

Chapter 15: The Age of Absolutism Curriculum Alignment

Part 1: Content by key concepts

The worldview of European intellectuals shifted from one based on ecclesiastical authority to one based primarily on inquiry and observation of the natural world.

- The visual arts incorporated the new ideas of the Renaissance and were used to promote personal, political, and religious goals.
 - Mannerist art
 - Baroque art

The struggle for sovereignty within and among states resulted in varying degrees of political centralization.

- The new concept of the sovereign state and secular systems of law played a central role in the creation of new political institutions.
 - Thirty Years' War
 - Peace of Westphalia
 - Rise of commercial elites
 - Secular political theories
- The competitive state system led to new patterns of diplomacy and new forms of warfare.
 - Balance of power
 - Advances in military technology
- The competition for power between monarchs and corporate groups produced different distributions of governmental authority in European states.
 - English Civil War
 - Nobles' challenge to monarchical power

Religious pluralism challenged the concept of a unified Europe.

- Religious reform both increased state control of religious institutions and provided justifications for challenging state authority.
 - Religious conflicts as basis of challenge
- Conflicts among religious groups overlapped with political and economic competition within and among states.
 - Habsburg efforts to restore Catholicism
 - Religious conflict to promote political and economic interests

Europeans explored and settled overseas territories, encountering and interacting with indigenous peoples.

- European nations were driven by commercial and religious motives to explore overseas territories and establish colonies.
 - Mercantilism
- Europeans established overseas empires and trade networks through coercion and negotiation.
 - Trade competition

European society and the experiences of everyday life were increasingly shaped by commercial and agricultural capitalism, notwithstanding the persistence of medieval social and economic structures.

- Economic change produced new social patterns, while traditions of hierarchy and status persisted.
 - Creation of new economic elite
 - Persistence of hierarchy and status
- Most Europeans derived their livelihood from agriculture and oriented their lives around the seasons, the village, or the manor, although economic changes began to alter rural production and power.
 - Serfdom in Eastern Europe
- Population shifts and growing commerce caused the expansion of cities, which often found their traditional political and social structures stressed by the growth.
 - Population expansion to pre-Great Plague levels

- The family remained the primary social and economic institution of early modern Europe and took several forms, including the nuclear family.
 - Social reactions to the “Little Ice Age”
- Popular culture, leisure activities, and rituals reflecting the persistence of folk ideas reinforced and sometimes challenged communal ties and norms.
 - Witchcraft craze

Different models of political sovereignty affected the relationship among states and between states and individuals.

- In much of Europe, absolute monarchy was established over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries.
 - Absolute monarchies
 - Louis XIV and Jean-Baptiste Colbert
 - Weakness of the Polish monarchy
 - Peter the Great’s “westernization”
- Challenges to absolutism resulted in alternative political systems.
 - English Civil War
 - Glorious Revolution
 - Dutch Golden Age
- After 1648, dynastic and state interests, along with Europe’s expanding colonial empires, influenced the diplomacy of European states and frequently led to war.
 - Rise of Prussia
 - Shift in Habsburg power
 - End of Ottoman expansion
 - Wars of Louis XIV

The popularization and dissemination of the Scientific Revolution and the application of its methods to political, social, and ethical issues led to an increased, although not unchallenged, emphasis on reason in European culture.

- Rational and empirical thought challenged traditional values and ideas.
 - Thomas Hobbes and John Locke
- New political and economic theories challenged absolutism and mercantilism.
 - John Locke
- The arts moved from the celebration of religious themes and royal power to an emphasis on private life and the public good.
 - Baroque art and music
 - Dutch painting

Part 2: Content in order of Spielvogel text

Section 15-1: Social Crises, War, and Rebellions

- Population recovered to its pre-Great Plague level in the 16th century, and continuing population pressures contributed uneven price increases; agricultural commodities increased more sharply than wages, reducing living standards for some. (p. 437)
- From the late 16th century forward, Europeans responded to economic and environmental challenges, such as the “Little Ice Age,” by delaying marriage and childbearing, which restrained population growth and ultimately improved the economic conditions of families. (p. 437)
- Reflecting folk ideas and social and economic upheaval, accusations of witchcraft peaked between 1580 and 1650. (p. 437-439)
- States exploited religious conflicts to promote political and economic interests.
 - France, Sweden, and Denmark in the Thirty Years’ War (p. 439-442)
- The Peace of Westphalia (1648), which marked the effective end of the medieval idea of universal Christendom, accelerated the decline of the Holy Roman Empire by granting princes, bishops, and other local leaders control over religion. (p. 441-442)
- Advances in military technology (i.e., the military revolution) led to new forms of warfare, including greater reliance on infantry, firearms, mobile cannon, and more elaborate fortifications, all financed by heavier taxation and requiring a larger bureaucracy. Technology, tactics, and strategies tipped the balance of power toward states able to marshal sufficient resources for the new military environment. (p. 442-444)
 - Sweden under Gustavus Adolphus (p. 442-443)

