Chapter 18
Age of Enlightenment
European History

European Society began to believe economic change and political reform were possible. The movement of people and ideas that fostered such thinking is called the Enlightenment. *Enlightened absolutism*-Inspired by the philosophes, absolute monarchs, such as Frederick the Great of Prussia, Joseph II of Austria, and Catherine the Great of Russia, modeled themselves on the ideal of the philosopher-king, attempting with varying degrees of success to enlist power in the service of the common good.

**Key Topics**
- The intellectual and social background of the Enlightenment
- The philosophers of the Enlightenment and their agenda of intellectual and political reform
- Enlightenment writers’ attitude towards Islam
- Efforts of “enlightenment” monarchs in central and eastern Europe to increase the economic and military strength of their domains
- The partition of Poland by Prussia, Russia, and Austria

**The Philosophers**
*Philosophers*- The 18th century writers and critics who forged the new attitudes favorable to change. They sought to apply reason and common sense to the institutions and societies of their day. Most famous philosophers were Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, D’Alembert, Rousseau, Hume, Gibbon, Smith, Lessing, and Kant. The chief bond between them was their common desire to reform religion, political thought, society, government, and the economy for the sake of liberty.

**Voltaire- First Among the Philosophers**
François-Marie Arouet = Voltaire (1694-1778). He wrote *Letters on the English* which criticized the French and praised the English. He wrote *Elements of the Philosophy of Newton*, which popularized Isaac Newton. His most famous writing is *Candice* in 1759 in which he attacked war, and religious persecution.

**Formative Influences of the Enlightenment**
The chief factors that fostered the ideas of Enlightenment and the call of reform in Europe were the Newtonian worldview, Britain’s stability and commercial prosperity, the economic and administrative problems of France.

**Ideas of Newton and Locke**
Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and John Locke (1632-1704). Newton formulated the law of gravitation and encouraged Europeans to approach the study of nature directly and avoid superstition. He insisted on using empirical support for his speculations. Newton revealed the rationality in the physical world, so thinkers began to apply rational to society. Locke believed everyone was born with *tabula rasa*, which means blank page and it’s the experiences in the world that creates you. This idea reject the Christian theory we all flawed by sin and humans can change.

**The Example of British Toleration and Stability**
England was stable and had a relative freedom of the press and speech, with a limited monarchy and with a few domestic restrictions.

The Emergence of Print Culture

*Print Culture* is a culture where books, journals, newspapers, and pamphlets were the chief vehicle of communication. Coffeehouses became centers for the discussion of writing and ideas. An expanding literate public created a social force of public opinion. This prevented the government from working wholly in secret. This led to the government banning and censoring books.

The Encyclopedia

Under Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and Jean Le Rond d’Alembert (1717-1783) started the encyclopedia, which is a reference of work that provides information on a range of subjects. Encyclopedias can encompass many areas of interest, or they can focus on a particular field of study, such as a geographic area, an ethnic group, a time period, or an academic discipline. Most encyclopedias have hundreds or thousands of articles, each addressing a distinct topic. Many of the articles contain illustrations, maps, photographs, and other media elements that help readers understand concepts. For centuries encyclopedias were published as multivolume sets of books. The encyclopedia was designed to spread information while putting lingering myths from the Middle Ages to rest.

The Enlightenment and Religion

Critical philosophers complained that the churches hindered the pursuit of a rational life and scientific study of humanity and nature. The philosophers attacked the certain practices and beliefs of the Church, such as predestination, torture, exempt from taxation, and who was able to become a priest or bishop.

Deism

*Deism* is a rationalist religious philosophy that flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly in England. Generally, Deists held that a certain kind of religious knowledge (sometimes called natural religion) is either inherent in each person or accessible through the exercise of reason, but they denied the validity of religious claims based on revelation or on the specific teachings of any church. Deism in Europe and America played an important role both in exposing traditional religion to rationalist criticism and in encouraging the development of rationalist philosophy. Deistic views were held by Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Ethan Allen and Thomas Paine. From Europe John Locke, David Hume and Voltaire were influenced by Deism. There were two major points in the deists’ creed, which were the existence of god, and life after death.

Jewish Thinkers in the Age of Enlightenment

Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) Dutch rationalist philosopher and religious thinker, who is accounted the most thoroughgoing modern exponent of pantheism. He also believed people should read and interpret the bible and not have someone read and interpret for them. Moses Mendelsohn argued both for advancing extensive religious toleration and for maintaining religious distinction in *Jerusalem or Ecclesiastical Power and Judaism*.

Islam in Enlightenment Thought

Islam continued to be seen as a rival to Christianity. People portrayed Islam as a false religion and Muhammad as an imposter and false prophet. Christians were also upset at how heaven was portrayed as a place of sensual delight and multiple of lovers and wives were acceptable.
The Enlightenment and Society
The philosophers believed the application of human reason to society would reveal laws in human relationships similar to those found in physical nature. Social Science was philosophers attempt to end human cruelty by discovering social laws and making people aware of them.

Beccaria and Reform of Criminal Law
Cesare Beccaria published *On Crimes and Punishment* which he believed the purpose of laws was not to impose the will of god or some other ideal of perfection; their purpose was to secure the greatest good or happiness for the greatest number of human beings.

The Physiocrats and Economic Reform
Philosophers believed mercantilist legislation was design to protect the mother country which then prohibits expansion of trade. Their leading spokes men were Francois Quesnay, and Pierre Dupont. The primary goal of government should be to protect property.

