

Enlighten Me

Influential Enlightenment Ideas

Benchmark: SS.7.C.1.1 Recognize how Enlightenment ideas including Montesquieu’s view of separation of powers and John Locke’s theories related to natural law and how Locke’s social contract influenced the Founding Fathers.

Clarifications/Objectives:

- Students will identify and describe the Enlightenment ideas of separation of powers, natural law, and social contract.
- Students will examine how Enlightenment ideas influenced the Founders’ beliefs about individual liberties and government.
- Students will evaluate the influence of Montesquieu’s and Locke’s ideas on the Founding Fathers.

Time: One class period

Materials:

- Enlighten Me PowerPoint
- Dry erase boards or signs labeled “Natural Law”, “Social Contract”, and “Separation of Powers” for small groups of students (optional, activity can be done with students calling out the answers)
- Computer
- Projector

Lesson Preparation

- Review all handouts and PowerPoints
- Print and review the PowerPoint in “notes view”. The PowerPoint includes notes to guide the lesson.
- Decide on method of participation for the activity (signs v. call out)

Lesson Overview

Warm Up Question: What was the Enlightenment? *Students should have been exposed to the Enlightenment in 6th Grade world history. Topic will be explained if students are not familiar.*

Briefly review the Enlightenment with students as the “Age of Reason” where there were significant developments in science, philosophy, politics, and society.

Working individually or in small groups, have students define “Natural Law”, “Social Contract”, and “Separation of Powers” to be best of their ability. Discuss student responses. Each concept will be explored in depth in the following slides. Where the presentation provides visual cues for remembering these concepts, students are encouraged to create their own devices to cue their memory.

Quotes and Concepts Activity Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students. The following slides contain quotes from several primary sources including the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, The Federalist Papers, and the U.S. Constitution. As the quote comes up, students should use context clues to determine if the quote addresses “Natural Law”, “Social Contract”, or “Separation of Powers”. Depending on the method, students should write down their response or raise their hand to

answer verbally. Teams can also name the person affiliated with the concept to get extra points. Keep a scoring system during the game to determine which team matched the most concepts to the quotes.

Debrief the activity Explain that these key Enlightenment concepts had a significant impact on the Founders of our nation and that impact can be seen in the documents that created our nation and government. Review the visuals used to help students remember the concept.

Check for Understanding The final slide will include a question from the End of Course Exam Item Specifications book. Have the students independently write down their answer and ask student to explain how they made their decision.