The Age of Absolutism
(1550 – 1800)
From the 1560s to the 1590s, religious wars between Huguenots (French Protestants) and the Catholic majority tore France apart.

In 1598, the Huguenot prince Henry inherited the throne becoming Henry IV and converted to Catholicism to prevent conflict.

To protect Protestants, Henry IV issued the Edict of Nantes, which granted Huguenots religious toleration and let them fortify their own towns and cities.

Henry then set out to heal the shattered land. Under Henry, the government reached into every aspect of French life.

By building the royal bureaucracy and reducing the power of the nobility, Henry laid the foundations for royal absolutism.
St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre — violence erupted on August 24, 1572 and 3,000 Huguenots were killed.
Later his grandson, Louis XIV achieved royal absolutism and helped France become the most powerful nation in Europe during the 1600s.

Louis took the sun as the symbol of his absolute power and was often quoted as saying, “L’etat, c’est moi”—“I am the state.”

During his 72-year reign, he did not once call a meeting of Estates General, the medieval council made up of all French social classes. Thus, the Estates General was unable to check the power of the king.

Louis expanded the bureaucracy and appointed intendants, royal officials who collected taxes, recruited soldiers, and carried out Louis’s policies in the provinces.
Versailles, Symbol of Royal Power

- In the countryside near Paris, Louis XIV, spared no expense to make Versailles the most magnificent building in all Europe and a symbol of Royal power.
- Louis created the strongest army in Europe, which he used to enforce his policies at home and abroad. Vast resources were used to war with the English and Dutch, who were fighting to maintain the balance of power.
Successes and Failures of Louis XIV

**Successes**
- Louis greatly strengthened royal power.
- The French army became the strongest in Europe.
- France became the wealthiest state in Europe.
- French culture, manners, and customs became the European standard.
- The arts flourished in France.

**Failures**
- Louis engaged in costly wars that had disastrous results.
- Rival rulers joined forces to check French ambitions.
- Louis persecuted the Huguenots, causing many to flee France. Their departure was a huge blow to the French economy.
The Scientific Revolution
Primary Source Documents 2 & 3

Document 2
The Granger Collection, New York

Document 3
The Tudors believed in divine right, but also recognized the value of good relations with Parliament.

Tutor King Henry VIII turned to Parliament to legitimize his break with the Catholic Church.

A constant need for money led Henry to consult Parliament frequently.

Later, Elizabeth I both consulted and controlled Parliament.
Elizabeth died without a direct heir, so the throne passed to her Scottish relatives, the Stuart family.

The Stuart Kings tried to establish an absolute monarchy. The Stuarts believed in divine right and repeatedly clashed with Parliament.

When he needed funds, James I dissolved Parliament and collected taxes on his own.

Charles I ignored the Petition of Right, which prohibited the King from passing taxes without the approval of Parliament and from imprisoning people without due cause, dissolved Parliament, and ruled the nation for 11 years without it.

In response, England was plunged into a Civil War that lasted from 1642 to 1649.
Events in England, 1603 – 1689

- 1603: Stuart rule begins
- 1629: Charles I dissolves Parliament
- 1649: Parliament orders execution of Charles I; Cromwell rules
- 1688: Glorious Revolution
- 1689: Parliament passes Bill of Rights

- 1640: Long Parliament meets
- 1642: English Civil War
- 1660: Parliament restores Stuart rule; Charles II is crowned
The English Civil War

- The English Civil War pitted supporters of Charles I against the forces of Parliament, under Oliver Cromwell.

- Cromwell’s army defeated the forces of the king.

- Parliament put Charles on trial and condemned him to death as “a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy.”

- After the execution of Charles I in 1649, the House of Commons abolished the monarchy, the House of Lords, and the official Church of England. It declared England a republic, known as the Commonwealth, under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell.

- In executing the king, parliamentary forces sent a clear signal that, in England, no ruler could claim absolute power and ignore the rule of law.
The Commonwealth

- Supporters of the uncrowned Charles II led a revolt from Ireland and Scotland.
- Cromwell led forces against them.
- Puritans enacted strict laws to govern social behavior based on the ideas of John Calvin.
- Soon after Oliver Cromwell died in 1658, Puritans lost control of England.
- In 1660, a newly elected Parliament invited Charles II to return to England and restored the monarchy.
The Glorious Revolution

When James II angered his subjects and clashed with Parliament, parliamentary leaders invited William and Mary to become rulers of England. When William and Mary landed in England, James II fled to France. This bloodless overthrow of a king became known as the Glorious Revolution.

Before they could be crowned, William and Mary had to accept the English Bill of Rights, which:

- ensured superiority of Parliament over the monarchy.
- gave the House of Commons “power of the purse.”
- prohibited a monarch from interfering with Parliament.
- barred any Roman Catholic from sitting on the throne.
- restated the rights of English citizens and affirming the principle of habeas corpus, which says that no person could be held in prison without being charged with a crime.

The Glorious Revolution did not create democracy, but a type of government called limited monarchy, in which a constitution or legislative body limits the monarch’s powers.
During the 1500s, wealth from the Americas helped make Spain the most powerful nation in Europe.

In 1519, Charles V inherited a huge empire. He became king of Spain and was also the heir to the Hapsburg empire, including the Holy Roman Empire and Netherlands.

Ruling two empires involved Charles in constant warfare with the Ottoman empire.

Eventually, Charles gave up his titles and divided his empire.

