Focus Question: What were the main developments in France, Great Britain, the Dutch Republic, the Mediterranean states, and the Scandinavian monarchies in the eighteenth century? What do historians mean by the term enlightened absolutism, and to what degree did eighteenth-century Prussia, Austria, and Russia exhibit its characteristics?

Monarchial Government?
- Most Philosophes believed in it
- Absolute monarch power from God
- Bossuet: believed monarchs placed in power by God
  - Should be centralized gov’t
  - His theories applied during Louis XIV’s reign

Enlightened Absolutism
- Adopted by Frederick II, Joseph II & Maria Theresa of Austria & Catherine III the Great of Russia
- Absolute authority justified because servants of the state or the people
- Pushed for reform: equal treatment under law

Problematic French Monarchy
- Louis XIV left France enlarged, in debt, & unhappy
- Louis XV: easily influenced, made poor decisions, & was extremely lazy & weak
  - Epitomized Divine Right ideals
- Enlightenment ideals/reforms did NOT make their way into the French monarchy
- Matters only worsened under Louis XVI & Marie Antoinette = leads to French Rev.

Constitutional England
- Gov’t post Glorious Revolution was one of transition
- King & Parliament shared power
- Parliament became corrupt & prime ministers battled for control (Hanoverian-German monarchy began with George I but spoke no English)
- Britain lost North American colonies under George III

The Dutch Decline
- 1st to lead exploration & discovery
- Gov’t broke down due to competition between the Republic’s oligarchial towns
- Also a call for democratic reforms
- Pushed aside by powerful neighbors-such as British

Prussia: Frederick William I
- “Soldier’s King”
- Dramatic increase in military strength & number of soldiers
- Wanted to make Prussia a military powerhouse
- Strengthened monarchy – very close to absolutist

Critical Thinking:
Enlightened Absolutist Checklist:

1. √
2. √
3. √
4. √
5. √
6. √
Frederick II of Prussia “The Great”
- First to put Enlightened ideals to work
- Condemned serf system but didn’t abolish
- Eliminated torture, abandoned capital punishment
- Limited freedom of speech
- Protection of religious minorities (except for Jews)
- Increased size of army
- War of Austrian Succession
- Seven Years’ War
- Increased power of Prussia

Maria Theresa & Joseph II
- Maria Theresa took over throne of Austria after her father’s death (Charles VI) = chaos
  - Pragmatic Sanction: Stated all Hapsburg possessions are to remain together under his heir
- Frederick II seized Silesia beginning War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748)
- Set up centralized gov’t and consolidated her power
- Reforms for peasants: reduced amt demanded work
- Increased education – compulsory starting with elementary
- 1765 Joseph joined his mother on throne until 1780 (her death)
- Joseph used more power – centralized gov’t more
- Increased power of Hungary (nobles refused to obey new rules)
- Catholic church under his control: illegal to talk directly to Pope, shut down over 600 monasteries & convents
- Ended Catholic church influences over Austrian people
- Totally abolished serfdom
- Granted liberties to peasants
- Took privileges landlords had over peasants away
- Why? Hope for his own personal gains later
- Toleration Patent: Lutherans, Greek Orthodox & Calvinists freely worship
- Also eased some oppression toward Jews

Catherine the Great (1762-1796)
- German princess (Peter III) who read philosophes works
- Wanted to bring Russia into modern age
- Asserted absolute authority in order to reform
- Local gov’ts run by nobility
- Eliminated taxes & tariffs
- Built up middle class
- Spurred productivity & growth
- Continued Westernization – revived from Peter I “The Great’s “ time

Poland’s Destruction
- 18th Cent. largest European state – too large to manage
- Old political structure failed to devel. modern form of gov’t
- Deep anarchy & confusion
- Poland Partitioned in 1772: Russia, Austria, & Prussia took slices

Critical Thinking:
Rank the monarchies/countries for their Enlightenedness. Which was the most enlightened? The least? Why?

Opposing Viewpoints: (Next Page)
ARGUMENTATION: How do Catherine’s statements validate or undermine the concept of “enlightened absolutism?”
Enlightened Absolutism: Enlightened or Absolute?

