

# \*\*\*Class Set\*\*\*

## European Absolutism

### Terms

**absolute monarch** - King or queen with complete control

**divine right** - Idea that a ruler receives the right to rule from God

### ABSOLUTISM IN EUROPE

(Pages 594–595)

#### What is absolutism?

Many rulers in Europe during the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries believed that they should be able to rule without any limits on their power. These types of kings were called **absolute monarchs**. They believed in holding all power. They also believed in **divine right**. This is the idea that a ruler receives the right to rule from God. Because of this idea, an absolute monarch answered only to God, not to his or her subjects.

As Europe emerged from the Middle Ages, monarchs grew increasingly powerful. The decline of feudalism, the rise of cities, and the growth of national kingdoms all helped to centralize authority to the king. Church Authority also broke down during the late Middle Ages and the Reformation. That opened the way for monarchs to assume even greater control.

Widespread unrest in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century led to an increase in absolute rule, or **absolutism**, and its restrictions. Religious and territorial conflicts between states led to almost continuous warfare. This caused governments to build huge armies and to lay even heavier taxes on an already suffering population. These pressures in turn brought about widespread unrest and sometimes chaos. In response to these crises, absolute rulers used their increased power to impose order. They wanted to free themselves from the limitations imposed by the nobility and representative bodies such as Parliament. Only with such freedom could they rule with absolute power.

Under an absolute monarch, religious worship and social gatherings were regulated by the King. He would often pass laws that restricted when and where people could gather as well as how they practiced their religion. This limited the spread of new ideas. Rulers would also increase the size of their courts to appear more powerful and create bureaucracies to control the economies in their countries.

