

Maria Theresa



Reign: Maria Theresa reigned from 1740-1780 as the Archduchess of Austria, Queen of Bohemia and Hungary, and sovereign of the Holy Roman Empire. Renowned for her beauty, her warmth, and her courage, she claimed the affection of her people and the respect of her enemies. Virtually without experience when she became empress at the age of 23, she developed into one of the great rulers in the European power politics of the 18th century.

Domestic Policy: Maria Theresa became committed to undertaking the greatest reform in the Habsburg kingdoms. She established a central authority in her government that unified her domain, which included Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Hungary, and Italy. She separated the executive from judicial functions and reorganized the offices of defense, commerce, the interior, foreign affairs, and justice. She tried to restrict government expense and regulate taxes. She restrained the power of the nobles and created a standing army. Her legal reforms included a new penal code and humanitarian laws to help the poor. She also began a compulsory primary education system.

Foreign Policy: Maria Theresa's father, Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI, the last Habsburg prince, engineered the Pragmatic Sanction, a special agreement made with several surrounding countries that permitted Charles to pass his crown to a female heir. In 1740, Charles VI died, and Maria Theresa asserted her right to the throne. Her claim, however, conflicted with the ambitions of Prussia's Frederick II. Upon Charles' death, Frederick invaded Silesia, a rich territory ruled by the Habsburgs, which lay between Austria and Prussia, creating the conflict that Charles had hoped to avoid through the Pragmatic Sanction. Frederick's invasion sparked the War of the Austrian Succession, which lasted from 1740 to 1748. The war ended with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, where all parties agreed to the confirmation of Maria Theresa as the rightful ruler of the Habsburg lands but allowed Prussia to keep Silesia, sparking a lifelong rivalry between the two monarchs.

Cultural Achievements: Though Maria Theresa was a devout Catholic, she worked to bring the Catholic Church under the control of the government and reduced certain religious practices and the number of religious holidays. She began the process of separating the education system from the Church. As she built up the Austrian Empire, however, she stressed the importance of religious unity and was not tolerant of other religions, and she was especially intolerant of Jews.

Legacy: In 1736, Maria Theresa married Francis Stephen of Lorraine, with whom she had 16 children. Aware of the problems that had been caused by her father's few heirs, Maria Theresa's sense of duty extended to the production of many children. The Habsburg dynasties in Spain and in Austria had maintained their 650-year rule in part through astute marriage diplomacy. She encouraged her children to marry for the sake of the dynasty, matching her daughter Marie Antoinette, for example, with the French dauphin to consolidate Austria's relations with France. Though she was devoted to her children, Maria Theresa did not get along very well with her son Joseph, who became co-ruler upon the death of her husband Francis in 1765. When Maria Theresa died on November 29, 1780, she left behind a unified Habsburg monarchy that Joseph II further reformed, although he never enjoyed the popularity of his mother nor the success of her reign.

James VI & I



GUN-POWDER Plot:

O R,
A Brief Account of that bloody and subtle Design laid against the King, his Lords
and Commons in Parliament, and of a Happy Deliverance by Divine Power.
To the Tune of *His is the King's*. Licensed according to Order.



Reign: James VI, the only child of Mary, Queen of Scots, was born on June 19, 1566. His mother was a Roman Catholic monarch who was forced to abdicate the throne a year later by Protestant rebels when James was still an infant. A revolving series of regents controlled Scottish politics until he took control in 1583, at the age of seventeen. When Queen Elizabeth I of England died without having children, James, one of her distant cousins, was named her heir. James united his personal control over both England and Scotland, a dominion he referred to as "Great Britain". James VI (his Scottish title) & I (his English title) ruled until his death on March 27, 1621.

