Enlightenment Thinkers Handout
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<tr>
<th>Name, Country &amp; Title of work</th>
<th>Views on Life &amp; Human Nature</th>
<th>Views on Government &amp; Economy</th>
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| Thomas Hobbes (England)        | • People are naturally cruel, greedy, & selfish  
• People need control and a social contract - agreement to give up the state of nature for an organized society | • Need a powerful govn’t to control people or they would fight, rob, & oppress one another  
• Yes to absolute monarchy  
• Govn’t control of economy | Society needs some form of government |
| John Locke (England)           | • People are basically reasonable and moral  
• People have natural rights – rights that belong to all humans at birth (life, liberty, property) | • Govn’t formed to protect natural rights  
• Best govn’t form has limited power and is accepted by all citizens  
• Rejected monarchy and sided w/ Parliament  
• People have the right to overthrow the govn’t if it fails its obligations or violates people’s natural rights - Supports revolution | Ideas on Natural right – life, liberty, property was a fundamental influence on the US Declaration of Independence |
| The Baron de Montesquieu (France) | • Power needs to be balanced so that individuals do not abuse power (people are greedy) | • Republican form of govn’t is BEST (supports limited or no monarchy)  
• Division of power into 3 branches (Executive, Legislative, Judiciary) to protect liberty  
• There needs to be a system of checks and balances | France, US, & Latin American nations all used separation of powers in new constitutions |
| Voltaire (France) - various | • Wrote about the abuses against humanity (inequality, injustice, superstition)  
• Detested the slave trade  
• Believed in religious freedom | • Targeted corrupt officials & idle aristocrats  
• He offended the govn’t and church  
• Defended freedom of speech “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” | Ideas on freedom of thought and expression were Guaranteed in US Bill of Rights and French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen  
Freedom of religion guaranteed in US Bill of Rights and French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen  
Ideas influenced European monarchs to reduce or eliminate censorship and religious persecution |
| Cesare Bonecana Beccaria (Italy) | • People should be treated fairly (no torture for criminals)  
• No capital punishment | • Laws exist to preserve social order, not to avenge crimes  
• Governments should seek the greatest good for the greatest number of people | Ideas on the abolishment of torture influenced torture to be outlawed or reduced in nations of Europe and the Americas  
Abolishment of torture guaranteed in the US Constitution |
| Jean-Jacques Rousseau (France) | • People are basically good but become corrupted by evils of society (esp. unequal distribution of property)  
• Committed to individual freedom | • Some control set by a freely formed govn’t-are good  
• In consenting to form a govn’t, people give up self-interest in favor of the common good  
• Surrender rights to retain freedom  
• Favors good of whole over the individual  
• Freedom is obedience to the law  
• He had a hatred of the political and economic oppression of the time | Idea that all people should be treated equal influenced US Declaration of Independence  
Ideas inspired leaders of the French Revolution |
| Mary Wollstonecraft (England) | • Woman’s first duty is to be a good mother  
• Woman should decide what is in own best interest and not be completely dependent on husband | • Called for equal education to ensure equal participation in public life | Influenced Women’s Rights movements |
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