

CHAPTER
17
SECTION 2

Section Summary
ENLIGHTENMENT IDEAS SPREAD

Enlightenment ideas flowed from France, across Europe and beyond. Before the Enlightenment, society was based on old ways of doing things. These included divine-right rule, a strict class system, and a belief in heavenly reward for earthly suffering. Enlightenment ideas challenged traditional beliefs and customs. In response, government and church leaders practiced **censorship**. They banned and burned books containing new ideas they did not like. They put writers in prison. Censorship, however, did not stop the spread of ideas. Writers disguised their ideas in works of fiction. Ideas continued to spread in **salons**, or informal social gatherings. There, writers, artists, and *philosophes* shared ideas about new literature, the arts, science, and philosophy.

In the 1600s and 1700s, the arts also evolved to meet the changing tastes and the new Enlightenment ideals. In art and in music, there was a shift from the heavy style of **baroque** to the more charming style of **rococo**. Later, composers wrote works in an elegant style called classical. New forms of literature developed, also. For example, new kinds of books called novels were being written for the growing group of middle-class readers.

Some changes happened in government, too. *Philosophes* tried to persuade European rulers to accept Enlightenment ideas. Some monarchs did. These **enlightened despots** used their power to bring about some political and social changes. In Prussia, **Frederick the Great** allowed a free press. He also urged religious tolerance. **Catherine the Great** of Russia abolished torture. In Austria, **Joseph II** traveled in disguise among his subjects to learn of their problems. Even though ideas of the Enlightenment spread, the lives of most Europeans changed slowly.

Review Questions

1. How did government and church leaders censor Enlightenment ideas?

2. What new art and musical styles developed during the Enlightenment?

READING CHECK

Name one European ruler who was an enlightened despot.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

Find the word *evolved* in the underlined sentence. What surrounding words or phrases can you find that might give you clues about its meaning? Circle the context clues in the paragraph that helped you to learn what *evolved* means.

READING SKILL

Summarize How were Enlightenment ideas spread across Europe?
