

The Impact of the Enlightenment

Big Idea

Europe's individual nations were chiefly guided by the self-interest of their rulers. As you read, use a chart like the one below to list the conflicts of the Seven Years' War. Include the countries involved and where the conflicts were fought.

Conflicts of the Seven Years' War



Read to Learn

Enlightenment and Absolutism (page 554)

Analyzing Information

Which monarch tried hardest to institute reforms?

The philosophes believed in natural rights for all people. These rights included equality before the law; freedom of religious worship; freedom of speech; freedom of the press; and the rights to assemble, hold property, and pursue happiness. To establish and preserve their natural rights, people needed to be governed by enlightened rulers. Many historians once assumed that a new type of monarchy, **enlightened absolutism**, emerged in the eighteenth century.

Frederick II of Prussia made a few reforms, such as granting limited freedom of speech and press, and greater religious toleration. But he kept Prussia's serfdom and rigid social structure intact.

In Austria, Joseph II made far-reaching reforms, including abolishing serfdom and establishing equality before the law and religious toleration. However, he alienated the nobles and Church by doing so, and his successors undid almost all of Joseph II's reforms.

In Russia, Catherine the Great favored the landed nobility and took strong measures to put down peasant rebellion. She greatly expanded Russia's territory. Monarchs of all three of these nations cared more for power and territory than for reform.



Read to Learn

The Seven Years' War (page 558)

Drawing Conclusions

What drive on the part of a monarch set the stage for the Seven Years' War?

The Seven Years' War was a global conflict with shifting alliances. Prussia conquered Austrian Silesia. France allied with Prussia, and Austria allied with Great Britain. Territories were forcibly exchanged in Europe, India, and North America. In 1748 the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ended the war and returned all occupied territories to their original owners, except for Silesia.

Austria's ruler, Maria Theresa, rebuilt her army and then got France and Russia to ally with Austria. The British then allied with the Prussians. The European conflict eventually ended and Maria Theresa had to officially recognize Prussia's control of Silesia.

The struggle between Britain and France went on in other parts of the world and is known as the Great War for Empire. The greatest conflicts of the Seven Years' War took place in North America. The British and French fought for control of the St. Lawrence waterways (in present-day Canada) and for control of the Ohio River valley. Eventually, the British won. In the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the French gave Canada and the lands east of the Mississippi to England, which also got Florida from France's ally, Spain. To make up for the loss of Florida, France gave Spain its Louisiana territory. Great Britain was now the world's greatest colonial power.

Enlightenment and Arts (page 561)

Comparing and Contrasting

How were the baroque and rococo styles different?

The ideas of the Enlightenment had an impact on world culture. By the 1730s, a new style, known as **rococo**, had spread over Europe. Unlike the baroque, which stressed grandeur and power, rococo emphasized grace and charm.

Eighteenth-century Europe produced some of the world's most enduring music. Bach, a German composer, is one of the greatest composers of all time. Handel, a German who worked in England, wrote *Messiah*. These two composers perfected the baroque musical style.

Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, in the latter part of the century, wrote music in the classical style. Mozart was a child prodigy who wrote some of the world's greatest operas.

In the 1700s, European novelists began to choose realistic social themes, as opposed to a focus on heroism and the supernatural.

Section Wrap-up

Answer these questions to check your understanding of the entire section.

1. Which nation was the world's greatest colonial power at the end of the Seven Years' War?

2. What four musical geniuses lived in the eighteenth century?

Descriptive Writing

Describe two imaginary residences—one built in the baroque style—to project power and grandeur—and one built in the rococo style to project grace and charm, using delicate designs, curves, and gold color.
