged the claims of absolute monarchs. We study them because of the actions that their ideas inspired later in history.



Watch a clip from [Heroes of the Enlightenment, Episode 2 \(0:00-1:22\)](#) and read the transcript below, then answer the questions to the right.

#### Transcript:

The Age of Enlightenment began in Europe in the late 17th century. It would bring about fundamental changes in the way the world was understood and how societies were organized. Until then, the church had dictated [told people] what to think and how to live. Dissent [disagreeing with those in power] was punished even by death. But with the Enlightenment, people began to embrace new ideas about freedom of expression and new rational methods to investigate the world. In England, Newton made the foundations of science as we know it by showing that the universe was governed by physical laws that could be discovered using observation and reason. In philosophy, Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire and Diderot argued that man, not God, was at the center of the world. Ideas were beginning to change, but in the 18th century most of Europe was still [ruled by] absolute monarchs. Empowered by Enlightenment thinking in both Europe and America, people began to demand real change.

1. Based on the video and transcript, what organization had the most influence on how people in Europe lived and what they thought?

2. What changes came about as a result of the Enlightenment?



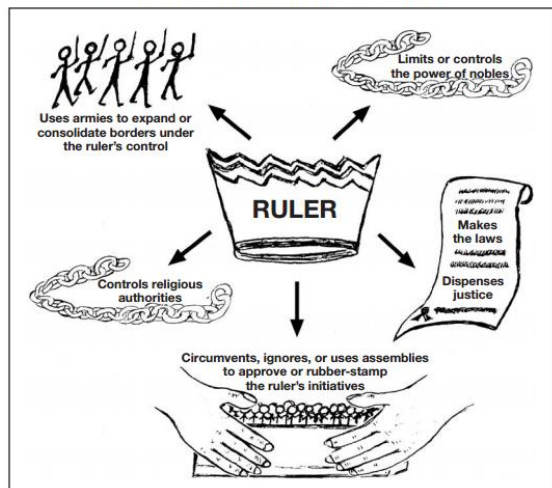
Contextualize

## What historical circumstances led to the Enlightenment?

**Directions:** Read each of the events that contributed to the start of The Enlightenment below, then respond to the accompanying question.

### 1. Power of Absolute Monarchs

Some Characteristics of an Autocrat



Source: NYS Global History and Geography Regents Exam, June, 2012.

In the 1500s, 1600s and 1700s, some monarchs in Europe became very wealthy. As a result, they were able to pay for large and powerful armies and expand their land and power. These kings and queens are known as **Absolute Monarchs**. Most of the countries in Europe were ruled by absolute monarchs in the 17th and 18th centuries. **Louis XIV of France** and **Peter the Great of Russia** were examples of absolute monarchs.

Many absolute monarchs consolidated and maintained their power by punishing those who opposed them and questioned their right to rule.

**1. How might the power of absolute monarchs have contributed to the start of the Enlightenment?**

### 2. Protestant Reformation and Scientific Revolution Influence



Martin Luther



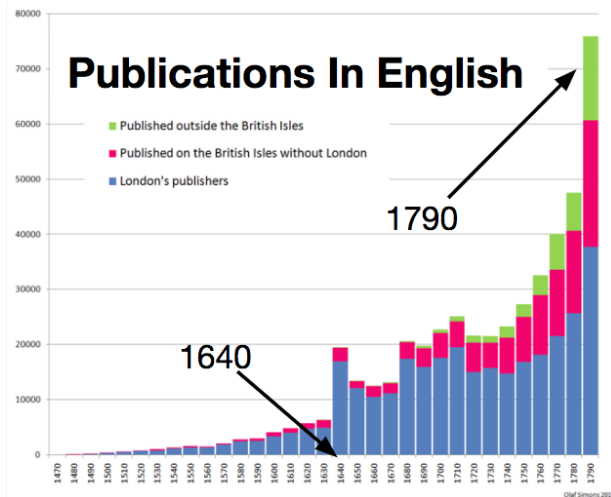
Isaac Newton

Martin Luther's actions in the Protestant Reformation challenged the Catholic Church's hold on power by translating the Bible into common languages and encouraging people to read it for themselves instead of having priests translate it for them.

Isaac Newton and other scientists used observation and reason to explain the true nature of the world which often proved the Catholic Church's claims wrong.

