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Unit Two: Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a period in history when European philosophers emphasized the use of reason (logical thinking) as the best method of learning truth. This period followed the Middle Ages and came about during the age of absolutism, a period in time when authority controlled the government and limited education.

Enlightenment thinkers relied on the scientific method, with its emphasis on experimentation and careful observation. They produced many important advances in fields such as anatomy, astronomy, chemistry, mathematics and physics. These thinkers organized knowledge in encyclopedias and founded scientific institutes, and explored issues in education, law, philosophy, and politics. The enlightenment thinkers attacked oppression, social injustice, superstition and ignorance. As we explore the Enlightenment, we will do so in 2 sections:

1. The Enlightenment in Europe
2. Spread of Enlightenment Ideas