

The Enlightenment DBQ

Directions: Use Documents 1-11 to answer the following question. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. Your teacher may provide additional instructions and advice to use when answering the question below.

Prompt: Analyze the various ideals and beliefs regarding Enlightenment thought during the 18th century.

Historical Background: During the 18th century, Europe experienced the era of the Enlightenment. During this era, new ideas emerged based upon natural law and reason. These ideas became the foundation for a greater emphasis on the natural rights of all men.

Document 1

Source: Jonathan Eybeshuetz, rabbi in the French city of Metz, sermon, 1744.

Therefore I implore you now, take all these things to heart, and do not go about defiantly, performing your religious obligations in a superficial and mechanical way, following the pattern of your parents. When it comes to your worldly behavior, you do not act as your parents did. Your parents never drank coffee or tea or such things. Nor did they use the tobacco plant, for no one knew of its beneficial properties. Yet now that its medicinal quality has been ascertained, rich and poor alike use it, never thinking about whether their parents did so or not. I tell you that fear and service of God is medicine for the soul; why will you not improve upon the pattern of your parents in the realm? Why will you not act appropriately for the time?

Source credit: From *Jewish Preaching 1200-1800: An Anthology* by Marc Saperstein, published by Yale University Press, 1989.

Document 2

Source: Julien Offroy de La Mettrie, French physician and radical philosophe, *L'Homme Machine*,* 1748.

If atheism were generally accepted, every form of religion would be destroyed and cut off at its roots. There would be no more theological wars, no more soldiers of religion—such terrible soldiers! Nature, having been infected with sacred poison, would regain its right and purity.

*Machine Man

Document 3

Source: Friedrich Nicolai, German philosopher heavily involved in Berlin's enlightenment culture, letter, 1756.

Toward the end of the year 1755 a coffeehouse for a closed society of a hundred people, mostly men of learning, was established in Berlin at the suggestion of the late Abbot Resewitz, then candidate [of theology] in Berlin. Jacobi, like Moses and myself, was a member. Every four weeks a paper was read by one of the members, the rest standing around a billiard table.

Source credit: First published in Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study by Alexander Altmann, published by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (Oxford & Portland, Oregon, 1973).

Document 4

Source: Johann Georg Mùchler, teacher and scholar, letter to Georg August von Breitenbauch, German aristocrat and scientist, 1756

On one day every week all members assemble. One talks, jokes, and reads something to one another. One finds there all kinds of learned periodicals, *journaux*, and other things.

Source credit: First published in Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study by Alexander Altmann, published by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (Oxford & Portland, Oregon, 1973).

Document 5

Source: Voltaire, French writer and philosopher, *Philosophical Dictionary*, 1764.

The English constitution has, in fact, arrived at that point of excellence, in consequence of which all men are restored to those natural rights, which, in nearly all monarchies, they are deprived of. These rights are, entire liberty of person and property; freedom of the press; the right of being tried in all criminal cases by a jury of independent men—the right of being tried only according to the strict letter of the law; and the right of every man to profess, unmolested, what religion he chooses, while he renounces offices, which the members of the Anglican or established church alone can hold.

Document 6

Source: Baron d'Holbach, French-German philosophe and scientist who kept a salon in Paris, *System of Nature*, 1770.

The *civilized* man, is he whom experience and social life have enabled to draw from nature the means of his own happiness; because he has learned to oppose resistance to those impulses he receives from exterior beings, when experience has taught him they would be injurious to his welfare.

The *enlightened* man, is man in his maturity, in his perfection; who is capable of pursuing his own happiness; because he has learned to examine, to think for himself, and not to take that for truth upon the authority of others, which experience has taught him examination will frequently prove erroneous.

Document 7

Source: Denis Diderot,* French philosophe and co-founder and contributor to the Encyclopédie, from *The Philosopher*, from the Encyclopédie, late 18th century.

In this manner he avoids objects that may cause him sensations that are not conducive to his well being or his rational existence, and seeks those which may excite in him affections agreeable with the state in which he finds himself. Reason is in the estimation of the philosopher what grace is to the Christian. Grace determines the Christian's action; reason the philosopher's.

*It is assumed that Diderot is the author, but it may have been written by another person

Document 8

Source: August von Hennings, German philosophe and legal scholar, letter he wrote to Moses Mendelssohn regarding Mendelssohn's arguments in favor of legal toleration for Jews, 1782.

And to what end do we need Judaism and Christianity? We have teachings common to all religions that sound reason must recognize everywhere. The more we spread these principles or doctrines, the more firmly that we establish tolerance, which without this universal enlightenment is always in danger of becoming infected by the poison of partiality, and of demonstrating folly rather than truth.

Source credit: First published in Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study by Alexander Altmann, published by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (Oxford & Portland, Oregon, 1973).

Document 9

Source: Ezekiel Landau, Rabbi in the city of Prague and conservative opponent of the Enlightenment, sermon, 1782.

Therefore, His Majesty the emperor has done us a great favor in commanding us to learn the language grammatically* so that we can speak it properly, as I stated in a sermon last winter. Even in the time of the last prophets, the king commanded that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans, and they distinguished themselves both in this area and in their knowledge of Torah and their performance of good deeds.

*referring to Joseph II's (Emperor of Austria 1765-1790) imposition of the German language on all non-German speaking people in his Empire

Source credit: From Jewish Preaching 1200-1800: An Anthology by Marc Saperstein, published by Yale University Press, 1989.

Document 10

Source: Ferdinando Maria Saluzzo, Papal nuncio (equivalent of an ambassador) in Poland, letter to the Pope, 1789.

Irreligion has made great strides here, and the Poles are not the Poles of the past. The example of that which has happened in France has arrived here *à contretemps*. The Poles who have always been reputed to be apes of the French now seem to glory in having served as a model.

Document 11

Source: Joseph II, Emperor of Austria from 1765-1790, *Letters of Joseph II*, late 18th century.

[to the Vice-Chancellor] Since my accession to the throne, I have ever been anxious to conquer the prejudices against my station, and have taken pains to gain the confidence of my people; I have several times since given proof, that the welfare of my subjects is my passion; that to satisfy it, I shun neither labor, nor trouble, nor even vexations, and reflect well on the means which are likely to promote my views; and yet in my reforms, I everywhere find opposition from people, of whom I least expect it.