Domestic Policy: As the monarch of both Scotland and England, James VI & I worked to establish a single country under the rule of one government. Unfortunately, his reign in England was marked by resistance from the English Parliament, who often resisted and opposed his policies. Parliament viewed itself as an independent branch of the government, while James viewed Parliament as an extension of his absolute authority. James' lavish spending and extended vacations did little to endear him to Parliament, especially the House of Commons. This confrontational atmosphere eventually led to James dismissing Parliament in both 1610 and 1614. James VI & I also faced confrontation from his own subjects, and he was the target of an assassination attempt called the Gunpowder Plot. A group of English Catholics, disappointed in James' refusal to enact wider religious tolerance, conspired to blow up the House of Lords during the State Opening of Parliament, which James was to attend. The perpetrators, including Guy Fawkes, were discovered before the plot could be exercised and were executed for treason.

Foreign Policy: James VI & I achieved more success through his foreign policy as opposed to his domestic affairs. James successfully kept Scotland from entering the Thirty Years' War, which wreaked havoc on Central Europe. After ascending the throne in England, he brought the Anglo-Spanish War to an end with a peace treaty signed in 1604. Under his authority, charters of colonization in the Americas and the Plantation of Ulster in Ireland began.

Cultural Achievements: Under the reign of James VI & I, the "Golden Age" of literary culture in England and Scotland continued to flourish; in fact, James was also a talented scholar who patronized many intellectual and artistic social circles. James also produced and published his own literary works, including *Daemonologie* (based on his observations of witch hunts in Denmark), *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (based on his interpretation of the divine rights of kings and absolutism) and *Basilikon Doron*, a guide to royal authority for his future heirs. James was baptized as a Roman Catholic in his infancy; however, as a young man he became a Presbyterian, a form of Protestantism developed in Scotland by John Knox. In 1584, James initiated a series of acts that made him the head of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, with the ability to appoint bishops and powers similar to the Head of the Anglican Church in England. In 1604, James sponsored the translation and compilation of the King James Bible, which was published in 1611 and is still in use today.

Legacy: After James VI & I's death, his son Charles I inherited the unified throne of England and Scotland. Like his father, Charles I spent disproportionate amounts of money and quarreled with Parliament. He raised taxes on the populace without Parliament's consent, and his increasingly tyrannical beliefs in his own absolute authority (taught to him through his father's book, *Basilikon Doron*) led to his defeat in the English Civil War. The monarchy was abolished, Charles I was executed for treason, and a republic called the Commonwealth of England was established to replace the monarchy. James' grandson, Charles II, would be restored to the throne, including the domains of England and Scotland, in 1660.

Louis XIV



Reign: Believing in his divine right to rule, Louis XIV broke precedent to establish himself as the absolute monarch of France from 1643 to 1750. Nicknamed the Sun King, he radiated power and magnificence during his reign. When he was four years old, his father Louis XIII died, and Louis XIV became king of France on May 14, 1643. Louis' mother, Anne of Austria, ruled as regent for her small son over the next several years until Louis reached the age of majority.

Domestic Policy: In 1661, Louis dismissed his ministers and declared his intention to rule alone. No longer would officials sign decrees, authorize spending, or make any decisions without the king's consent. Louis barred the nobility from his council; instead, only the king's most trusted allies were allowed to advise him. Louis maintained a strict schedule of conferences and meetings with his ministers. He reorganized the administration of his kingdom, assumed control of the national budget, carefully kept track of his treasury, and even managed to reduce taxes. Desiring religious unity for his kingdom, Louis revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had allowed Protestants the right to worship since 1598. The revocation resulted in disaster- churches were razed, soldiers committed torture and murder, Protestants caught worshipping were executed, and 300,000 people fled the country.

Foreign Policy: Louis XIV reorganized the French Army and invaded the Netherlands, beginning a long series of wars in Flanders. By the 1680s, Louis had significantly added to France's territory, including the eastern province of Franche-Comté, Flanders, and the duchy of Lorraine. France became the greatest power in Europe. In 1688, France faced another war against the English, the Dutch, and the Holy Roman Empire. Known as the War of the Grand Alliance, the conflict lasted until 1697, when Louis finally agreed to relinquish territories won during previous wars. France remained the richest, most powerful nation in Europe. Carlos II, the last Habsburg king of Spain, named Philippe d'Anjou, Louis' grandson, as his heir in 1700. The young duke was crowned King Philip V of Spain, and Louis XIV took on the government of the Spanish kingdom until Philip was able to rule. England and the Holy Roman Empire opposed this arrangement, sparking the War of the Spanish Succession. The war, which ended in 1714, ended France's dominance in Europe.

