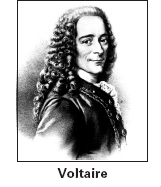
Name Class Date

6

The Enlightenment began in France with the brilliant circle of thinkers and reformers  
known as *philosophes.* Probably the most renowned throughout all Europe was the  
writer Voltaire, whose works people still enjoy today. ♦ *As you read, think about the  
courage it took at that time to criticize powerful institutions such as the Church and the gov-  
ernment. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

**Voltaire (1694 –1778)**

It is hard to imagine one single person today  
influencing people’s thinking as deeply as did  
the French writer known as Voltaire. In his  
own time he was considered a great poet and  
playwright, while today people enjoy the wit  
and biting humor of his tales and essays. He  
ridiculed all kinds of rules, ideas, and behav-  
ior that he thought were intolerant, unfair,  
cruel, or simply stupid. People still  
enjoy the witty satire of his story  
*Candide,* in which the always opti-  
mistic hero, despite the horrors and  
injustices he sees, still goes on say-  
ing that, “All is for the best in this  
best of all possible worlds.” *Candide*is so entertaining that American  
composer Leonard Bernstein made  
it the basis for a Broadway musical  
first presented in 1956.

Born in Paris, Voltaire’s real  
name was François-Marie Arouet. He  
attended a Jesuit college and grew up among  
others who were “freethinkers.” His first run-  
in with authority came when he was 23 and  
imprisoned in the Bastille for some verses he  
had written. Later he spent several years in  
England, where people had more liberty to  
write and say what they thought about con-  
troversial subjects like religion. He greatly

admired Britain’s constitutional monarchy,  
although he thought an enlightened authori-  
tarian ruler was better for France.

Voltaire criticized many things about  
French society and government, including  
the unjust legal system, press censorship, and  
the power and intolerance of the Catholic  
Church. These ideas made him unwelcome in  
Paris for many years. He spent  
some time at the court of Frederick  
the Great of Prussia, an “enlight-  
ened” monarch who admired  
Voltaire’s ideas. He spent most of  
the rest of his life at his chateau in  
Ferney, on the French border near  
Lake Geneva in Switzerland. Visi-  
tors, many uninvited, often traveled  
there just to meet the great man.

Voltaire was also a historian, set-  
ting a new style by including cul-  
tural and social ideas as well as political  
events in his histories. As a *philosophe,* he  
expressed his ideas in serious essays and  
philosophical poems and in tales and books  
such as *Zadig, Candide,* and the *Philosophical  
Dictionary.* His wit and ideas also appear in  
the thousands of letters he wrote to writers,  
friends, and monarchs all over Europe.

31-1

**1.** What were some of the things about French  
society that Voltaire criticized?

**2.** Which of Voltaire’s works is best known  
today and the basis of a musical?

**3. Make Comparisons** Voltaire admired  
Britain’s governmental system. How did  
this influence his ideas about the govern-  
ment of France?

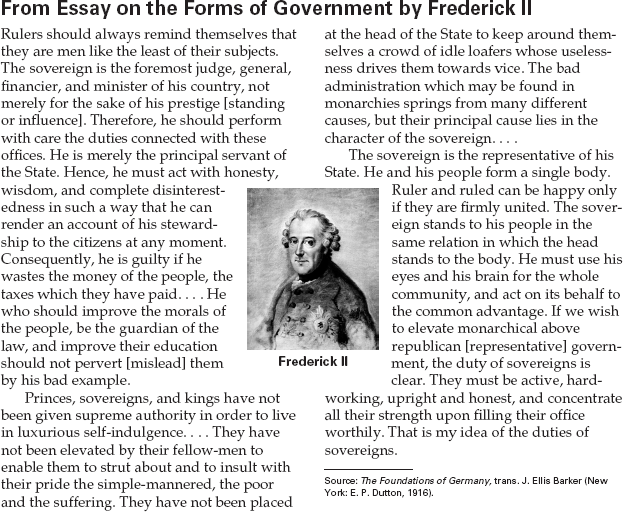
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**7**

Name Class Date

7

Frederick II, known as Frederick the Great, ruled Prussia from 1740 to 1786. He was  
strongly influenced by Enlightenment thinkers. Frederick was also a leading exam-  
ple of an enlightened despot—an absolute ruler who used power to bring about  
political and social reforms. ♦ *As you read, think about how Frederick viewed his role as a  
monarch and how he expressed Enlightenment ideas in his rule. Then, on a separate sheet of  
paper, answer the questions that follow.*



**1.** What does Frederick think makes a good  
ruler?

**2.** To what does Frederick compare a monarch  
and his or her subjects?

**3. Predict Consequences** Do you think  
Frederick’s subjects were satisfied with the  
limited independence he offered them?

