Unit 2: Absolutism Notes

Absolutism

- Absolutism – A state where the king or queen holds all of the power.
- Absolute monarchs believed in divine right.
  - Divine Right – The idea that God created the monarchy and the monarch was God’s representative on Earth.

Spain

- In the early 1500s, Spain grew into a world power thanks to the exploitation of new lands.
  - Conquistadors – Spanish soldiers and explorers who took part in the conquest of America.

Philip II

- Philip II inherited Spain and Spanish American from his father.
- He was a member of the Hapsburg royal family.
- Philip II was a devout Catholic and looked to expand his kingdom.
- At the beginning of Philip’s reign (1554), Spain was the richest empire in the world.

Religious Wars

- In Philip’s defense of Catholicism, he became the enemy of the Protestants.
- The Netherlands were under Hapsburg control, but were mostly Protestant.
- Philip heavily taxed them, causing them to revolt.
- England pledged to help the people of the Netherlands (the Dutch) fight the Spanish.

Spanish Armada

- To get back at Elizabeth, Philip decides to invade England.
- He builds the Spanish Armada.
- Philip hoped to overthrow Elizabeth.
- The Spanish Armada was defeated and many ships and men are lost at sea.
• With this defeat, the Spanish Empire began to weaken.

France
• France is mostly Catholic
• Since the Reformation, the Catholics have been fighting a group of Protestants called Huguenots (aka Calvinists)
• The Edict of Nantes is eventually passed.
  ○ Edict of Nantes – Declaration of religious tolerance.

French Royal Family
• France’s royal family is the House of Bourbon.
• When the king (Henry) is killed, Louis XIII is his successor.

Louis XIII
• Louis XIII is a weak king
  ○ Louis’ prime minister, Cardinal Richelieu, is a strong leader and takes control of the country.
• Richelieu is a powerful figure in the Catholic Church.

Richelieu’s Policies
• Upheld the Edict of Nantes, but did not allow Huguenot cities to have walls.
• Took power away from the nobles and gave it to government officials called intendants.

Richelieu and the Thirty Years War
• The Holy Roman Empire was a Catholic kingdom in Central Europe ruled by the Hapsburg royal family.
• The 30 Years War was fought because the Protestant German-States of the Holy Roman Empire wanted to rule themselves.
• Richelieu involved France in the Thirty Years War against Spain.
  ○ Wanted to weaken the Hapsburg Family.

Louis XIV
• Louis XIV took over after death of Louis XIII.
• He was determined to make the monarchy so powerful that no one could challenge him.

• Called himself “The Sun King”

• Expanded the power of intendants over the nobles.

• Appointed Jean Baptiste Colbert as minister of finance.
  • Colbert tried to make France self-sufficient and not reliant on imports.

Palace of Versailles

• The Palace of Versailles was a palace built by Louis XIV.

• The palace was a sign of the absolute power of the monarch.

End of Louis XIV’s Reign

• Louis fought many wars in an attempt to expand France’s borders.

• England and other countries fought France and Spain in the War of Spanish Succession.

France upon Louis XIV’s Death

• **Louis’ constant wars and extravagance led to the bankruptcy of France.**

• **The peasants had been heavily taxed and grew upset at the monarchy.**

Central Europe – Austria and Prussia

Thirty Years War

• War fought between the Hapsburg Catholics of Holy Roman Empire and German Protestants.

• Richelieu and France sided with the Germans in order to stop the Hapsburg family from gaining more power.

The Fall of the Holy Roman Empire

• Almost 100 years after the Thirty Years War, religious differences cause the Holy Roman Empire to split between two kingdoms.
  
  ○ Austria - Catholic

  ○ Prussia – Religious Tolerance (Protestant and Catholic)

Austria

• Austria is ruled by the Hapsburgs.
• Very diverse empire. Many different ethnic groups.

Maria Theresa
• Their king dies without a son and allows his daughter, Maria Theresa, to rule after his death.
• She is the first woman to rule in the Hapsburg family.
• Maria Theresa decreased the power of the nobility.
• Fought the war of Austrian Succession shortly after taking the throne in order to legitimize taking the throne.
• Created marriage alliances across Europe.

Prussia
• Prussia was ruled by the House of Hohenzollern
• Believed having a strong military was the only way to ensure safety.
• Mostly Germanic people.

Frederick the Great
• Frederick the Great was an enlightened leader.
• Believed the people should have some say in the way he governed.
• Although Frederick was a patron of the arts, he built Prussia’s army to be the best in the world.
• Challenged Maria Theresa in the War of Austrian Succession and gained valuable land for Prussia.

Russia

Ivan the Terrible
• Ivan the Terrible becomes the first Czar of Russia.
  ○ Czar or Tsar – the monarch of Russia.
• Takes power away from the boyars.
  ○ Boyars – Russian nobles.

Peter the Great
• Peter the Great takes the throne of Russia after a few weak czars.
Family of Romanov

- Wants to westernize Russia.
- Westernization – Using Western Europe as a model for change.

Peter’s Reforms

- Increased taxes to pay for an advanced military.
- Improved status of women.
- Fought Sweden for land to build a port-city.
- Named St. Petersburg
- Took control of the Orthodox Church.
- Imposed a “beard tax”

England

Parliamentary Monarchy

- Since the Magna Carta (1215) England has had a parliament to share in the ruling process.
- Elizabeth was not an absolute monarch...
- ...But she did hold a lot of influence and power.
- Parliaments Job:
  - Create Laws
  - Get money for the monarch.
  - It was up to the monarch whether or not to enforce the laws.

Queen Elizabeth’s Reign

- Under Elizabeth, England grows to be the greatest power in the world.
- She dies without an heir, leaving the empire to her cousin (James).
- This changed England’s royal family to the House of Stuart.