The Old Regime

FIND OUT ABOUT:
- The nature of the Old Regime
- The ideas of the Enlightenment
- Enlightened despotism
- The Bourbon reforms in Spain

KNOW HOW TO:
- Compare two Enlightenment texts
- Analyse scientific advances during the Age of Enlightenment

Monarchs and their palaces

In the 18th century, monarchs projected an image of power and splendour, as well as cultural sophistication. Royal palaces were a symbol of the monarch’s absolute power. They were monumental and richly decorated buildings, which were intended to impress the monarch’s subjects and foreign visitors.

WORK WITH THE IMAGE
- What palaces can you see on these pages? Which countries are they in?
- What do the palaces have in common? Are they impressive?
- What is the function of these palaces today?
- Which monarchs are shown? When and where did they reign?
Palaces are a valuable source of information about royal figures and their circles. The rooms, furniture, paintings and decoration all provide a window into the lives of past monarchs; they show the image that they wished to project.

• If you have visited a royal palace, describe what most interested or surprised you.
The Old Regime (also called the ‘Ancien Régime’) was the political, social and economic system that was found in many parts of Europe up to the 18th century. This type of society was based on estates and an agrarian economy, and was ruled by an absolute monarch.

### The society of estates

Society was divided into three estates: the nobility, the clergy and the commoners. This society had two main characteristics:

- **Privilege.** The clergy and the nobility were the privileged estates. They enjoyed major advantages over commoners; for example, they were judged by special laws, and they did not pay taxes.
- **Lack of mobility.** Except for the clergy, a person’s estate was determined at birth. In general, commoners did not move up, and nobles did not move down.

The clergy was divided into high and low clergy:

- The high clergy, such as archbishops and bishops, were often the younger sons of noble families.
- Members of the low clergy, like priests and monks, were from commoner families.

The nobility was also divided into high and low:

- The high nobility owned vast lands, received income from rents, and occupied all the high positions in the government and the military.
- The low nobility had less money, and sometimes married into wealthy bourgeois families.

The commoners, or third estate, made up the majority of the population. These were the bourgeoisie and peasants.

- The bourgeoisie was made up of merchants, doctors or artisans. Some were wealthy, but their political power was limited to city government. The bourgeoisie demanded greater participation in national government and equality before the law, but the privileged estates resisted these demands.
- The peasantry was the largest group, but had little social influence. Most worked on the land of nobles or the Church as tenants, day labourers or serfs. They paid rent to noble landowners, taxes to the king, and a tithe (10% of their crops) to the Church. Serfs needed their lord’s permission to leave the property.
The agrarian sector

Crop agriculture and livestock farming were the main economic activities in the 18th century. In most of Europe, peasants practised subsistence farming, and they mainly grew grains using very basic tools. Crops depended on the climate, and they were lost in times of drought or flooding. When this happened, prices rose, food became scarce and there was widespread famine.

Most land belonged to the nobility and the clergy. A noble’s land could not be divided because the law required the entire estate to be inherited by the eldest son. Moreover, part of the clergy’s land was legally protected, and could not be sold. As a result, a lot of land was not farmed productively.

Artisanal activity and trade

Guilds controlled most artisanal activity. These were associations of artisans who worked in the same trade. Artisans worked in small workshops and used simple tools. Guilds regulated production, and this was an obstacle to innovation.

The domestic system was a new system of production in the textile industry. A merchant provided cloth to peasants, who then made textile products in their own homes. The merchant collected the finished products and sold them.

Royal factories belonged to the monarchy. They were very large workshops, where weapons and luxury goods were made.

Foreign trade grew due to increased exchange with America and Asia. Some companies, like the English East India Company, were granted trade monopolies in certain regions and imported products like tea and cotton. The company owners and the Crown shared the huge profits.

Triangular trade developed between Europe, Africa and America. European ships sailed to Africa, where they traded items of little value for slaves. They took the slaves to America and sold them there. With the profits, they brought products such as cotton and sugar back to Europe.

