

1 The Ancien Régime

The Ancien Régime was a social, economic and political system that was dominant in Europe during the **Early Modern Age**¹.

Absolute monarchies were the main form of government during the Ancien Régime. They emerged because of the social and economic crisis that took place at the end of the Middle Ages. This crisis weakened the position of the privileged classes and allowed monarchs to strengthen their own positions in society. This led to powerful monarchs exercising supreme authority.

Justification for such power was found in the Medieval theory of the **divine right of kings**. This theory proposed that monarchs derived their right to rule directly from God. Any opposition was therefore opposing the will of God, an act that came with terrible consequences. Using language, history and religion, these monarchs **strengthened the identity of the state**. In addition, they made **tax collection** more effective and created **permanent armies** to protect their lands. **Louis XIV** of France is often given as a good example of this type of monarch, and his proclamation '**I am the state!**' illustrates the power he held.



Louis XIV of France, by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1701)

In contrast to these absolute monarchies typical of the time was the **parliamentary monarchy** introduced in England at the end of the 17th century. Following a civil war and the capture and execution of the king, England became a **republic**² led by Oliver Cromwell. However, this republic was short-lived and the absolute monarchy was restored until the **Glorious Revolution of 1688**.

This revolution culminated in the signing of the 1689 **Bill of Rights**³ by the Dutchman William of Orange. He became the first king of England's new parliamentary monarchy. In this form of government, the monarch's power was limited and depended on the support of parliament.

¹**Early Modern Age:** period of history that began in 1492 and ended with the French Revolution in 1789.

²**republic:** political system without a monarch; elected representatives exercise power.

³**Bill of Rights:** act which established the fundamental principles of the new parliamentary monarchy.

CLIL activities

- 1 Define these terms in your notebook.
 - a. absolute monarchy
 - b. divine right of kings
 - c. republic
- 2  Listen and write notes on the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Then create a diagram showing how it works.
- 3  With a classmate, discuss which of these words could be used to describe an absolute monarchy.

a. share	e. divine
b. hereditary	f. balance
c. compromise	g. agreement
d. unrestricted	h. controlling

...could/couldn't be used because...

2 The economy

Agriculture

More than 80% of the population lived in rural settlements and worked in **agriculture** during the Ancien Régime. Most of the land was owned by the nobility or the church. Exchanges between the peasants and landowners followed the principles of **manorialism**¹. Archaic techniques, basic tools and an extreme vulnerability in the face of nature resulted in **low productivity**. Regardless of poor harvests, peasants were expected to pay rent to landowners, tax to monarchs and deliver a **tithe**² to the clergy. From the 17th century onwards, some regions of Europe were able to increase productivity thanks to the introduction of new techniques, tools and crops.

Industry

Manufacturing and industry took place in workshops managed by **guilds**³ in urban areas. At the same time, family-run production of manufactured goods developed in rural areas outside the control of these guilds. The products were often lower in quality and made with the family's own raw materials and tools, or with those supplied by **bourgeois**⁴ entrepreneurs. This **domestic system** then allowed merchants to sell the finished products at lower prices than those made in workshops managed by guilds.



Rural production of manufactured goods was a family affair.

Trade

During the Ancien Régime, **domestic trade** was limited because of internal customs duties and poor-quality roads. On the other hand, **international trade** flourished during the era thanks to the discovery of new sea routes and new markets. This international trade was championed by the bourgeoisie because it was more efficient and more profitable. **Mercantilism**⁵ also developed during this period as states introduced **protectionist policies** that promoted exports and made importing foreign goods more expensive.

CLIL activities

4 Answer the questions in your notebook.

- What caused low agricultural productivity during the Ancien Régime?
- What was the domestic system?
- What were protectionist policies?

5  Listen and answer the questions.

- What was the triangular trade?
- What were the three routes?

6  Look at a map and find the routes in activity 5. Why do you think it was called the triangular trade?

¹**manorialism**: system in rural areas that gave legal and economic power to landowners.

