3.4 Liberal Thinkers: John Locke and Mary Wollstonecraft: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short-answer items may be brief but must be precise. For levels-marked questions, write developed paragraphs with accurate political knowledge and clear evaluation. Use the named thinkers John Locke and Mary Wollstonecraft where required.

1 Explain two ways Mary Wollstonecraft's liberalism departs from Locke's formulation on property and citizenship, referring to A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792).

(Total for Question 1 is 6 marks)

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2 Evaluate the extent to which John Locke and Mary Wollstonecraft agree on the foundations of liberalism, using their key works Two Treatises of Government (1689) and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) as the main sources. Anchor your answer in both thinkers and reach a judgement.

(Total for Question 2 is 24 marks)

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Question 1

identifies a departure, e.g. Wollstonecraft's explicit challenge to legal and educational exclusions of women from property and citizenship	**B1**
develops how this departs from Locke, e.g. Locke's natural rights rhetoric did not explicitly extend to women in practice	**B1**
identifies a second departure, e.g. Wollstonecraft criticises the social conditioning that transforms women into dependents rather than equal rights-bearing agents	**B1**
develops the second point, linking it to implications for citizenship and education	**B1**
links both departures to liberal theory, e.g. extending liberal individualism to demand institutional change	**B1**
offers brief evidence or example, e.g. Wollstonecraft's call for equal education and legal reforms	**B1**

Answer: Wollstonecraft departs from Locke by explicitly insisting that natural rights and rational individualism must include women, challenging legal and educational exclusions that left women without property rights or full citizenship; she also emphasises that social conditioning, not natural inferiority, explains women's subordinate position and so calls for institutional reforms such as equal education to realise liberal equality.

Question 2

Level 1 Basic knowledge of Locke and/or Wollstonecraft with limited analysis or evaluation. Claims are general and lack supporting evidence or linkage to liberal foundations.	**1-6**
Level 2 Clear knowledge of both thinkers and some analysis of areas of agreement and disagreement, but evaluation is undeveloped or one-sided. Some accurate textual references may be present.	**7-12**
Level 3 Detailed knowledge and analysis of how Locke and Wollstonecraft articulate liberal foundations, showing clear comparisons and some critical evaluation, with relevant evidence from their works.	**13-18**
Level 4 Sophisticated, balanced evaluation that integrates detailed textual knowledge of both thinkers, weighs strengths and limits of their agreement on liberal foundations, addresses counter-arguments and reaches a clearly argued, justified judgement about the extent of their agreement.	**19-24**

Indicative content:

- Areas of agreement: both emphasise individual rights and the importance of reason, making rational individualism a common foundation; both view legitimate government as having limits and being justified by consent or the need to protect rights.
- Locke's emphases: natural rights to life liberty and property, consent as the basis of political legitimacy, and constitutional limits to prevent arbitrary rule. Locke's account largely addresses male property holders and focuses on property as central to political order.
- Wollstonecraft's emphases: extension of rational individualism to women, critique of social and legal barriers that prevent women enjoying rights in practice, insistence on equal education and legal standing as necessary to realise liberal principles.
- Points of departure: Wollstonecraft explicitly applies liberal foundations to gender, arguing Locke's general principles must be extended to women; Locke's writings do not systematically challenge gendered exclusions and can be read as implicitly limited in their practical application.
- Tensions within liberalism: consider how Locke's defence of property and conditional toleration may produce limits in the inclusiveness of liberalism, and how Wollstonecraft's critique exposes a gap between abstract principles and social institutions.
- Evaluation could assess whether the differences are a matter of emphasis and extension, so that Wollstonecraft completes Locke's project by universalising it, or whether they are deeper, with Wollstonecraft rejecting assumptions about who counts as a full bearer of rights.
- Evidence to use: Locke on natural rights consent and limited government in Two Treatises; Wollstonecraft on education property and civic inclusion in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with dates 1689 and 1792 cited where relevant.
- A strong conclusion should judge the extent of agreement, for example arguing that they share core liberal foundations in principle but differ significantly in the scope and application of those principles, with Wollstonecraft offering a corrective that expands the liberal project to include gender equality.

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