Enlightened Absolutism and the Balance of Power

Chapter 20.3
Enlightened Absolutism

• In order to achieve an enlightened society, philosophes believed rulers needed to be enlightened
  • Enlightened monarchs should obey and enforce laws fairly, allow natural rights, encourage the arts

• Enlightened absolutism: a system in which rulers tried to govern by Enlightenment principles while maintaining their full royal powers

Can historians classify any rulers during the Enlightenment as enlightened absolutists?
  ➢ Sort of
Enlightened Absolutism

- Prussian monarchs enacted *some* Enlightenment reforms:
  - abolishing the use of torture
  - granting limited freedom of speech and press

- **Austrian Emperor Joseph II** enacted many Enlightenment reforms which ended in miserable failure
  - Religious reform angered the church, peasant reform angered the nobles, and peasants were mad because they didn’t understand

- **Russian Empress Catherine the Great** considered enacting Enlightened reform but ultimately refused
The Seven Years’ War

Seven Years’ War: Global conflict fought between all major European powers, including France against Britain

India

• Britain and France clashed in India
  • Britain ultimately won and claimed India for itself

North America

• British colonies and French colonies clashed in N. America
  • British colonies more populated

• Britain won, signed Treaty of Paris with France
  • France gave England its territory in Canada and its land east of the Mississippi
  • Spain (French ally) gave its territory in Florida to England
- Great Britain and allies
- France and allies
Britain and the American Revolution

Main idea—Enlightenment ideas helped spur the American colonies to shed British rule and create a new nation

• Officially, Parliament and the Royal Council controlled the colonies in N. America
  • In reality, the colonies had legislatures that acted independently

• After the Seven Years’ War, Britain needed new revenue to cover cost of war
  • Stamp Act (1765)—required documents carry stamp showing tax had been paid
American Revolution Begins

- Colonies organized the First Continental Congress
  - Urged colonists to take up arms and organize militias
- Fighting erupted between colonists and British soldiers in 1775 in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts
- George Washington was chosen as leader of Continental Army
- Colonies formally declared independence July 4, 1776

Foreign Support

- Support from foreign nations was vital to colonists
- French supplied arms, money and directly fought British
  - Spain and Netherlands also joined against Britain
Main idea—Enlightenment ideas helped spur the American colonies to shed British rule and create a new nation
Questions

- Single sheet of paper; individual work
- Answer with complete sentences
- Turn into tray when complete

1. What were the causes of and influences on the American Revolution?
2. Why did some intellectuals believe that the formation of the U.S. carried out Enlightenment thought?
3. What did Montesquieu mean by the phrase “separation of powers”?
4. In your own opinion, which philosophe do you most identify with? As in, which philosophe do you agree with the most, or like the most? Why? Explain.