



AP European History

Catherine's Enlightenment

Name:

Section:

Score: ____/5

Directions: Read the following excerpts concerning Catherine the Great's rule and her attempts to spread the ideals of the Enlightenment to Russia. Answer the thought questions under each of the passages.

From Letter of Baron de Breteuil

This princess seems to combine every kind of ambition in her person. Everything that may add luster to her reign will have some attraction for her. Science and the arts will be encouraged to flourish in the empire, projects useful for the domestic economy will be undertaken. She will endeavor to reform the administration of justice and to invigorate the laws; but her policies will be based on Machiavellianism; and I should not be surprised if in this field she rivals the king of Prussia. She will adopt the prejudices of her entourage regarding the superiority of her power and will endeavor to win respect not by the sincerity and probity of her actions but also by an ostentatious display of her strength. Haughty as she is, she will stubbornly pursue her undertakings and will rarely retrace a false step. Cunning and falsity appear to be vices in her character; woe to him who puts too much trust in her. Love affairs may become a stumbling block to her ambition and prove fatal for her peace of mind. This passionate princess, still held in check by the fear and consciousness of internal troubles, will know no restraint once she believes herself firmly established.

A Source Book for Russian History, G. Vernadsky, trans. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), Vol. 2.

Thought Question:

1. In what ways does Baron Breteuil predict Catherine will help develop Russia using the principles of the Enlightenment?
2. Does he truly believe she will be a true Enlightenment Monarch? Explain.

From Decree on Serfs (1767)

The Governing Senate. . . has deemed it necessary to make known > that the landlords' serfs and peasants . . . owe their landlords proper submission and absolute obedience in all matters, according to the laws r that have been enacted from time immemorial by the autocratic forefathers of Her Imperial Majesty and which have not been repealed, and which provide that all persons who dare to incite serfs and peasants to disobey their landlords shall be arrested and taken to the nearest government office, there to be punished forthwith as disturbers of the public tranquillity, according to the laws and without leniency. And should it so happen that even after the publication of the present decree of Her Imperial Majesty any serfs and peasants should cease to give the proper obedience to their landlords . . . and should make bold to submit unlawful petitions complaining of their landlords, and especially to petition Her Imperial Majesty personally, then both those who make the complaints and those who write up the petitions shall be punished by the knout and forthwith deported to Nerchinsk to penal servitude for life and shall be counted as part of the quota of recruits which their landlords must furnish to the army. And in order that people everywhere may know of the present decree, it shall be read in all the churches on Sundays and holy days for one month after it is received and thereafter once every year during the great church festivals, lest anyone pretend ignorance.

A Source Book for Russian History, G. Vernadsky, trans. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), Vol. 2, pp. 453-454.

Thought Questions:

1. How does the Decree of Serfs connect to Baron de Breteuil predictions of Catherine's rule?