Essential Question:
Who were the key figures and concepts during the Enlightenment and how can we see their influence in the world today?

Instructions:
1. (Packet users) Using the reading packet given to you (Lesson 3: Enlightenment Spreads) answer the following questions on your own paper. Hold your written answers until time to return all your work. (Google Classroom users) Read the information from the book that is given to you. Answer each question listed below. When you are finished you can submit your work on Google Classroom.
2. If you are using a packet, please put your completed work in a safe place where you can easily find it when the time comes to collect the work.
3. Each question should be answered using complete sentences.

Questions:
Read Section 3 (provided to you here) from the book and answer the following questions:
1. Why did the Catholic Church seek to censor the writings of Enlightenment thinkers? (2-3 sentences)
2. How did Mary Astell explain the relationship between Enlightenment ideas and the reality of women in European society? (2-3 sentences)
3. How accurately does the term enlightened despot describe Catherine the Great? Explain. (2-3 sentences)
4. What advantages did salons have over earlier forms of communications in spreading ideas? (2-3 sentences)
5. How did Diderot’s Encyclopedia spread Enlightenment thinking? (2-3 sentences)
6. To what extent did the Enlightenment ideal of social equality affect the lives of contemporary peasants, serfs and slaves? (2-3 sentences)
7. The Enlightenment produced many significant and revolutionary ideas. Review these ideas and choose two that are still used today and explain how they impacted the world for the better. Your explanation should be 1-2 paragraphs.
The Enlightenment Spreads

Setting the Stage

The philosophes' views about society often got them in trouble. In France, it was illegal to criticize either the Catholic Church or the government. Many philosophes landed in jail or were exiled. Voltaire, for example, experienced both punishments. Nevertheless, the Enlightenment spread throughout Europe with the help of books, magazines, and word of mouth. In time, Enlightenment ideas influenced everything from the artistic world to the royal courts across the continent.

A World of Ideas

In the 1700s, Paris was the cultural and intellectual capital of Europe. Young people from around Europe—and also from the Americas—came to study, philosophize, and enjoy the culture of the bustling city. The brightest minds of the age gathered there. From their circles radiated the ideas of the Enlightenment.

The buzz of Enlightenment ideas was most intense in the mansions of several wealthy women of Paris. In their large drawing rooms, these hostesses held regular social gatherings called salons. At these events, philosophers, writers, artists, scientists and other intellects met to discuss ideas.

Diderot’s Encyclopedia

The most influential of the salon hostesses in Voltaire’s time was Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin (zhuh•frehn). She helped finance the project of a leading philosophe named Denis Diderot (DEE•duh•roh). Diderot created a large set of books to which many leading scholars of Europe contributed articles and essays. He called it Encyclopedia and began publishing the first volumes in 1751. The Enlightenment views expressed in the articles soon angered both the French government and the Catholic Church. Their censors banned the work. They said it undermined royal authority, encouraged a spirit of revolt, and fostered “moral corruption, irreligion and unbelief.” Nonetheless, Diderot continued publishing his Encyclopedia. The salons and the Encyclopedia helped spread Enlightenment ideas to educated people all over Europe. Enlightenment ideas also eventually spread through newspapers, pamphlets, and even political songs. Enlightenment ideas about government and equality attracted the attention of a growing literate middle class, which could afford to buy many books and support the work of artists.

New Artistic Styles

The Enlightenment ideals of order and reason were reflected in the arts—music, literature, painting, and architecture.

Neoclassical Style Emerges

European art of the 1600s and early 1700s had been dominated by the style called baroque, which was characterized by a grand, ornate design. Baroque styles could be seen in elaborate palaces such as Versailles in France and in numerous paintings.

Under the influence of the Enlightenment, styles began to change. Artists and architects worked in a simple and elegant style that borrowed ideas and themes from classical Greece and Rome. The main artistic style of the late 1700s is therefore called neoclassical (“new classical”). Science played an important role in this trend: neoclassical artists were inspired by archaeological discoveries about the classical world.

Changes in Music and Literature

Music styles also changed to reflect Enlightenment ideals. The music scene in Europe had been dominated by such composers as Johann Sebastian Bach of Germany and George Friedrich Handel of England. These artists wrote dramatic organ and choral music. During the Enlightenment, a new, lighter and more elegant style of music known as classical emerged. Three composers in Vienna, Austria, rank among the greatest figures of the classical period in music. They were Franz Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven.

Writers in the 18th century also developed new styles and forms of literature. A number of European authors began writing novels, which are lengthy works of prose fiction. Their works had carefully crafted plots, used suspense and explored characters’ thoughts and feelings. These books were popular with a wide middle-class audience who liked the entertaining stories written in everyday language. Writers, including many women, turned out a flood of popular novels in the 1700s.
Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* is often considered the first true English novel. It tells the story of a young servant girl who refuses the advances of her master. Another English masterpiece, *Tom Jones*, by Henry Fielding, tells the story of an orphan who travels all over England to win the hand of his lady.

