

## ABSOLUTE RULERS

Directions: The following chart is a research tool to help you make your decision about which Absolute Monarch you would like to create a historical head poster for next week. Using the brief overview of each monarch, complete the following chart for each monarch listed. Rank the monarchs according to which one you think should be considered the most "absolute." (Note: you may expand this chart to create something similar for the homework questions)

Ruler	Country	Dates of Reign	Two examples of Absolute Policies	This monarch is best known for:	Rank
Louis XIV					
Philip II					
Frederick the Great					
Ivan the Terrible					
Peter the Great					
Catherine the Great					
Maria Theresa					
James I					

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

Which Absolute Ruler do you feel is the most absolute? Why?



**Ivan the Terrible (1530-1584)**

Ivan the Terrible! The "terrible" aspect of his name is of two natures: wise use of absolute power and insanity. He was "terrible" in that his reign as Russia's first tsar (emperor) was absolute, his word was law, and none questioned his tactics. While he was intense, his early years were full of progressive strides for Russia. Ivan appointed capable boyars (nobles) to help run the ever-growing state of Russia. He reorganized the army and made it well-trained and loyal to him. He also improved the legal code of Russia, making it modernized and more just. But always his rule was total and absolute.

One the other hand, Ivan's later years defined the other side of "terrible". Partially due to his suspicions that his beloved wife was poisoned by scheming boyars, Ivan simply deteriorated into insanity. He engaged in costly and lengthy wars that depleted Russia's economy with little territorial gain. He killed boyars at will, and even beat his pregnant daughter-in-law because he disapproved of her dress. This led to a fight with his son in which Ivan accidentally killed him.

Despite the tumult and pain of Ivan's reign, his rule was the beginning of Russia's growth as a powerful nation-state. He helped Russia become a dominant European power on par with France and Prussia.

## Absolute Monarchs



**Peter the Great (1672-1725)**

Peter the Great, a man of great intellect and immense power (not only in terms of his rule but also in his physical size), turned Russia into a modern European power by force of will and a true understanding of technology and learning. More than any other man, Czar Peter transformed Russia into a world power.

Westernization was the Peter's ultimate goal. After centuries of isolation due to geography and Mongol rule, Peter introduced Western ideas and science into Russia. He introduced potatoes into Russia, created the first Russian newspaper, forced the nobles to give up ancient clothing and to shave off their beards, and opened school of navigation and the arts. Peter believed Western education was the key for Russia's success.

Peter introduced THE Russian foreign policy in modern history: finding a **warm-water port**. He fought wars to gain this maritime advantage. Peter created the city of St. Petersburg to implement this change. Of course, the plight of Russian serfs was never an issue this "enlightened despot" sought to correct.

Through his absolute and enlightened rule, Peter the Great forged Russia into a mighty empire. Peter knew the importance of Western ideas in creating a strong nation-state and guided Russia towards its destiny as one of the world's superpowers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Catherine the Great of Russia (1729-1796)**

Catherine the Great, a classic example of an absolute yet **enlightened despot**, ruled over Russia as it gained more power, prestige, and grandeur. Not even Russian by birth, she married a mentally unstable Russian heir to the throne and become the czarina of Russia. Capitalizing on her husband's feebleness, he conveniently died and she seized total and absolute power.

Catherine continued the Westernizing policies of Peter the Great. She expanded Russian power into Poland, gaining more land for Mother Russia at the expense of the Poles. She also sought warm-water ports along the Black Sea, and fought two costly wars with the Ottoman Empire to gain control of the Black Sea's northern coast.

Catherine instituted limited reforms for the peasants and serfs of Russia, but her views drastically changed after a peasant revolt. She realized that she needed the support of the boyars (nobles) if she wanted to increase Russian and her own power. After the uprising, Catherine moderated her enlightened ideas and ended any vestiges of freedom the serfs possessed. Russia remained one of the last European nations to have serfs.

Catherine the Great, through conquest and domestic reforms, ensured the place of Russia as a top-notch European power. As Ivan planted the seed of Russian and Peter the Great fertilized and nurtured it, Catherine ensured it would blossom into a stalwart oak.



**Maria Theresa of Austria (1717-1780)**

History never saw a woman rule over the vast Hapsburg domains of Europe. The power and privilege of controlling the age-old Hapsburg lands was a man's to possess. Due to the controversial Pragmatic Sanction, Maria Theresa became one of the most powerful and absolute of European rulers, and a woman that no European monarch could challenge without caution and consequence.

