

CHAPTER 13 – THE OLD REGIME: ABSOLUTISM AND ENLIGHTENMENT

INTRODUCTION

- ✘ In this chapter, you will learn about important changes that took place in “Old Regime” Europe between 1600 and 1770. The “Old Regime” refers to Europe before the French Revolution. The Commercial Revolution, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment all had far-ranging effects during this period.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- ✘ What effect did the Commercial Revolution have on people's standards of living?
- ✘ How did Europe's rulers achieve absolute power?
- ✘ How did the Scientific Revolution change people's views of the natural world?
- ✘ How modern was the Enlightenment?

IMPORTANT IDEAS

- A. The Commercial Revolution occurred as Europeans entered a new age of global trade. Mercantilism encouraged the growth of European manufacturing and the establishment of colonies. As a result of the Commercial Revolution, Europeans enjoyed more goods and their living conditions improved.
- B. During the 17th century, most European rulers increased their power. During the Wars of Religion, rulers took control of religion within their countries, developed large standing armies, and increased taxes.
- C. Monarchs justified their rule on the basis of the "interest of state," the good of the people, or the will of God (*divine right*). Louis XIV of France established the model of absolute monarchy. His will was law in France.

D. In England, Parliament resisted Charles I's attempt at absolute monarchy. In the English Civil War, Charles I was beheaded. The English people then preserved their liberties in the Glorious Revolution (1688) and English Bill of Rights (1689). John Locke wrote that government was a "social contract" and that subjects have the right to rebel against an oppressive government.

E. Galileo, Newton, Boyle and others developed new ways of investigating and thinking about nature in the Scientific Revolution. Newton found that the law of gravity governs how things fall on Earth and how the planets move in space.

F. During the Enlightenment, European thinkers applied human reason to understand society and nature. They attacked traditional beliefs, hereditary privilege, the Catholic Church, and the power of absolute monarchs.

THE COMMERCIAL REVOLUTION

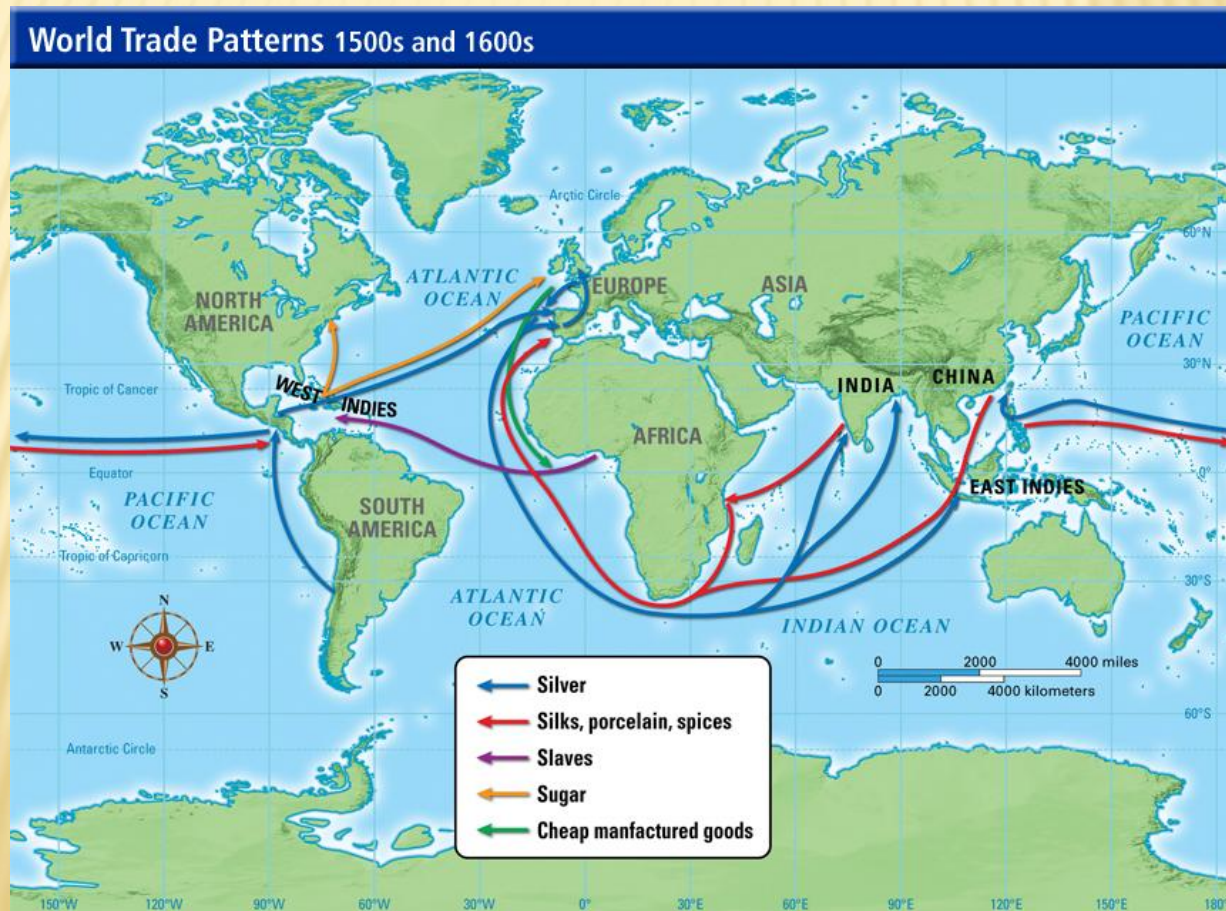
- ✘ Although most of Europe remained agricultural during this period, the fastest growing part of the European economy was in the trade of goods, especially those manufactured in Europe or brought from Asia and the Americas.



