

Was the Age of Reason Unreasonable?



A Reading in the Salon of Mme Geoffrin, 1755, oil on canvas, 129 x 196 cm, Châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau, Paris.

Supporting Questions

1. What ideas did Enlightenment philosophers discuss? Were these ideas about people and the government reasonable?
2. How did Enlightenment ideas influence the American Revolution?
3. How did Enlightenment ideas become more radical in the French Revolution?

9 Grade North Carolina Hub Was the Age of Reason Unreasonable? Inquiry by Julie Hellerstein

Was the Age of Reason Unreasonable?	
Inquiry Standard	WH.H.6.1 Explain how new ideas and theories of the universe altered political thought and affected economic and social conditions (e.g., Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment, rationalism, secularism, humanism, tolerance, empiricism, natural rights, contractual government, laissez-faire economics, Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, Newton, inductive and deductive reasoning, heliocentric, inquisition, works of Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Bolivar, Jefferson, Paine, Adam Smith, etc.).
Staging the Compelling Question	Students will listen to and annotate lyrics of both American and French Revolution music video parodies. Students will highlight “reasonable actions” in one color and “unreasonable actions in another color.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What ideas did Enlightenment philosophers discuss? Were these ideas about people and the government reasonable?	How did Enlightenment ideas influence the American Revolution?	How did Enlightenment ideas become more radical in the French Revolution?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Answer Supporting Question # 1 by writing a paragraph with evidentiary support.	1. Annotate the sources. Highlight and note Enlightenment ideas and how they inspired the American Revolution. 2. Do you think the American colonists are being reasonable? Why or why not? Provide two pieces of evidence.	Make an illustrated timeline that shows how the French Revolution became more radical and violent.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: Source A: History.com Enlightenment Source B: Source B: John Locke Infographic Source C: Source C: Rousseau, Social Contract Source D: Source D: Salon de Madame Geoffrin	Source A: Source A: Declaration of Independence Source B: Source B: Grievance List Source C: Patrick Henry, speech in support of the colonies in rebellion against Great Britain, “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” (excerpt), March, 20, 1775 Source D: Source D: King George III Speaks to Parliament of American Rebellion	Source A: Source A: Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen Source B: Source B- Storming the Bastille-Paris Newspaper Source C: Source C- Laws of Suspect Source D: Source D- Guillotine Coroner’s Report Source E: Source E- Reign of Terror

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT Was the Age of Reason unreasonable? Construct an argument that addresses the compelling question, using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources.
	EXTENSION Students will participate in a salon style classroom discussion where they present their arguments.
Taking Informed Action	UNDERSTAND Investigate a current group that you believe is being unreasonable in their actions but have a goal you find noble or important. Use evidence to support your claim. ASSESS Write a report about a current group that you believe is being unreasonable in their actions but have a goal you find noble or important. Use three pieces of evidence to support your claim. ACTION Identify what the group's intended goal is and write a more reasonable solution for that group to carry out their goals successfully. Create an action plan and share your findings with someone in your community.

Inquiry Description

The Age of Reason or the Enlightenment was a period where philosophers developed ideas about the relationship between people and government. They established the ideas of natural rights and social contract theory. A prominent philosopher, John Locke, argued that people have the right to break away from their government when their natural rights are not being met. These ideas influenced the thirteen colonies to break away from King George III. Enlightenment ideas influenced both the American Revolution and French Revolution. The French Revolution was more radical, extreme and violent and resulted in terror. In this inquiry, students will argue if the age of reason was actually unreasonable.

Structure

My inquiry is broken down into three supporting questions with corresponding formative performance task. The questions become more rigorous. The inquiry concludes with a summative task where students construct their argument and support it with relevant evidence. The inquiry can be modified as needed to fit time constraints and student ability.

Disciplinary Concepts: history, civics

Skills: making claims, using evidence, constructing arguments, reading, writing, and evaluating sources

Staging the Compelling Question

Compelling
Question

Was the Age of Reason Unreasonable?

