

Part III: Royal Despotism and Destined Revolution
Unit X: Nationalism and the Rise of Absolutist Monarchies

Following the Reformation and bridging of two “worlds,” Europe underwent a period of intense economic and political upheaval. The Reformation led to religious conflicts and wars in most European states, while the potential massive influx of gold and silver from the Americas induced conflict over wealth and trade. In the process, European monarchs sought to consolidate their power, increase control over their kingdoms, and provide security within their borders. Believing God had chosen them to rule their respective countries, kings claimed absolute power over their kingdoms. By the end of the 1500s, French and Spanish monarchs wielded near absolute power, but English kings failed to seize power. How did English kings lose out, and who seized power in their absence?

Essential Questions

1. Why did Spain and France become absolute monarchies?
2. Why *didn't* England become an absolute monarchy?

Topics of Study

I. Spain – How did Ferdinand and Isabella become absolute monarchs? Why did Spain lead the way in developing an absolute monarchy? Why did the Spanish Empire decline by the end of the Age of Exploration?

The Reconquista and Inquisition
Charles V as Spanish King and Holy
Roman Emperor
Ferdinand and Isabella

Philip II and the Diminution of
Wealth and Power
The Spanish Armada
Spanish Decline

II. France – How did French rulers make France into a nation? How did France become an absolute monarchy?

Catherine de Medicis and Henry IV of
Navarre
Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu
The Thirty Years' War

Louis XIV and Cardinal Mazarin
Versailles and the Architecture of
Power
War of the Spanish Succession

III. England – Why didn't England become an absolute monarchy? Why did England become a constitutional monarchy?

James I and Charles I	The Glorious Revolution and
The English Civil War and Oliver Cromwell	Constitutional Monarchy
The Restoration and Habeas Corpus	The English Bill of Rights

Further Reading

Patterns of Interaction, Chapter 21, "Absolute Monarchs in Europe, 1500-1800," pp. 589-617

Key Names

- Ferdinand and Isabella
- Charles V (of the Hapsburg Family)
- Philip II
- Catherine de Medici
- Henry IV (of the Bourbon Family)
- Jean Baptiste Colbert
- Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu
- Louis XIV and Cardinal Mazarin
- The Sun King
- Intendants
- James Stuart
- Charles I
- Roundheads
- Cavaliers
- Oliver Cromwell
- Charles II

Key Events, Places, and Concepts

- The Reconquista and Spanish Inquisition
- St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre
- The Edict of Nantes
- Thirty Years' War
- Peace of Westphalia
- The War of the Spanish Succession
- Versailles and its Construction
- Overall Balance of Power in Europe
- The English Civil War
- The Glorious Revolution
- The Restoration
- Habeas Corpus
- Bill of Rights
- Glorious Revolution
- Divine Right