THINK ABOUT IT

In the 18th century, drought or flooding caused crop failure, and people went hungry. Quite often this caused riots. Today, adverse weather phenomena can still increase the price of certain crops. However, in developed economies, these foods usually remain abundant in supermarkets. Why do you think the situation has changed?

ACTIVITIES

5 Explain why the agrarian sector was not very productive in the 18th century.

6 Draw a schematic diagram that shows how triangular trade worked and which items were bought and sold.

7 Investigate the Atlantic slave trade. Find out how many people died, and when it ended. In what ways should it be commemorated today? Share your viewpoint with your classmates.
Absolutism

Absolutism was the system of government in many parts of 18th century Europe. Under absolutism, the monarchs held full legislative, executive and judicial powers. They governed, introduced and ratified laws, and named judges. According to the divine right of kings, God was the source of a monarch’s power, and he was above the law.

To exercise their powers, the monarchs made use of numerous officials and powerful armies. Some issues, such as new taxes, had to be approved by assemblies like the Estates General in France or las Cortes in Spain. These parliaments were made up of representatives of the three estates. However, the monarch rarely called them.

The economic policies of absolute monarchs were based on mercantilism. According to this theory, there was only a fixed amount of trade in the world and a country’s wealth was based on the amount of gold and silver that it accumulated. Monarchs encouraged the growth of national industries, promoted exports and restricted imports.
English parliamentarism

In the early 17th century, the kings of the Stuart dynasty tried to rule Britain as absolute monarchs. However, they were opposed by Parliament, which was controlled by the bourgeoisie. A series of conflicts between the king and Parliament culminated in the English Civil War (1642-1651), when the royalists were defeated and King Charles I was executed. Although the monarchy was restored in 1660, new attempts to create an absolute monarchy led to the Glorious Revolution (1688), when King James II was deposed.

Under the new system of parliamentary monarchy, the monarch was not above the law, and he could not rule on his own. The Bill of Rights of 1689 guaranteed certain rights and liberties, and established that the king could not pass laws, create new taxes or collect them without the approval of Parliament. With the separation of powers, each branch of government had its own powers and responsibilities.

The Dutch Republic

In 1648, the independence of seven provinces in the northern Netherlands was officially recognised by Spain. This was the Dutch Republic (also known as the Republic of the United Provinces). Through trade, the Dutch bourgeoisie accumulated great wealth, and they held most of the political power in the republic.

Each of the seven provinces had its own Parliament. Representatives of all the provinces assembled together at the Estates General, where joint decisions were taken.

ACTIVITIES

1. Explain the following terms:
   - absolutism
   - mercantilism
   - the divine right of kings
   - the separation of powers

2. Find out which European countries had absolute monarchies, parliamentary monarchies or republics in the 18th century. Draw and label a map of Europe.

3. Investigate the rise of the Dutch bourgeoisie by looking at paintings. Bring one Dutch portrait painting and one scene of a bourgeois home into the classroom. Discuss in groups what we can learn from these artworks.

WORK WITH THE ORGANIGRAMS

4. Compare the organigrams and answer the questions.
   a. Who held legislative power in France? And in England?
   b. How was executive power different in France and England?
   c. Where did judicial power reside in France? And in England?
The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a highly influential intellectual movement that spread across Europe and America. According to Enlightenment thought:

- **Reason** should be applied to all areas of life. Enlightenment thinkers rejected practices that were not based on reason. They therefore criticised some aspects of absolutism, the privileges of the nobility and the clergy, and the strict rules of guilds.
- **Natural rights**, such as individual liberty, belonged to all human beings. The state could not arbitrarily suppress these rights.
- **Knowledge** was the key to happiness, and people could achieve knowledge through the use of reason. The Enlightenment placed great importance on education and the experimental sciences, which were considered vital for ongoing human progress.
- **Tolerance** was the basis of coexistence.

