**The Enlightened Island**

You have crash landed on an island, with some basic materials for everyday life and the writings of various Enlightenment philosophers: Montesquieu, Rousseau, DesCartes, Voltaire, Wollstonecraft, Locke, and Hobbes. In your suitcase, you also had the writings of two non-Enlightenment philosophers: Bentham and Mill. It is up to you and your fellow group members to determine what type of government best suits your island. You should answer the questions below and credit the philosopher whose philosophy is the basis of your idea. There is no “right” answer; you have to be able to justify why you made these decisions and use proper vocabulary.

**Enlightenment Vocabulary**

Important concepts:

* state of nature
* human nature
* *tabala rasa*
* natural rights
* social contract
* noble savage
* consent of the governed
* self-interest
* altruism
* Leviathan
* absolute power or sovereign power
* society
* checks and balances
* branches of government

Types of government:

* anarchy
* democracy
* monarchy
* tyranny or despotism

René DesCartes (1596-1650)

DesCartes was born in France, but lived most of his life in the Netherlands. His father was a member of the local parliament in France. He was instrumental in further developing logic and the scientific method. The Pope banned his work. His most famous work is *Discourse on the Method.*

1. It sounds like an odd question, but how do you know you are alive? That you’re not dead and this island is heaven or hell? Or that you’re not a character in someone’s dream or a book? Or that you’re not plugged into a computer program so robots can harvest your body’s energy? After all, you did survive a plane crash.
2. According to DesCartes, how does someone know s/he exists?

“I think; therefore I am.”

*In your words . . .*

Voltaire (1694-1778)

Voltaire was born in France, and lived in Paris. He insulted an aristocrat and had to flee to Britain. He was friends with many of the great thinkers of his time and is considered one of the greatest writers in the French language. His most famous work is *Candide.*

1. According to Voltaire, which freedom is most important?

“"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it"

*In your words . . .*

Baron de Montesquieu (1689­1755)

Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, was a nobleman, a judge in a French court, and one of the most influential political thinkers. Based on his research, based largely on the English constitution, he developed a number of political theories presented in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748).

1. According to Montesquieu, what is liberty?

According to Montesquieu, political liberty is "a tranquility of mind arising from the opinion each person has of his safety" (SL 11.6).

*In your words . . .*

1. According to Montesquieu, how do we create political liberty?

Liberty involves living under laws that protect us from harm while leaving us free to do as much as possible, and that enable us to feel the greatest possible confidence that if we obey those laws, the power of the state will not be directed against us.

*In your words . . .*

1. According to Montesquieu, what happens in monarchy? And what should be done about it?

"Constant experience shows us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it ... it is necessary from the very nature of things that power should be a check to power" (SL 11.4).

*In your words . . .*

1. According to Montesquieu, how do we prevent tyranny?

This is achieved through the separation of the executive, legislative, and judicial powers of government. If different persons or bodies exercise these powers, then each can check the others if they try to abuse their powers. But if one person or body holds several or all of these powers, then nothing prevents that person or body from acting tyrannically; and the people will have no confidence in their own security.

*In your words . . .*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

Rousseau was a watchmaker’s son from Geneva, Switzerland. His *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* and his *On the Social Contract* are cornerstones in modern political and social thought. In addition to his contributions to philosophy, Rousseau was active as a composer and a music theorist, as the pioneer of modern autobiography, as a novelist, and as a botanist.

1. According to Rousseau, what is the difference between living in a state of nature versus in an organized society?

“We see around us hardly a creature in civil society, who does not lament his existence . . . and laws hardly put a stop to the disorder. [Has] a savage ever complained of life?”

*In your words . . .*

Man [was made] wicked while making him sociable.

*In your words . . .*

1. According to Rousseau, how should we view natural resources?

The fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody

*In your words . . .*

1. According to Rousseau, what is human nature? (three ideas)

It is then certain that compassion is a natural feeling, which, by moderating the violence of love of self in each individual, contributes to the preservation of the whole species. It is this compassion that hurries us [to help] those who are in distress . . . [in] a state of nature [it cause us to create] laws, morals and virtues . . . [humans have a] natural goodness.

1. According to Rousseau, what is the effect of organized society on humans?

Society and law, which bound new fetters on the poor, and gave new power to the rich; which irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property and inequality . . . subjected all mankind to perpetual labor, slavery and wretchedness.

Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.

*In your words . . .*

Mary Wollstonecraft (1757-1797)

Born into an upper-middle family in London, England, Wollstonecraft had an informal education. She wrote about women’s rights and education, and was one of the first to do so. Her most famous work is *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which was in response to the blatant sexism of many of her fellow philosophers. Her daughter, Mary Shelley, was the author of *Frankenstein.*

1. According to Wollstonecraft, why did many people assume women were less intelligent than men?

The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity

*In your own words . . .*

1. According to Wollstonecraft, why are women displaying these less intelligent qualities?

One cause I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures . . .

*In your own words . . .*

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) &John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

1. According to Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, what is Utilitarianism?

Utilitarianism is generally held to be the view that the morally right action is the action that produces the most good or happiness.

They also held that we ought to maximize the good, that is, bring about ‘the greatest amount of good for the greatest number’.

*In your own words . . .*

**Please answer the following.** Please credit the philosopher. Use phrases like, inspired by, similar to, based on**:**

1. How many people have crash landed with you?
2. What are the positive aspects of your island?
3. What are limitations or negative aspects of your island?
4. What form of government will you chose? Please describe it.
5. How will you choose your leader(s)?
6. Why have you chosen this government?
7. Therefore, which philosopher is your primary influence?
8. Are people equal?
9. How will you divide up resources that you landed with or found on your island? Equally? Unequally?
10. Why are you dividing the resources this way?
11. How will gender roles be constructed on your island?
12. What freedoms will the island’s residents have?
13. How will you ensure the residents’ security?
14. What is human nature, according to your philosopher?
15. What is the purpose of government, according to your philosopher?