

Chapter 12
The Enlightenment
and the American Revolution
(1707-1800)

Section 1: Philosophy in the Age of Reason

During the **Scientific Revolution**, scientists used reason to explain why things happened in the universe. Scientists began to observe the world around them and to develop ideas about why things happened. They did experiments to test these ideas. This new way of thinking was called the scientific method. With the scientific method, scientists made important advances in many areas, such as science, medicine, and the way people thought about life.

Section 1: Philosophy in the Age of Reason (cont.)

By the early 1700s, Europeans were also using reason to discover the **natural laws** (laws that govern human nature) of human behavior that explained why people act the way they do. With these laws, they hoped to solve the problems of society. This time period was called the **Age of Reason**, or the **Enlightenment**, and dealt with social, political, and economic problems. The ideas of thinkers such as Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau would justify revolutions and inspire principles of representative government. Even women gained power and rights during the Enlightenment.

Section 1: Philosophy in the Age of Reason (cont.)

Some Enlightenment thinkers wanted to reform government. **John Locke** believed that governments must protect the **natural rights** of its people. Natural rights are rights that belong to all humans from birth. If the government did not protect these rights, the people had the right to overthrow it. John Locke's ideas were used in the Declaration of Independence.



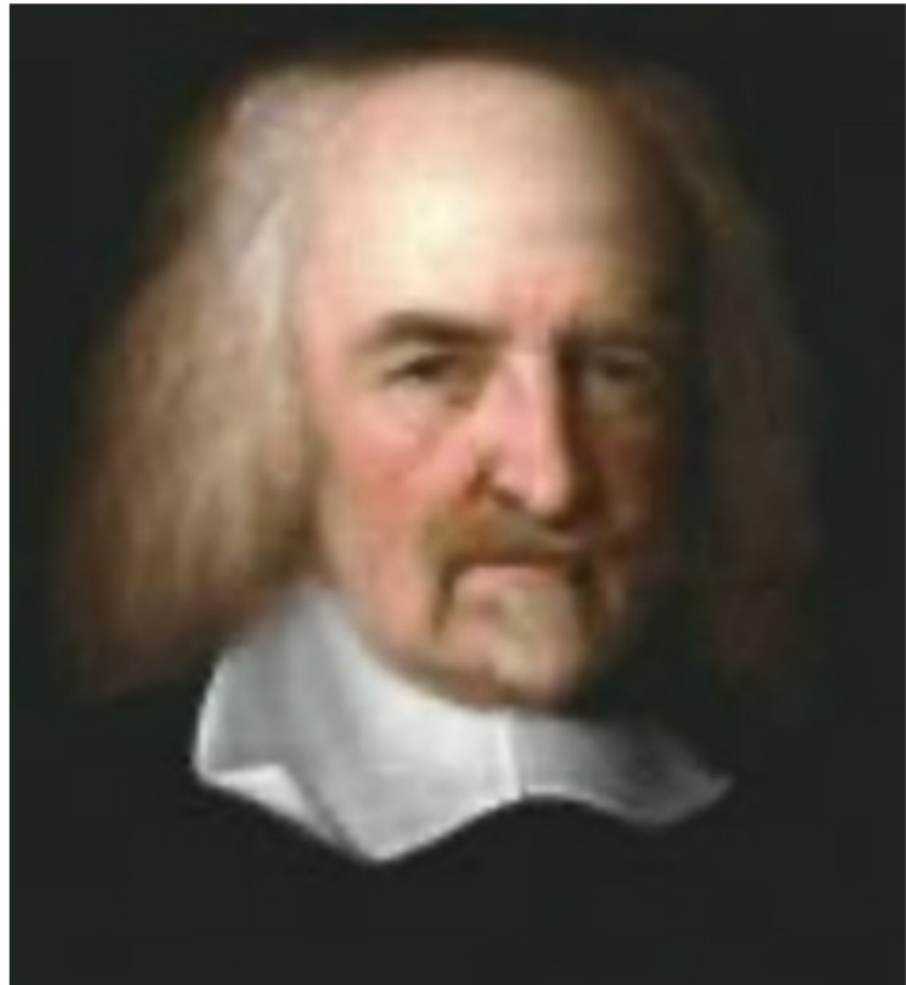
Section 1: Philosophy in the Age of Reason (cont.)