Maria Theresa understood the complexities of ruling the Hapsburg lands of central Europe. The multi-ethnic mix of Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Slavs, Poles, and others proved tough to manage. Too many nobles and too much diversity could end the reign of lesser monarchs. But Maria Theresa was an able politician and master diplomat and created a powerful monarchy based on intricate compromises and alliances.

Prior to the reign of Maria Theresa the traditional allies in Europe were as follows: Great Britain and Austria versus France and Prussia. France always feared the power of the Hapsburg family: not only did they rule the Holy Roman Empire (Germany) and Austria, but they also were the dynasty of Spain. Britain was a perennial enemy of France, so Britain and Austria were natural allies. Prussia, always desiring to weaken Hapsburg power, always allied with France. However, **ALL OF THIS** changed with the Seven Years' War. Maria Theresa saw that a new age was dawning and the ancient French feud was outdated. Maria allied not only with France but also with the new player: Russia. This **diplomatic revolution** now had Prussia and Britain against the French-Austrian-Russian alliance. This alignment remained true until the days of Napoleon and WWI.



### Louis XIV of France (1638-1715)

Louis XIV reigned over France for almost eighty years. He was a man of intense passions and stubborn determination. His belief that God granted him absolute power over France, the most powerful nation in Europe at the time, was a reality to him.

Calling himself the Sun King, and allegedly saying "L'etat c'est moi (I am the state)", Louis left no doubt that he WAS France. He was the epitome of the divine-right king. France seemingly revolved around him.

Louis truly understood the nature and use of power. Louis increased the size of the French army to almost half a million soldiers, complete with structured ranks and division. The army was loyal to Louis and France, not the local nobles as in the days of feudal Europe.

Louis also realized he needed to centralize his authority and keep the power-hungry nobles occupied so that he alone could hold power. Thus, Louis built the magnificent palace of Versailles. All nobles were to attend Versailles, and because of its many pleasures and parties few ever left the confines. Nobles drank, ate, partied, and waited in line just for a moment's company with Louis XIV. It was a testament to Louis' power, and a tool he used to keep that power.

Louis eventually lost the love of his people through constant warfare. His many wars virtually bankrupted France, yet resulted in little gains in land. Upon his death, he lamented that he loved war too much. His absolutism eventually led to popular disdain and all out Revolution in the decades to come.

## Absolute Monarchs



### Phillip II of Spain (1527-1598)

Phillip II, a dedicated and hard-working absolute monarch, reigned over Spain at the height of its power. During his rule, Phillip enriched Spain (and himself) with the seemingly endless shiploads of gold and silver from the American colonies. Although his attempts to conquer England were crushingly thwarted in 1588 with the total annihilation of the Spanish Armada and Spain lost control over the Protestant lands in Netherlands, Spain was enjoying a Golden Age of power and wealth under his watch.

Phillip was also a staunch believer in the Roman Catholic faith. Following in the tradition of the Spanish Reconquista and defeat of the Muslims in Spain, he desired to crush Protestantism and hold back the Muslim Ottoman Empire at any cost. However, the immensity of the precious metals arriving to Spain eventually led to the gold and silver losing its value. Also, Phillip heavily taxed the poor and lower class while allowing the land-owning noblemen to gain more and more wealth, thus preventing Spain from developing a middle class.

Also, Spain was subjected to pirate raids by English "sea dogs" like Francis Drake, in combination with borrowing money from foreign lands, resulting in Spain's slow wane from the top. Phillip II saw the sharp rise and slow fall of Spain's greatness. While people living in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries saw Spain as the top power of the day, Spanish strength was more superficial than real.

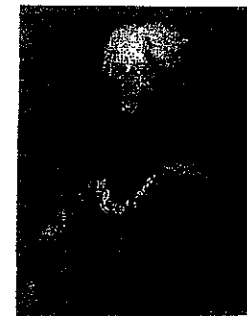


### James I of England (1566-1625)

Following in the footsteps of Queen Elizabeth I is no easy task. While she was not an absolute monarch, she did command absolute respect from the English parliament. Parliament was an institution that limited the power of the monarch. However, James I of England (aka. James VI of Scotland) thought of himself as God's divinely appointed monarch of England. He even said, "Kings are justly called gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power on earth." While his predecessor Elizabeth I also believed this theory, she was careful to be diplomatic and tactful in her dealings with parliament; James I did not share Elizabeth's grace. He was a god on earth and as such his word was law.