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- ✘ The "Commercial Revolution" marked an important step in the transition of Europe from the local economies of the Middle Ages to the formation of a truly global economy. The Commercial Revolution had the following aspects: Global Trade, Mercantilism, and the Emergence of Free Enterprise.

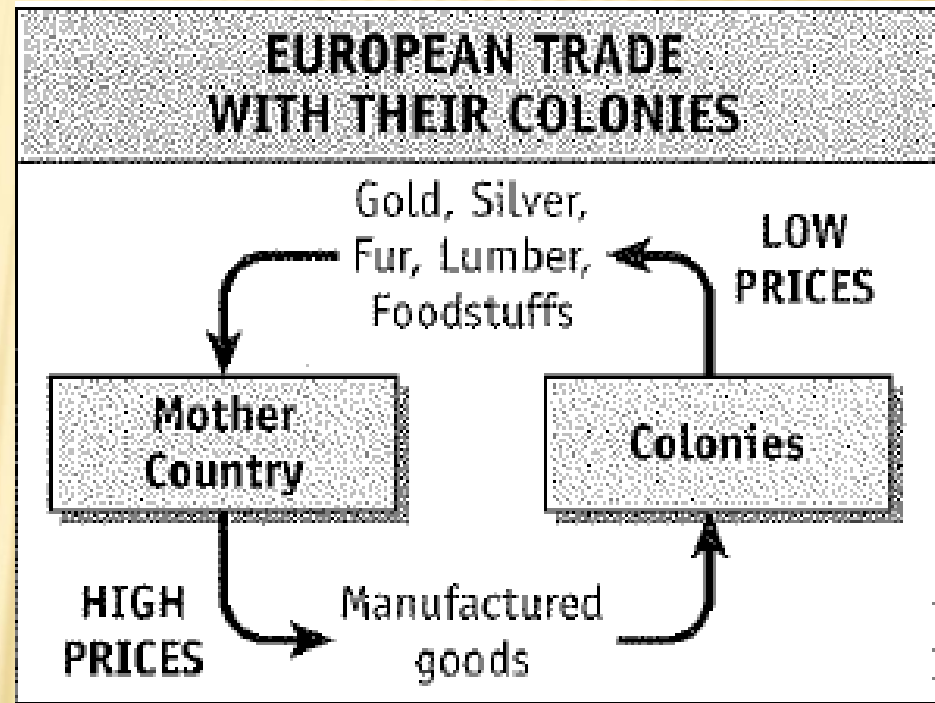
GLOBAL TRADE

- ✘ People began producing more goods for sale rather than for their own use. Trade increased as sugar, rice, tobacco, and precious metals were shipped from the Americas to Europe. Ming China exported silks and porcelain, while India exported tea. The East Indies produced spices, and Africa provided enslaved workers. Europe exported woolen cloth, lumber, and finished goods.



MERCANTILISM

- ✘ European kings hoped to increase their power through the system of mercantilism. Mercantilists acted to remove trade barriers within their country. They also taught that wealth and power were based on amassing gold and silver, which could be used to pay soldiers to defend the state.

