



How did subversive ideas gain traction in the Enlightenment?

01 With a classmate, discuss the questions.

1. What's an example of a subversive idea you've heard?
2. Where did you hear about it?
3. How many people do you think know about it?

02 Read "But Did It Go Viral?" and check (✓) the topics the students discuss.

1. The professor linked the Enlightenment and today.
2. Pamphlets were printed in color to be more interesting.
3. Salons and pamphlets were used to disseminate revolutionary ideas.
4. The people who attended the salons were interested in expanding their minds.
5. Tiktok is addictive.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

03 Read the text again. Write a summary paragraph describing the similarities between the salons and pamphlets of the Enlightenment and social media today.



But Did It Go Viral?

Student 1: Help! I was distracted by riveting, life-changing TikToks and didn't attend class. Could you help me catch up? I didn't start watching until I realized I'd missed the class.

Student 2: Ironically, the topic has a social media component, though it's connected to the **Enlightenment**.

Student 3: It was an exceptionally interesting class because Professor Vingaard argued that the **pamphlets** and **salons** of the Enlightenment, which were used to question the **status quo** and provide venues for intellectuals, artists, and academics to present and debate their revolutionary ideas, could be seen as the precursor to social media.

Student 1: What? I never heard a more interesting argument come from a social studies class! Tell me more!

Student 2: During this period, revolutionary **philosophers** like Voltaire used pamphlets filled with short, easily shared, thought-provoking ideas because pamphlets were passed person-to-person, not through traditional channels, and discussed and debated freely and fast, like today's social media trending topics or memes.

Student 1: So, pamphlets were the revolutionary thinkers' strategy to go viral?

Student 3: Not only that, but the salons also acted like live podcasts or live streams, where great thinkers or influencers could be heard by a few fortunate souls eager to listen to and absorb the revolutionary ideas, but they would also share them with their friends and family—like an old-fashioned repost—creating a groundswell of public support as their ideas flowed through the community.

Student 1: In a nutshell, the tools are new, but the **subversive** use of forward-thinking communication channels to disseminate their ideas, question the status quo, and create alternative ways of thinking goes back to the eighteenth century. I can't help but wonder what Rousseau would have thought about the revolutionary TikToks I was watching today!



04 Share your summary with two classmates. Then, discuss which period communicated revolutionary ideas more effectively and why.

05 Correct one error in each sentence.

1. Only not did Enlightenment salons provide a space for intellectual debate, but they also empowered individuals—especially women—to shape public discourse.

2. Seldom has ideas traveled so widely and rapidly as they did through pamphlets in the eighteenth century—until the rise of modern social media.

3. In only the informal gatherings of salons could revolutionary thoughts be exchanged so freely—much like today's online forums where unconventional perspectives often find their first audience.

4. So significant were the pamphlet that once circulated that the elite feared them.

07 Create a dialogue about salons, pamphlets, and TikTok without inversions. Exchange dialogues with another pair. Recreate the dialogues with inversions and perform them.

06 Add inversions to the sentences.

1. Enlightenment salons played an important role in spreading new ideas.

2. Pamphlets allowed writers to challenge powerful institutions.

3. Ideas are now shared quickly and widely on social media platforms.

4. Radical thinkers found few opportunities to express themselves publicly.

08 Create a pamphlet about a topic that interests you. Work with a classmate. Then, create a digital or paper copy to share with your classmates. Follow the instructions.

1. Choose a topic.
2. Create a design.
3. Write the text.
4. Add images to the text.
5. Share your pamphlet with your classmates.