James faced many difficulties in England, including the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 and repeated conflicts with the English Parliament. According to a tradition originating with historians of the mid-seventeenth-century, James's taste for political absolutism, his financial irresponsibility, and his cultivation of unpopular favorites established the foundation for the English Civil War. Recent historians, however, have revised James's reputation and treated him as a serious and thoughtful monarch.

Under James, the "Golden Age" of Elizabethan literature and drama continued, and James himself was an accomplished scholar. He was a divine right monarch who believed in absolutism, yet he ruled over a country leaned towards republicanism.



### Frederick II the Great of Prussia (1712-1786)

Frederick II the Great was known as an enlightened despot, a ruler who embraced new ideas of governing and more just ways of treating their subjects. He enjoyed the arts and loved philosophy, even befriending the philosopher Voltaire. As a boy he enjoyed the finer things in life and even attempted to flee Prussia (a militaristic northern German state) for England. His father, Frederick William I (known as the soldier-king), threatened to kill him, and went so far as executing the childhood friend of Frederick.

Eventually, Frederick returned to his father and became the next king of Prussia. His experiences left him with an understanding of power, the military, and the importance of conquest. However, he always maintained a love of the arts, music, and literature and always was a patron of these endeavors.

With this mix of power and artistic understanding, Frederick II the Great made expanded the lands of Prussia. He took lands in Silesia from Maria Theresa of Austria. He helped Prussia grow from a moderate German power to one of the great powers in European affairs. Prussia, by the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, became the German Empire.

Furthermore, Poland was partitioned between Prussia, Austria, and Russia. Poland went from being the largest country in Europe to non-existent. Frederick II built the power of Prussia at the expense of other nations. While he never changed the harsh and oppressive nature of Prussia's social class system, he did improve the lives of his subjects through his progressive domestic policies.

# Absolutism and the Puritan Revolution

## SECTION OVERVIEW

In the 1500s and 1600s, several rulers in Asia and Europe sought to centralize their political power. Claiming divine right, or authority from God, leaders such as Philip II in Spain and Louis XIV in France gained complete authority over their governments and their subjects. England resisted the establishment of absolutism. After a civil war, England's Parliament enacted a Bill of Rights that limited the English monarch's powers.

## KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

As you review this section, take special note of the following key themes and concepts:

**Government** How did monarchs in India, Spain, France, and Russia work to increase their political power in the 1500s and 1600s?  
**Power** What ideas did absolute monarchs use to justify their power?  
**Political Systems** In what ways was England's experience of absolutism different from that of other European countries?  
**Choice** What choices did Parliament make in England to assure a check on absolutism?

## KEY PEOPLE AND TERMS

As you review this section, be sure you understand the significance of these key people and terms:

absolutism	Jacques Bossuet	Oliver Cromwell
Akbar the Great	Ivan the Terrible	Glorious Revolution
Philip II	Peter the Great	English Bill of Rights
divine right	Puritans	limited monarchy
Louis XIV	The Levathan	

## GLOBAL ABSOLUTISM

In the 1500s and 1600s, monarchs in Europe and Asia sought to centralize their power. This trend led to absolutism, in which autocratic rulers had complete authority over the government and the lives of the people in their nation.

### Absolutism in Mughal India

One place where absolutism appeared in the 1500s was India. In the first half of the 1500s, Akbar the Great ruled the powerful Mughal Empire in India. Akbar strengthened the central government and made his empire larger and stronger than any in Europe at the time. He modernized the army, encouraged trade, and introduced land reforms. Akbar solidified his reign by recognizing India's diversity and promoting religious tolerance. Akbar's successors were not as strong. Mughal rulers in the late 1600s were much less tolerant, and Mughal power declined, allowing France and England to spread their influence to the region.

### Absolutism in Spain

In the 1500s, Spain became the most powerful nation in Europe. Wealth from its empire in the Americas helped Spain's power to grow. **CHARLES V** From 1519 to 1556, Charles V, the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, was king of Spain as well as Holy Roman Emperor. Ruling such a large and diverse area in Europe took its toll on Charles, however. He faced military threats from the French, from German Protestant princes, and from the Ottoman empire under Suleiman. In 1556, an exhausted Charles gave up his titles and divided his empire. His brother Ferdinand became Holy Roman Emperor, and his son Philip ruled Spain, the Netherlands, and the vast Spanish overseas empire.

