Essential Question:
- To what extent are Louis XIV (France), Peter the Great (Russia), & Elizabeth I (England) examples of absolute monarchs?

Warm-Up Question:
- What is a monarch?
- What is mercantilism?
- What is the Columbian Exchange?
The Age of Absolute Monarchs

By the end of the Renaissance, new nations were formed in Europe. Many of these nations were ruled by powerful kings with unlimited power known as absolute monarchs. The era from 1600 to mid-1700s was known as the Age of Absolutism.

How did European kings gain so much power?
The Rise of Absolute Monarchs

During the Middle Ages, European kings were not very powerful. Instead, feudal lords had real power because they controlled local manors & had the loyalty of knights.

The Catholic Church was the dominant religion in Europe. The Pope had power over the peasants.
The Rise of Absolute Monarchs

The Crusades stimulated trade & led to the rise of cities in Europe.

This trade sparked the Renaissance & weakened the power of feudal lords.

As feudalism declined, the power of kings increased.
During the Hundred Years War, new weapons like the cannon & longbow weakened the power of the nobles & knights. As feudalism declined, the power of kings increased.
The power of the Catholic Church weakened as a result of the Crusades & the Protestant Reformation.

As the power of the church declined, the power of kings increased.
The Rise of Absolute Monarchs

During the Renaissance, European kings taxed merchants & bankers and used the wealth to build powerful armies.

Monarchs used their power to build centralized governments to control their nations.

Some monarchs used overseas exploration to gain colonies and to increase their wealth & power.
By 1600, some European kings had become absolute monarchs. Absolute monarchy is a government in which one king should hold all the power within a country. Absolute monarchs controlled all aspects of their nations, including taxes, religion, the military, & the economy.
Absolute monarchs believed in divine right, the idea that God created the monarchy & kings answered only to God, not the people.
Examine the portrait of French king Louis XIV & find 3 things in the painting that help show Louis as an absolute monarch.
Before Louis XIV came to power, France was a nation in conflict between Catholics & French Protestants (called Huguenots).

After Henry IV died, Catholic leaders took control of France, ended the Edict of Nantes, weakened the power of nobles, & increased the power of the monarchy.
By the time Louis XIV came to power, France was an absolute monarchy.

Louis XIV ruled France for 72 years & became the classic example of an absolute monarchy.

Louis XIV believed that he was the government, ("L'état c'est moi"): He excluded nobles from gov’t decisions & hired bureaucrats to collect taxes & enforce laws.
Louis XIV called himself the “Sun King” because he felt that French power emanated from him.

With this wealth, Louis built a powerful army & transformed France into the most powerful nation in Europe.

Louis XIV had a positive impact on France:

His economic advisors used overseas colonies & mercantilism to generate new wealth.

He encouraged manufacturing to make France self-sufficient.
Louis XIV had a **negative** impact on France:

He involved France in expensive wars that failed to gain France new lands & led to massive debts.
He used wealth & art to glorify himself, including constructing a massive palace called Versailles.
The Palace at Versailles

Louis XIV’s palace at Versailles was proof of his absolute power. Only a ruler with total control over his country’s economy could afford such a lavish palace. It cost an estimated $2.5 billion in 2003 dollars. Louis XIV was also able to force 36,000 laborers and 6,000 horses to work on the project.

Many people consider the Hall of Mirrors the most beautiful room in the palace. Along one wall are 17 tall mirrors. The opposite wall has 17 windows that open onto the gardens. The hall has gilded statues, crystal chandeliers, and a painted ceiling.

It took so much water to run all the fountains at once that it was done only for special events. On other days, when the king walked in the garden, servants would turn on fountains just before he reached them. The fountains were turned off after he walked away.

The gardens at Versailles remain beautiful today. Originally, Versailles was built with:
- 5,000 acres of gardens, lawns, and woods
- 1,400 fountains
The Legacy of Louis XIV

As a result of Louis XIV, France became the most powerful nation in Europe.

But, decades of lavish spending by monarchs led to massive debts & heavy taxes.

Eventually, the French people grew frustrated & overthrew the monarchy.
Examine the portrait of Russian king Peter the Great & find things in the painting that help show his accomplishments.
Russia before Peter the Great

Russia’s was influenced by the Byzantine Empire but was conquered by the Mongols. Ivan III successfully liberated Russia from the Mongols and ruled as the first czar ("caesar" or "king").

Over time, czars expanded Russia’s borders, increased their power over the nobles, and created an absolute monarchy.

