American Revolution Essay – Primary Documents

(Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution & Bill of Rights)

The American Revolution is considered to be the first Enlightened Revolution in history and provided the foot prints for others to revolt against tyrant governments. Not only did they fight for the causes and ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers, they created documents that reflected the ideas and theories of these important thinkers of reason. In July 1776, the Second Continental Congress issued the **Declaration of Independence.** This document, written by Thomas Jefferson,was firmly based on the ideas of the Enlightenment and reflected these ideas in its eloquent argument for natural rights. In February 1787, Congress approved a Constitutional Convention to revise the Articles of Confederation. The Constitutional Convention held its first session on May 25, 1787 to write the **U.S. Constitution.** In order to gain support, the Federalists promised to add a bill of rights to the Constitution. This promise cleared the way for approval. Congress formally added to the Constitution the ten amendments known as the **Bill of Rights.** These amendments protected such basic rights as freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion. The 55 delegates were experienced statesmen who were familiar with the political theories of Locke, Montesquieu, Beccaria, Voltaire, Rousseau and other philosophers of the Enlightenment.

Research the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution and identify Enlightenment ideas used by the founding fathers in these documents. Create an essay that identifies the philosophers, as well as their ideas used in the two documents. Also explain where it can be found in the U.S. documents and how it applies to the principles of the United States. In conclusion, express if you think we still hold these ideas and principles to be true today.

**Tasks**

1. Examine the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution & the Bill of Rights using web pages or app on ipad.
2. Determine what Enlightenment ideas are represented in the documents, from whom these ideas originate & what they said.
3. Plan with an organizer that selects three different Enlightenment ideas, the philosopher, what they said, what document contains the idea, where it can be found and what it says.
4. Create a five paragraph essay in googledocs (see paragraph template)
5. Check final copy for errors (have someone else read)
6. Submit to Mr. Miller [butch.miller@gocruisers.org](mailto:butch.miller@gocruisers.org)

**Paragraph Template**

1st Paragraph- What will you tell in essay (philosopher/documents)

2nd Paragraph- What philosopher, Enlightenment idea, what they said, the document, where in document and what it says

3rd Paragraph- Different philosopher, same info as first PP

4th Paragraph- Different philosopher, same info as first PP

5th Paragraph- Recap the ideas shared in the essay, express if you think we still hold these ideas and principles to be true today.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 5pts | 3pts | 1pt |
| Identify | Clearly identifies use of U.S. documents/ Enlightenment idea | Identifies use of U.S. documents/ Enlightenment idea | Use of U.S. documents/ Enlightenment idea |
| Connects | Clearly connects Enlightenment ideas to U.S Documents | Connects Enlightenment ideas to U.S Documents | Mentions Enlightenment ideas to U.S Documents |
| Structure | Contains five paragraphs with very little errors | Contains five paragraphs with some errors | Contains five paragraphs with a lot errors |
| Self- Expression | Clearly expresses if ideas are true today | Expresses if ideas are true today | Mentions if ideas are true today |

American Revolution Essay – Primary Documents Organizer

(Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution & Bill of Rights)

Document: Philosopher:

Enlightenment Idea/quote/meaning from philosopher:

Where in the document did you find Enlightenment idea?

What does the document say/excerpt/meaning?

Document: Philosopher:

Enlightenment Idea/quote/meaning from philosopher:

Where in the document did you find Enlightenment idea?

What does the document say/excerpt/meaning?