

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

**Absolute Monarchs: The Holy Roman Empire, Austria, Prussia, France, Britain, & Russia:
The Seven Years War & Beyond**

The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) led to millions of deaths around Europe. Originally, the conflict started as Protestant and Catholic factions faced off. Eventually, the most powerful nations of Europe entered into war with each other over this religious divide. The conflict morphed into a political struggle too. The Bourbon Dynasty of France, though Catholic, saw the Catholic Holy Roman Empire's Hapsburg Dynasty as a threat to their power on the European continent. The Holy Roman Empire went to war against Protestant areas of Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the Protestant territories within the Holy Roman Empire.



King Louis the 13th, pictured to the left, was a passive king. The one actually running France, during his reign, was the First Minister, Cardinal Richelieu, pictured to the right.

While religion formed a foundation for the conflict, the combat evolved to be politically about the Hapsburg Dynasty of the Holy Roman Empire vs. the power of the French Bourbon Dynasty. The Holy Roman Catholic Emperor, Ferdinand the 2nd, a member of the Hapsburg Dynasty, tried to force everyone in his realm to be Catholic. Yet, Protestant factions resisted. Ironically, though Catholic, Cardinal Richelieu, the Chief Minister under King Louis the 13th, untied France with the Protestant factions to fight against the Hapsburg Dynasty, which included the monarchs of Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and Austria. Richelieu wanted to see the French Bourbon Dynasty as the most powerful in Europe. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) ended the conflict. Richelieu died before the end of the war. Yet, his predictions proved correct. France emerged more powerful, due their successful engagement in the Thirty Years War, and the Catholic Hapsburg Dynasty was weakened.

Question #1: What caused the Thirty Years War? What impact did it have on the Hapsburg Dynasty and the Bourbon Dynasty?

Europe was now far removed from a unified, Catholic region. Individual nation states arose claiming ultimate control in their regions. In the West, England, France, and the United Netherlands, claimed sovereignty (control) in their regions. More gradually, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, and others in Eastern Europe took a similar direction. This slow pattern in Eastern Europe arose due to serfdom. While many serfs lived pretty much as slaves in Europe, owing their land owning lords massive debt, many in the West had risen up against serfdom and migrated to urban areas, creating a thriving middle class that demanded more rights. Yet, in many areas of the East, serfdom continued and serfs had little control in their lives.

After the Thirty Years War, Austria rose to become very powerful. During the Thirty Years War, the Hapsburg dynasty royalty members squashed out Protestant opposition in their regions. The Hapsburg Austrians developed and maintained a powerful military and possessed control over a broad area of the middle section and eastern portions of Europe. Empress Maria Theresa of Austria (1717-1780) controlled Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Bohemia, Transylvania, and other areas. Yet, she faced opposition. She was the heir of Emperor Charles the 6th (1685-1740) of the Holy Roman Empire.

Frederick the 2nd (1712-1786), King of Prussia, challenged Theresa's rule in an area called Silesia. Frederick the 2nd went to war against Austria to take the region of Silesia. The Prussians had developed a powerful army and it seemed as if Maria Theresa of Austria would



When Maria Theresa was monarch of Austria, Frederick the 2nd of Prussia invaded to conquer and control Silesia.

not be able to maintain control of Silesia. France put its support behind Prussia and Great Britain supported Austria in the conflict. Frederick the 2nd was able to take Silesia. Yet, Austria's harsh resistance halted any future expansion of Prussia beyond Silesia. This conflict became known as the War of Austrian Succession, since it tested the power of the new monarch of Austria, Theresa. After the fight for Silesia, an ironic twist occurred. Austria made peace with France. Russia joined Austria and France in an alliance as well. Fearing this sudden move, Prussia entered into an alliance with Great Britain, who was still very much a hostile nation toward France.

Question #2: How did the area of Silesia cause conflict between Prussia and Austria? Who were some significant nations and individuals involved in this conflict?



Prior to the Seven Years War (The French and Indian War in North America) Britain and France had various land claims in North America.

The Seven Years War lasted from 1756-1763. The team of Great Britain and Prussia had massive tension with the team of France, Austria, and Russia. Great Britain and France saw each other as competitors toward their various colonial pursuits in the Americas and other places. France and Britain were fighting over colonial claims in North America and Austria tried to reclaim Silesia. This brought the alliances into military conflict in their mainlands and colonial areas. The alliance of Prussia and Britain, along with their allies, proved victorious in this conflict and each emerged as powerful entities in Europe. In the Americas, the conflict was

called the French and Indian War. France and an alliance of Native American groups fought Britain and the 13 British Colonies. In this region, Britain was triumphant and gained much of the land claims of France.

Question #3: What caused the Seven Years War? How did its conclusion impact France's influence in North America?



Though Ivan murdered his son, whom he thought opposed his power, he felt guilty upon the act. Here he is pictured beside his son. Ivan hoped for a miraculous recovery, which did not come.