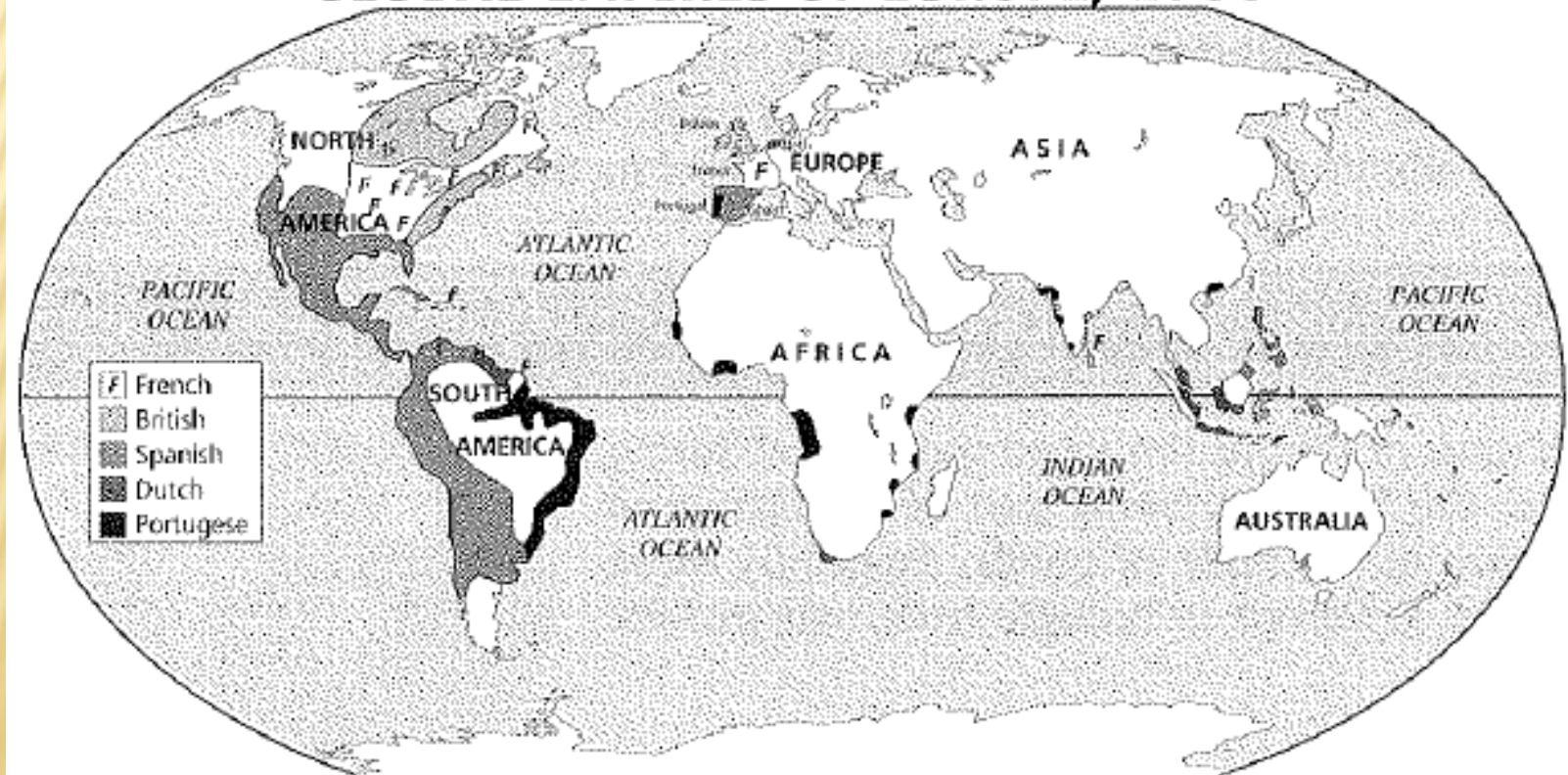


- ✘ Mercantilists thought the total wealth in the world was limited, so that it had to be gained through war or trade. For this purpose, France, England and Holland established overseas colonies in imitation of Spain. Each European "Mother Country" exported finished goods to its colonists in exchange for less costly raw materials. This was supposed to lead to a flow of money back to the "Mother Country."



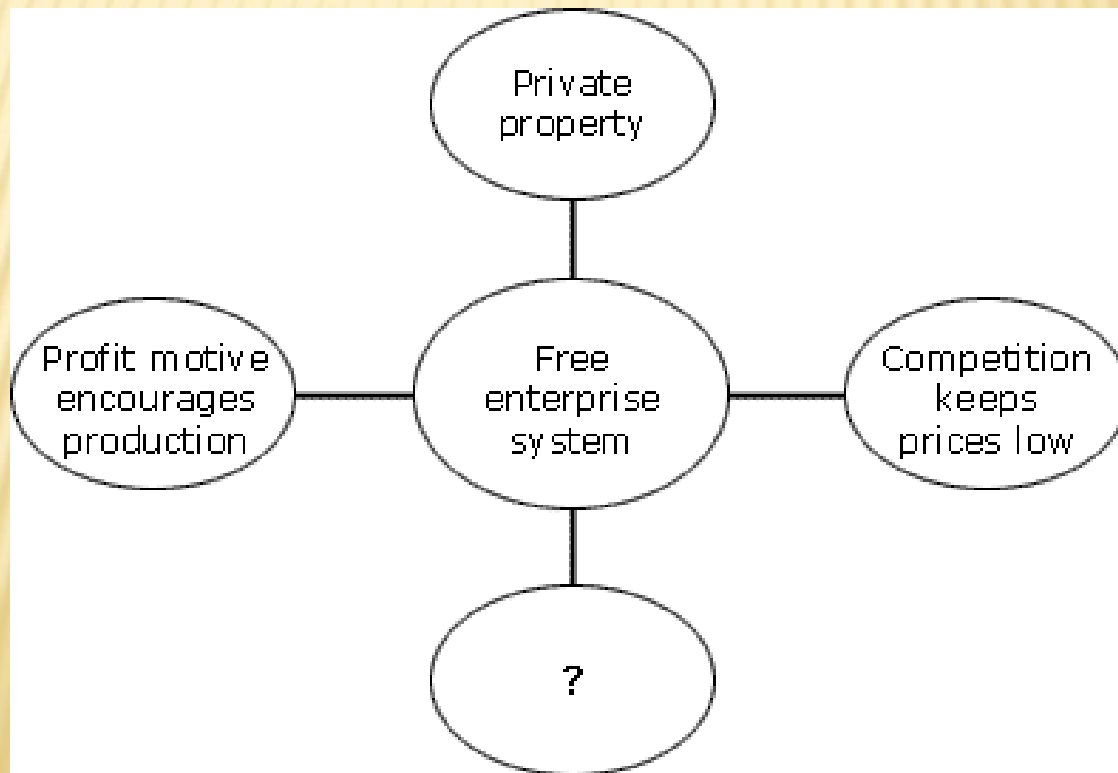
- ✗ The competition for colonial empires led to a series of wars between the major European powers. In the 1600s, England attacked Holland to take control of major shipping routes. In the 1700s, England and France fought a series of wars on land and sea for control of North America and India.