Cultural Achievements: When Louis was nine years old, the nobility instigated a rebellion against the king that became known as the *Fronde*. During this civil war, he was forced to flee Paris. Louis would never forget the humiliation, nor would he ever forgive the nobles. After taking full power, he oversaw the construction of Versailles, a palace located outside Paris that became the official residence of the king and his court in 1682. Louis ordered the nobility to Versailles to live under his watchful eye. There, courtiers attended the king from the time he awoke until he retired to bed. As Louis granted favors to only those who pleased him, it was imperative to be in the presence of the king, where rules of etiquette dictated every action. By keeping the nobles virtual prisoners in his "golden hive", Louis took his revenge for their rebellion during the *Fronde*. During his reign, Louis XIV cultivated theater, fashion, and made reforms that oversaw the blossoming of French arts. He favored the dramas of Molière and Jean Racine and encouraged music, architecture, painting, and sculpture.

Legacy: In 1660, Louis married Marie-Thérèse of Austria, the daughter of King Philip IV of Spain, sealing a peace treaty between France and Spain. After her death in 1683, Louis secretly married his children's governess, Françoise de Maitenon. Although the children from this marriage were legitimate, they were not eligible to inherit the throne because their mother was not royal. By 1714, Louis' son the *Grand Dauphin* had died, along with two grandsons and a great-grandson. Louis' remaining heir was his last great-grandson, the future Louis XV. Louis XIV died on September 1, 1715; his reign of 72 years is the longest recorded in history, and has come to symbolize a golden age in France.

Peter I



Reign: Peter I, a tall dominating figure who became known as Peter the Great, ruled Russia from 1682 to 1725. From 1682 to 1696, he co-ruled with his brother, Ivan V, until his death. At first, Peter showed little inclination for serious rule. He went sailing on the White Sea, and he left most affairs of state to relatives who governed incompetently and robbed the treasury.

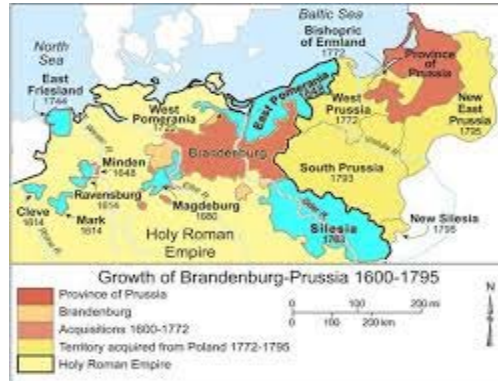
Cultural Achievements: In 1703, Peter ordered construction to begin on a new city that would be Western in appearance, grand in its architecture, and serve as the epitome of Peter's absolute power- the city of St. Petersburg. Peter was determined to make it different from Moscow in both form and function. He ordered that many buildings be constructed of stone to avoid the crude appearance of Moscow, and European architects designed baroque buildings surrounded by Western-style gardens. With its architecture, its great Winter Palace, and its imposing fortress, the city did not look "Russian," and the emerging beauty led many to call it the Venice of the North. Peter loved St. Petersburg for its Western modernity. In 1712, he began transferring the government to his new city, which became the capital.

Domestic Policy: The European travels had important ramifications for Russia- Peter determined that Western social practices must shape his nation. Peter pursued greater internal reform, trying to advance Westernization. He restructured the government, dividing Russia into eight provinces, each with its own governor appointed by him. To stifle and crush dissent, he developed a secret police. Peter modernized and enlarged the Russian forces through a series of military reforms, including that all landowners were required to serve time in the army, stipulated that peasants must complete a 25-year term of service, and importing weapons from Europe. By 1725, he had a standing army of 200,000. He founded the Russian Navy and developed a Baltic fleet. While expanding the military, Peter increased the taxes on each household. In 1718, he initiated the "soul tax"—a levy on each adult male. Since the gentry, clergy, and merchants were excluded from the tax, its burden fell almost exclusively on the peasants. Their condition worsened in 1722, when Peter solidified serfdom by forbidding any serf from leaving the estate on which he worked, unless he had his master's permission.