Although historians have used the term enlightened absolutism to describe a new type of monarchy in the eighteenth century, scholars have recently questioned the usefulness of the concept. The three selections below offer an opportunity to evaluate one so-called enlightened monarch, Catherine the Great of Russia. The first selection is from a letter written by the baron de Breteuil, the French ambassador to Russia, giving his impressions of Catherine. In 1767, Catherine convened a legislative commission to prepare a new code of laws for Russia. In her instruction, parts of which form the second selection, she gave the delegates a detailed guide to the principles they should follow. Although the guidelines were culled from the liberal ideas of the philosophes, the commission itself accomplished nothing. The third selection, from a Decree on Serfs (also issued in 1767), reveals Catherine’s authoritarian nature.

Letter of the Baron de Breteuil

[Catherine] seems to combine every kind of ambition in her person. Everything that may add luster to her reign will have some attraction for her. 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.

Catherine II, Proposals for a New Law Code

13. What is the true End of Monarchy? Not to deprive People of their natural Liberty; but to correct their Actions, in order to attain the supreme good. …
33. The Laws ought to be so framed, as to secure the Safety of every Citizen as much as possible. …
34. The Equality of the Citizens consists in this; that they should all be subject to the same Laws. …
123. The Usage of Torture is contrary to all the Dictates of Nature and Reason; even Mankind itself cries out against it, and demands loudly the total Abolition of it. …

180. That Law, therefore, is highly beneficial to the Community where it is established, which ordains that every Man be judged by his Peers and Equals. For when the Fate of a Citizen is in Question, all Prejudices arising from the Difference of Rank or Fortune should be stifled; because they ought to have no Influence between the Judges and the Parties accused. …

194. No Man ought to be looked upon as guilty, before he has received his judicial Sentence: nor can the Laws deprive him of their Protection, before it is proved that he has forfeited all Right to it. What Right therefore can Power give to any to inflict Punishment upon a Citizen at a Time, when it is yet dubious, whether he is Innocent or guilty?

Catherine II, Decree on Serfs

The Governing Senate … has deigned 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 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 tranquility, 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.

What impressions of Catherine do you get from the letter by the French ambassador to Russia? To what extent were the ideas expressed in the proposals for a new law code taken from the writings of the philosophes? What does the Decree on Serfs reveal about Catherine’s view of power? Based on these documents, was Catherine an enlightened monarch? Why or why not?

Focus Question: How did the concepts of “balance of power” and “reason of state” influence international relations in the eighteenth century? What were the causes and results of the Seven Years’ War?

Map Questioning: Europe in 1763
1. Given the distribution of Prussian and Habsburg holdings, in what areas of Europe were they most likely to compete for land and power?
Wars & Diplomacy:
- What view did philosophes have regarding war?
- What is the concept of balance of power?
- What is the concept of reason of state?

**War of Austrian Succession 1740-1748**
- Austrian throne to be left to female heir = Maria Theresa
- Charles VI sought to protect throne through the Pragmatic Sanction
- Frederick the Great ignored Pragmatic Sanction – invaded to gain land in Silesia
- France entered war to attack traditional enemy Austria
- Great Britain entered an alliance w/ Austria in fear of France increase in power (traditional rivals)
- War turned into worldwide conflict
- Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle restored status quo prior to war except Silesia kept by Prussia
  - Hostilities b/n Prussia & Austria remained

**Seven Years’ War 1756-1763**
- Continued conflict b/n Prussia & Austria and Britain & France in 3 theatres
  - **Europe:** Britain & Prussia vs. Austria, France, & Russia
    - Ended w/ Peace of Hubertusburg - lands returned & Austria recognized Prussia’s possession of Silesia
  - **Empire War:** British-French conflict over imperial possessions in India & N. America
    - British victorious under Robert Clive = Treaty of Paris
  - **French & Indian War:** Battle over possession in North America = French & Indians vs. British
    - French defeated & handed Canada to Britain in Treaty of Paris
  - Britain emerged as largest colonial power

**Britain in North America**
- N. American colonies: most valuable to Britain – tobacco, fish, lumber, grain
- Huge market for British goods: 2.5 million people by 1775

---

**Critical Thinking:**

Outline the alliances for both wars? Why did the sides change?

Why was France’s loss so important for them? For Britain?
Focus Question: What changes occurred in agriculture, finance, industry, and trade during the eighteenth century?