GLOBAL EMPIRES OF EUROPE, 1700



THE EMERGENCE OF FREE ENTERPRISE

- ✘ Merchants and bankers laid the foundations for the free enterprise system (also known as capitalism). Under this system, business owners risked their capital (money) in a business in order to make profits. The growth of new businesses - weaving cloth, processing foodstuffs, forging ironwares, building ships - led to a demand for huge sums of money.



- ✘ Money was needed to pay for the facilities and materials used in manufacturing or international trade. Ships had to be insured because there was a high risk of loss from an accident, stormy weather or war. European rulers also needed money to buy equipment and hire troops to wage war.



- ✘ To raise these large sums, the first joint-stock companies were formed. These ventures were privately-owned companies that sold stock to investors. Investors bought the stock for a share of the profit. The accumulation of capital by these companies allowed the purchase of large amounts of raw materials or equipment such as ships.



SLB	4.70	0.03	0.63%	0.02	15
MAL	4.36	-0.33	-0.70%	-0.02	9
NE	2.42	-0.01	-0.03%	0.0	4
NV	5.64	0.07	1.50%	0.0	2
QTVV	2.95	0.32	-0.02%	-0.05	4
HYOS	9.13	-0.01	-1.58%	-0.01	4
PLUG	11.61	-0.04	1.32%	0.0	5
ESLR	21.14	-0.05	-0.18%	-0.35	9
LMT	26.37	-0.11	-1.34%	0.17	8
CD	62.20	-0.04	-0.54%	-0.67	11
IOC	21.77	-0.01	-0.94%	0.11	3
TTI	26.6	0.53	-0.19%	-0.01	2
	19.59	0.13	-0.04%	0.0	7
	49.06	-0.35	0.86%	0.07	6
	39.16	0.09	0.6%	0.0	3
		-0.16	-1.3%	0.09	3
		0.27	0.46%	-0.11	26
			-0.33%	0.06	4
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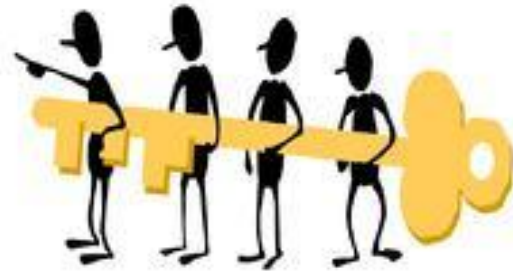


- ✘ Banks also developed new ways of raising and lending money. Some governments issued funds that were sold to the public. The government then paid interest to the purchasers of these funds.



- ✘ This "Financial Revolution" enabled some governments to raise large sums of money to expand their armies and navies. Bankers and merchants became more influential in government. In Holland, rich merchants were able to establish an oligarchy - rule by a few.

Oligarchy



Rule of a FEW

- ✘ As a result of the Commercial Revolution, Europeans had many more products from which to choose. They could enjoy tea, sugar, coffee, cotton cloth and other goods. There were more books and new forms of learning and entertainment, such as theater groups, newspapers and schools. This led to more choices in occupations as well as in consumption. These advances led to rising standards of living for many Europeans.



THE AGE OF KINGS (1600-1770)

- ✘ The decline of feudalism, the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation and the Commercial Revolution all served to enrich European society and to greatly increase the power of European monarchs (hereditary rulers).

THE GROWTH OF ROYAL POWER

- ✘ In the Middle Ages, the power of Kings had been limited by nobles, parliaments, and the Catholic Church. In the 16th and 17th centuries, this began to change. Kings were now able to increase their power for a variety of reasons.

- ✘ **Wars of Religion.** During the Reformation, most kings took control of religion within their own borders. For example in England, Henry VIII made himself the head of the national church as early as 1534. The religious wars that followed the Reformation provided kings with an opportunity to build large standing armies, to introduce new government officials (bureaucrats), and to increase taxes. The army was used to put down any resistance to higher taxes.



Thirty Years War (1618–1648).

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- ✘ **Changing Roles of the Nobility.** In the Middle Ages, nobles had been an independent source of power. Many even had their own castles and armies. In the 1600s, rulers like Louis XIV "tamed" the nobility. Louis built a magnificent palace at Versailles where the nobility were forced to live by his side under his watchful eye. Nobles kept their wealth and privileges but were expected to obey the king's commands. The growing middle classes in towns frequently allied themselves with kings against any resistance by the nobility.

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- ✘ **New Justifications for Royal Power.** New theories arose to justify royal authority. Many rulers adopted the Renaissance view, justifying their actions on the basis of "reason of state." An Englishman, Thomas Hobbes, wrote that man was not naturally good. Without a strong central authority to keep order, life would be "nasty, brutish and short." Society would break down into a "war of every man against every man." Hobbes said kings were justified in seizing absolute power because only they could act impartially to maintain order in society.

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- ✘ Other monarchs, like James I in England and Louis XIV in France, justified their power on the basis of divine right. According to this theory, a king was God's deputy on Earth, and royal commands expressed God's wishes.

