



- 1632 Birth of John Locke.
- 1668 Locke becomes a member of the Royal Society.
- 1675–79 Locke lives in France.
- 1689 Publication of *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by Locke.
- 1690 Publication of *Two Treatises of Government* by Locke.
- 1693 Publication of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* by Locke.
- 1694 Birth of Voltaire.
- 1704 Death of John Locke.
- 1726–28 Voltaire exiled in England.
- 1728 Publication of Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia*.
- 1734 Publication of Voltaire's *Lettres Philosophiques*.
- 1737 Birth of Thomas Paine.
- 1751–72 Publication of the *French Encyclopédie* edited by Denis Diderot.
- 1776 Declaration of American Independence.
- 1789 Publication of *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* by Jeremy Bentham. Revolution in France.
- 1791 Publication of *The Rights of Man* by Thomas Paine defending the French Revolution.

# The Enlightenment

Just as the scientific advances of the 17th century were part of a Europe-wide movement, so the Enlightenment grew out of ideas that were discussed across the Continent. The ideas of the Enlightenment led people to question the traditional teachings of the Church and to celebrate the power of human reason.

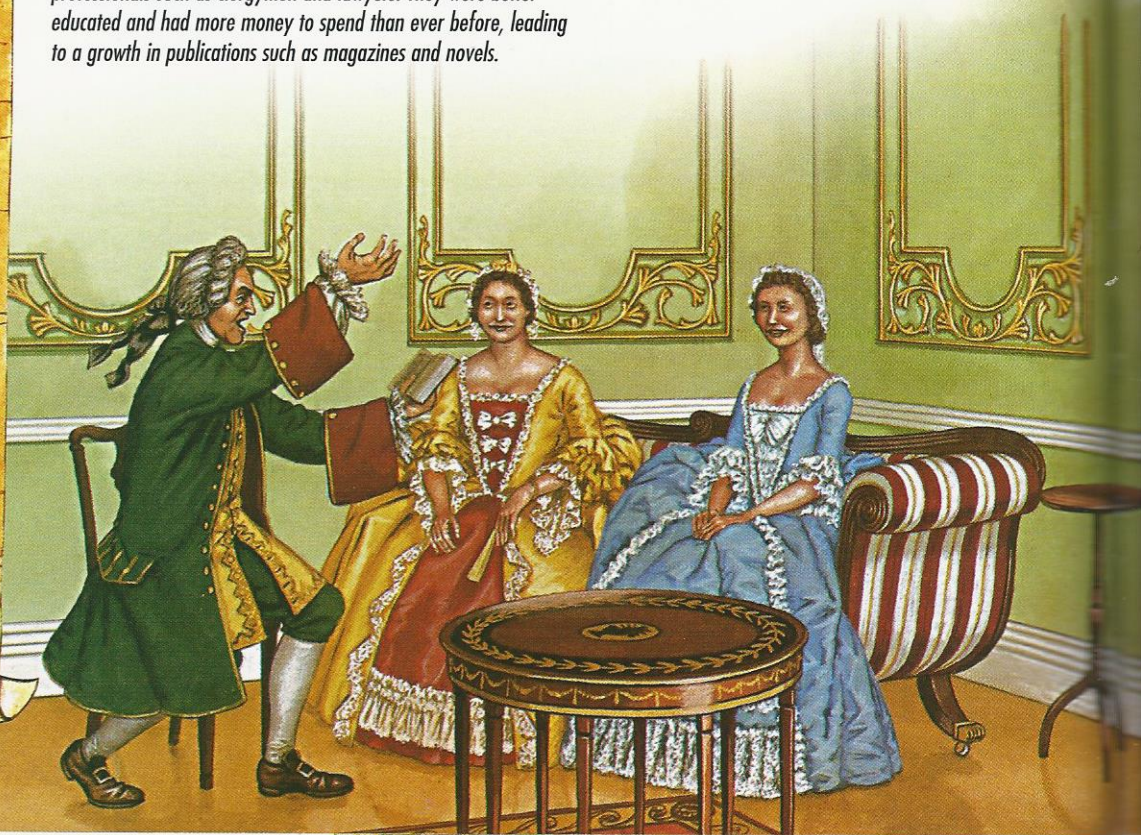
Enlightenment thinkers believed that knowledge about the universe and the world around them could be gained only by experience. This idea grew partly out of the work of the 17th-century scientists, particularly Sir Isaac Newton. Newton's experiments and his rigorous application of logic led to theories, such as his law of gravity, that helped people understand the universe.

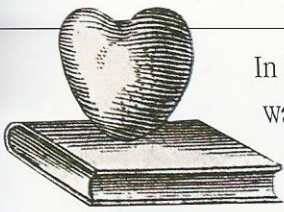
A major figure of the Enlightenment, John Locke, wrote many books and essays setting out his beliefs about the power of reason.

*An evening of music, readings and conversation in a 17th-century middle-class house. The 'middle sort' ranged from farmers to professionals such as clergymen and lawyers. They were better educated and had more money to spend than ever before, leading to a growth in publications such as magazines and novels.*



*In the 18th century ballet was performed in public for the first time. The clothes that dancers wore became less restrictive and much easier to dance in.*





**Many of the great writers of the Enlightenment were French, including Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire. In England, leading Enlightenment writers included John Locke and Thomas Hobbes.**

In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke said that at birth the human mind was empty (a 'clean slate') and that it was experience that created every individual character.

As a result, Locke insisted on the importance of a good and broad education for every child. He also wrote about government in the influential *Two Treatises of Government*. He insisted that the rulers of any country were entrusted with the 'public good', and if they failed to fulfil that trust then the people could overthrow them. Together with the work of other writers such as Jeremy Bentham and the French author Voltaire these ideas eventually led to revolution in America and France, and reform in Britain.

Britain in the 18th century was regarded with great admiration by many European thinkers and writers. They wrote about the civilized character of English society and the way in which there was tolerance and moderation in all things. Voltaire wrote: 'The English nation is the only one on earth which has succeeded in controlling the power of kings... and in which the people share in the government without confusion.' Although this was rather an optimistic view, Britain did come closer to the ideals of the Enlightenment than other European countries at that time.



**The *Encyclopédie* was published in parts between 1751 and 1772 in France. It was inspired by the success of an English publication called *Cyclopaedia* published in 1728. The *Encyclopédie* was edited by the philosopher Denis Diderot, and it embraced the tolerance and open-mindedness of Enlightenment ideas.**