Staging the compelling question

Students will be highly engaged as they watch parody music videos on both the American and French Revolution. I recommend playing "Too Late to Apologize: Declaration" for the American Revolution and "Lady Gaga French Revolution Bad Romance" parody for the French Revolution. While they listen to the music, they will follow along with their own set of lyrics and will highlight actions that they deem reasonable in one color and unreasonable in another color. The purpose is for students to see that Enlightenment ideas were present in both revolutions but the French Revolution became more violent and radical.

Supporting Question 1

Supporting Question	What ideas did Enlightenment philosophers discuss? Were these ideas about people and the government reasonable?
Formative Performance Task	Answer Supporting Question # 1 by writing a paragraph with evidentiary support.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: Source A: History.com Enlightenment● Source B: Source B: John Locke Infographic● Source C: Source C: Rousseau, Social Contract● Source D: Source D: Salon de Madame Geoffrin

In Supporting Question 1, students will identify the ideas that Enlightenment philosophers discussed. Students will evaluate if they believe these ideas were reasonable. This will help build their content knowledge and understanding of enlightenment ideas.

Formative Performance Task

Students will write a five to seven sentence paragraph that answers supporting question 1. Students should cite at least three pieces of evidence to support their reasoning.

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source A

Source A: History.com Enlightenment

Excerpt

“European politics, philosophy, science and communications were radically reoriented during the course of the “long 18th century” (1685-1815) as part of a movement referred to by its participants as the Age of Reason, or simply the Enlightenment. Enlightenment thinkers in Britain, in France and throughout Europe questioned traditional authority and embraced the notion that humanity could be improved through rational change. The Enlightenment produced numerous books, essays, inventions, scientific discoveries, laws, wars and revolutions. The American and French Revolutions were directly inspired by Enlightenment ideals”

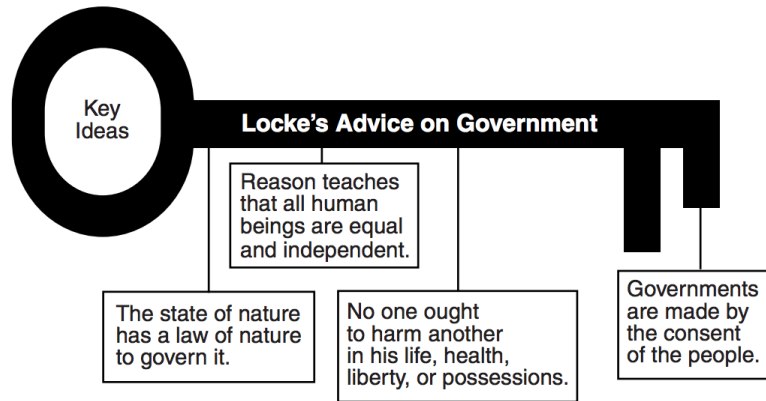
Source:

<http://www.history.com/topics/enlightenment>

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source B

Source B: John Locke Infographic



<http://www.nysedregents.org/globalhistorygeography..>

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source C

Source C: Rousseau, Social Contract

Excerpt

Background

In political philosophy, the social contract is a theory or model, originating during the Age of Enlightenment, that typically addresses the questions of the origin of society and the legitimacy of the authority of the state over the individual. Philosophers like John Locke and Rousseau discussed the idea of the social contract. Social contract arguments typically posit that individuals have consented to surrender some of their freedoms and submit to the authority of the ruler in exchange for protection of their remaining rights. The question of the relation between natural and legal rights, therefore, is often an aspect of social contract theory.

Read the modified excerpt below from *The Social Contract* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762)

"Man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains. The government is created by a contract among the people and receives its powers from them. The government exists to serve the people and when it no longer does so, the people may change it." ...

"How is a method of associating to be found which will defend and protect—using the power of all—the person and property of each member and still enable each member of the group to obey only himself and to remain as free as before?" This is the fundamental problem; the social contract offers a solution to it.

The very scope of the action dictates the terms of this contract and renders the least modification of them inadmissible, something making them null and void. Thus, although perhaps they have never been stated in so many words, they are the same everywhere and tacitly conceded and recognized everywhere. And so it follows that each individual immediately recovers his primitive rights and natural liberties whenever any violation of the social contract occurs and thereby loses the contractual freedom for which he renounced them.