**PHILIP II** Ruling from 1556 to 1598, Philip II expanded his own power as well as the influence of the Catholic Church and the Spanish empire. Philip wanted to control all aspects of government, believing that he ruled by **divine right**. According to this way of thinking, the king is an agent of God, and his authority to rule comes directly from God. Philip was a hard-working ruler, and he did much to promote a golden age in Spain.

In the 1600s, however, Spanish power slowly declined as rulers spent too much money on wars overseas. The Spanish relied on gold and silver from their colonies and as a result neglected business at home. The middle class felt that they were being taxed too heavily and stopped supporting the government.

### Absolutism in France

By the late 1600s, France had replaced Spain as the most powerful European nation. It, too, was ruled by absolute monarchs.

**THE INCREASE OF ROYAL POWER** In 1589, Henry IV inherited the throne. Henry IV laid the foundations of absolutism by increasing the influence of the government and reducing the power of the nobles. The appointment of Cardinal Armand Richelieu as chief minister by Henry's young son, Louis XIII, continued the trend of increasing royal power. Richelieu subdued or defeated the two groups that did not bow to royal authority: the nobles and the Protestant Huguenots. Meanwhile, Louis XIII strengthened the government and made his army the strongest in Europe.

**THE SUN KING** Inheriting the throne in 1643 as a five-year-old child, Louis XIV ruled France for 72 years. He continued to strengthen the monarchy, taking the sun as the symbol of his power and commanding complete loyalty from his subjects. Louis's claim to absolute power was strengthened by a court preacher, Bishop Jacques Bossuet. Bossuet argued that as God's representative on Earth, the king was entitled to unquestioning obedience. During his reign, Louis:

- expanded the bureaucracy, appointing officials to collect taxes, recruit soldiers, and carry out his rule in the provinces.
- built the lavish, immense Palace of Versailles outside of Paris.
- organized a highly disciplined army, the strongest in Europe.
- persecuted the Protestant Huguenots, depriving the nation of many of its most hard-working and prosperous citizens.

**LOUIS'S LEGACY** Under Louis XIV, France was a wealthy, powerful state with great cultural influence. However, Louis's extravagant parties at Versailles and his costly wars left France in debt, and there was social unrest among the starving peasants. The French monarchy

### Absolutism in Russia

During the 1400s, the city of Moscow became the center of power in Russia. The driving force behind Moscow's rising power was Ivan III, known as Ivan the Great. Ruling from 1462 to 1505, Ivan the Great built the framework for absolute rule in Russia. Following Ivan the Great, a long series of absolute rulers dominated Russia.

**IVAN THE TERRIBLE** Czar Ivan IV centralized royal power and introduced Russia to extreme absolute power. His harsh ruling style and fits of violence earned him the title "Ivan the Terrible." To enforce his will, Ivan organized a personal police force. Dressed in black robes, these agents of terror slaughtered rebellious nobles and destroyed towns suspected of disloyalty.

**PETER THE GREAT** Peter the Great ruled Russia as czar from 1682 to 1725. Peter worked to centralize royal power and bring all Russians under his authority. He reduced the power of the nobility and gained control of the Russian Orthodox Church.

**WESTERNIZATION UNDER PETER** Peter wanted to modernize Russia. He traveled to Western European cities to study western technology and brought back ideas on how to westernize Russia. For example, he copied European customs and dress, sent nobles to be educated, and developed mining and textiles. His capital at St. Petersburg served as his "Window on the West" to trade with Western Europe. However, Peter sometimes resorted to force and terror to achieve his goals.

**PETER'S STRONG FOREIGN POLICY** Peter created the largest army in Europe in the late 1600s and used it to expand Russian territory and gain ports on the Baltic Sea. Russia also extended eastward, sending explorers across the Bering Strait into North America.

Peter failed at one of his goals, however: to gain a port that would not be closed due to freezing in winter. He fought the Ottoman Turks to gain a warm-water port on the Black Sea but did not succeed. However, Catherine the Great, another absolute ruler of Russia, would successfully acquire Black Sea ports in 1795.

### REACTION TO ABSOLUTISM IN ENGLAND

While other nations turned to absolutism in the 1500s and 1600s, England moved in a different direction. England's Parliament managed to resist successfully the consolidation of royal power.