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps
1. Region What khanate controlled Russia? Persia? Korea?
2. Region What parts of Asia did the Mongols fail to control?
By the time Peter the Great became czar in 1682, Russia was a large empire. But Russia was not as advanced as Western European nations.
Russia was isolated from Western Europe & knew very little about the new ideas of the Renaissance. While European nations grew wealthy from trade, made cultural advances, & had strong economies, Russia had no advanced industry, no overseas colonies, & an economy of small-scale farmers. Most Russians were feudal peasants working for nobles (called boyars).
Czar Peter the Great wanted to modernize & “Westernize” Russia to catch up with Europe. In disguise, Peter toured Europe to learn new ways to modernize Russia. While in Europe, Peter learned new ideas about shipbuilding, manufacturing, gov’t organization, city planning, music, & fashion.
When he returned from Europe, Peter imposed new reforms to Westernize Russia:

- Adopted European fashions by banning beards for men & veils for women
- Adopted a European calendar
- Improved farming techniques
- Used mercantilism as an economic policy
- Created iron & lumber factories
- Modernized the army & navy
- Made himself head of the Orthodox Church (like Henry VIII in England)
Peter expanded Russia’s borders & built a new “European-style” Russian capital at St. Petersburg
The Legacy of Peter the Great

As a result of Peter the Great, Russia became a more advanced, Western nation.

But, modernization was a slow process & Russia had not fully industrialized by World War I.

During World War I, revolutionaries overthrew the monarchy & created a radical new gov’t based on socialism.
Examine the image of Elizabeth on her throne & explain how monarchs in England might have ruled differently than those in France or Russia.
England before Queen Elizabeth I

Unlike other nations in Europe, England had a limited monarchy rather than an absolute monarchy. During the Middle Ages, English nobles revolted against a cruel king who overtaxed them. In 1215, nobles forced King John to sign the Magna Carta which limited the king’s power & protected citizens’ rights.
The Magna Carta created a “limited monarchy” & led to the formation of Parliament in 1295.

Parliament is a legislative group of commoners & lords who work with the king to pass laws & taxes.
Elizabeth’s father, Henry VIII, transformed England during the Protestant Reformation by creating the Anglican Church.

Elizabeth’s sister Mary became queen & tried to convert England back to Catholicism; Protestants who ignored “Bloody Mary” were executed.
After Mary’s death in 1558, Elizabeth became queen.

Elizabeth ruled for 45 years & became the greatest monarch in English history.

Elizabeth refused to share power with a man & never married (she was known as the “Virgin Queen”).
During her reign, Elizabeth worked with Parliament to settle important issues. One of the most important issues was to determine what religion England would be: Anglican or Catholic?
During her reign, Elizabeth worked with Parliament to settle important issues.

Mary

Henry’s daughter (by Catherine of Aragon) - strongly Catholic.

Pope made Head of the Church again, Church services changed to Latin, Priests not allowed to marry, Protestants were persecuted.
During her reign, Elizabeth worked with Parliament to settle important issues. One of the most important issues was to determine what religion England would be: Anglican or Catholic? Elizabeth & Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity which made Anglicanism the official religion of England... ...but many Catholic traditions & rituals remained. This compromise settled the religious issue in England.
She promoted capitalism & mercantilism by encouraging joint-stock companies to invest in overseas exploration & colonization.
During Elizabeth’s reign as queen, England experienced a golden age in culture, especially literature & theater.
After Elizabeth’s death in 1603, the Stuart family assumed the monarchy. Unlike Elizabeth, these Stuart kings refused to work with Parliament & tried to create an absolute monarchy in England.
Conflicts between Parliament & the Stuart kings led to a violent civil war in 1642...

...and a near civil war in 1688 called the Glorious Revolution
After the Glorious Revolution, Parliament required the new monarchs to sign a Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights protected citizens from their gov’t:
- The king cannot tax or overturn Parliament’s laws
- Protected freedom of speech
- The army cannot be used as a police force
- No excessive bail

Together, the Magna Carta & Bill of Rights created a “constitutional monarchy” in England by serving as written limits on the king’s power.

Connect to Today

U.S. Democracy
Today, the United States still relies on many of the government reforms and institutions that the English developed during this period. These include the following:
- the right to obtain habeas corpus, a document that prevents authorities from holding a person in jail without being charged
- a Bill of Rights, guaranteeing such rights as freedom of speech and freedom of worship
- a strong legislature and strong executive, which act as checks on each other