

Unit One: **Foundations of American Democracy**

Mrs. Erinakes' AP U.S. Government & Politics

Lesson #1

- Textbook pages 1-7
- Age of Enlightenment
- Enlightenment Thinkers
- Influence on Founding Fathers
- Colonial Background
- Mobocracy Bad = Republic is the solution
- Core beliefs in American Democracy
- 3 Theories of Democracy

The Age of Enlightenment

The **Age of Enlightenment** refers to a period in which reason was advocated as the primary basis of thought and authority. Logic and rationality were used to explain the ways in which the world worked as opposed to old traditions and superstitions.

The American Enlightenment occurred during the 18th century among thinkers in British North America and the early United States and was inspired by the ideas of the British and French Enlightenments. Based on the metaphor of bringing light to the Dark Age, the Age of the Enlightenment shifted allegiances away from absolute authority, whether religious or political, to more skeptical and optimistic attitudes about human nature, religion and politics.



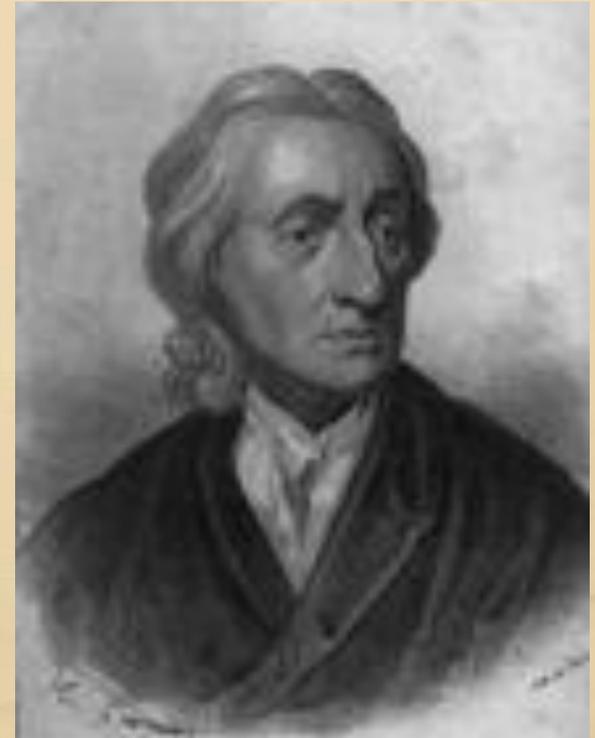
The Age of Enlightenment

In the American context, thinkers such as Thomas Paine, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin invented and adopted revolutionary ideas about scientific rationality, religious toleration and experimental political organization—ideas that would have far-reaching effects on the development of the fledgling nation.

Free speech, individualism, and tolerance for other ways of life also became important ideas during this time. This period also coincided with the rise of nationalism and introduced great thinkers who later influenced developing democratic governments including the government of the United States.

Enlightenment Thinkers

John Locke was perhaps the foremost philosopher of the Enlightenment. He believed that a government was legitimate only if the people it ruled consented to its authority. He also believed the government should protect the natural rights of citizens and that all individuals should be equal under the law. These principles were influential in the development of many movements, including the American Revolution. American documents such as the Declaration of Independence demonstrate the influence of Locke's ideas.



Enlightenment Thinkers

Thomas Hobbes was perhaps the first person to develop social contract theory. He believed strongly that people naturally give up certain rights to a government in order to maintain social order. Hobbes' idea of social order was based on the thought that without government structure, people would fight each other and would never know peace. Hobbes states that "The natural state of men, before they were joined in society, was a war, and not simply, but a war of all against all." Hobbes believed that the only cure for such a war was the creation of a strong government with almost absolute power. He believed that people would freely give up their right to govern themselves in order to know peace.



Enlightenment Thinkers

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a Swiss philosopher, writer, and Enlightenment thinker. Much of his philosophy influenced the French Revolution. Rousseau argued that each person is born free and cannot be made a subject of a government without his consent. If a person does not consent, he is not part of the social compact. Finally Rousseau reasoned that majority rule would bind the rest of citizens.



Enlightenment Thinkers

Charles-Louis Montesquieu was a French political thinker known for his ideas regarding the government's separation of powers. In his work entitled *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu argued against one large government structure controlling every aspect of law and instead proposed the idea of separate branches.



Influence on Founding Fathers

Citizens began to demand more of a voice in their government, as well as an end to the absolutist regimes that controlled their countries and limited the rights of citizens. Enlightenment ideas also inspired independence movements, as colonies sought to create their own country and remove their European colonizers. Governments also began to adopt ideas like natural rights, popular sovereignty, the election of government officials, and the protection of civil liberties.



