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# The Enlightenment Spreads

MAIN IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS NOW	TERMS & NAMES
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**POWER AND AUTHORITY**  
Enlightenment ideas spread through the Western world and profoundly influenced the arts and government.

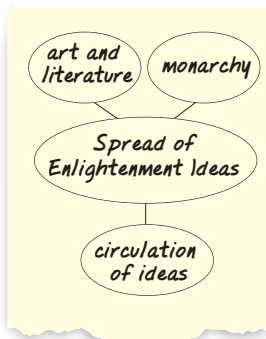
An “enlightened” problem-solving approach to government and society prevails in modern civilization today.

- salon
- baroque
- neoclassical
- enlightened despot
- Catherine the Great

**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.

**TAKING NOTES**

**Summarizing** Use a web diagram to list examples of each concept related to the spread of ideas.



## 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. There, in their large drawing rooms, these hostesses held regular social gatherings called **salons**. At these events, philosophers, writers, artists, scientists, and other great intellectuals 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.

### Cybercafés

These days, when people around the world gather to explore new ideas and discuss current events, many do so at Internet cafés. These are coffee shops or restaurants that also provide access to computers for a small fee.

While Internet cafés originated in the United States, they are thought to be on the decline in America as more people become able to afford their own computers.

Overseas, however, Internet cafés continue to boom. Observers estimate that some 200,000 operate in China. Most of them are illegal. China's Communist government has little desire to give so many of its citizens access to the kind of uncensored information that the Internet provides. As was the case with the Enlightenment, however, the spread of new ideas is often too powerful to stop.



### 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 (see page 600) 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 artistic style of the late 1700s is therefore called **neoclassical** (“new classical”).

**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.

## 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. **A**

**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. He also reformed the justice system and abolished the use of torture. 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 Austria from 1780 to 1790. He introduced legal reforms and freedom of the press. 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 firmly resisted this change. Like many of Joseph's reforms, it was undone after his death.

**Catherine the Great** The ruler most admired by the philosophes was Catherine II, known as **Catherine the Great**. She ruled Russia 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

### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Motives

**A** Why did the enlightened despots undertake reforms?

#### Vocabulary

*Serfdom* was a system in which peasants were forced to live and work on a landowner's estate.



▲ Joseph II

### Changing Idea: Relationship Between Ruler and State

#### Old Idea

The state and its citizens exist to serve the monarch. As Louis XIV reportedly said, "I am the state."

#### New Idea

The monarch exists to serve the state and support citizens' welfare. As Frederick the Great said, a ruler is only "the first servant of the state."

**MAIN IDEA****Synthesizing**

**B** How accurately does the term enlightened despot describe Catherine the Great? Explain.

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. **B**

**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 powers—Russia, Prussia, and Austria—each tried to assert their influence over the country. In 1772, these land-hungry neighbors each took a piece of Poland 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. Meanwhile, as Russia was becoming an international power, another great power, Britain, faced a challenge from its North American colonies. Inspired by Enlightenment ideas, colonial leaders decided to do the unthinkable: break away from their ruling country and found an independent republic.

**History Makers**

**Catherine the Great**  
1729–1796

The daughter of a minor German prince, Catherine was 15 when she was handed over to marry the Grand Duke Peter, heir to the Russian throne.

Peter was mentally unstable. Catherine viewed her husband's weakness as her chance for power. She made important friends among Russia's army officers and became known as the most intelligent and best-informed person at court. In 1762, only months after her husband became czar, Catherine had him arrested and confined. Soon afterward, Peter conveniently died, probably by murder.

**SECTION****3****ASSESSMENT**

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- salon
- baroque
- neoclassical
- enlightened despot
- Catherine the Great

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. What are two generalizations you could make about the spread of Enlightenment ideas?

**MAIN IDEAS**

3. What were the defining aspects of neoclassical art?
4. What new form of literature emerged during the 18th century and what were its main characteristics?
5. Why were several rulers in 18th century Europe known as enlightened despots?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** What advantages did salons have over earlier forms of communication in spreading ideas?
7. **ANALYZING ISSUES** In what way were the enlightened despots less than true reformers? Cite specific examples from the text.
8. **MAKING INFERENCES** How did the *Encyclopedia* project reflect the age of Enlightenment?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **POWER AND AUTHORITY** Imagine you are a public relations consultant for an enlightened despot. Write a **press release** explaining why your client is "Most Enlightened Despot of the 1700s."

**INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY INTERNET ACTIVITY**

Use the Internet to find out more about a composer or writer mentioned in this section. Then write a brief **character sketch** on that artist, focusing on interesting pieces of information about his or her life.

**INTERNET KEYWORDS**

*biography European Enlightenment*