Baron de Montesquieu wanted to divide government into three branches to create a separation of powers. Each branch would make sure the other two branches did not become too powerful or do anything improper. This system is called checks and balances. Some thinkers said that Enlightenment ideas could improve society.



Section 1: Philosophy in the Age of Reason (cont.)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that people are basically good and shouldn't have many constraints on them. But **Thomas Hobbes** felt the opposite, thinking that people are greedy and selfish.



Section 1: Philosophy in the Age of Reason (cont.)

Enlightenment thinkers called **philosophers** (lovers of wisdom) applied the methods of science to their efforts to understand and improve society. **Denis Diderot** created the first Encyclopedia. Philosophers met at **salons** (informal gathering places).



Section 1: Philosophy in the Age of Reason (cont.)

Other thinkers used reason to reform the economy of Europe. They believed that government should let businesses run themselves. This belief is called **laissez-faire** (where there is little or no government interference in business).

Physiocrats were philosophers who focused on economic reforms and believed in laissez-faire economics. The economist **Adam Smith** came up with the idea of a **free-market economy** (a country's economic system where prices are decided by the supply and demand of goods and with little government control).



Section 2- Enlightenment Ideas

As Enlightenment ideas spread across Europe, people began to question the old ways and demand reform. A fair society, they thought, should provide material well-being, justice, and happiness. However, government and the Church believed that God had set up society as it was. To stop the new ideas, they burned Enlightenment books and put the writers in prison. **Censorship** (the control of all communication in a society) was used to restrict access to the spread of the Enlightenment.

Section 2- Enlightenment Ideas (cont.)

Philosophers asked rulers to adopt reforms. **Enlightened despots** were absolute rulers who used their power to reform society. Frederick II of Prussia improved the government and tolerated different religions. He gave tools and seeds to **peasants** (very poor people). Catherine the Great of Russia reformed Russian law and government. Joseph II of Austria made the most reforms.

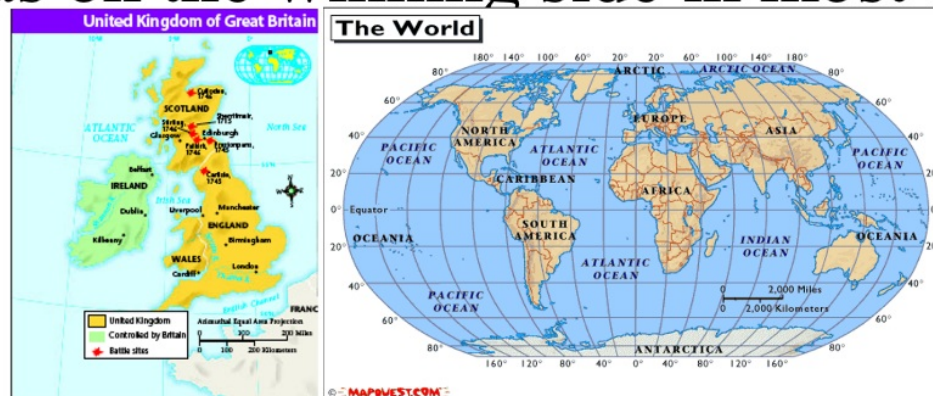


Section 2- Enlightenment Ideas (cont.)

During this period, most Europeans were peasants living in small villages. They knew little of the Enlightenment. In Western Europe, serfdom (a type of slavery) had almost disappeared. In central and Eastern Europe, however, most peasants were still tied to the land.

Section 3- Britain at Mid-Century

Britain was originally a **monarchy** (a country ruled by a king or queen). During the 1600s and 1700s, Britain built an **empire** (a large group of countries under a single authority, like an emperor) that reached around the world. Its island location allowed Britain to control trade during the Renaissance. Unrestricted trade helped merchants build settlements in the West Indies, North America, and India. In addition, the British gained control of the slave trade in Spanish America, which brought riches to Britain. Finally, Britain built a powerful **navy** (military branch made up of warships) and was on the winning side in most conflicts during the period.



Section 3- Britain at Mid-Century (cont.)