Portrait of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor traditionally attributed to Titian, today attributed to Lambert Sustris
Extending Spanish Power

- During his 42-year reign, Philip worked to expand Spanish influence, strengthen the Catholic Church, and make his own power absolute.

- As did Ferdinand and Isabella, Philip further centralized the government, ruling as an absolute monarch, a ruler with complete authority.

- He claimed to rule by divine right, that his authority to rule came directly from God.

- Philip saw himself as guardian of the Roman Catholic Church.

- Philip fought many wars as he attempted to advance Spanish Catholic power.

Philip II, King of Spain and Portugal, King of Naples, King consort of England, Ruler of the Spanish Netherlands, Duke of Milan
The Wars of Philip II, 1571–1588
Revolt in the Netherlands

- Protestants in the Netherlands (today’s Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) resisted Philip’s efforts to crush their faith.

- Protestants and Catholics both opposed high taxes and aristocratic Spanish rule, which threatened local traditions of self-government.

- In the 1560s, riots against the Inquisition led to general uprisings that raged for decades.

- In 1581, the northern Protestant provinces declared their independence from Spain becoming known as the Dutch Netherlands. They finally gained official recognition in 1648.

- The southern Catholic provinces remained part of the Spanish empire.
War with England

- Queen Elizabeth I of England supported the Dutch against Spain and encouraged English captains, called Sea Dogs, to plunder Spanish treasure ships.

- **Francis Drake** looted Spanish cities in the Americas.

- To end English attacks and subdue the Dutch, Philip prepared a huge *armada*, or fleet, to carry an invasion force to England.

Sir Francis Drake, Captain of Revenge
War with England (cont.)

- In the English Channel, lumbering Spanish ships took loses from lighter, faster English ships. Then a sudden storm scattered the armada, ensuring an English victory.
Spain’s Golden Age

- 1550 to 1650 is called Spain’s *siglo de oro*, or “golden century.”
- El Greco, “the Greek”, produced haunting religious paintings, dramatic views of the city of Toledo, and striking portraits of Spanish nobles.

*The Disrobing of Christ* is one of the most famous altarpieces of El Greco.

*The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* now El Greco’s best known work.
Spain’s Golden Age (cont.)

- Diego Velázquez painted vivid portraits of Spanish royalty.

Self portrait of Diego Velázquez

Diego Velasquez, Philip IV in Brown and Silver

Portrait of the Infanta Maria Theresa of Spain, Philip IV's daughter
Spain’s Golden Age (cont.)

- Lope de Vega wrote more than 1,500 plays, including witty comedies and action-packed romances.

- Miguel de Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote*, the first modern novel in Europe and a spoof of Medieval tales of chivalry.
Economic Decline

In the 1600s, Spanish power and prosperity slowly declined allowing France to become the most powerful European nation by the late 1600s.

LACK OF STRONG LEADERSHIP
- The successors of Philip II were far less able leaders than he.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS
- Costly overseas wars drained wealth out of Spain almost as fast as it came in.
- Treasure from the Americas led Spain to neglect farming and commerce.
- The expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Spain deprived the economy of many skilled artisans and merchants.
- American gold and silver led to soaring inflation.
Small Group Activity

In small groups, outline the causes and results of the assigned topic.

Topics:
1. The Thirty Year’s War
2. The War of the Austrian Succession
3. The Rise of Prussia
The Scientific Revolution

Primary Source Document 5

The Granger Collection, New York
The Thirty Years’ War

Causes

- Rival German princes held more power than the emperor.
- Religion divided the Protestant north and the Catholic south and created a power vacuum.
- Ferdinand, the Hapsburg king of Bohemia, tried to suppress Protestants and assert royal power over local nobles.
- In May 1618, rebellious Protestant noblemen tossed two royal officials out a castle window in Prague sparking a general revolt.
- Both sides sought allies, widening the conflict into a general European war.

Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia. His firm Catholicism was the proximate cause of the war.
The Thirties Years’ War

Contemporary woodcut depicting the Second Defenestration of Prague (1618), which marked the beginning of the Bohemian Revolt, which began the first part of the Thirty Years War.

The miseries of war; 11th Hang men
Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
The Thirty Years’ War (Cont.)

Results

- The Peace of Westphalia ended the war with a general European peace.
- The war led to severe depopulation.
- France gained territory.
- The Hapsburgs were forced to accept independence of all of the princes of the Holy Roman Empire.
- Germany was divided into more than 360 states.
- The Netherlands and present-day Switzerland won independence.

Ratification of the Treaty of Münster.

**Signed** 15 May 1648 (Osnabrück); 24 October 1648 (Münster)

**Location** Osnabrück and Münster, Westphalia, modern-day Germany
Europe After the Thirty Years’ War
The Hapsburgs kept the title of Holy Roman emperors and expanded their lands.

Hapsburg monarchs worked hard to unite the empire, which included peoples from many backgrounds and cultures.

Maria Theresa won popular support and strengthened Hapsburg power by reorganizing the bureaucracy and improving tax collection.
Prussia emerged as a new Protestant power.

The Hohenzollern family united their lands by taking over the states between them.

Hohenzollern kings set up an efficient central bureaucracy and reduced the independence of nobles.

Frederick William I created one of the best armies in Europe.

Frederick II used the army to strengthen Prussia.
Maintaining the Balance of Power

By 1750, the great powers of Europe included Austria, Prussia, France, England, and Russia.

These powers formed various alliances to maintain the balance of power.

Though nations sometimes switched partners, two rivalries persisted.

- Prussia battled Austria for control of the German states.
- Britain and France competed for overseas empire.