A CASE STUDY IN ABSOLUTISM: Louis XIV (1638–1715)

Absolutism refers to a monarch's total control over his subjects. Louis XIV of France provided a model for other absolute monarchs. His will was law. Any critic who challenged the king was punished. Louis interfered in the economic and religious lives of his subjects. His regulations established standards for all French industries. He demanded that Protestants convert to Catholicism or leave France. Leading nobles were forced to spend most of the year residing with the king at Versailles, so they had no opportunity to disobey or rebel. Louis developed a large army with standardized uniforms, training and housing. He involved his nation in a series of wars to expand France's frontiers and bring glory to his rule. Although he probably never said "I am the state," this expression accurately summarized his view of royal power. In the end, Louis' aggressive actions served to unite Europe against France, leaving his country bankrupt and exhausted at his death.



APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

★ Which conditions allowed many rulers in Europe to establish absolute power?

ABSOLUTISM IN RUSSIA

- ✘ At the eastern end of Europe, the rulers of Russia adopted the system of royal absolutism on a grand scale. By the end of the 15th century, the rulers of the region around Moscow declared independence from Mongol rule. Next they set about increasing Muscovy's size by conquering neighboring lands.

- ✘ The bulk of Russia's population were serfs - peasants who were required by law to stay on the land and work for their noble landowners. Just when serfdom was ending in Western Europe, it was increasing in Eastern Europe. In return for their powers over their serfs, the Russian nobility pledged absolute loyalty to the Tsar.



PETER THE GREAT (REIGNED 1682-1725)

- ✘ Peter turned Russia from a backward nation into a modern power by introducing Western ideas, culture and technology. He went on a voyage to the West, working in shipyards in Holland and visiting England.

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- ✘ In Russia, he executed his mutinous palace guard and developed a new army on Western lines. He used force to make the old Russian nobles shave their beards and wear Western-style clothing instead of traditional Russian garb. He defeated neighboring Sweden and Turkey, greatly extending Russia's boundaries. He took control of the Church, imported foreign workers, and opened new schools. Peter moved the capital of Russia from Moscow to St. Petersburg, a modern city he ordered to be built on the Baltic coast so that Russia would have a "window on the West."

CATHERINE THE GREAT (REIGNED 1762-1796)

- ✘ Forty years after Peter's death, Catherine II continued Peter's policies of expansion and Westernization. She also promoted limited reform at the beginning of her reign, corresponded with leading French thinkers, and even granted nobles their own charter of rights. However, she refused to part with any of her absolute power. During her reign, the conditions of the Russian serfs actually worsened. She defeated the Ottoman Empire, expanded Russia's border to the Black Sea, and carved up Poland with her neighbors.

APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

On a separate sheet of paper, make a chart comparing absolutism in France and Russia. Include both similarities and differences.

LIMITED MONARCH IN ENGLAND

- ✘ In England, monarchs were never able to establish absolute rule as their fellow monarchs did in France and Russia. Already in the Middle Ages, strong checks had been established on the English king's power:

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- ✘ **Magna Carta.** In 1215, English nobles forced King John to sign the Magna Carta, which guaranteed that Englishmen could not be fined or imprisoned except according to the laws of the land. John also agreed not to raise new taxes without the consent of his barons. The Magna Carta demonstrated that the king's power could be limited.

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- ✘ **Rise of Parliament.** Parliament was established as a legislative body made up of nobles in the House of Lords and elected representatives in the House of Commons. New taxes needed the approval of Parliament.

ENGLAND'S ROAD TO LIMITED MONARCHY

- ✘ Later events turned England into a limited monarchy, in which subjects enjoyed basic rights and power was shared between the king and Parliament:

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- ✘ **Tudor Monarchs.** In the 16th century, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I created a strong, centralized monarchy based on a sense of national unity, the Church of England, and a sharing of power between the monarch and Parliament. Henry relied on Parliament to approve his break with the Catholic Church in Rome.

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- ✘ **Early Stuart Monarchs.** James I became king in 1603. James believed in the divine right of kings and often came into conflict with Parliament. His son, Charles I, tried to establish absolutism and to collect new taxes without Parliament's consent. He imprisoned those who refused to obey. When the House of Commons questioned these practices, Charles dissolved Parliament and ruled without it for 11 years. A rebellion in Scotland forced Charles to recall Parliament. He needed their help in 1640 to pursue his policies in Scotland, but they continued to disagree.

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- ✘ **English Civil War (1642-1649).** The conflict soon led to a civil war between the king and Parliament. Army reforms were introduced by Parliament that helped it to win the Civil War. In 1649, Charles was tried and became the first English monarch to be executed. For a short time, England was a republic. When Charles was restored to the throne in 1660, he agreed to limits on royal power.

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- ✘ **Glorious Revolution (1688-1689).** A second English revolution occurred when James II converted to Catholicism and failed to respect many of his subjects' rights. Angered by his actions, Parliament deposed James II and invited James' daughter and her husband to take his place.

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- ✘ In 1689, William and Mary, the new rulers, agreed to the Bill of Rights, establishing Parliament's supremacy over the king and other rights. William and Mary agreed that they would neither collect new taxes nor raise an army without obtaining Parliament's consent. These events marked a final shift of power from the monarch to Parliament, and Parliament was never again successfully challenged.

