



Founders' Influence:
SS.7.CG.1.4
Enlightenment Influences
READING #2

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.1.4 Benchmark Clarification 2: Students will examine how Enlightenment ideas influenced the Founders' beliefs about individual liberties and government.

The United States grew into 13 colonies from English settlements in North America. The King of England and Parliament (England's legislature) governed the colonies. Many American colonists grew angry that the King refused to listen to their concerns. They were also angry that the Parliament did not include the colonists in decisions about the colonies. The colonists believed that the King and Parliament violated their **individual liberties**. This means the colonists' ability to live as free and independent people was not being protected.

Some colonists decided to speak out about wanting to separate from the English government. They wanted to create their own government. Representatives from the 13 colonies met and wrote a document listing their reasons for separation.

These representatives are now known as the Founding Fathers, or Founders. Many of the Founders' views on the purpose of government included **Enlightenment** ideas such as **separation of powers**, **natural law**, and the **social contract**.

Enlightenment - a period in European history when many educated people stressed the importance of learning and reasoning; education was considered the key to understanding and solving society's problems

individual liberty - a person's ability to be free and independent

natural law - laws passed by government to protect natural rights

separation of powers - the structure of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that sets up three branches with their own distinct powers and responsibilities

social contract - an implied agreement among the people of an organized society that defines the rights, duties, and limitations of the governed and the government