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The American Revolution was
The Child of Enlightenment. Comment.

Introduction:

The enlightenment was essentially an 18th Century European movement in literature and philosophy which encompassed a whole host of ideas based on reason as the primary source of knowledge. Enlightenment ideals include the promotion of liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government and separation of church and state. This coincided with the time when the future leadership of the American revolution was coming of age. The enlightenment ideas inspired an entire generation of individuals who would play a significant role in the American struggle for independence.

In this regard the American Revolution can be considered as the child of enlightenment. American Revolution was the child of Enlightenment. Why?

Thomas Paine was highly inspired from the Europeans intellectuals. In his celebrated pamphlet "Common Sense," Paine adopted the tenets of reason and nature, demonstrating that the American Revolution was truly a product of the enlightenment.

One of Paine's arguments for separation was that nature rejected the British colonization of America. Earth's geography alone made a very compelling case for independence. Miles of ocean stood between the continents, and the British Isles could hardly keep her

Colonial Subjects to the Atlantic Coast.

When parliament passed the Proclamation of 1763 to restrict Colonial Settlement west of the Appalachian mountains, it failed miserably for with an entire Continent waiting to be discovered, early Americans could not be expected to follow a law created across an Ocean.

This relationship between England and America, he said reverses the order of nature. Similarly, he pointed to the relationship between mother and child that America's parent Country appeared to manipulate. While all infant mammals are first fed on milk, they never keep their children from meat. England,

On the other hand, seemed to stifle the natural growth and development of its young colonies by restricting their trade and commerce.

Another classic enlightenment theme is the use of nature to explain the necessity of government. English philosopher Thomas Hobbes famously wrote men are created so equal in ambition and ability that without the power to keep them in check, life will become "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." This natural state of man is a natural state of war, and a government of some sort of natural solution. While Paine did not agree with all that Hobbes said he too spoke to the need for government. He explained his

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beliefs that representative government
arises from man's natural want
of society.

Thus while Hobbes viewed man
as inherently competitive, and

Paine found them inherently
cooperative. Paine used this

reasoning to present his case
against the British monarchy.

Claiming "male and female
are the distinctions of nature,

good and bad the distinctions
of heaven" he found no truly

natural or religious reason

can be assigned to the

separation of royalty and
subjects.

An enlightenment thinker would

call this illogical, especially

with regard to hereditary

succession. Kings cannot pass

down leadership traits, whereas

a representative system

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Searches for the best leaders.

In addition Paine used logic to demonstrate that Britain's Constitutional monarchy is plagued with flaws, despite the attempts at checks and balances implemented in the government.

He called it complete "absurdity"

that parliament had the power to withhold information from the King when the King was responsible for all final decisions.

The State of a King shuts him from the world "he sees yet the business of a King requires him to know it."

This argument against the irrationality of England not only furthered Paine's push for independence but also provides additional evidence of the enlightened American mind set in the 1770s.

The final and arguably most significant inspiration pulled from the enlightenment was the concept of natural rights. English philosopher

John Locke made the revolutionary claim that nature gave all men the rights to life, liberty, and property, and this truly served as the basis of the American fight for independence.

Conclusion:

In Boston, 1772, Samuel Adams riled up the colonists with his "Rights of the Colonists" centered on Locke's fiery words. Most importantly, the Declaration of Independence, the very document that embodies our freedom, is a clear tribute to enlightenment themes. Thomas Jefferson called on Locke when he penned the unalienable rights we quote today!

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life, liberty, and the pursuit
of happiness to show to England
that America was the true
child of enlightenment.