Foreign Policy: In 1697, to broaden his knowledge and gain the help of other nations, Peter decided to tour Europe. He visited with monarchs and worked on the docks, where he learned navigation and shipbuilding. During a four-month stay in Amsterdam, he studied mathematics, astronomy, architecture, and military fortification. Attracted by Amsterdam's museums, he decided to start one in Russia. In 1698, Peter arrived in London, where he visited Parliament, viewed the shipyards, and learned various crafts. Peter approached everything with a central goal in mind: expanding Russia. In 1699, he arranged a secret treaty with Poland and Denmark to attack Sweden. In 1707, Peter, whose armies had not been impressive against Sweden, tried to arrange a peace, but the enemy refused. Reinforced by additional men and new techniques, Peter attacked the Swedes in 1709 at Poltava and scored an enormous victory. By 1710, the Russians controlled the Baltic shoreline from Riga to Vyborg.

Legacy: On February 8, 1725, suffering complications from a cold, Peter died. He consolidated the Russian state and greatly expanded it, making it a powerful nation founded on absolutism. Historians dispute the extent to which Peter revolutionized Russia, with most agreeing he reshaped Russia- hastening the developments that would accelerate under Catherine II.

Frederick II



Reign: Frederick II was one of the most influential rulers in German history. Remembered as Frederick the Great, he ruled Prussia from 1740 to 1786, firmly establishing his kingdom as one of the great powers of Europe. Frederick was born in Berlin on January 24, 1712, the son of the Prussian king Frederick William I and Queen Sophia Dorothea. Frederick's father was an absolute monarch who made Prussia a state to be reckoned with in European affairs.

Domestic Policy: Frederick became king in 1740 after his father's death. Frederick ruled as an enlightened despot; convinced that the army was the key to the strength of the state, he continued his father's support of industries that supplied and equipped the army. He also sought to foster national economic self-reliance. In order to increase agricultural production, the state introduced new crops, brought marsh lands under cultivation, and resettled peasants in sparsely populated regions. Though these measures had the desired effect, they brought little benefit to the Prussian peasantry, who continued to bear a heavy tax burden. Frederick took great pride in his reputation as an enlightened ruler and claimed to serve in the interest of his subjects. However, the social and legal reforms he implemented were always subordinate to the needs of the army and the state. Though he personally disliked the institution of serfdom, he refrained from outlawing the practice because he feared that it would undermine the authority of the Prussian nobility. He abolished judicial torture in 1763, and toward the end of his reign, he was working to create a codified common law for all of his territories.

Foreign Policy: His first major act as king was the invasion of Silesia, a province of the Holy Roman Empire, in 1740. Inspired by the recent death of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI, Frederick based his claim to Silesia on his family's ancient connection to the territory. His attack shocked the other powers of Europe, particularly because Frederick's father had always been reluctant to use his armies in the field. Frederick's army soon won several decisive victories, however, allowing Frederick to add the strategically and economically valuable region to the Prussian kingdom. The other great powers of Europe came to oppose Frederick's evident desire to extend Prussian influence and territory. His invasions of Saxony and Bohemia in 1756 culminated in the Seven Years' War, which eventually involved all of the great states of Europe. Frederick's armies won several victories during the early stages, but the demands of the war put tremendous pressure on his treasury and his subjects. The devastation wrought by the war left Frederick humbled; for the rest of his reign, he followed a conservative and defensive foreign policy. He fostered better diplomatic relations with the other continental powers, especially Russia, and was intent on avoiding diplomatic isolation.

