

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



Conflict and Absolutism in Europe, 1550–1715

Lesson 1 Europe in Crisis

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What effect might social, economic, and religious conflicts have on a country?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

conflict opposition; a fight, battle, or war

policy an overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures of a governmental body

Content Vocabulary

heretic one who does not conform to established doctrine

armada a fleet of warships

inflation a rapid increase in prices

national sovereignty the independence of a state combined with the right and power of regulating itself without foreign interference

TAKING NOTES: *Monitoring*

ACTIVITY As you read, complete the chart by filling in key details for each topic

	Spain	England	France
Government			
Religion			
Conflicts			

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The logo for 'networks' features the word in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a starburst or network pattern.

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Lesson 1 Europe in Crisis, *continued*

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Protestants and Catholics in Europe fought with each other during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many wars were fought for religious and political control. There were also social and economic problems during these centuries. The situation at this time was frequently changing and resulted in uncertainty in people's lives.

Spain's Conflicts

Guiding Question *What roles did France and Spain play in religious conflicts?*

The Protestant religion started during the sixteenth century. By 1560, both Calvinism—a Protestant group—and Catholicism were very militant. They both fought to win converts, or people who switch from one religion to another. They were also aggressive in fighting against each other's authority. Their struggle was the chief cause of the religious wars in Europe in the sixteenth century. Economic, social, and political forces also played an important role in the conflicts, or fights, of the time. It was a period of crisis in Europe.

Spain's Militant Catholicism

King Philip II ruled in the second half of the 1500s. He was the strongest supporter of militant Catholicism at that time. He was the son of Charles V, who had been the Holy Roman Emperor, King of Spain, and Archduke of Austria. Charles V's brother followed him as Holy Roman Emperor. Philip II inherited the kingdoms of Milan, Naples, Sicily, the Netherlands, and Spain and its empire in the Americas from his father, Charles V. Philip II's reign lasted from 1556 to 1598 and was an age of greatness for Spain. Philip II insisted on strict conformity to Catholicism and strong monarchical authority. He also had the powerful Spanish navy under his control.

Around 1500, Catholic kingdoms in Spain had reconquered areas from Muslims. They expelled Spanish Jews. Muslims were forced to convert or go into exile. Spain saw itself as a nation chosen by God. Its task was to save Catholic Christianity from Protestant **heretics**. Heretics are people who reject or do not follow some of the teachings of a religion. Philip II was called the "Most Catholic King." He championed Catholic causes and his actions led to amazing victories and defeats. Spain was a leader in the Holy League against the Turks. The Holy League was an alliance, or agreement, between the Pope, Spain, and Venice, as well as several smaller Italian states. Pope Pius V organized it in the first half of 1571. Its goal was to stop the growth of the power of Islam in the Mediterranean as the Turks were gaining control of more areas.

The League had an important victory over the Turkish fleet in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Philip was not so lucky in other **conflicts**.

Resistance From the Netherlands

One of the richest parts of Philip's empire was the Spanish Netherlands (modern Netherlands and Belgium), which was made up of 17 provinces. Philip tried to increase his control over this region. The nobles in the region resented his actions and opposed him. Philip also tried to crush Calvinism in the Netherlands. Violence began in the area in 1566. Philip sent ten thousand soldiers to end the rebellion.

Philip faced growing opposition from the Dutch in the northern provinces. They were led by William the Silent, the prince of Orange. (The House of Orange was a noble family in the Netherlands. William was also known as William of Orange.) The fighting lasted until 1609. In that year, a 12-year truce ended

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the war. The northern provinces began to call themselves the United Provinces of the Netherlands. They became the core of the modern Dutch state. In fact, the seventeenth century is often called the golden age of the Dutch state, when the United Provinces were one of the great powers of Europe.

Protestantism in England

Elizabeth I ascended the English throne in 1558. During her reign, England became the leader of the Protestant nations of Europe and she laid the foundations for a world empire for the English nation.

Elizabeth was intelligent, self-confident, and also careful. She inherited a difficult religious problem from her Catholic half-sister, Queen Mary Tudor. Elizabeth moved quickly to solve the problem. Elizabeth repealed the laws favoring Catholics. A new Act of Supremacy, or law, named Elizabeth as “the only supreme governor” of both church and state. The Church of England under Queen Elizabeth followed a moderate Protestantism. This kept most people satisfied.

Elizabeth was also moderate in her foreign **policy**, which is a path of action taken by a government. She tried to keep Spain and France from becoming too powerful by balancing her support. When one of the two nations had more power, England supported the weaker of the two. The queen feared war would be disastrous. However, she could not escape a conflict with Spain.

Defeat of the Spanish Armada

In 1588, Philip II made preparations to send an **armada**—a fleet of warships—to invade England. A successful invasion could have resulted in the end of English Protestantism. However, Philip’s fleet did not have the number of ships or the manpower that he had planned to send.

The victory that Philip hoped for never came. The faster English ships greatly damaged the armada in battle. The armada sailed back to Spain by a northern route around Scotland and Ireland. There, it was hit by storms, and many of the Spanish ships sunk and never returned home.

By the end of Philip’s reign in 1598, Spain was still a powerful state, but its actual power was less than people thought. Spain still controlled the empire with the greatest number of people in the world. However, it was now bankrupt. Philip II had spent too much money on war. The ruler after Philip spent too much money on his court. Spain’s armed forces were out of date, and its government was not efficient. Spain continued to play the role of a great power, but the real power in Europe had moved to England and France.



Reading Progress Check

Drawing Conclusions Why might the overthrow of Protestantism in England have been important to Philip II?

