

## World History

Perspectives of Absolutism

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Section: \_\_\_\_\_  
Score: \_\_\_\_/5

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**Directions:** Read the following excerpts that deal with the different ideas relating to absolutism. Answer the thought questions associated with each excerpt. Once finished come up with a thesis statement for a paper that would answer the question below.

### Document 1:

“The state of monarchy is the supreme thing upon earth; for kings are not only God’s lieutenants on earth, and sit upon God’s throne, but even by God Himself they are called gods... Kings are justly called gods, for that they exercise a... divine power upon earth... God hath power to create and destroy, make or unmake at His pleasure, to give life or sent death, to judge all and to be judged nor accountable to none, to raise low things and to make high things low at His pleasure... And the like power have kings...”

*Source: Ideas were expressed by King James I of England in 1609*

**Thought Question:** Why does King James feel government should be organized in this way?

### Document 2:

The head alone has the right to deliberate and decide, and the functions of all the other members consist only in carrying out the commands given to them... The more you grant... [to the assembled people], the more it claims.. The interest of the state must come first.

*Source: Ideas were expressed by King Louis XIV of France in 1660*

**Thought Question:** Why does King Louis recommend this type of government?

### Document 3:

...If any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end... endeavor to destroy or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass that where an invader hath no more to fear than another man's single power, if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united to dispossess and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labor, but also of his life or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another

. ...From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavor peace, is derived this second law: that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far forth as for peace and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men as would allow other men against himself.

... The mutual transferring of rights is that which men call [social] contract.

*Source: Excerpt from Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes, 1651.*

**Thought Question:** How do men behave without law?

Thought Question: What is the only way to achieve peace?

**Document 4:**

It appears from all this that the person of the king is sacred, and that to attack him in any way is sacrilege. God has the kings anointed by his prophets with the holy unction in like manner as he has bishops and altars anointed. But even without the external application in thus being anointed, they are by their very office the representatives of the divine majesty deputed by Providence for the execution of his purposes. Accordingly God calls Cyrus his anointed. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him." Kings should be guarded as holy things, and whosoever neglects to protect them is worthy of death . . .

There is something religious in the respect accorded to a prince. The service of God and the respect for kings are bound together. St. Peter unites these two duties when he says, "Fear God. Honor the king."

. . . .Kings should tremble then as they use the power God has granted them; and let them think how horrible is the sacrilege if they use for evil a power which comes from God. We behold kings seated upon the throne of the Lord, bearing in their hand the sword which God himself has given them. What profanation, what arrogance, for the unjust king to sit on God's throne to render decrees contrary to his laws and to use the sword which God has put in his hand for deeds of violence and to slay his children! . . .

*Source: Bishop Jacques Bossuet, Politics Drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture, 1709*

Thought Question: How should monarchs be treated?

Thought Question: How should monarchs use their power?

**Document 5:**

This great emperor came in a few years to know to a farthing the amount of all his revenues, as also how they were laid out. He was at little or no expense about his person, and by living rather like a private gentleman than a prince he saved wholly that great expense which other monarchs are at in supporting the grandeur of their courts. ...He had no letters; he could only read and write, but had a great regard for learning and was at much pains to introduce it into the country. He rose early; the morning he gave to business till ten or eleven o'clock at the farthest; all the rest of the day, and a great part of the night, to diversion and pleasure.

In the year 1703 the tsar took the field early, cantoned his troops in the month of March, and about the 20th of April brought the army together; then marched and invested another small but important place called Neva Chance.... The commodious situation of this place made the tsar resolve to erect on it a considerable town, with a strong citadel, consisting of six royal bastions, together with good out works; this he soon put into execution and called it St. Petersburg, which is now esteemed so strong that it will be scarcely possible for the Swedes ever to take it by force.

*Source: General Alexander Gordon, History of Peter the Great, 1718*

Thought Question: What important policies and style of rule did Peter the Great implement as tsar of Russia?

**Document 6:**

...In 1722, the establishment of the Table of Ranks brought to its logical conclusion a process that had been evolving for three centuries. It imposed obligatory lifelong state service on all ranks of the nobility. It established fourteen equivalent grades in the military, naval, and civil service and required that even princes of the most exalted families should begin at the lowest grade and work their way up the ladder. The Table of Ranks offered the privileges of nobility to anyone who performed state service and made service to the state the principal basis for privilege...

*Source: Excerpt from Peter, The Revolutionary Tsar, by Peter Brock Putnam, published by Harper & Row*

Thought Question: Explain one way the Table of Ranks expanded the power of the Russian state.

**Document 7:**

...How great an effect did Peter have upon Russia? When he came to the throne, Russia was an insignificant state. He made it into a great power feared by all. At his accession [assumption of the throne] Russia had no armed forces except for the inefficient and untrustworthy Streltsy [hereditary military units]. When he died, there was a professional army of 210,000 men. He created a navy out of nothing, leaving behind him a fleet of forty-eight ships-of-the-line and many smaller vessels...

Peter signally [noticeably] failed to create the large, thriving middle class that Russia needed. In spite of the most strenuous efforts, Russia's commerce and industry remained dependent upon the Czar, so that when he died, there were not enough wealthy, far-sighted traders and industrialists to develop what he had begun. This lack of private initiative and enterprise was to remain one of Russia's greatest social weaknesses until the Communist Revolution of 1917...

*Source: Excerpt from Peter the Great, by Michael Gibson, published by Wayland Publishers*

Thought Question: What was one positive effect Peter the Great's rule had on Russia?

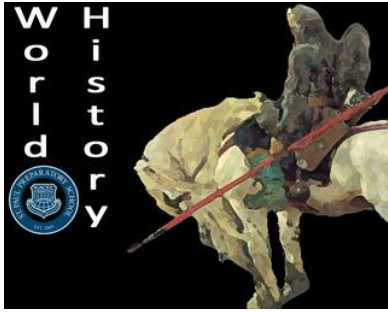
Thought Question: What was one negative effect Peter the Great's rule had on Russia?

**Document 8:**

In making his appointments the Sultan [Suleiman] pays no regard to any...wealth or rank, nor does he take into consideration recommendations or popularity, he considers each case on its own merits, and examines carefully into the character, ability, and disposition of the man whose promotion is in question. It is by merit that men rise in the service, a system which ensures that posts should only be assigned to the competent. Each man in Turkey carries in his own hand his ancestry and his position in life, which he may make or mar [hurt] as he will. Those who receive the highest offices from the Sultan are for the most part the sons of shepherds or herdsmen, and so far from being ashamed of their parentage, they actually glory in it.... Among the Turks...honors, high posts, and judgeships are the rewards of great ability and good service. If a man be dishonest, or lazy, or careless, he remains at the bottom of the ladder...for such qualities there are no honors in Turkey!

*Source: Excerpt from The Turkish Letters (1555-1562), by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, ambassador of the Holy Roman Emperor to Suleiman the Magnificent, ruler of the Ottoman Empire*

Thought Question: What type of men did Sultan Suleiman appoint to fill important government posts?



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Directions: Read the following excerpts that deal with the different ideas relating to absolutism. Answer the thought questions associated with each excerpt. Once finished come up with a thesis statement for a paper that would answer the question below.

**Question:** Was absolutism a period of prosperity or tyranny in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries?

**Thesis Statement:**

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