Cultural Achievements: Frederick's reputation as a model of enlightened despotism is based in large part on his artistic interests. He was an accomplished flautist and composed his own music. He also wrote extensively about history and politics. His most famous work was *Anti-Machiavelli*, in which he argued that a monarch should not abandon Christian principles. Frederick also corresponded with many of the leading intellectuals of his era, including the French philosopher Voltaire, who briefly lived with the Prussian king in his palace, Sans Souci.

Legacy: Frederick was forced to marry Elizabeth Christine of Brunswick-Bevern. The marriage was an affair of state; Frederick never developed any affection for his bride, and the couple had no children. Frederick left his successor, his nephew Frederick William II, a state more powerful than that which he had inherited. However, Frederick also left a legacy of autocracy that proved dangerous in less capable hands. Frederick died on August 17, 1786 at Potsdam, near Berlin, at the age of 74.

Catherine II



Reign: From 1762 to 1796, Catherine II ruled Russia with such energy and flair that she stamped an entire era with her name. Catherine was born Sophie Freiderike Auguste on May 2, 1729, a German princess from Anhalt-Zerbst. Her father, Christian August, served as a general in the Prussian Army, and her mother was Princess Johanna Elizabeth of Holstein-Gottorp, a connection that brought additional power to the family.

Domestic Policy: At age 15, Sophie traveled to Russia to marry Grand Duke Peter, a grandson of Tsar Peter I and heir to the Russian throne. She assumed the title of Grand Duchess and took the name Catherine following her conversion to Russian Orthodoxy upon her marriage in 1745. The throne passed to Peter, now known as Tsar Peter III, in January 1762. Peter was a difficult man with personality disorders, a fondness for alcohol, and was unfit in many ways to rule an empire; meanwhile, Catherine had gained the support of the military, the aristocrats, and the Streltsy Royal Guard to help her seize power. When Catherine had herself proclaimed empress, Peter abdicated and was killed at his country estate one week later, undoubtedly by Catherine's supporters.

In 1767, Catherine convened a commission to compile a new code of laws and provided the delegates with a Nakaz, a set of instructions she wrote with influences by Enlightenment authors. She asserted that all subjects should be equal before the law, torture should be abolished, capital punishment used only in extreme circumstances, and religious dissent should be tolerated. Unfortunately, the delegates could not agree and dissolved without producing anything. Catherine followed up with administrative reforms that made government more efficient and pursued the expansion of the education system. Elementary schools were opened, high schools appeared in the major cities, and she organized a college of medicine at the University of Moscow. In the field of health, she encouraged the use of inoculations and quarantines, effective against smallpox.

Foreign Policy: Catherine handled foreign relations realistically and aggressively and had already annexed territory along the Baltic coast and through the partition of Poland. Catherine annexed Crimea and established the city of Odessa in 1783, a crucial acquisition that established Russian power on the Black Sea. In 1787, Russia entered into an alliance with Austria and again went to war on the Ottomans. Catherine then obtained Lithuania, the Ukraine, and Courland after partitioning Poland with Austria and Prussia, resulting in the Russian Empire gaining 190,000 square miles.

Cultural Achievements: Catherine's court became known during this time for interesting cultural developments. She identified her own interests with those of the Russian state and worked without respite for its glorification. She was also excited by the idea of building a national culture that shared the ideals of the Enlightenment. Catherine came to be chiefly associated with the Winter Palace, which she enlarged and transformed to emulate the French Palace of Versailles. She also built three large adjoining palaces, known collectively as the Hermitage, which today serves as a museum of books, paintings, and sculptures Catherine and her descendants collected until the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Legacy: Though Catherine usurped the throne, she is admired as Catherine the Great by most Russians because she was truly dedicated to the future of Russia and was determined to increase its strength and power. For the most part, her Enlightenment reforms did not extend beyond society's upper levels, and tensions long present in Russia worsened. To monarchists, Catherine appeared highly successful, gaining territory and forging both a truly national state and a European power. However, the peasants suffered enormously, and the government often functioned chaotically. When Catherine died in St. Petersburg on November 17, 1796, she left behind a nation whose exterior appearance hid huge internal problems.