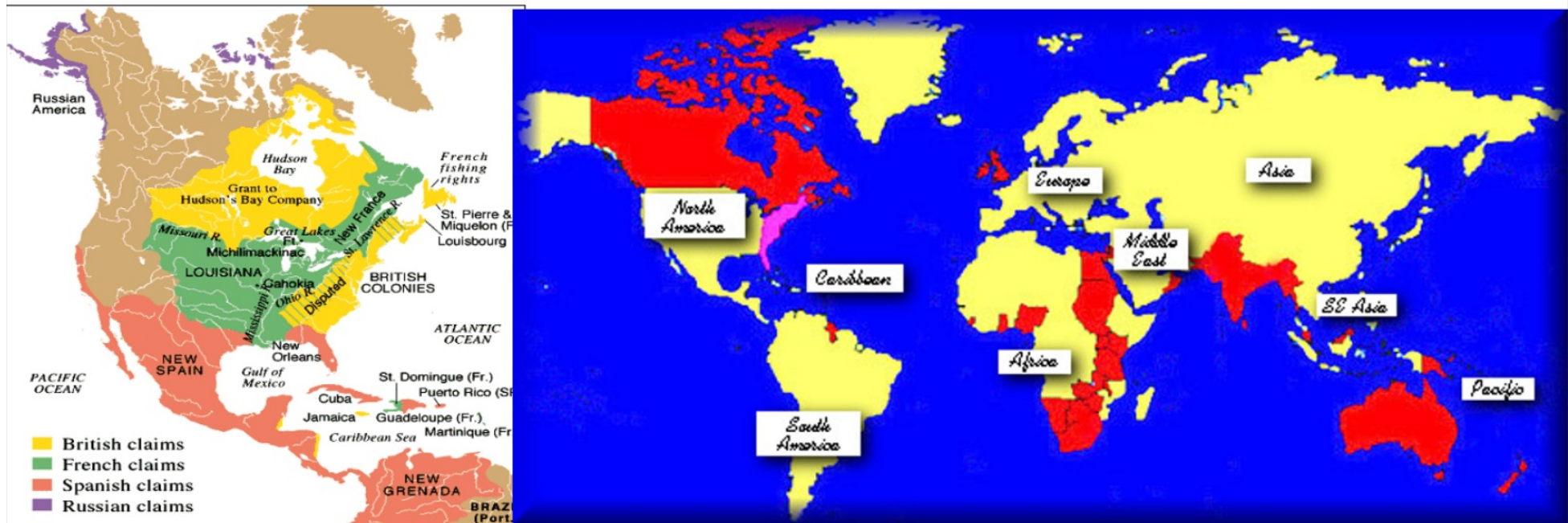
During the 1700s, the British created a **limited monarchy** (a political system that decreases the power of kings or queens) and a **constitution** (a plan for government where government power is defined and limited by laws). The new government included three important new institutions. These were political parties, the cabinet, and the office of prime minister. The first political parties were made up of rich, powerful men who shared beliefs. The Tories were **conservative** (less likely to want change and holding traditional values). The Whigs were **liberal** (more open to new ideas). The cabinet was a group of members of Parliament (the lawmaking body in Britain) who advised the King and helped make policy. The prime minister was the leader of the cabinet.

Section 3- Britain at Mid-Century (cont.)

Even with these changes, British government remained an **oligarchy** (a government where only a few powerful and rich controlled Parliament). Only male property owners could vote. A small middle class controlled the towns and cities. Most people were poor farmers who struggled to survive and had no power.

Section 4- Birth of America

By 1750, the British empire included 13 colonies along the eastern coast of North America. People from many religions and backgrounds made their home there. The colonies were part of a trade network linking North America, the West Indies, Africa, and Europe.



Section 4- Birth of America (cont.)

After 1763, serious problems developed between Britain and her colonies in America. The British wanted to control colonial trade and manufacturing as well as raise taxes. This made the colonists angry. The colonists felt that the King was taking away their rights as British citizens to control themselves. Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet, *Common Sense*, urging the colonists to fight for their freedom and independence from Britain.