²**tithe**: 10% of the harvest required as a contribution to the clergy.

³**guild**: association of people from the same trade or craft who monitor and control its practice.

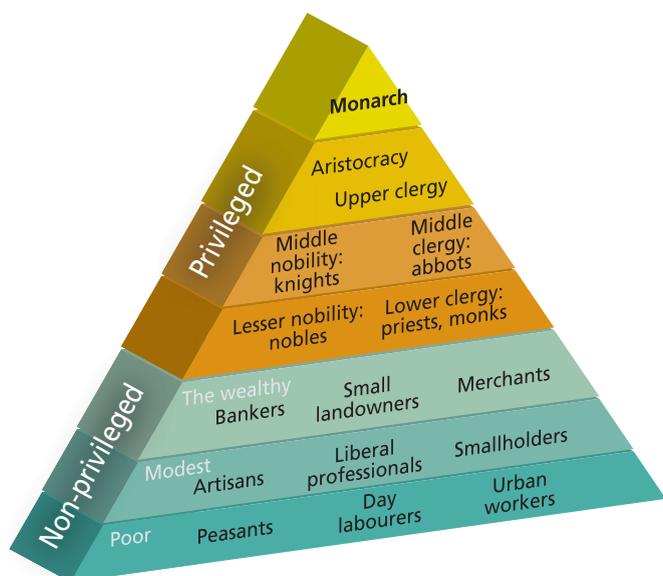
⁴**bourgeois**: middle class.

⁵**mercantilism**: economic theory based on the idea that a country's success depends on how much gold and silver it possesses.

3 Demographics and society

During the Ancien Régime, less than 20% of the world's population lived in Europe. It was a time characterised by high birth rates, high death rates, low life expectancy and weak population growth. During the latter part of the 18th century, a more **modern demographic regime** took hold. Population growth became much more significant thanks to better hygiene, improvements in medical knowledge and access to more food.

Society in the Ancien Régime continued to be divided into three social groups called **estates**. At the top was the **nobility**. This group was very small and a person's place within the group was **hereditary**¹. These were privileged people who didn't have to pay tax. Within the nobility were the **monarchs**, the **aristocracy** and the **lesser nobility**.



Also in the privileged group of people who didn't pay tax was the **clergy**². Despite being another very small group, the clergy had a great influence on daily life. The clergy only represented around 1.5% of the population. Within this social group there were great differences in wealth and status between its members.

At the bottom of the hierarchy were the non-privileged **ordinary people**, also known as the Third Estate. This group represented the majority of the population and had to pay tax. At the top were the **bourgeoisie**, a newer social group of merchants, workshop owners and traders who would eventually help bring about the fall of the Ancien Régime. Below them were **urban workers**. However, most ordinary people were **peasants** who lived in **rural areas** and worked the land of the landowners to whom they paid rent.

There was also a group of **outcasts**. These were people rejected by and excluded from society who often became **beggars**³ and prostitutes.



¹**hereditary**: passed down from one family member to another.

²**clergy**: leaders of religious activities in the church.

³**beggar**: poor person who lives on charity.



CLIL activities



- 7 In your notebook, copy the notes and write the name of the social groups.
- the most privileged social group
 - had to pay tax
 - the newest social group
 - the religious leaders
 - the lowest social group

- 8 Listen and make notes on these threats to life in Early-Modern Europe.
- food scarcity
 - disease
 - violence
 - war

- 9 Work in a small group. Choose two social groups from the Ancien Régime. Compare and contrast their lives.

Daily life and ways of thinking

Education in the Ancien Régime depended on gender and social class. Daughters of all social classes were taught at home by their mothers. They learned how to carry out domestic tasks and received a basic education in religion. Most sons of ordinary people also acquired a basic knowledge of religion and learned agricultural or craft techniques. Only some went to school and learned to read and write. Sons of the nobility and the bourgeoisie often had private tutors. In the case of the bourgeoisie, they were prepared for work in the family business and for entrance to university.