Section 15-2: The Practice of Absolutism: Western Europe

- Across Europe, commercial and professional groups gained in power and played a greater role in political affairs. (p. 444-447)
 - Nobles of the robe in France (p. 445)
- Secular political theories, such as those espoused in Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, provided a new concept of the state. (p. 444)
 - Jean Bodin (p. 444)
- Monarchies seeking enhanced power faced challenges from nobles who wished to retain traditional forms of shared governance and regional autonomy. (p. 444-445)
 - Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu (p. 444-445)
 - The Fronde in France (p. 445)
- The growth of commerce produced a new economic elite, which related to traditional elites in different ways in Europe’s various geographic regions.
 - Nobles of the robe in France (p. 445)
- Louis XIV and his finance minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, extended the administrative, financial, military, and religious control of the central state over the French population. (p. 446-447)
- The rise of mercantilism gave the state a new role in promoting commercial development and the acquisition of colonies overseas. (p. 447)
- The competition for trade led to conflicts and rivalries among European powers. (p. 448-450)
- Following the Peace of Westphalia, religion no longer was a cause for warfare among European states; instead, the concept of the balance of power played an important role in structuring diplomatic and military objectives. (p. 448-451)
- Advances in military technology (i.e., the military revolution) led to new forms of warfare, including greater reliance on infantry, firearms, mobile cannon, and more elaborate fortifications, all financed by heavier taxation and requiring a larger bureaucracy. Technology, tactics, and strategies tipped the balance of power toward states able to marshal sufficient resources for the new military environment.
 - France (p. 448-450)
 - Spain under the Habsburgs (p. 451)
- States exploited religious conflicts to promote political and economic interests.

- Catholic Spain (p. 450-451)
- Absolute monarchies limited the nobility's participation in governance but preserved the aristocracy's social position and legal privileges.
 - Philip III and IV of Spain (p. 450-451)
- The efforts of Habsburg rulers failed to restore Catholic unity across Europe.
 - Philip III (p. 451)
 - Philip IV (p. 451)
- Hierarchy and status continued to define social power and perceptions in rural and urban settings.

Section 15-3: Absolutism in Central, Eastern, and Northern Europe

- Hierarchy and status continued to define social power and perceptions in rural and urban settings.
- As western Europe moved toward a free peasantry and commercial agriculture, serfdom was codified in the east, where nobles continued to dominate economic life on large estates. (p. 452, 453)
- Absolute monarchies limited the nobility's participation in governance but preserved the aristocracy's social position and legal privileges.
 - Peter the Great of Russia (p. 454-456)
- Peter the Great "westernized" the Russian state and society, transforming political, religious, and cultural institutions; Catherine the Great continued this process. (p. 454-456)

Section 15-4: Limited Monarchy and Republics

- As western Europe moved toward a free peasantry and commercial agriculture, serfdom was codified in the east, where nobles continued to dominate economic life on large estates. (p. 459)
- Religious conflicts became a basis for challenging the monarchs' control of religious institutions
 - Nobles in Poland (p. 459-460)
 - Puritans (p. 462-466)
- The Dutch Republic developed an oligarchy of urban gentry and rural landholders to promote trade and protect traditional rights. (p. 460-461)
- The growth of commerce produced a new economic elite, which related to traditional elites in different ways in Europe's various geographic regions.
 - Gentry in England (p. 462)
- Across Europe, commercial and professional groups gained in power and played a greater role in political affairs. (p. 462-466)
 - Gentry in England (p. 462)
- Absolute monarchies limited the nobility's participation in governance but preserved the aristocracy's social position and legal privileges.
 - James I of England (p. 462)
- The English Civil War, a conflict between the monarchy, Parliament, and other elites over their respective roles in the political structure, exemplified this competition. (p. 462-466)
 - James I (p. 462)
 - Charles I (p. 462-463)
 - Oliver Cromwell (p. 462-465)
- States exploited religious conflicts to promote political and economic interests.
 - Protestant England (p. 462-466)
- Hierarchy and status continued to define social power and perceptions in rural and urban settings.
- The outcome of the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution protected the rights of gentry and aristocracy from absolutism through assertions of the rights of Parliament. (p. 463-466)
 - English Bill of Rights (p. 466)
 - Parliamentary sovereignty (p. 466)
- Locke and Rousseau developed new political models based on the concept of natural rights. (p. 466-467)
- Political theories, such as John Locke's, conceived of society as composed of individuals driven by self-interest and argued that the state originated in the consent of the governed (i.e., a social contract) rather than in divine right or tradition. (p. 466-467)

Section 15-5: The Flourishing of European Culture

- Mannerist and Baroque artists employed distortion, drama, and illusion in works commissioned by monarchies, city-states, and the church for public buildings to promote their stature and power. (p. 468-470)
 - El Greco (p. 469)
 - Artemesia Gentileschi (p. 470)
 - Gian Bernini (p. 469-470)
 - Peter Paul Rubens (p. 469)
- Until about 1750, Baroque art and music promoted religious feeling and was employed by monarchs to glorify state power. (p. 469-470)
 - Gian Bernini (p. 469-470)
- Artistic movements and literature also reflected the outlook and values of commercial and bourgeois society as well as new Enlightenment ideals of political power and citizenship.
 - Dutch painting (p. 470-471)
 - Rembrandt (p. 471)
- A human-centered naturalism that considered individuals and everyday life appropriate objects of artistic representation was encouraged through the patronage of both princes and commercial elites. (p. 468-470)
 - Rembrandt (p. 471)