

Document A

Source: John Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, 1690.

Note: John Locke (1632–1704) lived in England during both the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution. When Locke was born, England's form of government was an absolute monarchy in which the king or queen had power to rule and sometimes asked for advice and assistance from Parliament. In 1689, the English Parliament passed the Bill of Rights. This law reversed the role of king and Parliament making Parliament more powerful than the king.

“Of the State of Nature”

... (W)e must consider, what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature....

There [is] nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank ... should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection....

“Of the Dissolution of Government”

(W)hen the government is dissolved, the people are at liberty to provide for themselves, by erecting a new legislative, ... for the society can never, ... lose the native and original right it has to preserve itself, which can only be done by a settled legislative, and a fair and impartial execution of the laws made by it. But the state of mankind is not so miserable that they are not capable of using this remedy, ... they have not only a right to get out of [a failed government], but to prevent it.

Document Analysis

1. In what year is John Locke writing these words? How many years was this before the American Declaration of Independence?
2. What does John Locke mean when he says that all men are naturally in “a state of perfect freedom ... within the bounds of the law of nature”?
3. What does Locke have to say about human equality?
4. According to Locke, who has the right to create a new government if the old government fails? What two branches of government does Locke appear to recommend?
5. Based on these two passages, what would you say is Locke’s main idea?

Document B

Source: Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, 1726.

Note: Voltaire was born Francois-Marie Arouet in Paris in 1694. He adopted his pen name and became a prolific writer, eventually composing poems, novels, essays, plays, and over 20,000 personal letters. He remains among the leading historical supporters of tolerance. Voltaire died in 1778 at the age of 83, eleven years before the French Revolution.

Take a view of the Royal Exchange (trading center) in London ... where the representatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind. There the Jew, the Mahometan (Muslim), and the Christian transact together as tho' they all professed the same religion.... There the Presbyterian confides in the Anabaptist (Baptist), and the Churchman (Anglican) depends on the Quaker's word....

If one religion only were allowed in England, the government would very possibly become arbitrary; if there were but two, the people would cut one another's throats; but as there are such a multitude, they all live happy and in peace.

Document Analysis

1. What happens at the Royal Exchange in London?
2. Why, according to Voltaire, is it good that England allows a "multitude" of religions?
3. What is Voltaire's main idea about religion in society?
4. What does Voltaire's main idea about religion have in common with John Locke's main idea about government?

Document D

Source: Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792.

Note: British author Mary Wollstonecraft wrote novels, a history of the French Revolution, a travel journal, and a children's book in addition to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. During the 18th century, most people believed that women should be beautiful, emotional and dependent on men. Therefore, women were discouraged from studying history, geography, and rhetoric, which all teach people how to make logical, reasoned arguments.

Chapter 2 *The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed*

The most perfect education, in my opinion, is ... to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render [her] independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose [skills] do not result from the exercise of [her] own reason.

Chapter 12 *On National Education*

To render mankind more virtuous, and happier of course, both sexes must act from the same principle;... women must be allowed to found their virtue on knowledge, which is scarcely possible unless they be educated by the same pursuits as men. For they are now made so inferior by ignorance and low desires, as not to deserve to be ranked with them....

In short, ... reason and experience convince me that the only method of leading women to fulfill their peculiar duties is to free them from all restraint by allowing them to participate in the inherent rights of mankind. Make them free, and they will quickly become wise and virtuous,

Document Analysis

1. In what year is Mary Wollstonecraft writing these words? What revolution was going on at the time?
2. How does Wollstonecraft believe women compare to men? What does Wollstonecraft recommend in order to make women equal to men?
3. What methods did Wollstonecraft use to reach her conclusions?
4. What is Wollstonecraft's main idea?
5. In what ways are the main ideas of Wollstonecraft, Locke, Smith, and Voltaire similar?