The Enlightenment

The main ideas of the Enlightenment can be traced back to such movements as the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Scientific Revolution and to the Greeks, Romans, and Christianity. Read the information and answer the questions that follow.

Ancient Greeks and Romans used their powers of reasoning and observation, looking closely at something, to find out more about the world around them. They also stressed the value of individuals.

1. What values Ancient Greeks and Romans contribute to the Enlightenment?

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The Scientific Revolution brought new ways of thinking about the natural world. Scientists used observation, looking closely at things. They did not accept any idea until it was proven. Philosophers also began to look again at old ideas about government, religion, economics, and education.

2. How did Enlightenment thinkers use ideas from the Scientific Revolution?

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The Renaissance brought new interest in the classic works of Greece and Rome. Once again, reason and logic were stressed. In addition, humanism focused on what people could do. People were expected to use their minds to solve problems and do great things. New inventions like the printing press helped spread new ideas.

3. Identify the concepts stressed during the Renaissance. What were people expected to do?

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The Reformation started a trend of questioning authority. By challenging the Catholic Church, reformers showed that people could question even the most powerful institution. This idea helped bring about revolutions later in the Enlightenment.

4. How did the Reformation prepare the way for the Enlightenment?

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During the Middle Ages, Christianity was widespread in Europe. Faith was more important than reason. However, Christianity brought the idea of equality in the eyes of God. This became important in the Enlightenment.

5. How did Christianity influence the Enlightenment?

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The Enlightenment (1700s) was a movement in which thinkers stressed reason and the power of individuals to solve problems. Enlightenment thinking ended many old beliefs.

6. What was important to Enlightenment thinkers? How effective was the Enlightenment?

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