Ivan the 4th (1530-1584), also called Ivan the Terrible, ruled as monarch of Russia from 1547 to 1584. He called himself Tsar, which meant Caesar. Some of the nobility of Russia, called boyars, rose up against Ivan to claim various lands. Ivan was able to squash these rebellions. Ivan was ruthless against opposition, even murdering his own son, Ivan Ivanovich (1554-1581), whom he believed stood against him, through hitting him in the head with his scepter. Ivan ruled with an iron fist. He even developed a secret police force, the Oprichnik, that terrorized Russia and all those Ivan even speculated stood against him. He gave the Oprichnik lands he had confiscated from the boyars in exchange for service.

After Ivan the 4th's death, Russia struggled to find a leader to maintain stability. Ivan's heirs could not maintain the control he once had. Russia then entered into Time of Troubles (1598-1613), defined by peasant revolts and feuds between various boyars. Ivan's son, Feodor the 1st (1557-1598), died childless. This left a vacancy in Ivan's dynastic lineage, called the Rurik Dynasty. Eventually, the Zemsky Sobor, a parliament like meeting of several Russian leaders, appointed Feodor's nephew, Michael Romanov (1596-1645), as the new Tsar. This appointment ended the Rurik dynasty of Ivan the 4th and started the Romanov Dynasty, which lasted until 1917.

One of the most powerful monarchs of the Romanov Dynasty was Peter the Great (1672-1725). Prior to Peter, Russia was isolated from massive movements in Western Europe, such as the Renaissance, the Reformation, and other movements. Russia was not Catholic or Protestant. Yet, they were Christians. They embraced the Eastern Orthodox Church, headquartered in

Constantinople, not Rome. The Eastern Orthodox Church split from the Catholic Church in 1054 AD. This cultural divide meant Russians were very different from Western Europe. They viewed them as outside their views of faith and inferior. Yet, Peter saw the West as growing in power and wanted to imitate the West's economic success, industrial like pursuits, and other features. Peter felt Western nations like England gained wealth through navigation of the seas. He implemented programs to get Russians to study navigation and guide Russia to toward being a naval force. He also entered into military engagements, such as with Sweden, to conquer disputed areas to create port cities, such as Saint



Peter the Great traveled to Western Europe. He made it all the way to England and studied Western culture. Throughout his reign, he was determined to increase Russia's navigational power and morph the nation to be more culturally like Western Europe.



Catherine the Great

Petersburg, which he made the new capital of Russia. This port city became the access point of Russia to the West. Peter also pursued measures to develop shipbuilding and build factories in Russia. He went so far as to make Russian leaders dress in Western attire, develop areas to teach Western education, and pursued other measures to make Russia more like nations in Western Europe.

Catherine the Great (1729-1796) ruled Russia in a time when the Enlightenment was becoming very popular. According to this movement, governments should recognize certain principals, like the equality of people. In

Russia, serfs harvested the lands of various Lords. They were not allowed to leave and owed huge rent payments. Therefore, they were pretty much slaves. Catherine initially entertained notions of treating the serfs with more equality or even setting them free. Yet, Catherine's initial considerations of Enlightenment ideas faded over time. When various peasants revolted against her rule in Russia, she crushed the revolts. Far from helping the serfs, serfdom actually expanded during her reign. Catherine also expanded Russia toward the Black Sea, confiscating areas from the Ottomans and expanding the territory Russia controlled.

Question #4: Describe the political and social impact of the following Russian Absolute monarchs: Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, and Catherine the Great.

Answers:

Question #1: What caused the Thirty Years War? What impact did it have on the Hapsburg Dynasty and the Bourbon Dynasty?

The Thirty Years War originally started as a fight between Catholic and Protestant factions. Yet, it evolved to be a fight between the Bourbon Dynasty of France against the military might the Hapsburg Dynasty. Ironically, both dynasties were Catholic, but the Bourbon French Dynasty joined with the Protestant alliances to diminish the power of the rival Hapsburg Dynasty.

Question #2: How did the area of Silesia cause conflict between Prussia and Austria? Who were some significant nations and individuals involved in this conflict?

When Maria Theresa became the monarch of Austria, and consequently became in charge of Silesia, Frederick the 2nd invaded Silesia to absorb it into Prussia. Britain backed Austria and France backed Prussia in this move. While Prussia did gain Silesia, it did not take any more land from Austria beyond this region.

Question #3: What caused the Seven Years War? How did its conclusion impact France's influence in North America?

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Question #4: Describe the political and social impact of the following Russian Absolute monarchs: Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, and Catherine the Great.

Ivan the Terrible created a fierce central government in Russia and enforced his rule through his secret police, the Oprichnik. Peter the Great implemented various programs to make Russia more culturally like the nations of western Europe. Catherine the Great seemed to view the Enlightenment favorably, but eventually endorse serfdom and expanded it in Russia.