

Absolute Monarchs in Europe**Section 2**

The Reign of Louis XIV

Terms and Names

Edict of Nantes Order that gave Huguenots the right to live in peace in Catholic France

Cardinal Richelieu Chief minister of France who reduced the power of the nobles

skepticism Belief that nothing could be known for certain

Louis XIV French king who was an absolute ruler

intendant Official of the French government

Jean Baptiste Colbert Chief Minister of Finance under Louis XIV

War of the Spanish Succession War fought by other European nations against France and Spain when those two states tried to unite their thrones

Before You Read

In the last section, you were introduced to the idea of absolutism.

In this section, you will read about absolute power in France.

As You Read

Use a time line to list the major events of Louis XIV's reign.

RELIGIOUS WARS AND POWER STRUGGLES; WRITERS TURN TOWARD SKEPTICISM

(Pages 596–598)

What changes were occurring in France?

France was torn by eight religious wars between Catholics and Protestants from 1562 to 1598.

In 1589, a Protestant prince, Henry of Navarre, became King Henry IV. In 1593, he changed religions. He became a Catholic to please the majority of his people. In 1598, he issued an order called the **Edict of Nantes**. It gave Huguenots—French Protestants—the right to live in peace and have their own churches in some cities.

Henry rebuilt the French economy and brought peace to the land. He was followed by his son, Louis XIII, a weak

king. However, Louis had a very capable chief minister, **Cardinal Richelieu**.

Richelieu ruled the land for Louis and increased the power of the crown.

The cardinal ordered the Huguenots not to build walls around their cities. He also said nobles had to destroy their castles. As a result, Protestants and nobles could not hide within walls to defy the king's power. Richelieu used people from the middle class—not nobles—to work in his government. That also reduced the power of the nobles.

French thinkers had reacted to the religious wars with horror. They developed a new philosophy called **skepticism**. Nothing could be known for certain, they argued. Doubting old ideas was the first step to learning the truth, they said.

Section 2, *continued*

1. How did the monarchy get stronger in France?

LOUIS XIV COMES TO POWER

(Pages 598–599)

How did Louis XIV rule?

In 1643, **Louis XIV** became king at the age of about five. Cardinal Mazarin, who succeeded Richelieu as minister, ruled for Louis until he was 22. Louis became a powerful ruler, who had total control of France. He was determined to never let nobles challenge him.

He kept the nobles out of his government. He gave more power to government officials called **intendants** and made sure that they answered only to him. He also worked hard to increase the wealth of France. His chief minister of finance, **Jean Baptiste Colbert**, tried to build French industry. Colbert wanted to persuade French people to buy French-made goods and not those from other countries. He urged people to settle in the new French colony of Canada in North America. The fur trade there brought wealth to France.

2. How did Louis make sure he kept his power?

THE SUN KING’S GRAND STYLE; LOUIS FIGHTS DISASTROUS WARS

(Pages 599–602)

What changes did Louis make?

Louis enjoyed a life of luxury at his court. He built a huge and beautiful palace at Versailles near Paris. He also made sure that nobles had to depend on his favor to advance in society.

Louis made France the most powerful nation in Europe. France had a larger population and a bigger army than any other country. However, Louis made some mistakes that later proved costly. After winning some wars against neighboring countries, he became bolder and tried to seize more land. Other nations allied to stop France in the late 1680s. The high cost of these wars combined with poor harvests to produce problems at home in France.

The final war fought in Louis’s time was fought over succession to the throne of Spain and lasted from 1700 to 1713. In this **War of the Spanish Succession**, France and Spain attempted to set up united thrones. The rest of Europe felt threatened and joined in war against them. Both France and Spain were forced to give up some of their American and European colonies to England. England was the new rising power.

3. How did Louis XIV bring disaster to France?

Section 2, *continued*

As you read about the French monarchy, write notes to answer the questions.

Wars between the Huguenots and Catholics create chaos in France.	
1. How did Henry of Navarre end the crisis and restore order?	
2. How did Cardinal Richelieu strengthen the French monarchy?	
3. What effect did the religious wars have on French intellectuals?	

Louis XIV became the most powerful monarch of his time.	
4. What steps did Jean Baptiste Colbert take to turn France into an economic power?	
5. In what ways did Louis XIV support the arts?	
6. Why did Louis fail in his attempts to expand the French Empire?	
7. What was the legacy of Louis XIV?	