Chapter 16 Starting with a Story - Challenging Old Ideas

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Rousseau, who lived from 1712 to 1778, wrote several significant works. His first two explored the idea that civilization destroys many of the noble qualities of human beings. Rousseau felt that progress and increased urbanization came at the price of a person’s compassion, inner happiness, individuality, and freedom. In his third work, published in 1762, he offered a solution to the loss of freedom suffered by people in society. He said that government is a contract or agreement between those who govern and the people. The people agree to obey the government if, in return, their rights and individual liberties are protected. If the government favors only a few or tyrannizes the people, then it has broken the contract and should be removed. These ideas became the cornerstones of both the American and French revolutions.

1. What did Rousseau feel happened to human beings with progress and urbanization?

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2. When did Rousseau think a government should be overthrown?

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Read pages 532 and 533 to answer the following questions.

3. From where did the European monarchs get their claim to absolute power? (page 532)

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4. What new ideas began sweeping through Europe in the mid-1700's? Why were the new ideas a problem? (Page 532)

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5. What was Louis's reaction to Rousseau's book, "The Social Contract"? (Page 533)

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6. What type of rights does Andre think all people deserve to have? (Page 533)

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7. Why does Louis think these new ideas won't be accepted by the kings and nobles? (Page 533)

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8. Why are Louis and Andre fearful as they end their conversation? (Page 533)

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