



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown
History Category - Recommended Readings



History Q1

According to Bertrand Russell, "Hitler is an outcome of Rousseau; Roosevelt and Churchill of Locke." To what extent was he correct?

Recommended Readings

Primary Works by John Locke

1. Two Treatises of Government (1689)

Locke's most influential political work, argues for natural rights, limited government, and consent of the governed

Specifically relevant chapters: Ch. 2 (state of nature), Ch. 5 (property), Ch. 8-9 (political society)

Establishes foundations for liberal democracy and constitutional government

2. A Letter Concerning Toleration (1689)

Argues for religious tolerance and separation of church and state

Establishes the importance of individual conscience and limitations on government power

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689)

Locke's epistemology, emphasizing empiricism and rational thought

Particularly Book II on experience as the foundation of knowledge

Primary Works by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

1. The Social Contract (1762)

Outlines Rousseau's vision of political legitimacy based on the "general will"

Key concepts: sovereignty of the people, general will vs. individual will

2. Discourse on Inequality (1755)

Critique of modern society and property rights



Establishes Rousseau's view of humanity corrupted by civilization

3. Emile, or On Education (1762)

Outlines Rousseau's educational philosophy

Contains important views on human nature and development

Works by Bertrand Russell

1. History of Western Philosophy (1945)

Contains Russell's analysis of both Locke and Rousseau

Provides context for the quote in question

2. Freedom and Organization (1934)

Russell's analysis of political developments from 1814-1914

Discusses the intellectual foundations of political movements

Contemporary Academic Resources

1. The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau (ed. Patrick Riley, 2001)

Collection of essays on Rousseau's thought, including his political philosophy

Particularly useful: "Rousseau and Totalitarianism" chapter

2. Stephen Hicks, "Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault" (2004)

Controversial but relevant analysis of Rousseau's influence on collectivist political thought

Traces intellectual lineage from Rousseau to various political movements

3. John Gray, "Liberalism" (1995)

Analysis of liberal tradition from Locke to contemporary times

Discusses distinctions between Anglo-American and Continental European political thought

4. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1958)



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Distinguishes between "negative liberty" (Lockean) and "positive liberty" (Rousseauian)

Essential for understanding the philosophical divide Russell references

5. James Sheehan, "Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?: The Transformation of Modern Europe" (2008)

Analyzes the different political paths taken in Europe and Anglo-American world

Provides historical context for how different political philosophies manifested

6. Mark Lilla, "The Shipwrecked Mind: On Political Reaction" (2016)

Discusses the intellectual foundations of various political movements

Analyzes the relationship between philosophical ideas and political development

7. Zeev Sternhell, "The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition" (2010)

Argues there's a counter-Enlightenment tradition that opposed rationalism and individualism

Explores Rousseau's ambiguous position between Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment

Historical/Biographical Resources

1. Roy Jenkins, "Churchill: A Biography" (2001)

Comprehensive biography of Churchill

Discusses Churchill's political philosophy and influences

2. H.W. Brands, "Traitor to His Class: The Privileged Life and Radical Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt" (2008)

Analyzes Roosevelt's political development and philosophical foundations

Shows Roosevelt's balance of pragmatism and liberal democratic principles

3. Ian Kershaw, "Hitler: A Biography" (2008)

Standard historical account of Hitler's rise and rule

Analyzes the intellectual and political foundations of Nazism



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4. Robert Wokler, "Rousseau, the Age of Enlightenment, and Their Legacies" (2012)

Detailed analysis of Rousseau's place in intellectual history

Addresses the contested nature of Rousseau's legacy