Housing also depended on social class. Some people lived in single room **dwellings**¹ alongside domestic animals, and others had dwellings with separate living and working spaces. The privileged few had houses with many rooms, each designed for a specific use.

The more privileged members of society saw **work** and manual labour as **dishonourable**². This meant the nobility avoided work and relied on the rent they received from the peasants who lived on their land. Sometimes this was not enough to cover their costs and they went into debt.

At this time **honour** was valued above wealth. Attaining a noble lifestyle was the main goal for most of society. This was particularly true of the wealthy bourgeoisie, whose money was useful to struggling nobles. In return for financial support, these nobles offered bourgeois families strategic marriages. These allowed the bourgeoisie to improve their social position.

¹**dwelling:** place where someone lives.

²**dishonourable:** shameful or lacking integrity.



The marriage settlement, by William Hogarth (1743)

CLIL activities

10 Answer the questions in your notebook.

- Why did the members of the nobility sometimes struggle to maintain their lifestyles?
- How did the nobility and the bourgeoisie benefit from each other?

11  Listen and make notes about women during the Ancien Régime.

12  Compare and discuss your notes from activity 11 with a classmate. How is life different today?

Today we ... whereas in the past they...

4 The Enlightenment

The **Enlightenment** was a cultural and intellectual movement that aimed to dispel the darkness of human ignorance through the light of knowledge. It championed humans' capacity to understand and explain the world, and achieve success and happiness using the **power of reason**. The Enlightenment criticised many of the foundations of the Ancien Régime and helped bring about **social and political reform**.

Enlightened thinkers believed in freedom, education and **social mobility**¹. They wanted a taxation system in which everyone paid tax and a political system with separation of powers. In terms of the economy, Enlightened thinkers opposed the old ways of mercantilism and believed a country's wealth should be defined by its agriculture and production. They supported the **economic liberalism** put forward by Adam Smith and believed that **free trade**² and **free markets**³ would bring better economic results.

It was during the Enlightenment that the controversial *Encyclopedia* was published under the direction of Jean Le Rond d'Alembert and Denis Diderot. This was a compilation of human knowledge which criticised the **social stratification**⁴ and absolutism of the Ancien Régime and promoted the values of the Enlightenment.

Enlightened despotism

Influenced by the ideas of Enlightenment, a new political system emerged in some parts of Europe at the end of the 18th century. **Enlightened despotism** was the result of absolute monarchs introducing reformist policies influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, **without giving up any of their power**. Some examples of these Enlightened despots include Frederick the Great of Prussia, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, Catherine the Great of Russia, Joseph I of Portugal and Carlos III of Spain.

Enlightened despots promoted agricultural and industrial development, implemented aspects of economic liberalism, encouraged education in all levels of society, supported scientific, technological and cultural development and became **patrons**⁵ and protectors of art.



Portrait of Carlos III, by Andrés de la Calleja (1765)

¹**social mobility:** belief that people can move up and down the social hierarchy.

²**free trade:** unrestricted exchange of imports and exports.

³**free market:** production is based on supply and demand, with free competition and little state intervention.

⁴**social stratification:** practice of categorising people in society based on socioeconomic factors.

⁵**patron:** rich person who commissions and pays artists.

CLIL activities

13 Create a word cloud in your notebook including the key concepts of the Enlightenment.

14 Copy the table about Enlightenment thinkers. Then listen and complete it.

Name	Dates	Idea

15 Research one of the ideas from activity 14 and present it to the class.

Today I'm going to talk about...

I'd like to start by...

Moving on to my next point...

To conclude...