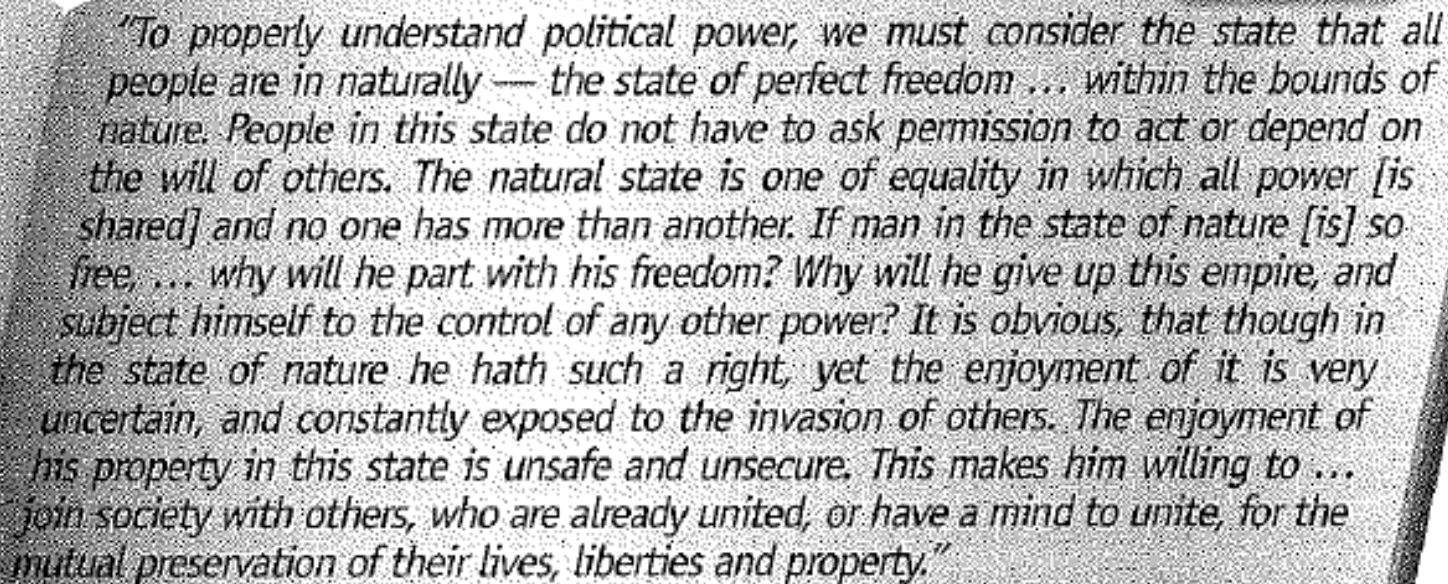
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- ✘ One of the most influential writers in this period was John Locke. He challenged both the divine right theory and the views of Hobbes. Locke believed that governments obtain their power from the people they govern, not from God.

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- ✘ According to Locke, individuals are free in the "state of nature," but join together to form a community to protect themselves. The community then hands power over to a government in a "social contract." The main purpose of government was therefore to protect life, liberty, and property.

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- ✘ Locke defended a people's right to revolt when the government abused its power. His ideas were influential beyond the period in which he wrote. A century later, his writings greatly influenced leaders of the American and French Revolutions .

ACTING AS AN AMATEUR HISTORIAN

In his *Second Treatise on Government* (1690), John Locke defines man in a “state of nature”:



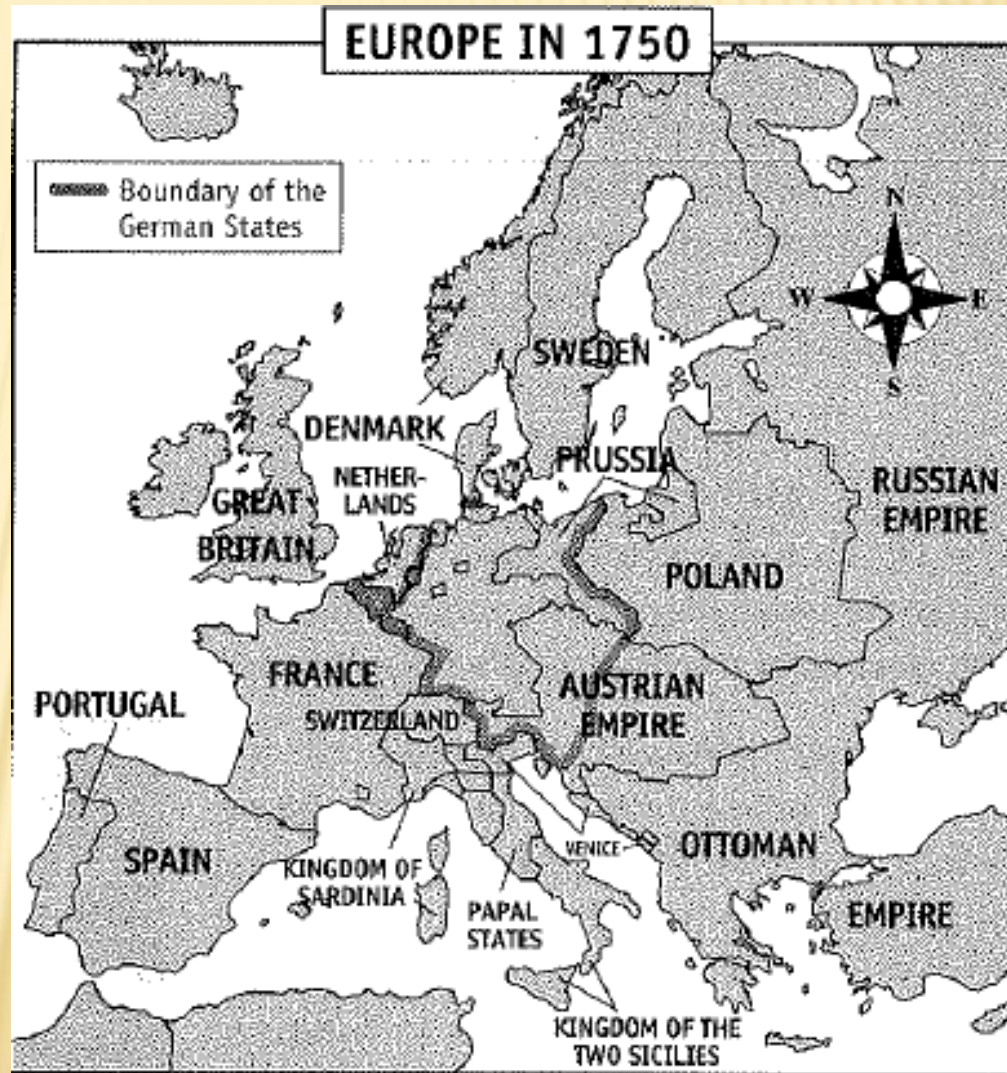
“To properly understand political power, we must consider the state that all people are in naturally — the state of perfect freedom ... within the bounds of nature. People in this state do not have to ask permission to act or depend on the will of others. The natural state is one of equality in which all power [is shared] and no one has more than another. If man in the state of nature [is] so free, ... why will he part with his freedom? Why will he give up this empire, and subject himself to the control of any other power? It is obvious, that though in the state of nature he hath such a right, yet the enjoyment of it is very uncertain, and constantly exposed to the invasion of others. The enjoyment of his property in this state is unsafe and unsecure. This makes him willing to ... join society with others, who are already united, or have a mind to unite, for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and property.”