Adam Smith on Economic Growth and Social Progress
Adam Smith wrote *Inquiry into Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* 1776. He believed the best way to encourage economic growth, was to unleash individuals to pursue their own selfish economic interest, that regulation, tariffs and trading monopolies prevented expansion. It was believed under mercantilism that nature resources were scare and limited, which meant the only way to be wealthy, was to take from another nation. Smith argued that natural resources were infinite. Smith is the founder of laissez-faire.

Laissez-Faire (French, “let things alone”), in economics, policy of domestic nonintervention by government in individual or industrial monetary affairs. The doctrine favors capitalist self-interest, competition, and natural consumer preferences as forces leading to optimal prosperity and freedom. It arose in the late 18th century as a strong liberal reaction to trade taxation and nationalist governmental control known as mercantilism.

*Four Stage Theory*- Humans are classified into 4 groups, they are 1) hunting and gathering 2) pastoral or herding 3) agricultural 4) commercial. Those societies that were in stage four were though of as more civilized and that it was their duty to civilize the societies in stages 1-3 which unleashes Imperialism.

Political Thought of the Philosophers
Montesquieu and Spirit of the Laws (1748)
Montesquieu (1689-1755) his *Persian Letters* (1721); in this work, through the device of letters written to and by two aristocratic Persian travelers in Europe, Montesquieu satirized contemporary French politics, social conditions, ecclesiastical matters, and literature. It was one of the earliest works of the movement known as the Enlightenment, which, by its criticism of French institutions under the Bourbon monarchy, helped bring about the French Revolution. His masterpiece was *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), in which he examined the three main types of government (republic, monarchy, and despotism) and states that a relationship does exist between an area's climate, geography, and general circumstances and the form of government that evolves. Montesquieu also held that governmental powers should be separated and balanced to guarantee individual rights and freedom.

Rousseau: A Radical Critique of Modern Society
Rousseau (1712-1778) was a French philosopher, social and political theorist, musician, botanist, and one of the most eloquent writers of the Age of Enlightenment. He wrote *The Social Contract* (1762) where he states “All men are born free, but everywhere they are in chains.”
Rousseau believed society was more important than any single individual and that people should not focus on their own selfish desires.

**Women in the Thought and Practice of the Enlightenment**

Women ran salons which were able to give philosophers a social environment to make connections and spread their ideas. The philosophers of the enlightenment had two types of beliefs. Their were those who believed women should be more educated with less focus on religion but remain in their traditional role of womanhood. The other belief was still the inferiority and weakness of women. Rousseau believed that women and men existed in two separate spheres. The sphere women reside in was still one of inferiority but the role of women in motherhood and as wives were a noble profession, bring the status of women up. In 1792 Marry Wollstonecraft wrote *Vindication of the Rights of Women* which was an essay in opposition of certain polices of the French Revolution. She asserts that intellectual companionship is the ideal of marriage and pleads for equality of education and opportunity between the sexes.

**Enlightened Absolutism**

*Enlightened Absolutism*- Several European rulers had embraced many of the reforms set forth by the philosophers. The rulers used the ideas behind the enlightenment to strengthen their army to be able to find new resources to increase revenues.

**Frederick the Great of Prussia**

Frederick (1740-1786)- He tried to strengthen Prussia through economic policies, such as loans for agriculture improvements, draining of swamps to create more land and importation of labor. Since taxation fell heavily on the peasants and townspeople he was unable to restore Prussia to its formal glory.

**Joseph II of Austria**

He was the son of Maria Theresa, co-ruled with her from (1765-1780) last ten years ruled by himself.

*Centralization of Authority*- Maria took education into the service of the crown. She reduced the amount of labor that a noble can require from its peasants. She also increased the monarchies power.

*Ecclesiastical Policies*- Joseph believed in toleration of all religions and passes several laws to allow freedoms in religion. He also sought to bring Roman Catholic institutions under royal control. He dissolved several monasteries and confiscated their lands. He also made Roman Catholic priest the employees of the state.

*Economic and Agrarian Reform*- He abolished many internal tariffs. He reconstructed the judicial reforms to make laws more uniform and rational. He abolished serfdom and prior to his death past a land tax which all people paid regardless of status, however id did not go in effect.

**Catherine the Great of Russia**

Catherine II (1762-1796) becomes tsar after her husband’s assassination. In 1767 she has the legislation to revise the laws of Russians government.

*Limited Administrative Reform*- She put most local offices in the hands of nobles rather than creating a royal bureaucracy. She then issued the Charter of the Nobility, which guaranteed nobles rights and privileges

*Economic Growth*- She suppressed internal barriers to trade and favored expansion of the urban middleclass.
Territorial Expansion - Desire for warm water ports led to expansion. Russia went to war with the Ottoman empire and gained control of the Danube River and the Crimean coast of the Black Sea. Created a legislative commission in 1767 to revise and codify Russian law based on the Nakaz, or Instruction, which she published in the same year. Introduced a system of local self-government in 1775 that decentralized power, subdividing Russia into 15 major administrative units. Established the Russian Academy of Letters in 1783 and passed an edict to allow the formation of private publishing houses. In 1785, issued the Charter to the Nobility, by which the landholders of each province were allowed to form a general assembly and petition the empress.

The Partition of Poland
Russia agreed they would abandon the conquered Danubian provinces and Russia would receive a large portion of Polish territory with 2 million inhabitants. Leopold II, revoked most of the reforms and was forced to recognize Hungary as a separate unit of the Habsburg lands. Even so, Joseph’s reign had regenerated the monarchy and opened it up to European trends. During the era of enlightened despotism, Austria acquired part of Poland by joining with Russia and Prussia in the partition of that country.

The End of the 18th Century in Central and Eastern Europe
All 3 regimes became more conservative and politically repressive due to nobility trying to regain their power and the peasants revolting.