

Absolutism in Europe

*The Emergence of the First
Global Age (1450–1750)*



The Spanish Empire

Absolutism in France

The rise of absolute monarchs

Limiting British monarchs

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Religion and thought



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will have learned about the Spanish Empire under Philip II, and be able to answer the following key questions:

- What is absolute monarchy?
- How did Philip II change the Spanish Empire?
- What challenges did Philip's empire face?
- Who were some of the great artists of Spain's Golden Age?



In order to contextualize the rise of absolutism in Europe, use this timeline to recap previous key historical events. Either press on a date or drag the pointer along the timeline to find out information about what happened in each year.

Press **start** to begin.

start



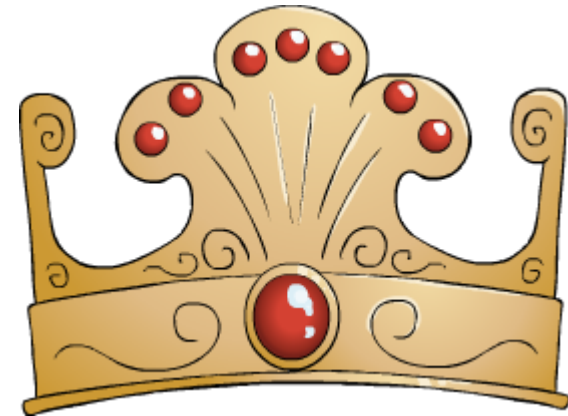


What is absolutism?



Throughout Western Europe, the 17th century was a time of religious and territorial upheaval.

Some monarchs imposed order by increasing their control over every aspect of society. These rulers were called **absolute monarchs**.



Absolute monarchs were believed to rule by **divine right**, meaning they were chosen by God and were not answerable to human laws.

What are some advantages and disadvantages of absolutism?



When **Philip II** inherited Spain, he also became ruler of its many colonies and its territory in the Netherlands.

In 1580, the king of Portugal died without an heir. Philip quickly claimed the throne, adding Portugal's African, Indian and East Indies colonies to his global empire.



With the shiploads of gold and silver mined from Spanish colonies, Philip was able to maintain a standing army of nearly 50,000 men. He would soon need that army to suppress a revolt in his European territories.





Like his father, Charles V, Philip II was a devout Catholic. This brought him into conflict with the largely Protestant population of the Spanish Netherlands. Press on the tabs to learn more about the Dutch War of Independence and the United Provinces of the Netherlands.

Press **start** to begin.

start





The Spanish Armada



Elizabeth I, the Protestant queen of England, had supported the Dutch rebels in their revolt against Philip.

Philip had supported several plots to overthrow Elizabeth and put her Catholic cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, on the English throne. Elizabeth eventually had Mary executed in 1587.

In 1588, Philip sent his navy, the **Spanish Armada**, to invade England. The English fleet chased the Armada north toward Scotland, from where they were forced to return to Spain, severely weakened.



Why do you think the defeat of the Armada marked the beginning of the end of the Spanish Empire?



Spain's problems were compounded by serious **inflation**. This inflation was the result of several factors.

A growing population caused increased demand, allowing merchants to raise prices. At the same time, surplus gold and silver from the colonies lowered the value of money.

Spanish businesses were run by old-fashioned guilds that used outdated and expensive technology. This meant that foreign imports were often cheaper than Spanish goods. Much of Spain's colonial wealth actually went to other nations.

As a result, Philip had to borrow from these other countries to fund his wars. Unable to pay off his debts, he was forced to declare bankruptcy three times.





Despite this, the 16th and 17th centuries were the Golden Age of Spanish art and literature.

El Greco was revolutionary in using bright colors and distorted figures to represent religious subjects. Diego Velázquez was the royal portrait painter in the mid-1600s. His realist style would inspire artists for generations to come.



In 1605, Miguel de Cervantes published *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, a work of fiction about a man who imagines he is on heroic quests. It is considered one of the first modern novels.

Why was this such a rich period for the arts?



True or false?



Read the following statements
about the Spanish Empire and
decide whether each one is
true or false.

Press **start** to begin.

start





The Philip II's Spanish Empire has a broad and complex history.
Can you match each event to the year in which it took place?

Press **start** to begin.

start

