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WC-Enlightenment DBQ

The Main Idea of the Enlightenment

Isaac Newton help start the idea of Enlightenment when he discovered that Earth was held in place by a force he called gravity and that gravity held the planets in place around an unmoving sun. This showed that if there are rules for the sky there must be rules for how people behave, this help start the Age of Reason. The Enlightenment was from the 17th and 18th century, it was also called the Age of Reason. A question a lot of people asked is what was their main ideas. The main ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers was freedom in government, religion, economics, and gender equality for every individual in society.

The first main idea of the thinkers was government. The main person who talked about this is John Locke, John Locke is an English philosopher who lived through the English civil war and the Glorious Revolution. Locke believed that the people should choose their own government and if it fails them the people can abolish it this is a quote from him “When the government is dissolved, the people are at liberty to provide for themselves…”(Locke 13). This shows that Locke believed that people should choose their own government.

Meanwhile another thinker was changing religion. His name is Voltaire, Voltaire was born in Paris in 1694. Voltaire believed that everyone had a right to their own religion. Voltaire believed that no matter what your religion is or where it is from that it should be allowed. Here is a quote from him “But as there are such a multitude, they all live in peace…(Voltaire 15). This proves that Voltaire believed that everyone can have their own religion.

At the same time a man was fighting for free economic decisions by the people for the people. This mans name is Adam Smith. Smith lived in England, he thought that England's economy should have been ran by numerous amount of people and not just the king or queen. Smith believed people had a right to pursue anything they want and that would lead to a good economy. “Every man… is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest in his own way…”(Smith 17). That proves that Adam Smith believes in a free market society.

Perhaps the most interesting thinker was Mary Wollstonecraft. Many believed that men and women should be treated equally. She fought for a long time for this. Mary thought that women should not be dependent on men. This is true in this quote. “It is fierce to call any being virtuous whose [skills] do not result from the exercise of [her] own reason…” (Wollstonecraft 19). That proves that Mary fought for equal gender rights.

Altogether these thinkers are not alive today they still have a major impact on society today. All these philosophers ideas are in America. Like Lockes freedom of government, Voltaires free religion, Smiths freedom in economics, and Wollstonecraft's freedom in gender equality. These are just the few people who helped start the enlightenment process.