**Review Period 1 LEQ Question 2**

**Question 2.** Many historians maintain that the Enlightenment can be viewed as a turning point in European society. Support, modify, or refute this interpretation, providing specific evidence to justify your answer.

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| **Learning Objective** | **Historical Thinking Skill** | **Key Concepts in the**  **Curriculum Framework** |
| **OS-7** Analyze how and to what extent the Enlightenment encouraged Europeans to understand human behavior, economic activity and politics as governed by natural laws.  **SP-1** Explain the emergence of civic humanism and new conceptions of political authority during the Renaissance, as well as subsequent theories and practices that stressed the political importance and rights of the individual.  **SP-4** Analyze how new political and economic theories from the 17th century and the Enlightenment challenged absolutism and shaped the development of constitutional states, parliamentary governments, and the concept of individual rights.  **IS-9** Assess the extent to which women participated in and benefited from the shifting values of European society from the 15th century onwards. | Periodization  Historical Argumentation  Appropriate use of Relevant Historical Evidence | 2.3.I  2.3.II  2.3.III |

**ANSWER**

**Thesis:** Possible thesis statements supporting, modifying, or refuting the interpretation may include the following:

* The Enlightenment ushered in dramatic changes in the lives and society of Europe.
* The Enlightenment brought major changes for some aspects of society and for a portion of the population, but much of European life continued largely as in earlier periods.
* The Enlightenment did not bring significant change for the majority of Europeans.

**Support for argument:** Possible evidence that could be used for an argument supporting the interpretation includes the following:

* The Enlightenment *philosophes* attempted to apply the rational analysis of the Scientific Revolution to the study and understanding of society and other problems.
  + The works of Hume, Voltaire and others challenged traditional religious belief.
    - The rise of Deism as a religious philosophy arguing for a dispassionate uninvolved creator modified traditional Christian beliefs.
  + The Enlightenment challenged traditional sources of political authority.
    - Many writers criticized the precepts of absolutist or monarchical power.
    - Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau all argued that government was a social contract and that authority came from this agreement rather than being inherent in royal prerogative or handed down from God.
    - Many writers, such as Voltaire, argued for varying degrees of religious toleration.
  + Enlightenment thinkers challenged many aspects of traditional society.
    - Montesquieu and Rousseau criticized traditional power structures and social constructs.
    - Adam Smith and others criticized the precepts of mercantilism as a hindrance to economic progress.
    - Beccaria critiqued the absurdity of torture and the death penalty as means to prevent and punish crime.
  + The adoption and implementation of Enlightenment ideals by so-called “Enlightened Monarchs” spread the impact of the Enlightenment to new realms and greater numbers of people.
    - Frederick the Great in Prussia, Catherine the Great of Russia, and Joseph II in Austria all implemented various enlightened policies in their territories.

**Support for argument:** Possible evidence that could be used for an argument refuting the interpretation includes the following:

* The Enlightenment, by the admission of its own advocates, was a movement for the educated elite of the nobility and middle class.
  + The *philosophes* envisioned political reform to limit monarchs but only to include and benefit the nobility and bourgeoisie in the governance of society, which still would leave the majority of the population without any voice in government.
  + The majority of the population continued to follow traditional religion and superstitious folk tales as guides in life, ignorant of the advances and theories of science and rationalism.
  + The economic policies favored by the physiocrats and Adam Smith aided the wealthy merchant classes and not the average farmer, peasant, or artisan.
  + The ideas of republicanism and democracy favored by Enlightenment writers had been around since ancient Greece and Rome and were simply borrowed by later Europeans.
    - Various states had adopted republican forms prior to the Enlightenment, notably several Italian city-states.
  + The “Enlightened despots” did not entirely embrace enlightened ideas but only those which served their purposes.
    - In Prussia and Russia, serfdom persisted and power and wealth remained firmly in the hands of the nobility.
    - In Austria, the majority of Joseph II’s attempted reforms failed due to opposition from nobles and peasants.

**Application of Historical Thinking Skills**

Students earn points by using the evidence offered in support of their argument to identify and illustrate continuity and change over time. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

* The Renaissance served as a bridge from the ideas of the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution and the application of those ideas as inspiration for the French Revolution and beyond.
* The Enlightenment ideals were a clear break from medieval European beliefs and traditions, presenting a first glimpse of a modern worldview.

**Synthesis**

Students can earn the point for synthesis by crafting a persuasive and coherent essay. This can be accomplished by providing a conclusion that extends or modifies the analysis in the essay or by connecting to another historical period or context. Examples could include, but are not limited to, the following:

* The Enlightenment challenge to political and religious authority mirrored the earlier turmoil surrounding the Reformation and its challenge to traditional Catholic and papal authority.
* The Enlightenment was a redefining of social, political, and religious ideals in much the same way that the ideas of fascism and communism would seek to reshape the world in the twentieth century.