**Women and the Enlightenment**

During the Enlightenment period, European women generally had few legal or property rights. Although the philosophes challenged many assumptions about government and society, they often took a traditional view toward women. Rousseau, for example, developed many progressive ideas about education. However, he believed that a girl’s education should mainly teach her how to be a helpful wife and mother. Other male social critics scolded women for reading novels because they thought it encouraged idleness and wickedness. Enlightenment writers even used scientific discoveries about female anatomy to support the view that women were only suited for domestic roles. Still, some male writers argued for more education for women and for women’s equality in marriage.

Women writers also tried to improve the status of women. In 1694, the English writer Mary Astell published *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. Her book addressed the lack of educational opportunities for women. In later writings, she used Enlightenment arguments about government to criticize the unequal relationship between men and women in marriage. She wrote, “If absolute sovereignty be not necessary in a state, how comes it to be so in a family? . . . If all men are born free, how is it that all women are born slaves?”

During the 1700s, other women picked up these themes. Among the most persuasive was Mary Wollstonecraft, who published an essay called *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. In the essay, she disagreed with Rousseau that women’s education should be secondary to men’s. Rather, she argued that women, like men, need education to become virtuous and useful. Wollstonecraft also urged women to enter the male-dominated fields of medicine and politics.

Women made important contributions to the Enlightenment in other ways, such as the salons you read about earlier in this lesson. One woman fortunate enough to receive an education in the sciences was Emilie du Châtelet (shah•tlay). Du Châtelet was an aristocrat trained as a mathematician and physicist. By translating Newton’s work from Latin into French, she helped stimulate interest in science in France.

**Enlightenment and Monarchy**

From the salons, artists’ studios, and concert halls of Europe, the Enlightenment spirit also swept through Europe’s royal courts. Many philosophes, including Voltaire, believed that the best form of government was a monarchy in which the ruler respected the people’s rights. The philosophes tried to convince monarchs to rule justly. Some monarchs embraced the new ideas and made reforms that reflected the Enlightenment spirit. They became known as enlightened despots. Despot means “absolute ruler.”

The enlightened despots supported the philosophes’ ideas. But they also had no intention of giving up any power. The changes they made were motivated by two desires: they wanted to make their countries stronger and their own rule more effective. The foremost of Europe’s enlightened despots were Frederick II of Prussia, Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II of Austria and Catherine the Great of Russia.

**Frederick the Great** Frederick II, the king of Prussia from 1740 to 1786, committed himself to reforming Prussia. He granted many religious freedoms, reduced censorship, and improved education. For example, he issued an edict requiring children in Prussia to attend primary schools. He also reformed the justice system and abolished the use of torture. In addition, he improved his army by giving promotions based on merit and hard work rather than on the basis of class. However, Frederick’s changes only went so far. For example, he believed that serfdom was wrong, but he did nothing to end it since he needed the support of wealthy landowners. As a result, he never tried to change the existing social order.

Perhaps Frederick’s most important contribution was his attitude toward being king. He called himself “the first servant of the state.” From the beginning of his reign, he made it clear that his goal was to serve and strengthen his country. This attitude was clearly one that appealed to the philosophes.
Joseph II The most radical royal reformer was Joseph II of Austria. The son and successor of Maria Theresa, Joseph II ruled the Holy Roman Empire with his mother starting in 1765 and ruled Austria alone from 1780 to 1790. He introduced legal reforms and freedom of the press and expanded education opportunities within Austria. He also supported freedom of worship, even for Protestants, Orthodox Christians, and Jews. In his most radical reform, Joseph abolished serfdom and ordered that peasants be paid for their labor with cash. Not surprisingly, the nobles resisted this change. Like many of Joseph’s reforms, it was undone after he died.

Catherine the Great The ruler most admired by the philosophes was Catherine II of Russia, known as Catherine the Great. She ruled from 1762 to 1796. The well-educated empress read the works of philosophes and she exchanged many letters with Voltaire. She ruled with absolute authority but also sought to reform Russia. In 1767, Catherine formed a commission to review Russia’s laws. She presented it with a brilliant proposal for reforms based on the ideas of Montesquieu and Beccaria. Among other changes, she recommended allowing religious toleration and abolishing torture and capital punishment. Her commission, however, accomplished none of these lofty goals.

Catherine eventually put in place limited reforms, but she did little to improve the life of the Russian peasants. Her views about enlightened ideas changed after a massive uprising of serfs in 1773. With great brutality, Catherine’s army crushed the rebellion. Catherine had previously favored an end to serfdom. However, the revolt convinced her that she needed the nobles’ support to keep her throne. Therefore, she gave the nobles absolute power over the serfs. As a result, Russian serfs lost their last traces of freedom.

