

CHAPTER

2

SECTION 4

EXTEND WORKSHEET

Creating the Constitution

3, 4

Enlightenment Philosophers**John Locke**

The ideas of English philosopher John Locke were so radical that he could not publish his *Treatises on Government* until 1690, ten years after its completion. Locke believed that all people are born with natural rights, including life, liberty, and property. People establish governments to protect these rights. If the government fails in this duty, the people have a right to change the government. This idea challenged the divine right of kings, and was used to justify the Glorious Revolution. Locke's ideas of natural rights, government by and for the people, and religious toleration greatly influenced the Framers of the U.S. Constitution.

Baron de Montesquieu

In his work *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), French philosopher Baron de Montesquieu examined different forms of government. He observed that corruption can creep into any government. "... constant experience shows us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it . . . it is necessary from the very nature of things that power should be a check to power." Montesquieu concluded that abuse of power can be prevented by separating legislative, executive, and judicial powers among different bodies. Each body would restrain the power of the others, and all would be bound by the rule of law.

Voltaire

François-Marie Arouet, known as Voltaire, was one of the most vocal of the French Enlightenment thinkers. He wrote scathing attacks on religious bigotry and fanaticism, for which he was jailed and eventually exiled. In place of traditional religion, Voltaire promoted deism—a religious philosophy that acknowledged God but rejected specific teachings of any church. Deists argued for religious freedom and toleration. As Voltaire wrote in "A Treatise on Toleration" (1763), "we ought to look upon all men as our brothers." Deist views migrated to America and were adopted by leaders such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington.

EXTEND WORKSHEET (continued)**Creating the Constitution****3, 4****Jean-Jacques Rousseau**

"Man is born free, but everywhere is in chains." Thus began Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762). Rousseau believed that a social contract exists between a government and the governed. The people agree to obey the laws and submit to the general will of society. In exchange, government agrees to protect the rights and equality of all people. Current governments, he argued, broke this contract by protecting only the wealthy and powerful, enslaving the common people. In such cases, the people should change the government. This idea of social contract underlies the Bill of Rights and the concept of consent of the governed.

William Blackstone

William Blackstone was no fan of American independence. Yet his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* would greatly influence America's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. In his *Commentaries*, he distilled the vast bulk on English common law into four clearly written, understandable volumes. Once Americans had won their rights on the battlefield, they turned to the *Commentaries* for a summary of those rights. Readers included Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, John Jay, and James Wilson. Despite their disdain for Blackstone's politics, the Framers often referred to his work as they laid the nation's legal foundation.