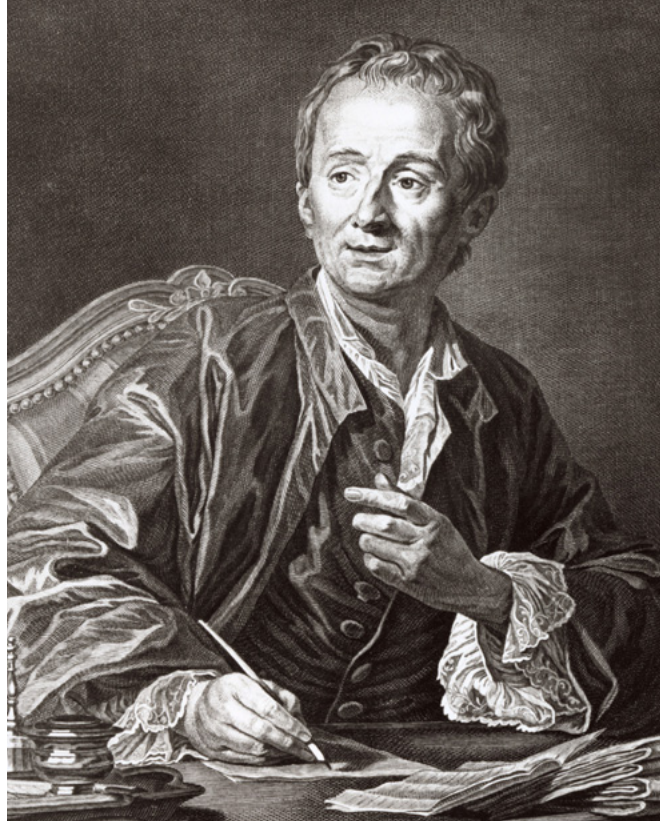


Biography Activity

The Enlightenment and Revolutions

Denis Diderot (1713–1784)

Denis Diderot was born in France. His father wanted him to become a lawyer or a priest, but Diderot preferred writing. As a young man, he wrote novels and plays and was friendly with philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In 1745, Diderot was hired to translate an English encyclopedia into French. He decided to add original articles. With help from friends, he compiled an encyclopedia covering all disciplines. Diderot's *Encyclopedia* came out in 28 volumes from 1751 to 1772. Its articles stress reason and honor achievements of the human mind. Diderot also wrote *An Essay on Blindness*, which includes a proposal to teach the blind to read through the sense of touch. Some of Diderot's work questions traditional roles of church and government in society.



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- 1. Drawing Inferences** Much of Diderot's thoughts and works emphasize the power and greatness of the human mind. What are some examples of Diderot's forward-thinking approach?

- 2. Constructing Arguments** Do you think most government leaders in France supported or opposed Diderot's encyclopedia? Why?
