

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 rise of absolute monarchs in central Europe, and be able to answer the following key questions:

- What were the causes and results of the Thirty Years' War?
- Who were Maria Theresa and Frederick the Great and why were they important?
- How did Peter the Great make Russia a major power in European affairs?



Following the Peace of Augsburg, the princes of the Holy Roman Empire made treaties with other princes who shared their religion. They formed the Protestant Union (1608) and the Catholic League (1609). Both sides kept a close watch on the future Holy Roman Emperor, **Ferdinand II**, who was a devout Catholic.

Press **start** to begin.

start





The Thirty Years' War ended in 1648 with the **Peace of Westphalia**.

Drag each of the following results of the Peace into the correct place, based on whether they are territorial, political or religious.

Press **start** to begin.

start



Why was the Thirty Years' War so important?



Austria and Prussia



As western European nations developed powerful middle classes, nobles in central Europe continued to oppress the lower classes and limit royal power. Central European monarchs were often elected. They had little income and no standing army. The decline of the Holy Roman Empire created a power vacuum in central Europe. In the 18th century, two absolute monarchs would compete to fill the void.

Press **start** to begin.

start



How were Austria and Prussia similar and different?



Upon taking the throne, Frederick the Great invaded the Austrian region of Silesia, which was rich in iron ore, textiles and food. This struggle became known as the **War of Austrian Succession**.

Maria Theresa traveled to Hungary to personally ask the nobles for support. Although they resented Hapsburg rule, they agreed to contribute their armies.

Great Britain came to Austria's aid in order to fight against France, which was allied with Prussia. Despite this assistance, Austria lost Silesia in the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748).





Following this defeat, Maria Theresa decided to change her allegiance to France. In response, Prussia allied with Great Britain. Russia also allied with Austria and France, becoming involved in western politics for the first time.

In 1756, Prussia invaded Saxony, an ally of Austria. Soon, every major power was involved in the struggle. The **Seven Years' War** (1756 – 1763) saw fighting in Europe, North America and India.

Although the War did not affect European borders, France lost its North American colonies and Britain gained economic control in India.



How did the Seven Years' War affect American history?





The rise of Russian tsars



Russia developed very differently than
Western Europe.
Press the dates in the timeline to find out
about the rise of the **tsars** and how they
shaped Russia.

Press **start** to begin.

start





By the end of the 17th century, Russia was very different from Western Europe.

Due to Mongol control, Russia had not experienced the Renaissance. Even after its liberation from the Mongols, religious differences between Russia and the West limited the exchange of goods and ideas.



Russia's economy still relied on **serfs** – tenant farmers owned by aristocratic landowners.



Why else was Russia different from Western Europe?





In 1696, Tsar Peter I (**Peter the Great**) became the sole ruler of Russia. Peter wanted to make Russia a European power.

In 1697, Peter went on a diplomatic tour of Western Europe. This “Grand Embassy” was unprecedented for a Russian ruler.



Peter returned with the goal of westernizing Russia. Although he believed **westernization** would make Russia stronger, he knew many would resist his ideas. In order to implement them, he had to become an absolute monarch.

Why did Peter expect resistance to westernization?



Like other absolute monarchs, Peter weakened his nobility and promoted men from the lower classes to powerful positions in his government. He created an enormous standing army trained by Western officers.

Peter took control of the Russian Church through a group called the Holy Synod. He introduced the potato as a staple of the Russian diet, created and edited the first Russian newspaper and forced boyars to wear Western clothing.

Peter also opened schools for navigation and arts and sciences. He even forced some Russian men to study in the West.





St. Petersburg



Peter believed that Russia needed a warm-water seaport if it was to truly westernize. He waged war with Sweden for 21 years in order to gain access to the Baltic Sea. He named his new Baltic port city St. Petersburg.

Between 25,000 and 100,000 serfs died in the construction of St. Petersburg due to poor working conditions and disease. When the city was completed, Peter forced many boyars to move there.



By the time of Peter's death, Russia was a major power in European affairs for the first time in history.

Do you think Peter's means justified his ends?