Crowning Glory of the...

Throughout human existence there have been many notions of truth and ways of knowing which have been given privilege over alternatives. Also, there have been times in history when these ways of knowing or paradigms and notions of truth have been significantly changed. France during the age of Enlightenment is one such time. Humanity met a tipping point. Ideas of reason and critical thinking shifted the sands of knowing, culminating in the seminal work of the Encyclopédie. This work and that of the philosophers influenced the Church, academic discourse and politics like nothing before.

Salons and tea rooms were the dwelling places of the intellectual giants of the time, known as the philosophes, where they discussed views, theories and discoveries from 1715 to 1760. The Enlightenment in France (2005) declares Paris as the center of Enlightenment. Theatres would rush in and the salons would be abuzz with excitement. The heliocentric view of the universe or why an apple falls from a tree echoed through academia. Voltaire represented the Enlightenment stereotype, although Diderot and D'Alembert were to edit the pivotal work of the time, the Encyclopédie, (The Enlightenment in France, 2005). The 28 volumes were ground-breaking. Over 25,000 sets were in circulation by the late 1700s across France and Europe, allowing ordinary people ‘to know’ and ‘to reason’ (The Enlightenment in France, 2005).

Edelstein (2010, p.44) speaks of the Enlightenment as an intellectual conversation which turned into a ‘Quarrel’ between the supporters of the ‘Ancients’ against advocates of the ‘Moderns’. Although, Edelstein noted that Voltaire’s ‘Modern’ assertion in Gens de Lettres, where he describes the modern ‘esprit philosophique’ as the natural successor to the earlier erudite ‘critique’, (2010, p.48).

The pressure applied to the Catholic Church by philosophers throughout this period was weighty (Quentin, 2011, p.401). France experienced religious chaos as the Church fought to come to terms with the rapid change in knowledge. Bursen (2009, p. 1) explains that the Jesuits held control of most of the Catholic seminaries in France and numerous colleges at the University of Paris between 1730 to 1750. Philosophers were resolute in cleansing the Church of fables and superstitions by using modern science as opposed to the erudite practice of scholasticism to produce a return to the ‘primitive truth’, Quentin (2011).

At the same time, Rasmussen (2011, p.77), provided a new viewpoint on the role that the philosophers played regarding politics. Political mayhem prevailed with an absolute monarch in Louis XIV. Rasmussen (2011, p.79), explains the misunderstanding that Voltaire and Diderot were political rationalists. They both excluded ideas of a single rational partisan order. The notion of this period as being an “age of reason” is disputed due to Voltaire and Diderot’s belief that reason alone should not govern. They supported a gradual and staged reform rather than comprehensive transformation. They rejected the notion that reason alone would achieve endless progress.

These arguments explore the very nature of a shift in knowing through new truths in ‘real time’ during the Enlightenment in France. There is a palpable paradigm shift happening during this period whereby the modern scholars or philosophers are claiming the new world of knowing through changes in science and critical thinking and by doing so they are laying the foundation for analysing information for future centuries in time.
Assignment Feedback

Tutor feedback
This poster provides a clear and cohesive argument on truth and ways of knowing in Enlightenment France. I particularly liked how you discussed the tea rooms and Encyclopedie as places and ways in which this enlightenment thinking was spread throughout France.

The poster had a clear layout but was a little busy with the numerous images, and some were also slightly small. Perhaps you could have picked one or two of these to really focus on in order to maintain a clearer presentation.

Nonetheless, a good poster that clearly addressed time, truth, and the human condition. Well done.

Learning advisor feedback
The Academic Poster opens by clearly articulating the topic and focus of the assessment task. Clearly referring to the overarching topic of constructs of truth at a particular time and place. The introductory paragraph also outlines the specific focus and place (France in the age of the Enlightenment).

The writer makes the position that at this time in France, paradigms and notions of truth were ‘shifting’ and evidence of such changes were visible on a political, religious and academic level.

The writer reinforces this position by highlighting and providing examples to reinforce this position from the seminal text Encyclopedie.

Evidence according to the structure and direction set in the introductory paragraph is presented with scholarly based evidence presented as direct quotes, paraphrased and summarized and synthesized ideas.

The final paragraph of the poster summarises the main position – restating how scholars and philosophers where influencing and contesting truths at the time and suggest the significant impacts on our modern abilities to think critically and analyse information.

Academic paragraphs are constructed according to clear topic sentences, explanation sentences. Sentences outlining scholarly evidence to support and reinforce overall position and concluding sentences to synthesis overall ideas.

Librarian feedback
APA in-text citations and reference errors:
- Images have inconsistent in-text citations/references. Each image should have an APA in-text citation within the body of the poster, and a corresponding APA citation in the reference list.
- Noted some inconsistencies with information source in-text citations in the text of your poster
- Some reference list errors.

You identified excellent information sources for your poster - it would be even better if a couple were more recent.