

BRITAIN AT MID-CENTURY (1700s)

Rise to Global Power

Union With Scotland

- Act of Union - 1707 - joined England and Scotland in United Kingdom of Great Britain
 - free trade between the two created a larger market for farmers and manufacturers (Wales was also part of the union)

Ireland

- controlled by England since the 1100s - in the 1600s, England gave Protestant settlers in Ireland title to Irish Catholics' lands - Irish resisted Protestant rule, uprisings led to increased repression - Catholics couldn't own weapons, marry non-Catholics, teach in schools

Growth of Constitutional Government

- after the Glorious Revolution, 3 new political institutions arose in Britain:

1. Political Parties - 2 new parties emerged: Tories (supported a powerful monarch and a dominant Anglican Church), and Whigs (supported religious toleration and favored Parliament over the monarch)
2. The Cabinet - a handful of parliamentary advisers who set policy (made up of leaders of the majority party in the House of Commons)
3. The Prime Minister - leader of the majority party in Parliament, eventually became the chief official of the British govt. - George I - a German prince and the first of Britain's Hanover monarchs - inherited the throne after the last Stuart monarch - didn't speak English, so parliamentary members helped him rule - his closest adviser was Sir Robert Walpole - he is often called Britain's first prime minister

George III Reasserts Royal Power

- 1760 - George III began his 60-year rule of Britain

- wanted to end Whig domination, choose his own ministers, dissolve the cabinet system, make Parliament follow his will
- he decided that the English colonists in N. America must pay the cost of their own defense - when colonists protested, Parliament passed harsh measures to force them to obey - led to the start of the Revolutionary War in 1775 - ended in a humiliating defeat for Britain
- George III was discredited by this loss, and he began to suffer from bouts of mental illness (known as "the madness of King George") - cabinet rule was restored in 1788

THE ENLIGHTENMENT (Late 1600s-1700s)

Progress and Reason

- the Scientific Revolution of the 1500s-1600s had convinced educated Europeans that reason could be used to discover natural laws (laws that govern human nature)
- using the scientific method, reformers believed that people and governments could solve every social, political, and economic problem faced by society
- this revolution in thinking became known as the Enlightenment (or the Age of Reason)

Two Views of the Social Contract

Thomas Hobbes - England - wrote the book *Leviathan*, in which he argued that if not strictly controlled (by a govt. or ruler), people would fight, rob and oppress each other

- life in the "state of nature" (without laws or other control) would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" - to escape this life, Hobbes said that people entered into a social contract (an agreement by which they gave up the state of nature for an organized society) - the best govt. was an absolute monarchy - people shouldn't rebel against the ruler (they'd return to the "state of nature," or chaos)

John Locke - England - a more optimistic view of human nature - said people were basically good, moral, reasonable - all people born with natural rights (right to life, liberty, and property) - in his book, *Two Treatises of Government*, he said people formed govts. to protect their natural rights - best govt. was one that had limited power and accepted by all citizens (unlike Locke, he rejected absolute monarchy)

- said that if a govt. fails its obligations or violates people's natural rights, the people have the right to rebel and set up a new govt.

Separation of Powers

Montesquieu - France - wrote *The Spirit of the Laws* - studied govts. throughout history, admired Britain's system of limited monarchy - believed the best way for people to protect themselves against tyranny was to divide the various functions and powers of govt. among 3 separate branches:

1. legislative branch (makes laws)
2. executive branch (enforces laws)
3. judicial branch (interprets laws)

- separation of powers was the best way to protect liberty

checks and balances - each branch should be able to serve as a check on the other two so that no one branch becomes too powerful

The Philosophes and Society (philosophes means "lovers of reason")

Voltaire - France - in his writings, he targeted corrupt officials, battled inequality, injustice, and superstition - detested the slave trade, spoke out against religious prejudice

- his writings offended French govt. and the Catholic Church - imprisoned, forced into exile - even as he saw his books outlawed and burned, he continued to defend freedom of speech

Denis Diderot - France - spent 25 years producing a 28-volume *Encyclopedia* - his purpose was to "to change the general way of thinking" by explaining the new ideas on topics such as govt., philosophy, and religion - some articles in his work were written by Montesquieu and Voltaire - many of the articles in the *Encyclopedia* denounced slavery, praised freedom of expression, urged education for all citizens - spoke out against traditional religions and the belief of divine right - articles became controversial

- 20,000 copies printed between 1751 and 1789 - versions translated into different languages helped spread the Enlightenment across Europe and to the Americas

Rousseau - France - wrote *The Social Contract* - believed that people were basically good - felt society placed too many limitations on people's behavior, said some controls were necessary but should be minimal - controls should only be imposed by govts. that had been freely elected

- believed in the "general will" (the best conscience of the people) - today's idea of "majority rules" is similar - the good of the community as a whole should be placed above individual interests - throughout his work is a profound hatred of all forms of political and economic oppression

ENLIGHTENMENT IDEAS SPREAD

Enlightened Despots - absolute rulers who used their power to bring about political and social change

Frederick the Great - king of Prussia from 1740-1786 - had seed and tools distributed to peasants who had suffered in Prussia's wars, tolerated religious differences, welcomed victims of religious persecution, reorganized civil service, simplified laws

Catherine the Great - empress of Russia from 1762-1796 - read the works of enlightened thinkers, exchanged letters with Voltaire and Diderot - made some limited reforms in law and govt., criticized the institution of serfdom

Joseph II - Holy Roman Emperor from 1765-1790 - granted toleration of Protestants and Jews in his Catholic empire - ended censorship, tried to bring Catholic Church under royal control, built hospitals, abolished serfdom

The Arts and Literature

Art - new styles developed in Europe:

- baroque - grand, complex style - paintings were huge, colorful, full of excitement - glorified historic battles or lives of saints
- rococo - personal, elegant, charming style (paintings featured nobles in rural settings surrounded by happy servant and pets)

Middle-Class Audiences - Rembrandt - Dutch artist who portrayed the lives of middle-class merchants

Trends in Music - new kinds of musical entertainment (ballets and operas) were performed at royal courts - music of the period followed ordered, structured forms (fit perfectly with the ideas of the Enlightenment)

- famous classical composers of the era: Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frederick Handel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The Novel - middle-class readers enjoyed stories about their own times

- the novel (a long work of fiction) became popular - English author Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe*, a story about a shipwrecked sailor on a tropical island

Lives of the Majority

- most Europeans untouched by courtly or middle-class culture - peasants continued to live in small rural villages - their culture changed slowly