Catherine Expands Russia Peter the Great, who ruled Russia in the early 1700s, had fought for years to win a port on the Baltic Sea. Likewise, Catherine sought access to the Black Sea. In two wars with the Ottoman Turks, her armies finally won control of the northern shore of the Black Sea. Russia also gained the right to send ships through Ottoman-controlled straits leading from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea.

Catherine also expanded her empire westward into Poland. In Poland, the king was relatively weak, and independent nobles held the most power. The three neighboring kingdoms—Russia, Prussia, and Austria—each tried to assert their influence over the country. In 1772, these land-hungry neighbors each took a piece in what is called the First Partition of Poland. In further partitions in 1793 and 1795, they grabbed up the rest of Poland's territory. With these partitions, Poland disappeared as an independent country for more than a century.

By the end of her remarkable reign, Catherine had vastly enlarged the Russian empire. She also made significant improvements to Russia’s government administration and economy. But as she developed Russia into an international power, she lost sight of the ideals she held at the beginning of her reign. Instead of promoting justice in Russian society, she became known as a tyrant.

Legacy of the Enlightenment

Over a span of a few decades, Enlightenment writers challenged long-held ideas about society. They examined such principles as the divine right of monarchs, the union of church and state, and the existence of unequal social classes. They held these beliefs up to the light of reason and found them in need of reform. The philosophes mainly lived in the world of ideas. They formed and popularized new theories. Although they encouraged reform, they were not active revolutionaries. However, their theories eventually inspired the American and French revolutions and other revolutionary movements in the 1800s. Enlightenment thinking produced three other long-term effects that helped shape Western civilization.

It is difficult to tell how deeply these ideas spread into European societies. Educational reforms expanded the reading public during this period and books and periodicals became more easily available. Ideas also spread informally through salons and literary clubs. Yet many working-class people, especially in rural areas, still could not read. Although we don’t know what information spread by word of mouth, it is likely that most poorer Europeans had little exposure to the Enlightenment.
Belief in Progress The first effect was a belief in progress. Pioneers such as Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton had discovered the key for unlocking the mysteries of nature in the 1500s and 1600s. With the door thus opened, the growth of scientific knowledge seemed to quicken in the 1700s. Scientists made key new discoveries in chemistry, physics, biology and mechanics. The successes of the Scientific Revolution gave rise to a belief in social progress. Leading thinkers of the age were confident that humans, using reason, could find ways to solve society’s problems.

Many philosophes and reformers urged an end to the practice of slavery and argued for greater social equality, as well as a more democratic style of government. The idea of universal human rights was central to these social reform movements. However, some Enlightenment thinkers, including Voltaire, viewed Africans and other nonwhite peoples as inferior. Eighteenth-century ideas about racial differences helped support the expansion of colonialism and the global slave trade.

A More Secular Outlook A second outcome was the rise of a more secular, or nonreligious, outlook. During the Enlightenment, people began to question openly their religious beliefs and the teachings of the church. One by one, scientists discovered that the mysteries of the universe could be explained mathematically or through scientific processes. A new type of human-centered philosophy emerged, teaching that individuals could control their own lives through reason and self-determination rather than relying on an all-knowing deity. Although the church often considered this secular philosophy a threat, there were religious thinkers who embraced reason and scientific inquiry. Newton himself was a deeply religious man, and he sought to reveal God’s majesty through his work. However, his findings often caused people to change the way they thought about God.

Newton, Locke and other major thinkers of the time were called deists. They believed that people should determine their religious beliefs mainly through reason instead of scripture. Some deists, such as Voltaire, harshly criticized the beliefs and practices of organized Christianity. They wanted to rid religious faith of superstition and fear and to promote tolerance of all religions.

Importance of the Individual Faith in science and in progress produced a third outcome, the rise of individualism. As people began to turn away from the church and royalty for guidance, they looked to themselves instead.

The philosophes encouraged people to use their own ability to reason in order to judge what was right or wrong. They also emphasized the importance of the individual in society. Government, they argued, was formed by individuals to promote their welfare. The British thinker Adam Smith extended the emphasis on the individual to economic thinking. He believed that individuals acting in their own self-interest created economic progress. Smith advocated the end of a system popular in Europe in the 1600s and 1700s known as mercantilism. In this system, countries believed they could increase their wealth by encouraging exports and discouraging imports. Smith called for freer trade practices and argued that countries could get wealthy and could keep more people employed by being both exporters and importers within a free market system. During the Enlightenment, the greatest minds of Europe developed new ideas about reforming society. Some European kings and queens tried to apply these ideas to create progress in their countries. This influence also spread across the Atlantic. Inspired by Enlightenment ideas, colonial leaders in America decided to do the unthinkable: break away from their ruling country and found an independent republic.