

NAME:

DATE:

CLASS:

## DBQ FOCUS: European Absolutism



### Document-Based Question Format

Directions: The following question is based on the accompanying Documents (The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise.) This question is designed to test your ability to work with and understand historical documents.

### Write a response that:

- Has a relevant **thesis** and **supports that thesis with evidence** from the documents.
- Cites evidence from included source perspectives.
- Analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible. Does not simply summarize the documents individually.
- Takes into account both the sources of the documents and the author's points of view.

**Historical Context:** During the 1500s and 1600s, Western Europe experienced a period of governments ruled by absolute monarchs. Absolutism is a monarchical form of government in which the monarch exercises ultimate governing authority as head of state and head of government; their powers are not limited by a constitution or by the law. An absolute monarch wields unrestricted political power over the sovereign state and its people. Absolute monarchies are often hereditary but other means of transmission of power are attested. Absolute monarchy differs from limited monarchy, in which the monarch's authority is legally bound or restricted by a constitution; consequently, an absolute monarch is an autocrat. In theory, the absolute monarch exercises total power over the land and its subject people, yet in practice the monarchy is counterbalanced by political groups from among the social classes and castes of the realm, such as the aristocracy, clergy, bourgeoisie, and proletarians.

### Question

**Was absolutism a period of prosperity or tyranny in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries?**

## Document 1

**Source:** Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 1513

...For all men in general this observation may be made: they are ungrateful, fickle, and deceitful, eager to avoid dangers, and avid for gain, and while you are useful to them they are all with you, but when it [danger] approaches they turn on you. Any prince, trusting only in their works and having no other preparations made, will fall to ruin, for friendships that are bought at a price and not by greatness and nobility of soul are paid for indeed, but they are not owned and cannot be called upon in time of need. Men have less hesitation in offending a man who is loved than one who is feared, for love is held by a bond of obligation which, as men are wicked, is broken whenever personal advantage suggests it, but fear is accompanied by the dread of punishment, which never relaxes.

### Student Analysis

What type of ruler must the prince be, and why is it necessary for him to rule in this manner?

## Document 2

**Source:** Ideas were expressed by King James I of England in 1609

The state of monarchy is the supreme thing upon earth; for kings are not only God's lieutenants on earth, and sit upon God's throne, but even by God Himself they are called gods... Kings are justly called gods, for that they exercise a... divine power upon earth... God hath power to create and destroy, make or unmake at His pleasure, to give life or sent death, to judge all and to be judged nor accountable to none, to raise low things and to make high things low at His pleasure... And the like power have kings...

### Student Analysis

Why does King James feel government should be organized in this way?

## Document 3

**Source:** Ideas were expressed by King Louis XIV of France in 1660

The head alone has the right to deliberate and decide, and the functions of all the other members consist only in carrying out the commands given to them... The more you grant... [to the assembled people], the more it claims.. The interest of the state must come first.

### Student Analysis

Why does King Louis recommend this type of government?

## Document 4

**Source:** Excerpt from *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes, 1651.

...If any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end... endeavor to destroy or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass that where an invader hath no more to fear than another man's single power, if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united to dispossess and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labor, but also of his life or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.

...From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavor peace, is derived this second law: that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far forth as for peace and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men as would allow other men against himself.

... The mutual transferring of rights is that which men call [social] contract.

### Student Analysis

How do men behave without law?

What is the only way to achieve peace?

## Document 5

**Source:** Bishop Jacques Bossuet, *Politics Drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture*, 1709

It appears from all this that the person of the king is sacred, and that to attack him in any way is sacrilege. God has the kings anointed by his prophets with the holy unction in like manner as he has bishops and altars anointed. But even without the external application in thus being anointed, they are by their very office the representatives of the divine majesty deputed by Providence for the execution of his purposes. Accordingly God calls Cyrus his anointed. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him." Kings should be guarded as holy things, and whosoever neglects to protect them is worthy of death . . .

There is something religious in the respect accorded to a prince. The service of God and the respect for kings are bound together. St. Peter unites these two duties when he says, "Fear God. Honor the king." . . .

...Kings should tremble then as they use the power God has granted them; and let them think how horrible is the sacrilege if they use for evil a power which comes from God. We behold kings seated upon the throne of the Lord, bearing in their hand the sword which God himself has given them. What profanation, what arrogance, for the unjust king to sit on God's throne to render decrees contrary to his laws and to use the sword which God has put in his hand for deeds of violence and to slay his children! . . .

### Student Analysis

How should monarchs be treated?

How should monarchs use their power?

## Document 6

**Source:** General Alexander Gordon, *History of Peter the Great*, 1718.

This great emperor came in a few years to know to a farthing the amount of all his revenues, as also how they were laid out. He was at little or no expense about his person, and by living rather like a private gentleman than a prince he saved wholly that great expense which other monarchs are at in supporting the grandeur of their courts. ...He had no letters; he could only read and write, but had a great regard for learning and was at much pains to introduce it into the country. He rose early; the morning he gave to business till ten or eleven o'clock at the farthest; all the rest of the day, and a great part of the night, to diversion and pleasure.

In the year 1703 the tsar took the field early, cantoned his troops in the month of March, and about the 20th of April brought the army together; then marched and invested another small but important place called Neva Chance.... The commodious situation of this place made the tsar resolve to erect on it a considerable town, with a strong citadel, consisting of six royal bastions, together with good out works; this he soon put into execution and called it St. Petersburg, which is now esteemed so strong that it will be scarcely possible for the Swedes ever to take it by force.

