The Enlightenment Influences Montesquieu & Locke

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Foundations of American Government
The Founding Fathers were creating a country, unlike any other. They looked for inspiration from Enlightenment philosophers to solve the following issues:

- Creating Governments
- Writing Constitutions
- Establishing Rights
- Creating a Country and getting rid of the British
The Enlightenment

The Age of Enlightenment (or simply the Enlightenment or Age of Reason) was an era from the 1620s to the 1780s in which cultural and intellectual forces in Western Europe emphasized reason, analysis, and individualism rather than traditional lines of
In other words, during the Enlightenment, people began to think about how life could be better. This included how governments could be better.
The Enlightenment

Big Ideas On Government:

• The natural world & human behavior is governed by laws
• Government should reflect natural law
John Locke – Philosopher

One of the philosophers the Founding Fathers turned to was John Locke, who wrote a famous book, "Two Treatises of Government"
John Locke - State of Nature

Take a moment and think about what life would be like if there was no government? Write down some of your ideas.

Hmm, why do we need a government?
Locke is famous for his ideas on a “State of Nature”. He questioned what life would be like if there were no governments?
Locke said people are by nature good, but greedy, and without rules they would take advantage of each other.
According to John Locke, all people are entitled to certain “Natural Rights” that all governments should protect.
John Locke – Natural Rights

According to John Locke:

- All men should be **free** and **equal**. They are born and should have **natural rights**.
- Man is good, but greedy and **needs government** to **protect** natural rights.
- The only **purpose of government** is to protect: **Life, Liberty and Property**.
John Locke on Natural Rights

“The Natural Liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the authority of man, but only to have the Law of Nature for his rule.”

— John Locke

John Locke (1632-1704)

- The state of nature
  - The ideal state, but...
  - People tend to do as they wish
  - People tend to violate the natural rights of others
- Governments secure natural rights
John Locke is also famous for his ideas about the “Social Contract.” A social contract is an implicit agreement among the members of a society to cooperate for social benefits, for example by sacrificing some individual freedom for state protection.
For example, with the social contract, I give up the right to drive like a maniac in exchange for safer streets.
Social Contract – people enter into an “agreement” with the government and must give up the right to do certain things, but they get back protection from the government.
John Locke’s influence on The Declaration of Independence

I used a lot of John Locke’s ideas when writing the Declaration

Thomas Jefferson
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John Locke</th>
<th>Thomas Jefferson</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Rights</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unalienable Rights</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Contract</strong></td>
<td><strong>Consent of the governed</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Life, liberty &amp; property</strong></td>
<td><strong>Life, liberty &amp; pursuit of happiness</strong></td>
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Another Enlightenment philosopher that greatly influenced the Founding Fathers was Montesquieu.

I gave them the idea of separating the government into three branches!
The colonists thought that I, King George III of England, had too much power!!
Montesquieu – Separation of Powers

The Founding Fathers and the colonists were scared of any part of the government having too much power!
Montesquieu – Separation of Powers

“When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty.”
Montesquieu – Separation of Powers

At the Constitutional Convention they made sure to divide power into three branches, like Montesquieu suggested.
Montesquieu – Separation of Powers

Legislative  →  Makes Laws
Executive   →  Executes (enforces) the Law
Judicial    →  Interprets the Law
The framers to the Constitution also put “checks” on each branch of government to further limit their power.
Montesquieu – Influence

Executive – President – Enforces Laws

Legislative – Congress – Makes Laws

Judicial – Supreme Court – Interprets Laws
Montesquieu / Locke Review

The Enlightenment was a time of learning, knowledge and philosophy

John Locke:

- Natural Law
- Social Contract
- Influenced the Declaration of Independence

Montesquieu:

Separation of Powers / Checks and Balances
Influenced the Founding Fathers

- Creating Governments
- Writing Constitutions
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