A famous compendium of human knowledge, the *Encyclopaedia*, was published in France by Diderot and D’Alembert. Enlightenment ideas were spread through the specialised academies of arts or sciences, elite social gatherings called salons, and through the press. Although the Enlightenment was not a revolutionary movement politically, many of its ideas challenged the foundations of the Old Regime.

**Enlightenment thinkers**

The ideas of the English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) had a great influence on the Enlightenment. Locke argued that the state was the result of a social contract between the government and the people. This contract could be broken if the government was unjust.

Three of the greatest Enlightenment thinkers (known as philosophes) were Baron Charles Montesquieu, François-Marie Arouet (famous as Voltaire), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

### KEY HISTORICAL TEXTS

**The separation of powers**

When legislative and executive powers lie with the same person or entity, there is no liberty. One can fear that such a person will make tyrannical laws, and execute them tyrannically. [...] In a state in which a single man or entity [...] held the three powers, and had the ability to make laws, execute public resolutions and judge the crimes and disputes of individuals, all would be lost.

*Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws, 1748*

- What are the three powers that Montesquieu refers to?
- According to the author, what would happen if one person or institution held all three powers?
- What are the differences between Montesquieu’s ideas and those of absolute monarchy?

### MAIN ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS

**Montesquieu (1689-1755)**

- **Ideology.** He defended the separation of powers: legislative power should be held by a representative Parliament, executive power by the King, and judicial power by independent judges.
- **Major works.** *The Spirit of Laws* (1748).

**Voltaire (1694-1778)**

- **Ideology.** He defended a strong monarchy with respect for civil liberties. He believed strongly in freedom of expression and rejected fanaticism and intolerance.
- **Major works.** *Candide* (1759), *Treatise on Tolerance* (1763).

**Rousseau (1712-1778)**

- **Ideology.** He defended freedom and equality. He believed society corrupts human beings, who are naturally good. Sovereignty should reside in the people. For the benefit of the community, the people allow a higher authority to govern in their name.
- **Major works.** *Emile* (1762), *The Social Contract* (1762).
Enlightened despotism (also known as enlightened absolutism) was a form of absolutism influenced by Enlightenment ideas. Several 18th century monarchs, such as Joseph II of Austria, Catherine the Great of Russia, Frederick the Great of Prussia and Carlos III of Spain, modernised their kingdoms by introducing educational, legal and administrative reforms:

- **Education.** They founded new educational institutions, such as universities and academies. They modified the curriculum to emphasise sciences: mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc.

- **Government.** They modernised their bureaucracies, strengthened the central administration, created new legal codes and required the privileged estates to pay taxes.

- **Land.** To improve the economy, they expropriated unused lands. This means they took the land from Church or noble estates and sold it. The goal was for the new owners to farm the land and make it more productive. New farmland was cultivated, and roads and irrigation systems were built.

Some rulers privately believed in the Enlightenment ideas of reason and tolerance. Thus Frederick the Great invited Voltaire to his court while Catherine the Great became a great patron of the arts. However, these enlightened despotism did not want to destroy the Old Regime, which was the foundation of their own power. In fact, many of their reforms were designed to strengthen royal authority.
The role of the Encyclopaedia in spreading Enlightenment ideas

- Before you read, think about how you use encyclopaedias today. Which ones do you use? Are they printed books or online?

The nature of the Encyclopaedia

The Encyclopaedia was a huge compilation of human knowledge, published in 28 volumes between 1751 and 1772. (Seven extra volumes were published between 1776 and 1780.) Originally, its publishers had simply planned a translation of an English book, but under its main editors Denis Diderot and Jean D’Alembert it grew into a far more ambitious project.

In accordance with Enlightenment ideas, the Encyclopaedia classified knowledge on the basis of reason and scientific progress. As it challenged the authenticity of some parts of the Bible, there were attempts at censorship by the state and the church. It was aimed at the general public, and became one of the main ways that Enlightenment ideas reached a wide readership.

Who wrote for the Encyclopaedia?

