

Pre Test

**1. Who is Burke criticizing in this paper?**

- a. England    b. France    c. Germany    d. America

**2. Which country does he believe has a better bureaucracy?**

- a. England    b. France    c. Germany    d. America

**3. Which method of coming to rule does Burke promote?**

- a. Democratic elections    b. inheritance    c. overthrow    d. any of the above

**4. Which of the following does Burke believe?**

- a. all men are equal    b. all men are fit to rule    c. not all professions are equal  
d. all men have a chance at being equal

**5. Who does Burke refer to when saying, “no man should be judge in his own cause?”**

- a. Locke    b. Hobbes    c. Rousseau    d. a&b

**6. Burke warns about changing the \_\_\_\_\_ that has served us so well.**

- a. edifice    b. law    c. punishment    d. rights

**7. Man is inherently\_\_\_\_\_?**

- a. religious    b. atheist    c. rebellious    d. conformist

**8. The desire to innovate is the result of?**

- a. selfishness    b. desire to give    c. the need to improve    d. fun

**9. The only qualification for government is?**

- a. virtue and wisdom    b. your in the lineage    c. graduated high school    d. keener

**10. According to Burke, how much progress have humans made as a civilization?**

- a. lots    b. some    c. none    d. all of the across

## Edmund Burke- Reflections on the Revolution in France 1790

### Background

- Burke was an [Anglo-Irish](#) statesman, author, orator, [political theorist](#) and [philosopher](#), who served for many years in the [British House of Commons](#)
- Burke supported the American revolution and opposed British attempts to suppress the Revolution by force of arms (modern conservatism)
- he argued against taxing the American colonies, and that American independence should be recognized and the war brought swiftly to an end
- because of his support for the American revolution, people were surprised when he was completely against the French revolution

### Inheritance

- the “happy effect of following nature”- which is wisdom **without reflection**
- it secures what it acquires but leaves room for improvement
- the institutions of policy, the goods of fortune, the gifts of providence are handed down to us, and from us, in the same course and order
- by using inheritance, our polity has the image of family
- nature teaches us to judge our government by age and descendants

### Innovations

- the desire to innovate is the result of selfishness and closed minds
- we are never satisfied in what we improve
- the spirit of freedom leads to misrule and **excess**; the first to acquire looks bad

### Property

- Property unequal- it divides itself among many
- While being divided, its defensive power is decreased, each man gets less than what he would want if he could just take from other people
- the few greedy people who take land from others and control people with it, have a lot less than the common people’s combined, but the common never realize this
- property is never safe- someone w/ more ability can invade

### Equality/ Rights

- “**those who attempt to level never equalize**”- they change and pervert the natural order of things
- not all professions are equal, not everyone is fit to rule
- Burke doesn’t want to confine power and authority to blood and titles- there is no qualification for government but **virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive**
- Condemns France for rejecting the talents and virtues of the rulers
- There should be no rotations or elections for government because we don’t tend to chose the right man (democracy)
- Each virtuous leader will face struggles at one point
- Whatever each man can separately do, **without trespassing upon others**, he has a right to do for himself
- Each man has equal rights, but not to equal things

- In society, you lose your self-defense> men can't enjoy the rights of an uncivil and civil state together (TRUST)
- If you have a right to everything, you want everything- so gov is a system of wisdom to provide for our wants
- after giving your right to judge yourself to the state, government becomes a consideration of **convenience**
- Society makes us control our passions
- There's no use in talking about our abstract rights, the gov must talk about our tangible needs and use *experts* to find out

#### Science

- Science of gov requires experience, more than anyone can gain in his whole life
- Burke warns about changing the system that has served us well
- Society is complex-it must answer a wide variety of needs/rights of men
- **we have made no progress, no innovations**
- In England, we fear God and respect kings because any other feelings are false and tend to corrupt our minds **which make us deserve slavery**
- We are men of untaught feelings- we cherish **prejudices**
- Men find wisdom in their prejudice, and then continue the prejudice with reason
- Prejudice helps men make decisions in times of emergency- "his duty becomes his nature"
- France's politicians have no respect for the wisdom of others but full confidence in their own
- France's people...
  - o think everything that gives perpetuity is mischievous
  - o believe that there doesn't need to be an attachment to government
  - o They believe that the magistrate is all for itself

#### Religion

- Burke feels that religion is the basis of civil society and the source of all good and comfort
  - o b/c of this there is no superstition in England that corrupts the mind
  - o "We shall never be such fools to bring in an enemy of a system to rid it of corruption. If our religious tenets should ever want an explanation, we shall not call on atheism to explain them."
- atheism is against, not only our reason, but our instincts, and cannot prevail long
- If we throw off our comfort blanket of Christianity it may be replaced with a degrading superstition
- Men shouldn't look for the faults in their government, but instead look at them like "wounds of a father"

#### Contract

- Society is a contract- a partnership in all science, art and virtue
- Since it is a partnership that cannot be obtained over many generations, it becomes a partnership between the living, dead, and those to be born
- It links the lower with the higher natures

## Glossary

Prejudice: an unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason

Edifice: system

Usurpations: illegal seizing of a throne

Sagacity: discernment

Elucidation: detailed explanation

Obstinacy: stubborn

## Discussion Questions

1. Burke promotes inheritance, but are there negatives to an inherited rule? Where have we seen this in history? Do we still judge our government by their age and descendants?
2. Do you agree that democracy is faulted because we fail to choose the right leader?
3. Should every man in each career have the right to authority?
4. Why do we study “the science of government” if it’s something that no man can understand in his lifetime of experiences? (Should we learn from history? Why do we still repeat mistakes?)
5. Do we reject everything structural as being biased or mischievous? (like how teenagers rebel against rules of authority, even though they may know better)
6. Did Burke mean that atheism cannot prevail long individually or in society? Do you agree?
7. Are we “religious animals”? Are we inherently spiritual beings? What separates us from other species? What’s the difference between religious and spiritual? Is this important to know?
8. Have our improvements really benefited us or just caused us grief and trouble? Overall would we be better off without them? Is it a selfish desire to improve or is it natural to want to “help” out society?
9. Do you think that Burke’s approach was the right way to go about telling a country that they are going down the wrong path? Was it acceptable? Uses harsh language “if in the moment of riot and in a drunken delirium from the hot spirit drawn out of the alembic of hell, which in France is now so furiously boiling”
10. What were some of the major revolutions throughout history and were the results good?
11. Do those who try to create equality end up corrupted with power?
12. What’s the best way to have a just and equal society?
13. If you could chose one country in the world to start a revolution for, which would it be? What would your goal be?
14. Burke mentions that every virtuous leader will struggle. Does the media negate this by exploiting every mistake a leader makes? Should we be less presumptive and accept faults? For example, John F. Kennedy made a huge mistake with the Bay of Pigs, but later succeeded with the Cuban Missile Crisis. Does the media force leaders to go to extremes to preserve their name rather than do what is right?

15. "No man should be judge in his own cause." Being apart of society, justice is not in our own hands. Why do we trust the government? When do we question law? When should we?
16. Is it okay for us to hold the world hostage because we make more money than them? Is it possible to turn around a country from outside? (Is saying no just an excuse to not help) -the benefit of technology-
17. Are prejudices natural? What makes you question your prejudices? What do you most question about your beliefs? Is property a right or a privilege?
18. How will you go about obtaining property, and for what purpose?
19. How many people really benefit from a revolution? Is it only the revolutionists?
20. What do you aspire to in life and what do you want to be remembered for? What do you think will be your 3 ultimate weaknesses? (& if you know them now, why not change?)