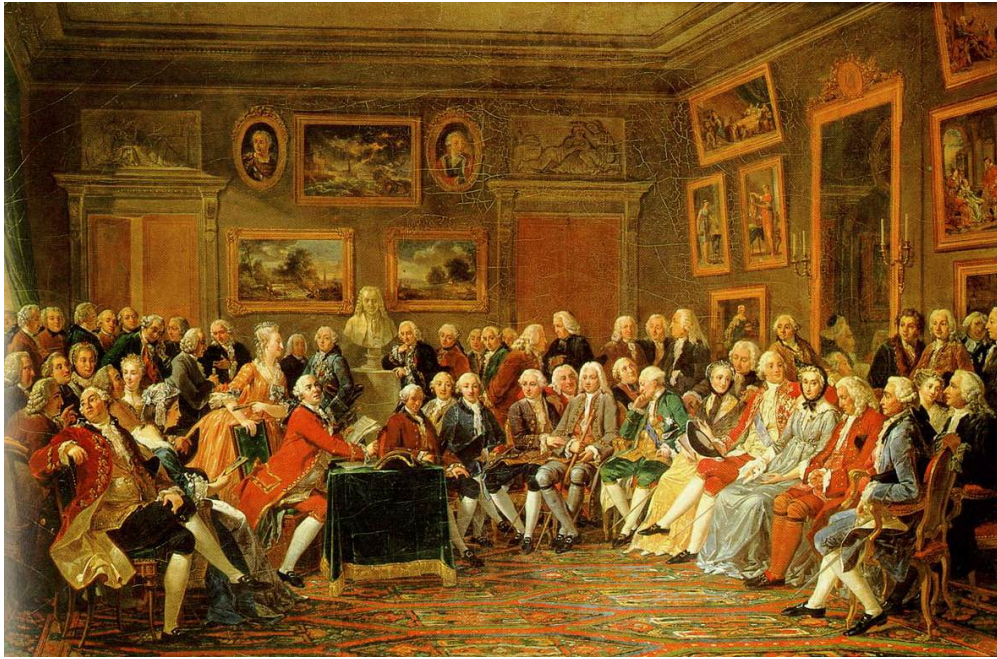
Source:

The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1762) (1762) via <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/ushistory1os2xma..>

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source D

Source D: Salon de Madame Geoffrin



A Reading in the Salon of Mme Geoffrin, 1755, oil on canvas, 129 x 196 cm, Châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau, Paris.

Supporting Question 2

Supporting Question	How did Enlightenment ideas influence the American Revolution?
Formative Performance Task	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Annotate the sources. Highlight and note Enlightenment ideas and how they inspired the American Revolution.2. Do you think the American colonists are being reasonable? Why or why not? Provide two pieces of evidence.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: Source A: Declaration of Independence● Source B: Source B: Grievance List● Source C: Patrick Henry, speech in support of the colonies in rebellion against Great Britain, "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" (excerpt), March, 20, 1775● Source D: Source D: King George III Speaks to Parliament of American Rebellion

In Supporting Question 2, students will analyze how Enlightenment ideas influenced the American Revolution. Students will annotate, note and highlight Enlightenment ideas that are present in the American Revolution documents.

Formative Performance Task

Students will analyze the American Revolution documents for Enlightenment ideas. Students will demonstrate their understanding by highlighting and annotating the text. Students will also form an argument and provide evidence. This argument exercise will prepare students for the summative performance task at the end of the inquiry.

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source A

Source A: Declaration of Independence

Excerpt

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness

Source:

Declaration of Independence (US 1776)

Modified version- Stanford History Education Group

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source B

Source B: Grievance List

Excerpt

Americans wrote a list of Grievances Against King George III in the American Declaration of Independence

(8 & 9) He has refused to establish courts of justice, and has made judges dependent on him for their jobs and salaries.

(10) He has sent swarms of British officers to harass our people and eat our food.

(11 & 12) He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.

(16) For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;

(17) For imposing taxes on us without our consent;

(18) For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury;

(23 & 24) He is waging war against us; He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burned our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

(27) He has started fights among

Source:

Declaration of Independence (US 1776)

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source C

Patrick Henry, speech in support of the colonies in rebellion against Great Britain, "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" (excerpt), March, 20, 1775

Excerpt

NOTE: Renowned for his oratory skills, Patrick Henry led the opposition against the Stamp Act of 1765. He served as governor of Virginia twice and later led anti-federalist opposition against the ratification of the United States Constitution, which helped lead to the adoption of the Bill of Rights.