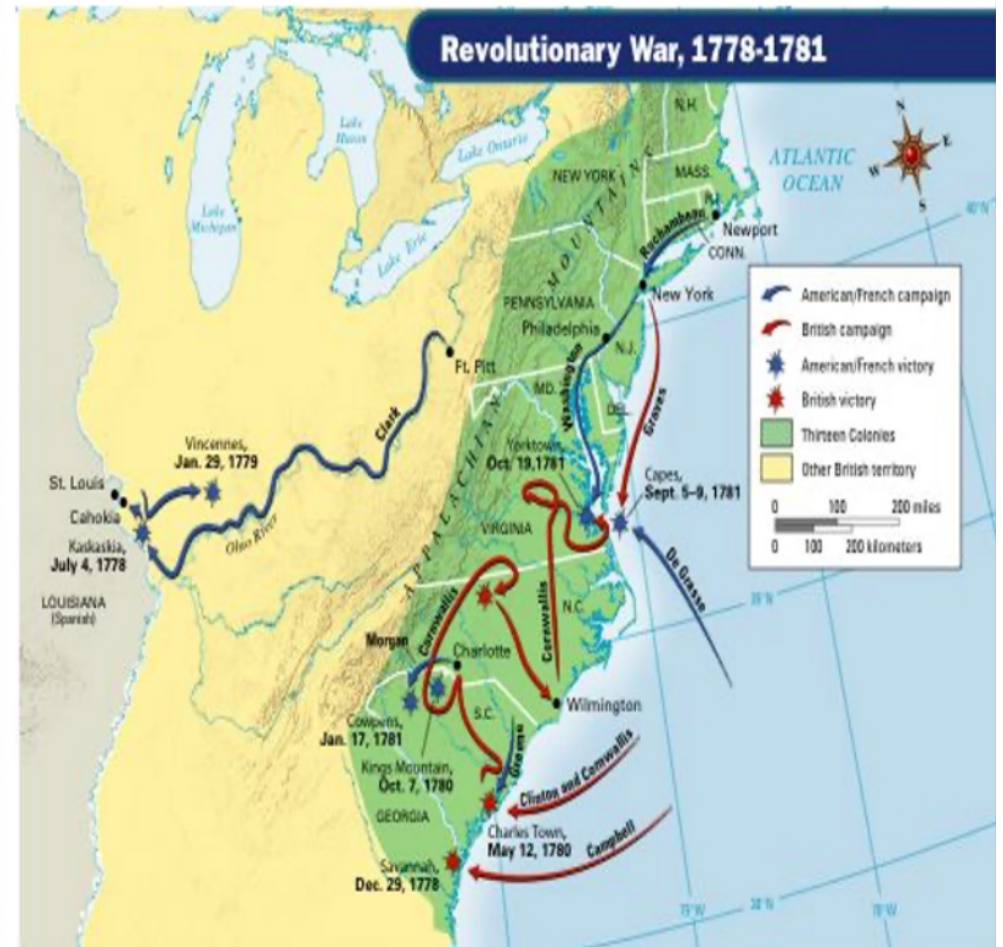


Section 4- Birth of America (cont.)

In 1775, war broke out between the colonists and Britain and the **American Revolution** (the American fight for freedom from Britain) began. The following year, the colonists declared their independence from Britain. Using Enlightenment ideas, the writers of the **Declaration of Independence** (America's document stating they were free from Britain and their own separate country) stated that the colonists had the right to revolt against an unfair government. They called their new nation the United States of America. **Patriots** supported America in the American Revolution. **Loyalists** supported Britain.

Section 4- Birth of America (cont.)

In 1781, the colonists defeated the British, but only with the help of French money, troops, and naval ships.



Section 4- Birth of America (cont.)

The leaders of the United States of America set up a **republic** (government ruled by elected representatives) and adopted a constitution in 1787. The Constitutional government (a government whose power is defined and limited by laws) included many Enlightenment ideas. Among these ideas were separation of powers and checks and balances. The Constitution stated that the duty of the government was to protect the rights of the people. The **U.S. Constitution** (the name of the group of America's basic laws and principles that created how America runs her government) created a federal republic (a government where power is divided between the federal government and the states). The federal republic was based on the idea of **popular sovereignty/self-government** (the belief that power comes from the people).