A very wide variety of people contributed articles, including leading chemists, botanists, cartographers, mathematicians, architects, theologians, engineers, economists and poets. Diderot, d’Alembert, Montesquieu, Turgot, Quesnay and Buffon were among its many eminent contributors. The contributors expressed their ideas freely and sometimes disagreed with each other.

Denis Diderot
(1713-1784)
French essayist and philosopher.
As well as writing several articles for the Encyclopaedia, he wrote satirical novels and plays that criticised French society, such as Jacques the Fatalist and his Master.

Jean le Rond d’Alembert
(1717-1783)
French philosopher and scientist.
He wrote several articles for the Encyclopaedia about mathematics. He also wrote the introduction to the work: ‘Preliminary discourse’.

Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron of Montesquieu
(1689-1755)
French writer and philosopher. One of his major works was Persian Letters. In this book, two fictional characters exchange letters in which they criticise the customs of the Old Regime.

Jacques Turgot
(1727-1781)
French economist and statesman. He introduced potato farming in Limoges, where he was a leading administrator. Later, he became Minister of Finance under Louis XVI.

François Quesnay
(1694-1774)
French economist, and one of the founders of physiocracy. This theory held that the wealth of a nation resided in agriculture, and that industry and trade were not productive activities.

Georges-Louis Leclerc, Count of Buffon
(1707-1788)
French naturalist, and director of the Jardine des Plantes in Paris. One of his main works was Natural History, which compiled the scientific knowledge of his time in different areas.
An illustrated work

One of the novel aspects of the *Encyclopaedia* was the large number of illustrations it included: over 2,000. Many of the illustrations were related to craft activity. To make their illustrations as accurate as possible, the artists visited workshops where they observed and drew the rooms, tools and processes involved.

Illustrations from the *Encyclopaedia*. A The inside of a distillery and the tools used there. B Upholstering a chair. C Eyeglass workshop and types of lenses.

An 18th century best-seller

The *Encyclopaedia* was organised into 17 volumes of articles and 11 volumes of illustrations. Later, five supplements and two indices were also published. The articles were arranged in alphabetical order, and differed in length and quality. They reflected each author’s opinions, and some of them had typographical errors. They covered all areas of human knowledge and understanding, from optics to the concept of freedom. The *Encyclopaedia* was sold by subscription. In only thirty years, over 25,000 copies were sold. It also reached other countries, and was decisive in the spread of Enlightenment thought.

ACTIVITIES

1. Look at the plates from the *Encyclopaedia* shown above. Describe them. Do you think they are realistic?

2. Look for the *Encyclopaedia* in English on the Internet. (Use the keywords ‘University Michigan Encyclopaedia Diderot’.)
   - Under ‘Browse plates’, click on *English title*. Look through the plates in different categories. Choose two that catch your interest and describe them.
   - Go back to the homepage and click on *Simple Search*. Select *Search in: title*. Type in different topics and read the entries.
   - Now, select *Search in: author*. Type in *Quesnay*. Click on the article *Farmers* and read the first paragraph. What does Quesnay say about farmers? Which part is fact and which part is opinion?

3. Why is the 18th century called the Age of Enlightenment? How did the *Encyclopaedia* spread Enlightenment thought?
The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714)

The Habsburg King Carlos II died without children in 1700, when there were two rival candidates to the Spanish throne. The candidate of the Bourbon dynasty, Philippe, Duke of Anjou, was Louis XIV’s grandson, and he was supported by France. Archduke Charles was the Habsburg candidate, and he was supported by the Holy Roman Empire. Carlos II named Philippe of Anjou as his successor, but Archduke Charles did not accept this, and the War of the Spanish Succession began in 1701.

This war was an international conflict. France and Spain opposed an alliance of European powers (the Holy Roman Empire, the Dutch Republic and Britain), who were concerned about possible Bourbon supremacy. However, it was also a civil war: much of Castile supported Philippe of Anjou, while the Crown of Aragón supported Archduke Charles.