According to this passage, why do people give up their freedom to join society?

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- ✘ Sir William Blackstone (1723 -1780) an English judge, summarized English law in his Commentaries on the Laws of England. The book explained the English common law - a system of laws based on a judge following the precedents of other courts. Blackstone defined the rights of individuals in English law, as well as property rights that could not be violated, even by the king. He also explained England's "mixed monarchy" where power was shared by the king and Parliament.

A GRAND TOUR OF 18TH-CENTURY EUROPE

- ✘ In the 1700s, Europe was not organized into a series of similar states, as we find it today. Instead, there was a great variety of types of countries.



EASTERN EUROPE

- ✘ Eastern Europe mainly consisted of large empires - Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Habsburg territories of Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary. Russia and Habsburg Austria had absolute rulers, privileged nobilities, and large populations of serfs. Poland's nobles elected their king.

CENTRAL EUROPE

- ✘ The middle of Europe consisted of many smaller states. Italy was divided into republican city-states such as Venice and Lucca, small kingdoms like Naples, and territories ruled by foreign powers. Germany was still under the authority of the Holy Roman Emperor. Since the Reformation, each German state had become virtually independent. Some were nobles with their own property; others were cities like Bremen; finally, some were kingdoms like Prussia and Bavaria.

NORTHERN EUROPE

- ✘ In Scandinavia, Denmark ruled Norway. Sweden lost its Baltic provinces to Russia at the beginning of the century.

WESTERN EUROPE

- ✘ France, Spain, Portugal, Great Britain and Holland were nation-states, as they are today. Although Spain controlled a vast overseas empire in the Americas, it was weak from centuries of warfare. The most powerful countries were France and Britain. France had Europe's largest population - 25 million people in 1750 - as well as a large land area with coasts on the Atlantic and Mediterranean, rich farmland, and rising industry and commerce. Britain had a smaller population, but a prosperous middle class, greater liberty than elsewhere in Europe, and overseas colonies.

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- ✘ Throughout "Old Regime" Europe, society was aristocratic. People of noble birth felt they were a race apart - superior to everyone else. Nobles owned the most land, served as officers in the army, became bishops in the Church, and held most high government positions.

THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

- ✘ The roots of the Scientific Revolution can be found in the Renaissance with the work of Copernicus, Galileo, Harvey, and other scientists. The Scientific Revolution continued through the 17th and 18th centuries. It rejected traditional authority and church teachings in favor of the direct observation of nature.

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- ✘ The revolution in science was based on the new scientific method - in which people observed nature, made hypotheses (educated guesses) about relationships, and then tested their hypotheses through experiments. Galileo, for example, conducted tests on the motion of objects to find general principles of physics. Scientists began to discover that the motions of objects could be predicted by mathematics.

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- ✘ The Irish chemist Robert Boyle (1627-1691) is sometimes known as the "Father of Chemistry." Boyle conducted experiments on gases at different temperatures and pressures. He found gas pressure increased as the volume of the gas decreased. He also distinguished mixtures from compounds. Boyle was one of the first scientists to perform controlled experiments and to publish his work in detail.

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- ✘ The most influential thinker of the Scientific Revolution was Sir Isaac Newton. His book *Principia Mathematica* connected the speed of falling objects on Earth to the movements of planets. Newton reduced all these patterns to a single formula: the law of gravity. Newton's discovery raised hopes that all of the universe acted according to certain fixed and fundamental laws. It seemed that all scientists had to do was to apply observation, experimentation, and mathematics.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

- ✘ The Enlightenment refers to an important movement in 18th century European thought. The spark for the Enlightenment came from the progress made by the Scientific Revolution. Enlightenment thinkers believed that by applying reason and scientific laws, people would be better able to understand both nature and one another. They applied the new scientific method to society and its problems.

