## The Enlightenment ER Name:

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| The following are the most important beliefs of the Enlightenment—a philosophical movement that changed how we think about politics. | |
| **Reason**  The absolute most important belief of the Enlightenment was that reason should guide humanity. Reason is the ability to make observations and come to answers that make sense and are based on the information known.  The writers of the Enlightenment stated that everything should be based on reason—government, science, daily lives, and even religion to some enlightenment thinkers. | **Summarize this belief:** |
| **Popular Sovereignty**  Until the modern era, most kings and governments claimed their authority came from God, a concept called the Divine Right. This idea was challenged in the Enlightenment by the emergence of popular sovereignty.  Popular sovereignty is the idea that governments take their authority from the consent and support of the people, not from God.  One application of this idea is that if a government fails or mistreats its people, the people have the right to replace it. | **Summarize this belief:** |
| **Constitutionalism**  One of the most important political ideas was the concept that governments should have a constitution.  The idea of a constitution is that government should have powers that are clearly defined—not just be able to make them up however it wants.  A constitution was a sort of deal with the people so that the people of the country could know exactly what rules and powers the government had over them and what rights they, as citizens, would have. | **Summarize this belief:** |
| **Natural Rights**  Many Enlightenment writers believed in the idea of Natural Rights—which stated that all people are born with rights that the government can’t take away.  This idea suggested that even the most powerful, absolute monarch still had no right to do certain things to his/her citizens.  According to John Locke there were three natural rights: life, liberty and property. All individuals were entitled to live in safety, to be free from oppression, to acquire property and have it safe from theft or seizure.  It is the responsibility and the duty of government, Locke wrote, to uphold and protect the natural rights of individuals. | **Summarize this belief:** |
| **Equality**  One of the central ideas of the Enlightenment was that all humans are basically equal. It didn’t necessarily say that everyone was as strong or smart or rich as anyone else but that all people are people and should be treated the same.  Many enlightenment philosophers such as Rousseau and Locke thought that people are born entirely equal to one another and it is their upbringing or their society that makes them either good or bad, intelligent or ignorant. | **Summarize this belief:** |

Liberite! Fraternite! Egalite!