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The French Wars of Religion

Guiding Question *What fueled the French civil wars of the sixteenth century?*

The most destructive of the sixteenth-century religious wars were the French civil wars, known as the French Wars of Religion, which lasted from 1562 to 1598. Religious conflict was at the center of these wars. The French kings persecuted Protestants, but the persecution did not stop the spread of Protestantism.

Huguenots

Huguenots (HYOO·guh·nahts) were French Protestants. They were influenced by the ideas of John Calvin. The Huguenots made up only about 7 percent of the total French population. However, 40 to 50 percent of the nobility became Huguenots. This made the Huguenots a powerful political danger to the Catholic monarchy.

The ultra-Catholics were an extreme Catholic party. They strongly opposed the Huguenots. They had the loyalty and support of parts of northern and northwestern France. As a result, they were able to pay for and gather large armies.

Religion was the most important issue, but there were other reasons for the French civil wars. Towns and provinces wanted to help the nobles to weaken the power of the French monarchy.

Henry IV and the Edict of Nantes

For 30 years, battles took place in France between the Catholics and the Huguenots. In 1589, the Huguenot political leader Henry of Navarre came to the throne as King Henry IV. But he knew that because he was a Protestant, Catholic France would never accept him. Therefore, he converted to Catholicism, and Catholics no longer had a reason to oppose him. When Henry IV was crowned king in 1594, the fighting in France finally came to an end.

In 1598, Henry IV issued the Edict of Nantes to solve the religious problem. The edict recognized Catholicism as the official religion of France. It also gave the Huguenots the right to worship and to enjoy all political privileges, such as holding public offices. Both Catholics and Huguenots accepted the edict.



Reading Progress Check

Identifying What was the purpose of the Edict of Nantes?

Crises in Europe

Guiding Question *How was Europe affected by social and economic crises in the seventeenth century?*

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europe experienced political and religious wars. It also experienced some bad economic and social crises. One major problem was **inflation**, or rising prices.

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A growing population in the sixteenth century increased the demand for land and food, which drove up the prices for both.

Economic and Social Crises

By 1600, an economic slowdown had begun in parts of Europe. Spain's economy was failing by the 1640s. It depended on silver that came from its empire. But its mines were producing less silver. Spain's fleets were attacked by pirates. Also, the loss of Muslim and Jewish artisans and merchants hurt Spain's economy. Italy had been the financial center of Europe in the Renaissance. But it was also declining economically.

Population figures in the 1500s and 1600s show Europe's worsening situation. The 1500s was a period of growing population. This was possibly the result of a warmer climate and increased food supplies. Europe's population rose from about 60 million in 1500 to about 85 million by 1600. By 1620, the population stopped increasing. By 1650, it began to decline. This was especially true in central and southern Europe.

War, plague, and famine all contributed to the population decline. These terrible events also caused social tensions. One reason for the tension was the witchcraft trials.

The Witchcraft Trials

A belief in witchcraft, or magic, had been part of traditional village culture for centuries. Religious zeal had led to the Inquisition and hunt for heretics. Now there was also concern about witchcraft. People believed that witches could use magic to harm others. At a time of war, plague, and famine, some people blamed witches. Perhaps more than a hundred thousand people were charged with witchcraft during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As more and more people were brought to trial, the fear of witches grew. At the same time, the fear of being called a witch also grew.

Common people—usually the poor and those without property—were often accused of witchcraft. More than 75 percent of those accused were women. Most of them were single or widowed and over 50 years old.

Accused witches were sometimes tortured. They then usually confessed to a number of practices that people expected witches to do. For example, many of the accused witches said that they had sworn allegiance to the devil. They said that they attended sabbats, nightly meetings where they feasted and danced, and others confessed to casting evil spells.

By 1650, the witchcraft hysteria had begun to decrease. As governments grew stronger, fewer officials wanted to disrupt their societies with witch trials. In addition, attitudes were changing and many people no longer believed in the old view of a world full of evil spirits.



Reading Progress Check

Identifying What sources of social tension existed in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

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The Thirty Years' War

Guiding Question *What were the causes and effects of the Thirty Years' War?*

Religious conflict continued in Germany after the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. One reason for the conflict was that the peace had not recognized Calvinism. By the 1600s, Calvinism had spread through Europe.

Causes of the War

Religion played an important role in the start of the Thirty Years' War. This war was called the "last of the religious wars." However, there were also political and territorial motives for the war. The war began in 1618 in the Holy Roman Empire. It started as a struggle between Catholic forces, led by the Hapsburg Holy Roman emperors, and Protestant (primarily Calvinist) nobles in Bohemia. Then Denmark, Sweden, France, and Spain entered the war. The conflict became more political. For example, Catholic France fought against the Holy Roman Empire and Spain. Under the direction of Cardinal Richelieu, France wanted to gain leadership in Europe.

All the major European powers except England joined in the plundering and destruction of Germany during the Thirty Years' War. After the decades of fighting, the Peace of Westphalia officially ended the war in 1648 and gave new territories to Sweden, France, and their allies. The treaty firmly established the concept of **national sovereignty**. National sovereignty is the independence of a state together with the right and power of the state to rule itself without foreign interference. Many scholars believe this was a sign of the modern state system that was going to rise in Europe.

Sweden received lands in the area around the Baltic Sea, which increased its power in northern Europe. The peace also made the more than three hundred states of the Holy Roman Empire independent. These states each now had the freedom to choose their own religion and control their own foreign policy. The Holy Roman Empire was no longer a true political state. The unification of Germany, which included much of the empire, occurred two hundred years later.



Reading Progress Check

Stating Was the original motivation for the Thirty Years' War political or religious? State evidence.