### Expansion in the 18th Century

#### Economic and Demographic Changes
- 1700: 80% of western Europeans were farmers; higher % in eastern Europe
- Most people lived in poverty
- Dramatic population growth until 1650; slows down until 1750

#### Open-Field System
- Greatest accomplishment of Medieval agriculture
- Village agriculture; 1/3 to ½ of fields lay fallow
- Serfs in eastern Europe were worst off; many sold with lands (like slavery)

#### Agricultural Revolution
- Major milestone in human civilization
- Impact of the scientific revolution’s experimental method was great
- Crop rotation most important feature

#### Enclosure Movement
- End to common lands and open-field system
- Agriculturalists consolidated lands and closed them off
- Left many landless & jobless
- As much as 50% of lands enclosed already by 1750 (much by mutual consent)
- By 1700: ratio of landless farmer to landowner = 2:1; not much greater in 1800

#### Game Laws
- In England prohibited peasants from hunting game
- Caused considerable friction in the countryside in 17th and 18th centuries

#### Low Countries
- Took the lead in Ag Rev
- Increased population meant more food had to be produced
- Cornelius Vermuyden: important in drainage of swamp lands into useful farm land; Huge impact on southern England

#### England
- Viscount Charles Townsend (1674-1738): improved soil by crop rotation (turnips); Drained extensively, manured heavily, regular crop rotation w/o fallowing
- Jethro Tull (1674-1741): seed drill; more efficient than scattering seeds by hand
- Selective breeding of ordinary livestock: created larger animals

---

Critical Thinking:

Why was the enclosure movement so important?
Population Explosion
- After 1750
- Limits to population growth before 1700: famine, disease, war
- Reasons for population growth:
  - disappearance of plague, improved sanitation,
  - improved transportation for food distribution (canal and road building in western Europe), increased food supply (esp. potato)

Cottage Industry
- First and foremost a family enterprise (also called “putting-out” system)
- Occurred during Agricultural Revolution
- Putting-out system: city manufacturers took advantage of cheaper labor in the countryside
- Increased rural population eager to supplement agricultural income.
- Began to challenge urban craft industry

Inventions
- 1733, John Kay: flying shuttle
- 1764, James Hargreaves: spinning jenny
- 1769, Richard Arkwright: water frame, which improved thread spinning.
- 1780s, Arkwright: steam engine to power looms; factory production of textiles.
- 1793, Eli Whitney, cotton gin

Critical Thinking:

Why did the cottage industry grow?
Atlantic Economy in the 17th and 18th Centuries - Characteristics

- World trade became fundamental
- Spain and Portugal revitalized their empires and began drawing more wealth from renewed development.
- Netherlands, Great Britain, and France benefited most; Great Britain the leading maritime power.
  - Britain’s commercial leadership based on mercantilism
  - Navigation Laws: aimed to reduce Dutch trade in Atlantic region
- Mercantilism: self-sufficiency; colonies exist solely for benefit of mother country
- Commercial rivalry influenced diplomacy & warfare as states competed over markets

South Sea Bubble

- Responsible for exploiting the asiento other commercial privileges won from Spain after Treaty of Utrecht (1713)
- Stock values soared but the “bubble” burst in 1720
- England recovered better than France who had created a Mississippi Bubble for New Orleans commerce.
- “Bubble Act”: forbade joint-stock companies, except those chartered by gov’t
- 3 Anglo-Dutch wars: hurt Dutch shipping and commerce
- Netherlands’ “golden age”: during 1st half of 16th century but soon pushed out by Brits

Slavery

- Spain’s Latin American colonies: helped revitalize Spanish empire in 18th c.
- Gold and silver mining recovered
- Significant trade with mother country
- Creoles elite came to rival top Spanish authorities (about 10% of population)
- Mestizos increased to about 20% of population
- Black slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico
- Portuguese Brazil: about 50% of population African by early 19th c.
- More successful in blending races than in Spanish colonies or United States

Changing Society in The 18th

- marriage; divorce
- birth control & pre-marital sex
- illegitimacy
- work away from home
- child rearing
- foundling hospitals
- infanticide
- “Spare the rod and spoil the child”
- Health and hospital reforms
Smallpox

- Edward Jenner (1749-1823) developed a vaccine for smallpox by using inoculation from cowpox
- Found people could be immunized by using the milder version found in cows

**Focus Question Answer:**

Smallpox was a deadly killer disease for centuries. What will be the impact of the vaccine for the future?

**Critical Thinking:**

List 3 observations you have found by analyzing the graph.

---


**Focus Question Answer:**
The John Bacon Family by Arthur Devis (1711-1787)

1. What does this painting illustrate about upper-class family life in Great Britain in the first half of the eighteenth century?