

Study Guide

Unit 3: Absolutism and the Enlightenment

Theme

How should power be distributed in society?

Vocabulary

Context

Colonization	
Gunpowder empires	
Bourgeoisie	
Absolutism	
Divine Right	
Absolute Monarchs	
Louis XIV	

Conflict

English Civil War	
Glorious Revolution	
Parliament	
Constitutional Monarchy	
English Bill of Rights	

Plot

Scientific Revolution	
Enlightenment	
Natural rights	
Social contract	

Characters

Philosopher	
Thomas Hobbes	
John Locke	
Baron de Montesquieu	
Voltaire	
Jean Rousseau	
Cesare Beccaria	
Mary Wollstonecraft	
Enlightened Despots	
Catherine II	

Resolution

Revolution	
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Analysis

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1. What is power?

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2. How did European monarchs justify absolutism?

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3. How did the English Civil War shift power in England?

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4. How did the Enlightenment rethink society and power?

Characters

5. Compare and contrast the philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke?

Resolution

6. Identify three Enlightenment thinkers and describe how their ideas were revolutionary?

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Theme

How should power be distributed in society?

Vocabulary

Context

Colonization	The movement of settlers and their culture to a new territory.
Gunpowder empires	States that used firearms to expand their territories and control their own populations.
Bourgeoisie	The middle class
Absolutism	a political theory which argues that one person should hold all power.
Divine Right	Belief that monarchs have a God-given right to rule and that rebellion is a sin.
Absolute Monarchs	Rule by one person, monarch, whose actions are not restricted by law or custom
Louis XIV	Absolute monarch in France, known as the Sun King and for the Palace of Versailles

Conflict

English Civil War	A series of wars Parliamentarians and Royalists, supporters of the King Charles I.
Glorious Revolution	Overthrow of King James II by Parliament for William III, also known as the "Bloodless Revolution."
Parliament	The British legislature
Constitutional Monarchy	A monarchy wherein the monarch is restrained by the laws of a constitution.
English Bill of Rights	The civil rights Parliament required William III to sign as limits on his power.

Plot

Scientific Revolution	Refers to the historic changes in thinking begun by Copernicus until Newton.
Enlightenment	The philosophical movement primarily concerned with applying reason to society.
Natural rights	rights people supposedly have under natural law (given by nature to all human beings.)
Social contract	a hypothetical agreement between rulers and ruled

Characters

Philosopher	A philosopher is involved in the rational inquiry into areas that are outside either theology or science.
Thomas Hobbes	British philosopher who dismissed the idea of divine right for a social contract
John Locke	British philosopher who believed people could rebel against governments that did not protect people's natural rights.
Baron de Montesquieu	French philosopher who wrote about the separation of powers.
Voltaire	French philosopher who wrote on separation of church and state and freedom of speech.
Jean Rousseau	French philosopher who emphasized the general will of the people through a representative legislature
Cesare Beccaria	Italian philosopher who wrote on criminal justice.
Mary Wollstonecraft	British philosopher who wrote on women's equality
Enlightened Despots	Absolute monarchs pursued reforms inspired by the Enlightenment, especially concerned with education, health, and infrastructure.
Catherine II	Considered an enlightened despot of Russia opening hospitals and schools.

Resolution

Revolution	a forcible overthrow of a government or social order in favor of a new system.
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Analysis

Theme

1. What is power?

Power is the ability to direct or influence the behavior of others. This can take various forms-political, economic and social. Political power is related to a position and typically is coercive in the making and enforcement of rules. Economic power is related to expertise in the ability to acquire and control resources, especially wealth. The final type is relational power that influences others through persuasion and transformation.

Setting

2. How did European monarchs justify absolutism?

European monarchs began to amass enormous power and wealth through military expansion. While monarchs struggled for dominance in Europe they expanded overseas through colonization. Gunpowder tipped power away from the feudal order to absolutism. The power of barons and lords was taken by monarchs as they centralized power through government bureaucracies. Monarchs justified their increasing power by appealing to divine right. They believed that their power had been granted to them by god. Louis XIV epitomized this power. He disregarded the power of the Estates General, the French legislature. He created the Palace of Versailles to be his home, seat of government, and pageant of power.

Conflict

3. How did the English Civil War shift power in England?

While monarchs on the European continent were increasing in power, Britain had a tradition of resistance to the overreach of the monarchy with the Magna Carta. When Charles I attempted to assert absolute power, Parliament took up arms against him. A series of wars pitted the Roundheads, supporters of Parliament, led by Oliver Cromwell against the Cavaliers, supporters of the King, that ultimately brought Charles' reign to an end with his beheading. A republic was formed with leaders elected, but when rebellions in continued, the country descended into a military rule. Parliament decided to return to a monarchy, but again when Charles II overstepped his position, they kicked him out and chose another. William III was selected, who agreed to the English Bill of Rights, forming a constitutional monarchy.

Plot

4. How did the Enlightenment rethink society and power?

The Enlightenment flowed out of the larger trend in Europe begun with the Renaissance. It was a turn from a divine perspective to one centered on humans—humanism. This led to movements that questioned religious authorities during the Reformation and the Ptolemaic understanding of the universe during the Scientific Revolution. The Enlightenment continued in this growing dependence on logic or reason and questioning traditional authorities. If universal laws could be found governing the universe, then philosophers tried to find those principles governing human actions in society and government.

Characters

5. Compare and contrast the philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke?

Both thinkers begin by discussing people in a state of nature, that is people without government. Then they consider why we form government to determine its purpose. What is the social contract between government and people? This leads them to describe the form of government best suited to the situation. While they share similar patterns of thinking they come to different conclusion. Hobbes argues that people are generally bad, while Locke sees them as generally good, having an innate sense of moral law. Hobbes sees people forming government out of fear and an absolute monarch is best suited to keep people under control. Locke on the other hand argues that people need government to judge between people when people's natural rights are broken. Government should protect people's freedom and therefore he argues for a government where power is separated into executive, legislative and judicial powers. Locke concludes that if government is not protecting those natural rights, the social contract has been broken and the people can rebel against that illegitimate government.

Resolution

6. Identify three Enlightenment thinkers and describe how their ideas were revolutionary?

Montesquieu wrote on the separation of powers in government—executive, legislative, and judicial—challenging the absolutist monarchy of France. Voltaire critiqued government and church throughout his life and this freedom to speak out against authorities led to ideals like freedom of speech and separation of church and state. Rousseau wrote on the importance of the general will of the people which refocused the role of government around the needs and desire of the people rather than the elite. Beccaria writing on the criminal justice system spoke out against torture and the death penalty and wrote about due process, which was influential on the American Bill of Rights. Mary Wollstonecraft challenged the social norms around women arguing that women should be treated as equals.