

**World History: The  
West and the World**  
University Preparation  
(CHY4U)

# An Evening at a Salon

## The Task

Students were presented with the following scenario:

The Enlightenment was a period marked by considerable intellectual growth and aspirations for social reform. Many contemporary thinkers, or “*philosophes*”, advocated progress based on reason, tolerance, and enhanced individual rights. It could be difficult, even dangerous, to disseminate those ideas in societies where repression and censorship were still common. One unthreatening way to share ideas was through salons. Salon hosts, usually wealthy women, invited thinkers, writers, and scientists to their homes to speak or to read from their works. Enlightenment salons often focused on political, economic, and social thought. They addressed important and sometimes controversial issues, and promoted debate about the direction in which society should progress.

You will organize a modern salon evening, based on the Enlightenment model, for people concerned about the state of Western society today. As host of the salon, you will choose a theme for the evening and formulate a central question that will guide debate and discussion. You will also present your view, as host, on the way Western society should respond to the theme/central question.

The salon will be an occasion when the past can be brought to life. You will choose three speakers, from the past 500 years, who will present different viewpoints on the theme/central question. You may invite a combination of individuals long dead, more recent historical figures, and

characters you have created based on historical groups that have traditionally lacked a voice (e.g., “Ivan the peasant”).

You will create an invitation to your salon for interested members of your community, highlighting the theme and guest speakers. The salon will begin with an opening address that you will deliver in your capacity as host.

## Final Product

Each student was to submit an invitation, an opening address, and a bibliography. The invitation was to include the following:

- the theme and central question for the salon;
- an agenda for the salon;
- the names of three guest speakers;
- a short biographical sketch of each speaker;
- a brief summary of each speaker’s viewpoint on the theme/central question.

The opening address, which was to be about 750 words, was to include the following:

- a justification of the choice of theme for the salon;
- a personal viewpoint on the way in which Western society should respond to the issues raised by the central question;
- an introduction for each guest speaker that explains his or her historical perspective on the theme for the salon.

*Note:* Although students were required to submit a bibliography, it was not evaluated as part of the exemplar task.

### **Expectations Addressed in the Exemplar Task**

This task gave students the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of all or part of each of the following selected expectations from the Change and Continuity, Citizenship and Heritage, and Methods of Historical Inquiry and Communication strands.

*Students will:*

1. assess the influence of individuals and groups who have helped shape Western attitudes to change;
2. formulate questions for research and inquiry into topics drawn from Western and world history and develop a plan to guide research;
3. describe the main tenets of key modern beliefs and philosophies and explain how they have shaped Western thought;
4. express ideas, arguments, and conclusions, as appropriate for the audience and purpose, using a variety of styles and forms;
5. assess the variety, intensity, and breadth of change that has taken place from the sixteenth century to the present.

*For information on the process used to prepare students for the task and on the materials and resources required, see the Teacher Package reproduced on pages 121–128 of this document.*