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.

Source:

Public domain. Available at the Colonial Williamsburg website:

<http://www.history.org/almanack/life/politics/give..>

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source D

Source D: King George III Speaks to Parliament of American Rebellion

Excerpt

“acted with the same temper; anxious to prevent, if it had been possible, the effusion of the blood of my subjects; and the calamities which are inseparable from a state of war; still hoping that my people in America would have discerned the traitorous views of their leaders, and have been convinced, that to be a subject of Great Britain, with all its consequences, is to be the freest member of any civil society in the known world.” King George went on to scoff at what he called the colonists’ “strongest protestations of loyalty to me,” believing them disingenuous, “whilst they were preparing for a general revolt.”

Source:

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/king-ge..>

Supporting Question 3

Supporting Question	How did Enlightenment ideas become more radical in the French Revolution?
Formative Performance Task	Make an illustrated timeline that shows how the French Revolution became more radical and violent.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: Source A: Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen● Source B: Source B- Storming the Bastille- Paris Newspaper● Source C: Source C- Laws of Suspect● Source D: Source D- Guillotine Coroner's Report● Source E: Source E- Reign of Terror

In Supporting Question 3, students will explain how the enlightenment ideals of the French Revolution become corrupt, radical, and violent.

Formative Performance Task

Students will create an illustrated timeline that shows the events of the French Revolution. Students will note that although the French Revolution was inspired by Enlightenment ideas, it was carried out in a violent and radical way.

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source A

Source A: Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen

Excerpt

Approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789

The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties; in order that the acts of the legislative power, as well as those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all political institutions and may thus be more respected, and, lastly, in order that the grievances of the citizens, based hereafter upon simple and incontestable principles, shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all. Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Articles:

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.
4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.
5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law.
6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.
7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.
8. The law shall provide for such punishments only as are strictly and obviously necessary, and no one shall suffer punishment except it be legally inflicted in virtue of a law passed and promulgated before the commission of the offense.
9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.
10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.
11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.
12. The security of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces. These forces are, therefore, established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those to whom they shall be intrusted.

13. A common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces and for the cost of administration. This should be equitably distributed among all the citizens in proportion to their means.

14. All the citizens have a right to decide, either personally or by their representatives, as to the necessity of the public contribution; to grant this freely; to know to what uses it is put; and to fix the proportion, the mode of assessment and of collection and the duration of the taxes.

15. Society has the right to require of every public agent an account of his administration.

16. A society in which the observance of the law is not assured, nor the separation of powers defined, has no constitution at all.

17. Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be deprived thereof except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it, and then only on condition that the owner shall have been previously and equitably indemnified.

Source:

Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen (1789)

Accessed via http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.a..

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source B

Source B- Storming the Bastille- Paris Newspaper

Excerpt

It was a terrible scene.... The fighting grew steadily more intense; the citizens had become hardened to the fire, from all directions they clambered onto the roofs or broke into the rooms; as soon as an enemy appeared among the turrets on the tower, he was fixed in the sights of a hundred guns and mown down in an instant; meanwhile cannon fire was hurriedly directed against the second drawbridge, which it pierced, breaking the chains; in vain did the cannon on the tower reply, for most people were sheltered from it; the fury was at its height; people bravely faced death and every danger; women, in their eagerness, helped us to the utmost; even the children, after the discharge of fire from the fortress, ran here and there picking up the bullets and shot; [and so the Bastille fell and the governor, De Launey, was captured].... Serene and blessed liberty, for the first time, has at last been introduced into this abode of horrors, this frightful refuge of monstrous despotism and its crimes.

