**THE ENLIGHTENMENT**

The "Enlightenment" was not a single movement or school of thought. The ideas of the Enlightenment were often referred to as not only a set of ideas, but a set of values. The Enlightenment is held to be the source of critical ideas, such as the centrality of [freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_%28political%29), [democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy), and [reason](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reason) as primary values of society.

Enlightenment is defined as: A philosophical movement of the 18th century that emphasized the use of reason to scrutinize previously accepted doctrines and traditions and that brought about many humanitarian reforms. It can be thought of as a movement that helped change ideas about government that put more emphasis on the rights of man, and less absolute power than that of a tyrant or dictator. European ideas, pertaining to the Enlightenment, during the 17th – 18th centuries, concerning God, reason, nature, and man were blended into a worldview that inspired revolutionary developments in art, philosophy, and politics. Enlightenment beliefs support the idea that an individual person’s thoughts has value and governmental organizations should protect the freedom for individuals to act accordingly, within a certain framework of laws that are for the good of the whole.

**JOHN LOCKE**

Born in 1632 to a wealthy middle class English family, John Locke studied medicine at Oxford University. Later in his life, Locke published two treatises on the order of government. These were considered influential works in the American and French revolutions. Locke’s argument was that revolution against tyranny was an acceptable form of rebellion to bring legitimate rule to a nation. He believed that the main purpose of any government was to protect the natural rights of its people.

His ideas on universal education that would help a child become a well rounded individual remain with us still. Locke retired to the country to live with friends and passed away in 1704, before America became an independent nation, but many of his works would influence the birth of a democratic America and the resistance of governments with absolute power.

Without Locke’s suggestion that divine kingship was morally wrong and that democratic rights were the goal of any government, the French and American revolutions may have been very different, if they happened at all. Locke’s work on education underlies the public school. His thoughts on theology helped people find a path to religious freedom. John Locke created foundational theories for a period of history full of change and dissent. Like many from his time period, Locke made history by thinking outside the box – something every schoolchild learns today as a matter of course.

**Describe two ways in which the beliefs during the time of Enlightenment and John Locke’s personal beliefs (during the Enlightenment) helped influence the development of the Declaration of Independence and later the government of the United States of America.**

* **emphasis on man (rights) and not ruler**
* **individuals have freedom of thought**
* **government should protect rights of people**
* **we have religious freedom**
* **governments should provide a framework of laws that are for the good of all people**