**2. How might the influence of the Protestant Reformation and the Scientific Revolution have contributed to the start of the Enlightenment?**

### 3. Increased Book Production and Literacy



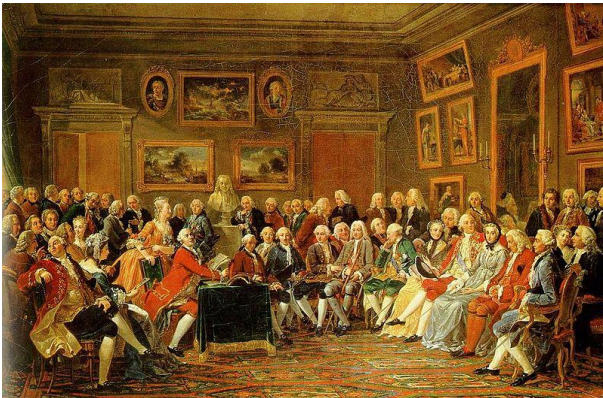
Source: English Short Title Catalogue title count, numbers of titles per decade 1477-1799. See Olaf Simons, *The English market of books: title statistics and a comparison with German data*, at Critical Threads (2013) for data and details.

Johannes Gutenberg invented his printing press around 1440. That invention made it easier and less expensive to produce books. It was very important in spreading Martin Luther's ideas during the Protestant Reformation.

During the Enlightenment, book production increased even more and **literacy** rates, the percentage of people who are able to read, also increased.

**3. How might increased book production and literacy have contributed to the start of the Enlightenment?**

### 4. Urbanization, Salons, and Coffeehouses



The picture shows a gathering of Enlightenment thinkers in the salon of French hostess Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin (1699-1777) for a reading of one of Voltaire's writings. Voltaire was in exile in England so he is represented by the statue in the center-left of the painting.

Source: Anicet-Charles-Gabriel Lemonnier, 1812.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Salon\\_de\\_Madame\\_Geoffrin.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Salon_de_Madame_Geoffrin.jpg)

During the 1700s, the process of **urbanization** (people moving to cities and the growth of those cities) increased in Europe. As more people moved to cities they found places to socialize and discuss ideas.

Coffee was a newly popular drink in Europe and intellectuals from the upper and middle classes like the **philosophes** came to coffee houses to drink it and discuss politics and religion.

Upper class philosophers also exchanged ideas in **salons**, gatherings, usually at someone's home where the guests came to listen to readings and discuss a specific topic.

**4. How might urbanization, salons, and coffeehouse have contributed to the start of the Enlightenment?**

## SQ 2: What historical circumstances led to the Enlightenment?



Connect Cause  
and Effect



Contextualize

→ **Directions:** Based on what you have learned, complete the task below.

**Example:** *The Mongol Empire gained, consolidated, and maintained power throughout Asia during the 13th century.*

**Who?**

*individuals, groups of people, regions,  
nations involved*

Roman Empire

**When?**

*date, year, era, "before \_\_," "after \_\_"*

476 CE

**Where?**

*continents, regions, countries,  
geographic features nearby, describe  
the geography if relevant*

Europe and North Africa

**Why?**

*use words and phrases like "led to,"  
because, and so to show connections  
between events and to explain why*

political turmoil, invasions, introduction of Christianity

How did this event lead to a  
turning point in history?/How  
is this event a turning point?

the end of a 500 year empire, the splitting into western Europe and Byzantine empire, birth of the dark ages

Combined Contextualization  
Example 1

In 476 CE, the Roman Empire which stretched across Europe and North Africa, collapsed because of political turmoil, invasions, and tensions caused by the introduction of Christianity. The fall of the Roman Empire ended a 500 year empire, birthing the dark ages and a Europe divided between the West and the Byzantine empire.

**Writing Strategies Used:**

Prepositional phrase (*In 476 CE*)  
Conjunctions (*because, and*)

Combined Contextualization  
Example 2

The Roman Empire, *an expansive state that stretched across Europe and North Africa*, collapsed in 476 CE due to political turmoil, invasions, and tensions caused by the introduction of Christianity. The fall of the Roman Empire ended a 500 year empire, birthing the dark ages and a Europe divided between the West and the Byzantine empire.

**Writing Strategies Used:**

Appositives (...*an expansive state that stretched across Europe and North Africa*,...)  
Conjunctions (*due to, and*)

**Content and Vocabulary Checklist**

Use the checklist below to assess the use of important content and vocabulary in the unit.

Self Yes/No	Teacher Yes/No	Did you use the content and vocabulary below in your response?
		philosophers
		absolute monarch
		literacy rate
		government
		Scientific Revolution

**Event: The Enlightenment**

**Who?**

*individuals, groups of people, regions, nations involved*

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**When?**

*date, year, era, “before \_\_,” “after \_\_”*

---

**Where?**

*continents, regions, countries, geographic features nearby, describe the geography if relevant*

---

**Why?**

*use words and phrases like “led to,” because, and so to show connections between events and to explain why*

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**Combined Contextualization**  
**Why** did it happen **when** and  
**where** it happened?

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