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- ✘ At the core of the Enlightenment was a questioning of traditional institutions, customs, and morals. In particular, they questioned the divine right of kings, the hereditary privileges of the nobility, and the power of the Catholic Church.

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- ✘ Enlightened philosophers believed that nature and society operated according to certain basic universal principles, which they referred to as "natural laws." They further believed that people could use their reason to discover these laws and then apply this knowledge to improve the quality of life.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE ROOTS OF DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT

- ✘ Many of the Enlightenment thinkers were French. They were influenced by earlier French Protestants who, following John Calvin, had argued that citizens could challenge the actions of an "ungodly" king. They were also impressed by the ideas of John Locke, who had written that each of us is born as a "blank slate." Our experiences then shape our personalities. This might mean that a peasant could be just as good as a nobleman if he had the same experiences.

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- ✘ Enlightenment thinkers were also influenced by the earlier Wars of Religion: to avoid senseless killing, they favored religious toleration. They opposed torture in judicial proceedings. Many practices in France - its privileged nobility, powerful Church, and absolutist king - seemed irrational to these thinkers.

Voltaire (1694–1778) poked fun at traditional authority in society, government, and the church. His views on religious toleration and intellectual freedom influenced the leaders of the American and French Revolutions.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) believed a government should express the “general will” of the people. His book, *The Social Contract*, helped to inspire the democratic ideals of the French Revolution.

KEY THINKERS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755) argued for a separation of powers in government as a check against tyranny. His book, *The Spirit of Laws*, encouraged the development of a system of checks and balances later in the U.S. Constitution.

Adam Smith (1723–1790) described capitalism in his book, *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith explained how competition and the division of labor help to guide a free-market economic system based on self-interest. He argued that government should follow a **laissez-faire**, or “hands off,” policy towards the economy.

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- ✘ Enlightenment ideas were applied by Thomas Jefferson in the American Declaration of Independence. The Declaration recognized the existence of natural rights such as the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It stated that the purpose of government was to protect these rights. This demonstrated the strong influence of Locke on colonial thinking.

ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM

- ✘ Enlightened despots were absolute monarchs who tried to use Enlightenment ideas to reform their societies "from above." They often came from countries without a strong middle class. They felt it was up to the ruler to introduce positive changes. They instituted religious tolerance, established scientific academies, and promoted social reform, but they rarely supported a greater sharing of political power. Catherine the Great of Russia, Frederick the Great of Prussia, and Joseph II of Austria were examples of enlightened despots.

APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Select *one* of the people you read about in this chapter and explain the effect of his or her ideas on later generations.



LEARNING WITH GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS



Complete the graphic organizer below by describing the accomplishments or beliefs of some of the people you learned about in this chapter.

King Louis XIV	Peter the Great	Thomas Hobbes
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MONARCHS AND ENLIGHTENED THINKERS		
John Locke	Baron de Montesquieu	Jean-Jacques Rousseau
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CHAPTER STUDY CARDS

Commercial Revolution

- ★ **Mercantilism.** Rulers increased their power by amassing gold and silver through conquest, taxes, trade, and obtaining colonies.
- ★ **Colonies.** Spain, Holland, Portugal, France, and England developed overseas empires.
- ★ **Free Enterprise (*Capitalism*).**
 - Merchants developed new methods to finance large business ventures.
 - Used borrowing and **joint-stock companies** to raise the large amounts of capital needed for these ventures.

Limited Monarchy in England

- ★ Traditional checks on English king's power:
 - Magna Carta (1215) limited kings' power.
 - English Parliament (*legislature*).
- ★ **Henry VIII** and **Elizabeth I** ruled with Parliament.
- ★ **James I** favored divine right. His son, Charles, tried to rule without Parliament.
- ★ **English Civil War.** Parliament defeated and executed **Charles I** (1649).
- ★ **Glorious Revolution.** **James II** was overthrown.
- ★ **English Bill of Rights.** Stated supremacy of Parliament and the rights of subjects.
- ★ **John Locke** justified Glorious Revolution. Locke stated that subjects have a right to rebel against an oppressive government.
- ★ **William Blackstone** summarized English law.

Absolute Monarchy

- ★ **Factors leading to growth of royal power:**
 - Kings increased sizes of their army.
 - Kings raised more taxes among their subjects.
 - Kings subdued nobility.
 - Royal authority based on "reason of state" — need for order, or **divine right**.
- ★ **A Case Study in Absolute Monarchy — King Louis XIV of France:**
 - His will was law.
 - He permitted no criticism of his rule.
 - Built **Versailles** Palace to house nobles.
 - Developed a large and powerful army.

Scientific Revolution

- ★ **Changed ways of thinking:**
 - New ways of scientific investigation.
 - Rejected traditional teachings of Church.
 - **Robert Boyle.** Investigated gases.
 - **Isaac Newton.** Laws of gravity.

Enlightenment

- ★ Applied human reason to society.
 - Questioned role of Catholic Church.
 - Rejected traditional teachings of Church.
 - Opposed hereditary privileges.
 - Sought to reform society.
- ★ Leading Enlightenment thinkers:
 - **Voltaire**
 - **Baron de Montesquieu**
 - **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**