The war ended with a series of treaties in 1713 and 1714. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) recognised the Bourbon candidate Philippe, who became Felipe V, King of Spain. In exchange, Austria received Spanish territory in Flanders and Italy. Britain received Gibraltar and Menorca, and was also granted some privileges in its trade with America. Within Spain, opposition to Felipe V ended when Barcelona was taken in 1714.

Early Bourbon rule

Felipe V (1700-1746) centralised administration in Spain, following the French model. Since the Crown of Aragón had opposed him in the war, he issued the Nueva Planta decrees. These abolished the charters and institutions of the Crown of Aragón.

Felipe V imposed Castilian institutions throughout the country. In government, he did not use the old councils, but created a new figure instead: this was the secretary of state, or minister. Felipe’s successor, Fernando VI (1746-1759), continued these reforms, and also strengthened the navy. The Catastro of Ensenada (1749) was a large scale census and geographical investigation.

In foreign policy, Felipe tried to recover the Italian territories lost at Utrecht. He made alliances with the French Bourbons through ‘Family Pacts’, and participated in several wars. Spain recovered Naples and Sicily, as well as several Italian dukedoms.
What caused the War of the Spanish Succession?
Which countries formed alliances with each other? How did the war end?
Spain has had a territorial dispute with Great Britain since 1714. What is it about?
Spain became a more centralised nation under Felipe V. In what ways has this affected later Spanish history?
The enlightened despotism of Carlos III

Carlos III (1759-1788) initiated a wide-ranging reform programme that made him Spain’s greatest enlightened despot.

Early in his reign, Carlos III (who had previously been a Duke in Italy) named Italian ministers like the Marquis of Esquilache. The Marquis’s reforms were unpopular at all levels of society, and his attempt to modernise traditional Spanish clothing led to the Esquilache Riots (1766).

After this uprising Esquilache was deposed, and Carlos appointed Spanish ministers like Counts Aranda, FloridaBlanca and Campomanes. Their reforms attempted to modernise Spain:

• The Church. The reformers considered that parts of the Church were an obstacle to modernisation. The Jesuits were accused of provoking the Esquilache Riots and were expelled from Spain. The powers of the Inquisition were reduced.

• Economic development. Spanish ports were allowed to develop free trade with America. In agriculture, new land was farmed, for example, in Sierra Morena, which was repopulated. The privileges of the Mesta were reduced, and sheep pastures were transformed into crop fields. Royal factories were created, like the Buen Retiro Porcelain Factory.

• Education. New schools were built and primary education was expanded. Secondary and university curricula were renovated.

• Economic Societies of Friends of the Country. These private associations of enlightened thinkers met to discuss a variety of subjects. Among other activities, they founded schools to train artisans and farmers.

In foreign policy, Spain recovered Menorca, although the British continued to hold Gibraltar. Spain supported the Americans when they fought Britain for their independence in the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783).

Satirical poems and songs were often distributed in the 18th century. Do we have similar forms of protest today?

This poem about the Marquis of Esquilache was written before the Esquilache Riots in 1766. Read it and answer the questions.

• What is the poem about? Why is Esquilache called ‘Leopold the First’, as if he were a king?

• Why do you think the author of this poem disliked Esquilache so much?

• Research the Esquilache Riots. What were their causes and consequences?

I, Leopold the First, ‘The Great’
Marquis of Esquilache,
Here in Spain, I annihilate –
Even King Carlos can’t match me.

I do as I like with king and nation,
And never say ‘Please’ or ‘Thank you’.
I drive the people to desperation –
I leave them boiling in a stew.

And meanwhile, Carlos my protégé,
Murmurs softly: ‘Do it your way’.
Carlos IV and the end of reform

Carlos IV became king in 1788. A year later the French Revolution began, and Carlos was worried that Enlightenment ideas could lead to a similar revolution in Spain. Enlightened ministers like the Count of Floridablanca and the Count of Aranda became less prominent, and were replaced by Manuel Godoy. Most reforms were stopped, and increased censorship was introduced to prevent revolutionary ideas from reaching Spain.

