

3.4 Philosophical Foundations of the American Revolution

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

KEY WORDS individual talent over hereditary privilege 才能重于世袭特权 • natural rights 天赋权利
• revolution's ideas 革命思想

Objective

Build the skills to explain the **revolution's ideas** 革命思想.

You must be able to:

- state what Enlightenment ideas emphasized
- state what religion contributed
- name the two documents the CED gives
- state the CED's claim about the documents' later influence

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Enlightenment

Enlightenment ideas and philosophy inspired many American political thinkers to emphasize individual talent over hereditary privilege.

■ Religion

Religion strengthened Americans' view of themselves as a people blessed with liberty. The CED gives religion a distinct contribution rather than folding it into the Enlightenment.

■ Two documents

The colonists' belief in the superiority of republican forms of government based on the natural rights of the people found expression in Thomas Paine's Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence.

■ Later influence

The ideas in these documents resonated throughout American history, shaping Americans' understanding of the ideals on which the nation was based. The CED explicitly makes these documents matter beyond their moment.

2 Practice

2.1 State what Enlightenment ideas emphasized. [2]

2.2 State what religion contributed. [2]

2.3 The documents outlived their moment.

(a) State the CED's claim. [2]

(b) Name the two documents. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Enlightenment ideas emphasized individual talent over [1]

- **A** hereditary privilege
- **B** natural rights
- **C** religion
- **D** commerce

3.2 The CED treats religion's contribution as [1]

- **A** distinct from the Enlightenment's
- **B** identical to it
- **C** absent
- **D** hostile to liberty

3.3 A later generation appeals to the Declaration to argue for a right it does not yet have.

(a) State what the CED's claim predicts. [1]

(b) Explain the mechanism. [2]

Solutions

2.1 individual talent over hereditary privilege.

2.2 it strengthened Americans' view of themselves as a people blessed with liberty, a contribution the CED keeps distinct from the Enlightenment's.

2.3 (a) the ideas resonated throughout American history, shaping Americans' understanding of the ideals on which the nation was based. (b) Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence.

3.1 A. hereditary privilege.

3.2 A. distinct.

3.3 (a) exactly this. (b) the documents state principles in general terms, so anyone excluded can appeal to them against the practice that excludes them.