The royal Tudor family ruled England from 1485 to 1603. These monarchs, who included Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, generally worked well with Parliament. Even though the Tudors believed in divine right, they saw great value in maintaining good relations with Parliament. In 1603, however, the English throne passed to the Stuarts. Lacking the diplomatic skills of the Tudors, the Stuarts with their absolutist tendencies came into conflict with Parliament.

Answer the

question: How did absolute rulers impact their (countries)?

2. How did England's history after 1700 differ from the rest of Europe?

### The Stuart Monarchs

The first Stuart king, James I, sought to increase his power, using divine right as his justification. Neeching money for his wars and extravagant court life, he frequently clashed with Parliament over financial issues and foreign policy. Angering leaders in the House of Commons, James eventually dissolved Parliament and imposed his own taxes. The king also conflicted with Puritans, who were seeking to "purify" the church of England by eliminating Catholic practices.

The Stuart monarchs received support in their struggles with Parliament from the English thinker Thomas Hobbes. In *The Leviathan*, Hobbes wrote that people were by nature selfish and greedy and would fall into chaos unless ruled by a strong government that could suppress rebellion. Hobbes believed that an absolute monarchy—one that could command obedience—was needed to maintain order.

James's son Charles I inherited the throne in 1625. He continued his father's absolutist policies. Charles created problems during his reign by:

- putting his enemies in prison without trials.
  - imposing very high taxes.
  - angering the Puritans.
  - dissolving Parliament.
- Charles, however, had to summon Parliament back in 1640 to obtain funds to put down a Scottish rebellion. As a result, civil war broke out between Charles I and Parliament.

### The English Civil War

The English Civil War, sometimes called the Puritan Revolution, pitted Charles's supporters, the Cavaliers, against Parliament's forces, the Roundheads. The Roundheads, a group consisting of Puritans, country landowners, and town-based manufacturers, were led by the skilled military commander Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell's disciplined army won several battles against the Cavaliers and captured the king in 1647. Parliament put Charles I on trial and beheaded him in 1649.

Charles I was the first king ever to be tried and executed by his own subjects. This event shocked other European monarchies and signified that absolutism would not prevail in England.

### Cromwell and the Commonwealth

After Charles's execution, Parliament's House of Commons abolished the monarchy, the House of Lords, and the official Church of England. England became a republic, called the Commonwealth, with Oliver Cromwell as its leader. England's years as a republic were troubled, however. Supporters of Charles II, the uncrowned heir to the throne, attacked England from Ireland and Scotland. Cromwell led forces into Ireland to crush the uprising. In 1653, Cromwell took the title of Lord Protector and ruled through the army. By the time of his death in 1658, many people had become tired of Puritan rule.

### The Restoration

In 1660, Parliament invited Charles II, son of Charles I, to become king of England. This marked the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. In 1683, his brother, James II, inherited the throne. James quickly became unpopular because of his Catholicism and his absolutist policies.

### The Glorious Revolution

Parliament overthrew James II. Parliament, in 1688, fearing the return of Catholic dominance, took strong measures. Parliament asked James's daughter, Mary, and her Dutch husband, William, to take the English throne. William and Mary, both Protestants, arrived in England as James II fled to France, completing a bloodless transfer of power. This nonviolent overthrow is known as the *Glorious Revolution*.

Before they could take power, William and Mary were forced to accept the *English Bill of Rights*, a set of acts passed by Parliament to ensure its superiority over the monarchy. This Bill of Rights:

- stated that the king must work regularly with Parliament.
- stated that the king must give the House of Commons financial control.
- affirmed habeas corpus, meaning that no person could be held in jail without first being charged with a crime.

With this Bill of Rights, England became a limited monarchy, a government in which a legislative body limits the monarch's powers.

The Toleration Act of 1689 granted Protestant dissenters, such as Puritans and Quakers, limited toleration. Catholics, however, were denied toleration.

### SUMMARY

Though the 1500s and 1600s, absolutism became dominant through much of Europe and parts of Asia. In India, Akbar the Great consolidated his power. In Spain, France, and Russia, absolutist monarchs claimed that they ruled by divine right and sought to extend their political power. While other nations accepted absolutism, England stood as a contrast to this trend. After the Puritan Revolution and the Glorious Revolution of the mid-1600s, the English Bill of Rights was passed, establishing England as a limited monarchy.

3. How did the English Civil War impact England?