Spain joined other countries in a war against revolutionary France. However, after some French military victories, Spain agreed to make peace with France in 1795, when Spain lost its part of the island of Santo Domingo.

The following year, Spain and France signed a military alliance with each other. This led to a naval conflict with Britain, which was still at war with France. In 1805, the powerful British navy destroyed the Spanish fleet in the Battle of Trafalgar.

In the face of difficulties at home and abroad, opposition grew towards Carlos IV and his minister Godoy. In 1808, Carlos IV abdicated in favour of his son, Fernando VII.

ACTIVITIES

2 What measures did Carlos III introduce to strengthen the economy?
3 What were the Economic Societies of Friends of the Country? How did they contribute to the spread of Enlightenment thought?

WORK WITH THE IMAGE

4 Analyse the painting.
   - Who are the people represented in this painting?
   - What image does this portrait give of the royal family? Do you think this was intentional?

5 Work in groups to research the life and work of Francisco de Goya. Prepare an album called: ‘Goya, chronicler of his age’.
   - Begin the album with a brief biography of Francisco de Goya, one of the greatest Spanish painters of all time. Include details about his birth, his career, where he died, and where he is buried.
   - Choose three areas in which Goya’s work helps us to understand the society of his time. For example: a) portraits; b) scenes depicting popular customs; and c) events from wartime.
   - Write the three headings in your album. Find at least two or three paintings for each area, and stick them in the album.
   - Provide information beneath each painting. For example, in the case of a portrait, identify the sitter (the person in the portrait), and write a sentence describing his or her place in history.

1. Copy and complete the diagram.

2. Write these events in chronological order, including the date they occurred. Then, place them on a timeline like the one below.

- Abdication of Carlos IV
- Esquilache Riots
- Independence of the Dutch Republic
- Bill of Rights in England
- The War of the Spanish Succession begins
- The reign of Carlos III of Spain begins
- Battle of Trafalgar
- Treaty of Utrecht
- French Revolution

3. Listen to the recording. Then, write a short summary of the historical significance of each of these Enlightenment figures.

- Locke
- Montesquieu
- Diderot
- Voltaire
- Rousseau

4. Explain the following terms:

- Society of estates
- Royal Factory
- *Nueva Planta* decrees
- Economic Society of Friends of the Country

5. Explain the similarities and differences between the following:

- Absolute monarchy and enlightened despotism
- Absolute monarchy and parliamentary monarchy
Are these statements about 18th century Europe true or false? Correct the false ones in your notebook.

a. Under the Old Regime, one’s estate was determined by wealth.

b. The bourgeoisie was one of the privileged estates, and played an important role in national government.

c. Droughts and floods often led to high food prices and famine.

d. The slave trade was an important part of triangular trade.

e. Enlightenment thinkers believed passions should be applied to all areas of life.

f. In the War of the Spanish Succession, Aragón and Catalonia supported Philippe, Duke of Anjou.

Answer the questions.

a. Which events led to the rise of English parliamentarism?

b. What document reinforced this new system?

c. What principle of government requires each branch to have only limited authority?

THE LEGACY OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTEMENT

The legacy of the Age of Enlightenment is vast and diverse.

• Enlightenment ideas. Many of our ideas about the importance of reason, tolerance and education were shaped by Enlightenment thinkers.

• Political life. Liberty, equality before the law and the separation of powers are the foundation of many modern political systems.

• Parliamentary monarchy. This system emerged in England in the 17th century, and was consolidated in the 18th century. This type of monarchy still exists today.

• Encyclopaedias. These works are compendiums of all the knowledge that humans have acquired throughout history. They are still published today as printed books or online.

In groups, investigate 18th century architecture and plan a route.

• Find out which buildings in Madrid were built under Carlos III.

• Prepare records of when and where they were built, how they were used in the 18th century and how they are used today.

• Prepare a route through Madrid that will enable you to visit some of its most important 18th century monuments.