United States

- British colonies are upset with their lack of representation in Parliament, oppressive taxes
- British colonies rebel against their mother country, resulting in the American Revolution
- Connection to Enlightenment:
 - Declaration of Independence - Right to life, liberty, pursuit of happiness; all men are created equal; right to overthrow government
 - Constitution - Based on popular sovereignty, created a new 3 branch government, used checks and balances
 - Bill of Rights - Protected the rights of free speech, religion, press, assembly

The Colonial Background

1607: Jamestown, Virginia = representative assembly

1620: Separatists & the Mayflower Compact (Plymouth, MA)

More and more colonies were Living under the *rule of law*, based on the consent of the people.

More colonies, more government ; **limited government**



British Restrictions & Colonial Grievances



King George III (1738-1820) was king of Great Britain and Ireland from 1760 until his death on January 29, 1820. Under George III, the British Parliament attempted to tax the American colonies. Ultimately, exasperated at repeated attempts at taxation, the colonies proclaimed their independence on July 4, 1776.

- ✓ 1st Continental Congress
- ✓ 2nd Continental Congress
- ✓ Declaration of Independence

Key Words in Important Vocabulary

Look at the 5 words below and try to write a **BRIEF** definition for each **using as few words as possible**, **BUT** your few words should contain the **KEY words** that differentiate one from the other:

1. Democracy (16)
2. Direct Democracy (16)
3. Representative Democracy (19)
4. Constitutional Democracy (20)
5. Limited Government (20)

WHY WAS DEMOCRACY SEEN AS A BAD THING TO THE FOUNDING FATHERS?

Democracy has only enjoyed a positive meaning in the last 100 years

Distinguishing feature of democracy is that government **derives authority from its citizens**

DIRECT DEMOCRACY

- Rule by the people and
 - 1) individual participation on legislation or policy or
 - 2) making decisions without delegating authority to elected representatives
- Only example in original Constitution is the election of House of Representatives

Modern day examples:

- **Election of United States Senators** – 17th Amendment
- **Direct primary** - voters, rather than party leaders or other elected officials, select who may run for office
- **Referendum** - procedure for submitting to popular vote measures passed by the legislature or proposed amendment to a state constitution (can only be done at the state level)
- **Initiative** - procedure whereby a certain number of voters may, by petition, propose a law or constitutional amendment and have it submitted to the voters (can only be done at the state level)
- **Recall** - procedure for submitting to popular vote the removal of officials from office before the end of their term (can only be done at the state level)

Founding Fathers feared direct democracy >> fear of MOB RULE or MOBOCRACY

HOW WAS A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY (REPUBLIC) BETTER?

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

- Authority is delegated to elected representatives to make decision on behalf of citizens
- People vote >> Representatives >> make law (public policy)
- This is today's meaning of democracy
- Representative democracy = republic
- Republic
 - Same as indirect democracy
 - Solves problems of direct democracy
 - “Secures the advantages of direct democracy while curing its weaknesses”

A Constitutional democracy is based on 3 relationships: federalism, separation of powers, and checks & balances. [3 minute video](#)

WHAT ARE THE CORE BELIEFS IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY?

1. Individual liberty

- All individuals must have the opportunity to realize individual goals
- Every individual has rights; these rights are the source of all legitimate governmental authority and power
 - John Locke and the social contract theory
- Freedom of expression; Right to assemble and protest

2. Popular consent

- Governmental power from people
- A willingness to lose if majority removes support

3. Equality of opportunity

- Jefferson's Declaration of Independence statement (“All men are created equal”)
- What kind of equality? Equality of opportunity?

Theories of Democracy:

1. *Participatory Democracy*

- Relies on the direct participation of many, if not most, people in society. People vote directly for laws and other matters that affect them instead of voting for people to represent them.

2. *Pluralist Democracy*

- Citizens and groups (interest groups) organize to try and influence / control political decision-making.
- Pluralist theorists believe that the ideas and viewpoints in the U.S. are so varied and scattered that no single view can control the shaping of policy

3. *Elite Democracy*

- Elected representatives act as trustees and make the decisions for the people who elect them.
- Recognizes an inequity in the decision of power and believes the elites (people with resources and influence) dominate

ALL ARE THEORETICAL – NONE ARE CORRECT / INCORRECT
WHICH DO YOU BELIEVE MOST INFLUENCED OUR GOVERNMENT?