# Enlightenment Thinkers

| Thinker | Dates | Country | Writings | Key Ideas / Significant Actions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thomas Hobbes | 1588-1679 | Britain | Leviathan | Life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short – social contract used to gain collective security through absolutism – strong authoritarian government |
| John Locke | 1632-1704 | Britain | Two Treatises on Government | People are inherently good, independent, and equal – experience is the best way to gain knowledge – "tabula rasa" (blank slate) – attacked theory of divine right – believed in religious freedom and separation of church and state – check and balances in government |
| Montesquieu | 1689-1755 | France | The Spirit of the Laws, | Separation of powers – judicial branch in particular must be independent – aristocracy much have power to balance of the monarchy – law codes should be reformed and used only to regulate crimes against person and property – punishment must be humane and proportional to the crime |
| Voltaire | 1694-1778 | France | Candide | Religion and church authority are bad – universal natural laws and human rights exist for all – evil is done when man strays from natural law – worst crimes in society are injustice and bigotry |
| Jean-Jacques Rousseau | 1712-1778 | France | The Social Contract | Religious and social institutions corrupt mankind – mankind's "natural" state is morally superior – will of the people rather than divine right should be used to rule – stressed importance of education and "the general will" of society – abolitionist – frank autobiography published after his death |
| Denis Diderot | 1713-1784 | France | Encyclopedia | Supported deism and attacked church authority – religious tolerance, appreciation of reason and science, and freedom for all are most important signs of an enlightened society – materialism is unhealthy |
| Mary Wollstonescraft | 1759 –1797 | England | Wrote A Vindication of the Rights (1792) | Women should be educated because they are the primary teachers in society, Opposed arbitrary power of monarchs but upheld arbitrary power of men over women. |
| Adam Smith | 1723-1790 | Britain (Scotland) | The Wealth of Nations | Popularized idea of "laissez-faire" (let it be) – government should not interfere in business or the distribution of wealth – capital should be put back into production and distribution – supply and demand acts as an "invisible hand" acting in the best interests of society |