• Compare your route to those of the other groups. With the whole class, choose the best route for visiting the Madrid of Carlos III.

The Royal Observatory, Madrid. This was founded by Carlos III, but it was built in the reign of Carlos IV.

Read the following extract from the Spanish Constitution of 1978. In groups, discuss the influence of Enlightenment ideas on it.

1. Spain is hereby established as a social and democratic state, subject to the rule of law, which advocates as the highest values of its legal order, liberty, justice, equality and political pluralism.

2. National sovereignty is vested in the Spanish people, from whom emanate the powers of the state.

3. The political form of the Spanish state is that of a parliamentary monarchy.

The Spanish Constitution, 1978

What was the impact of the Enlightenment in Spain?
Enlightenment thinkers introduced new ideas about concepts as important as equality, liberty and tolerance. You are going to analyse two of these ideas.

Tolerance

It is no longer to men that I am talking, but to you, God of all beings, of all worlds and of all ages [...]. You did not give us hearts to hate people, or hands to kill each other. Make us help each other to bear the weight of a painful and transitory life. Make it so that the small differences in the clothes that cover our frail bodies, in our insufficient languages, in our ridiculous customs, in our imperfect laws, in our senseless opinions, in all our conditions so disproportionate in our eyes, and so equal in yours – that all the little variations that differentiate the atoms called men do not become signs of hatred and persecution.

Voltaire, Treatise on Tolerance, 1763

Equality

If we ask what the most valuable possession of all is, we find that everything can be reduced to two main issues: liberty and equality, without which liberty cannot exist. To renounce liberty is to renounce being human, to renounce the rights and obligations of humanity.

True equality does not mean that everyone must have exactly the same amount of wealth. It means that no one is so wealthy that they can buy someone else, and that no one is so poor that they are forced to sell themselves. Some say that this type of equality cannot exist in practice. But if abuse is inevitable, does that mean we must give up trying to regulate it? Precisely because natural forces tend to destroy equality, we must make the force of legislation tend to maintain it.

J. J. Rousseau, The Social Contract, 1762

To analyse the Enlightenment ideas you have just read about, follow these steps:

1. **Situate** each text in time and identify its author.
2. **Identify the main ideas** as well as the secondary ideas in each text. Explain them and situate them in their historical context.
3. **Draw conclusions.** Discuss the importance of these ideas in their time. In addition, examine their validity in today’s world.

1. Who is the author of each text? Search for information about these thinkers on the Internet, and write a short biography of each. When were these works written?

2. What aspects of the Old Regime does Voltaire criticise? How does he define tolerance? What does intolerance lead to?

3. Which two basic principles does Rousseau support? What link does he draw between them?

4. Compare Rousseau’s ideas to those in the text below. What differences do you notice? What type of society does Rousseau advocate?

Any system that […] aims to establish equal obligations among men, and to destroy the necessary distinctions, will soon lead to chaos, which is an inevitable consequence of absolute equality [...].

Warning issued by the Parliament of Paris, 4th March 1776

5. Do you think the ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau were generally well received by society at the time? Explain your answer.

6. Are the ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau still valid today? Explain your answer.

7. Do you think liberty is safe in modern times? Is tolerance always practised? Give reasons and examples.
In the 18th century, people became very interested in science. Private collections of botany, zoology, mineralogy, etc., proliferated, and so did voyages of exploration. In some cases, scientific investigations were even financed by kings. Some of the discoveries and technical advances changed people’s lives forever.

1. Which scientific discoveries or advances from the Age of Enlightenment do you think are most important? Explain your answers.

2. Which do you think had the biggest impact on the lives of people living in the 18th century? Why?

3. Which do you think have had a lasting impact up to the present day? Explain your answers.

4. James Cook made several voyages of exploration. What did he discover? Use the Internet to find out.

5. Do you think Enlightenment ideas promoted scientific development? Explain your answer.

6. Are we living in an era of rapid scientific development today? Explain your answers.