Meanwhile, they get ready to march; they leave amidst an enormous crowd; the applause, the outbursts of joy, the insults, the oaths hurled at the treacherous prisoners of war; everything is confused; cries of vengeance and of pleasure issue from every heart; the conquerors, glorious and covered in honour, carry their arms and the spoils of the conquered, the flags of victory, the militia mingling with the soldiers of the fatherland, the victory laurels offered them from every side, all this created a frightening and splendid spectacle. On arriving at the square, the people, anxious to avenge themselves, allowed neither De Launey nor the other officers to reach the place of trial; they seized them from the hands of their conquerors, and trampled them underfoot one after the other. De Launey was struck by a thousand blows, his head was cut off and hoisted on the end of a pike with blood streaming down all sides.... This glorious day must amaze our enemies, and finally usher in for us the triumph of justice and liberty. In the evening, there were celebrations.”

Source:

<http://alphahistory.com/frenchrevolution/paris-new..>

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source C

Source C- Laws of Suspect

Excerpt

"1. Immediately after the publication of the present decree, all suspects within the territory of the Republic and still at large, shall be placed in custody.

2. The following are deemed suspects:

- i. those who, by their conduct, associations, comments, or writings have shown themselves partisans of tyranny or federalism and enemies of liberty;
- ii. those who are unable to justify, in the manner prescribed by the decree of March 21st, their means of existence and the performance of their civic duties;
- iii. those to whom certificates of patriotism have been refused;
- iv. civil servants suspended or dismissed from their positions by the National Convention or by its commissioners, and not reinstated, especially those who have been or are to be dismissed by virtue of the decree of August 14th;
- v. those former nobles, together with husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, and agents of the émigrés, who have not constantly demonstrated their devotion to the Revolution;
- vi. those who have emigrated between July 1st 1789, and the publication of the decree of March 30th, even though they may have returned to France within the period established by said decree...

The Surveillance Committees established in accordance with the law of March 21st last are responsible for drawing up lists of suspects, with issuing warrants of arrest against them, and with placing their papers under seal.

Source:

Laws of Suspect (1793)

<http://alphahistory.com/frenchrevolution/law-of-su..>

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source D

Source D- Guillotine Coroner's Report

Excerpt

The guillotine, the notorious killing machine of the French Revolution, was used to behead thousands, including King Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette. Why was it a humane form of execution for its time, and did victims' brains continue functioning after decapitation?

Watch the four minute video on History.com

Source:

<http://www.history.com/topics/french-revolution/vi..>

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source E

Source E- Reign of Terror

Excerpt

During the Terror, the [Committee of Public Safety](#) (of which [Maximilien de Robespierre](#) was the most prominent member) exercised virtual dictatorial control over the French government. In the spring of 1794, it eliminated its enemies to the left and to the right. Still uncertain of its position, the committee obtained the Law of 22 Prairial, year II (June 10, 1794), which suspended a suspect's right to public trial and to legal assistance and left the jury a choice only of acquittal or death. The "Great Terror" that followed, in which about 1,400 persons were executed, contributed to the fall of Robespierre on July 27 (9 Thermidor).



The last prisoners awaiting execution during the Reign of Terror in 1794, undated engraving.

During the Reign of Terror, at least 300,000 suspects were arrested; 17,000 were officially executed, and perhaps 10,000 died in prison or without trial.

Source:

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Reign-of-Terror>

Summative Performance Task

Compelling Question	Was the Age of Reason Unreasonable?
Argument	Was the Age of Reason unreasonable? Construct an argument that addresses the compelling question, using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources.
Extension	Students will participate in a salon style classroom discussion where they present their arguments.

Argument

Students will answer the compelling question by constructing an argument. Students will use specific claims and relevant evidence from the historical sources provided in the inquiry.

Extension

In the salon style discussion, students are going to share their view points in a reasonable way. I would encourage teachers to make this a memorable experience for students by playing rococo style music and make the classroom feel like an 18th century salon!

Taking Informed Action	
Understand	Investigate a current group that you believe is being unreasonable in their actions but have a goal you find noble or important. Use evidence to support your claim.
Assess	Write a report about a current group that you believe is being unreasonable in their actions but have a goal you find noble or important. Use three pieces of evidence to support your claim.
Action	Identify what the group's intended goal is and write a more reasonable solution for that group to carry out their goals successfully. Create an action plan and share your findings with someone in your community.

Students will critically examine how groups achieve their goals. Students will propose a more reasonable action plan for a group who wants to be heard.