5 Spain in the 18th century: the Bourbons

The death of Carlos II in 1700 led to the first major conflict of the 18th century: the **War of the Spanish Succession**. Because Carlos II was childless, two of Europe's leading dynasties were left to fight for the Spanish throne. On one side was **Philip of Anjou** of the **House of Bourbon**. On the other side was **Archduke Charles** of the **House of Hapsburg**. The conflict ended with the signing of the **Treaties¹ of Utrecht (1713)** and **Rastatt (1714)**. Philip of Anjou became Felipe V, the first Bourbon king of Spain. Although peace was restored, Spain lost many lands as a result of the peace treaties.

During his reign, **Felipe V** introduced the **Nueva Planta Decrees²**, created secretaries of state within the central government and organised Spain into provinces. In addition, he introduced new taxes and encouraged state intervention in the economy. In foreign policy, he allied with France and attempted to recover the lands lost at the start of his reign. He ruled over Spain until his death in 1746. Felipe V was succeeded by his son **Fernando VI**, who died in 1759 and was succeeded by **Carlos III**.

Carlos III participated as an ally of France in the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence, which allowed him to recover Menorca. In Spain he embarked on a general project of modernisation that consisted of various reforms. This modernisation project included the development of infrastructure, the expulsion of the Jesuits and a general strengthening of royal authority over the church.

Carlos III also increased agricultural production by repopulating the Sierra Morena, improving irrigation and limiting the power of the **mesta³**. In Madrid, he became known as the 'best mayor of Madrid' due to the many improvements he introduced there, such as improved road networks, streetlighting and waste collection. When Carlos III died in 1788, he was succeeded by his son **Carlos IV**. The start of the French Revolution put an end to the process of reform.

¹**treaty**: formal agreement between peoples or countries.

²**Nueva Planta Decrees**: set of decrees signed by Felipe V abolishing the laws and institutions of the Crown of Aragón and replacing them with those of the Crown of Castilla.

³**mesta**: powerful association in the Crown of Castilla that controlled sheep farming.



CLIL activities

- 16 Answer the questions in your notebook. Which king:
 - a. died in 1759?
 - b. was the first Bourbon King of Spain?
 - c. allied with France in two wars?
- 17 Research one of the kings mentioned on this page and list his achievements.
- 18 Listen and answer the questions about the Seven Years' War.
 - a. When did it take place?
 - b. Who was it between?
 - c. What were they fighting for?
 - d. What were the war's consequences?

6 Science and art

The Scientific Revolution of the 17th century

During the 16th and 17th centuries, discoveries in physics, astronomy, biology and chemistry radically changed our view of the world and laid the foundations for modern science. The combined work of **Nicolaus Copernicus**, **Johannes Kepler** and **Galileo Galilei** proved the **heliocentric theory**¹. This theory had many consequences, the most significant being Isaac Newton's universal laws of motion and his 1687 Law of universal gravitation.

The legacy of the Scientific Revolution, along with the Enlightenment's focus on the importance of education, went on to make the 18th century a time of great scientific and technological advances.



¹heliocentric theory: astronomical model that proposed the notion that the Earth and planets revolve around the Sun.

Rococo art and architecture

This artistic style developed in France between 1730 and 1760 and spread throughout much of Europe. Works were often commissioned by members of the nobility or the bourgeoisie, rather than by monarchs or the church.



The swing, by Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1767)

They reflected the hedonistic lifestyle and ostentation of the aristocracy. Rococo style is characterised by **elegance** and **exuberance**. Its themes include nature, mythology and love.

In architecture, Rococo palaces and mansions were often located away from cities and had plain facades with big windows. These simple exteriors contrasted with the highly ornate interiors full of decoration. Rococo eventually went out of fashion around 1780, after Enlightened thinkers criticised its superficiality. It was replaced by a more serious and orderly style known as **Neoclassicism**.

CLIL activities

- 19 Answer the questions in your notebook.
- What did the heliocentric theory propose?
 - How did the 17th century influence the 18th century from a scientific perspective?
 - What were the characteristics of Rococo?

- 20  Listen and list the inventions/discoveries. Which do you think was the most important and why?
- 21  Describe the painting *The swing* with a classmate. What different elements of the Rococo style can you see?