**4. Activity** How does Frederick’s description of  
what makes a good ruler express Enlighten-  
ment ideas? Create a word web showing how  
Frederick’s ideas relate to the Enlightenment.

**8**

**1.** What does Frederick think makes a good  
ruler?

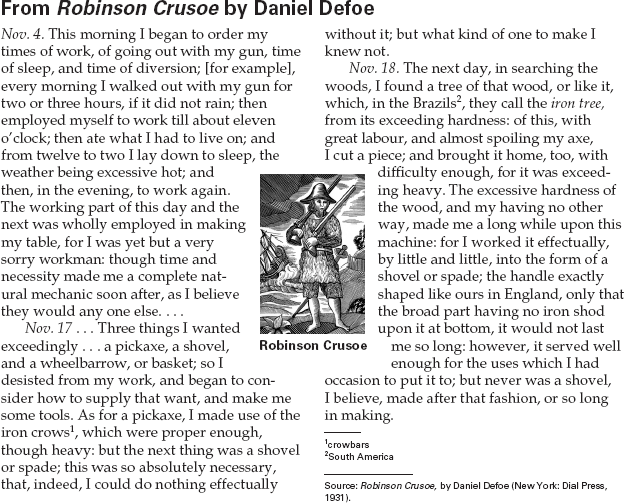
**2.** To what does Frederick compare a monarch  
and his or her subjects?

**3. Predict Consequences** Do you think  
Frederick’s subjects were satisfied with the  
limited independence he offered them?

Name Class Date

8

*Robinson Crusoe,* written in 1719, tells the story of a fictional shipwreck survivor,  
Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe lives on a tropical island for many years, with only a few  
supplies from his wrecked ship and what he could make or hunt for himself. In this  
excerpt, Crusoe has just landed on the island. ♦ *As you read, think about how Crusoe’s  
behavior expresses Enlightenment values and ideas. Then, on a separate sheet of paper,  
answer the questions that follow.*



ques

**1.** What is the first problem Crusoe addresses in  
this excerpt?

**2. Draw Inferences** Crusoe follows a regular sched-  
ule and carefully plans each new project. What  
do you think Defoe is saying about the use of rea-  
son to solve problems? Why?

**3. Draw Conclusions** Write a paragraph  
explaining how you think the story  
Robinson Crusoeexpresses Enlighten-  
ment values.

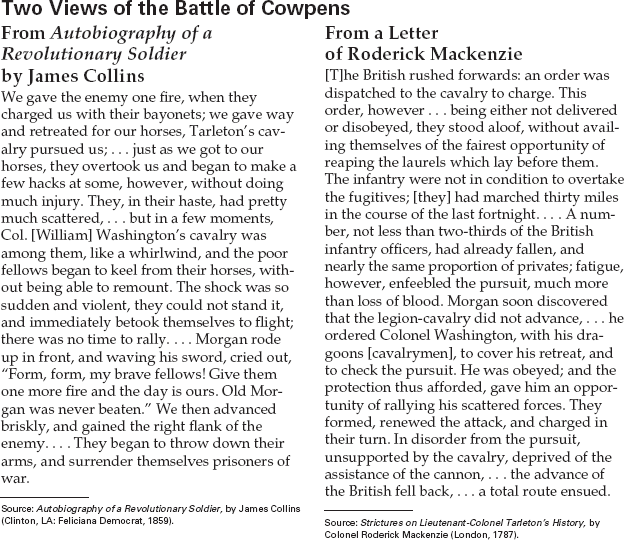
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**9**

Name Class Date

11

The Battle of Cowpens was fought in present-day South Carolina in 1781. In the  
excerpts below, two soldiers describe the battle. James Collins was an American foot  
soldier serving under Daniel Morgan, and Roderick Mackenzie was a British infantry  
officer under the command of Banastre Tarleton. ♦ *As you read, think about what might  
cause soldiers in battle to view the same events differently. Then, on a separate sheet of paper,  
answer the questions that follow.*



ques

**1.** Who won the battle: the Americans or the  
British?

**2. Make Comparisons** What reasons do the two  
soldiers give for the outcome of the battle?

**3. Draw Inferences** Why might soldiers on dif-  
ferent sides attribute the outcome of a battle  
to different causes?

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**11**