### Student Analysis

What important policies and style of rule did Peter the Great implement as tsar of Russia?

## Document 7

**Source:** Excerpt from Peter, The Revolutionary Tsar, by Peter Brock Putnam, published by Harper & Row

...In 1722, the establishment of the Table of Ranks brought to its logical conclusion a process that had been evolving for three centuries. It imposed obligatory lifelong state service on all ranks of the nobility. It established fourteen equivalent grades in the military, naval, and civil service and required that even princes of the most exalted families should begin at the lowest grade and work their way up the ladder. The Table of Ranks offered the privileges of nobility to anyone who performed state service and made service to the state the principal basis for privilege...

### Student Analysis

Explain one way the Table of Ranks expanded the power of the Russian state:

## Document 8

**Source:** Excerpt from Peter the Great, by Michael Gibson, published by Wayland Publishers

...How great an effect did Peter have upon Russia? When he came to the throne, Russia was an insignificant state. He made it into a great power feared by all. At his accession [assumption of the throne] Russia had no armed forces except for the inefficient and untrustworthy Streltsy [hereditary military units]. When he died, there was a professional army of 210,000 men. He created a navy out of nothing, leaving behind him a fleet of forty-eight ships-of-the-line and many smaller vessels...

Peter signally [noticeably] failed to create the large, thriving middle class that Russia needed. In spite of the most strenuous efforts, Russia's commerce and industry remained dependent upon the Czar, so that when he died, there were not enough wealthy, far-sighted traders and industrialists to develop what he had begun. This lack of private initiative and enterprise was to remain one of Russia's greatest social weaknesses until the Communist Revolution of 1917...

### Student Analysis

What was one positive effect Peter the Great's rule had on Russia?

What was one negative effect Peter the Great's rule had on Russia?

## Document 9

**Source:** Excerpt from The Turkish Letters (1555-1562), by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, ambassador of the Holy Roman Emperor to Suleiman the Magnificent, ruler of the Ottoman Empire

In making his appointments the Sultan [Suleiman] pays no regard to any...wealth or rank, nor does he take into consideration recommendations or popularity, he considers each case on its own merits, and examines carefully into the character, ability, and disposition of the man whose promotion is in question. It is by merit that men rise in the service, a system which ensures that posts should only be assigned to the competent. Each man in Turkey carries in his own hand his ancestry and his position in life, which he may make or mar [hurt] as he will. Those who receive the highest offices from the Sultan are for the most part the sons of shepherds or herdsmen, and so far from being ashamed of their parentage, they actually glory in it.... Among the Turks...honors, high posts, and judgeships are the rewards of great ability and good service. If a man be dishonest, or lazy, or careless, he remains at the bottom of the ladder...for such qualities there are no honors in Turkey!

### Student Analysis

What type of men did Sultan Suleiman appoint to fill important government posts?

**Generic Core-Scoring Guide for AP World History  
Document-Based Question**

Basic Core: Competence	Points	Historical Thinking Skills Assessed
1. Has acceptable thesis.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Argumentation</li> <li>➤ Depending on the topic of the question:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical Causation</li> <li>• Comparison</li> <li>• Patterns of Continuity and Change Over Time</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2. Addresses all of the documents and demonstrates understanding of all or all but one.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Use of Historical Evidence</li> </ul>
3. Supports thesis with appropriate evidence from all or all but one document. [Supports thesis with appropriate evidence from all but two documents.]	2  (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Argumentation</li> <li>➤ Depending on the topic of the question:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical Causation</li> <li>• Comparison</li> <li>• Patterns of Continuity and Change Over Time</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4. Analyzes point of view in at least two documents.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Use of Historical Evidence</li> </ul>
5. Analyzes documents by grouping them in two or three ways, depending on the question.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Argumentation</li> <li>➤ Use of Historical Evidence</li> <li>➤ Depending on the topic of the question:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical Causation</li> <li>• Comparison</li> <li>• Patterns of Continuity and Change Over Time</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6. Identifies and explains the need for one type of appropriate additional document or source.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Argumentation</li> <li>➤ Use of Historical Evidence</li> </ul>
Subtotal	7	Essay as a whole: Synthesis
Expanded Core: Excellence	Points	Historical Thinking Skills Assessed
Expands beyond basic core of 1–7 points. A student must earn 7 points in the basic core area before earning points in the expanded core area. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Has a clear, analytical, and comprehensive thesis.</li> <li>➤ Shows careful and insightful analysis of the documents.</li> <li>➤ Uses documents persuasively as evidence.</li> <li>➤ Analyzes point of view in most or all documents.</li> <li>➤ Analyzes the documents in additional ways — groupings, comparisons, syntheses.</li> <li>➤ Brings in relevant “outside” historical content.</li> <li>➤ Explains why additional types of document(s) or sources are needed.</li> </ul>	0–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Same skills as noted in basic core</li> <li>➤ Other historical thinking skills may be demonstrated depending on the question and the documents</li> </ul>
Subtotal	2	
TOTAL	9	

<b>TOTAL POINTS</b> <i>BASIC CORE</i>	
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b> <i>EXPANDED CORE</i>	
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b> <b>EARNED</b>	
<b>FINAL GRADE</b>	

RUBRIC	PERCENT	POINTS
<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Comments:**