

Absolute Ruler: Peter the Great

Directions: For each document, read the question, and then read through the document, annotating anything connecting to the question. When you have fully read and annotated the document, write an answer in clear words and complete sentences.

Document 4

... On August 8, 1700, Peter made his historic decision to declare war on Sweden, in order to open a road* from Russia to the West by the conquest of the Baltic littoral [coastal region]. He had secured the collaboration of Poland and Denmark, but his alliance with these two rivals of Sweden was to prove ineffectual. With nothing to rely on but his own forces, Peter was defeated at Narva by the valiant Swedish King, Charles XII. Refusing to be discouraged by this defeat, Peter raised and equipped new armies; he put immense effort into creating a good artillery; he worked with his own hands on the construction of the frigates [ships] that were to give him mastery of the Baltic. Then his disciplined and well-trained regiments seized the mouth of the Neva [River] and entrenched themselves along the coveted [desired] littoral. On June 27, 1709, in a battle at Poltava, he put his great adversary, Charles XII, to flight...

Source: Constantine de Grunwald, "A Window on the West," in Christopher Hibbert, ed., *The Pen and the Sword*, Newsweek Books (adapted)

*road: a place less enclosed than a harbor where ships may ride at anchor

1. According to Constantine de Grunwald, what was Peter the Great hoping to accomplish with his war on Sweden?

2. What was one action taken by Peter the Great to overcome his defeat at Narva?

Document 5

... In 1722 the establishment of the Table of Ranks brought to its logical conclusion a process that had been evolving for three centuries. It imposed obligatory lifelong state service on all ranks of the nobility. It established fourteen equivalent grades in the military, naval, and civil service and required that even princes of the most exalted families should begin at the lowest grade and work their way up the ladder. The Table of Ranks offered the privileges of nobility to anyone who performed state service and made service to the state the principal basis for privilege....

Source: Peter Brock Putnam, *Peter, The Revolutionary Tsar*, Harper & Row, Publishers

3. According to Peter Brock Putnam, in what way did the introduction of the Table of Ranks attempt to reduce the influence of the old aristocracy?

Document 6

... How great an effect did Peter have upon Russia? When he came to the throne, Russia was an insignificant state. He made it into a great power feared by all. At his accession [assumption of the throne] Russia had no armed forces except for the inefficient and untrustworthy Streltsy [hereditary military units]. When he died, there was a professional army of 210,000 men. He created a navy out of nothing, leaving behind him a fleet of forty-eight ships-of-the-line and many smaller vessels....

Peter signally [noticeably] failed to create the large, thriving middle class that Russia needed. In spite of the most strenuous efforts, Russia's commerce and industry remained dependent upon the Tsar, so that when he died, there were not enough wealthy, far-sighted traders and industrialists to develop what he had begun. This lack of private initiative and enterprise was to remain one of Russia's greatest social weaknesses until the Communist Revolution of 1917....

Source: Michael Gibson, *Peter the Great*, Wayland Publishers

4. According to Michael Gibson, what were two effects Peter the Great's rule had on Russia?

Summary Questions

Directions: Answer these two questions using information from the documents. You do NOT have to cite the documents (YET), but as you look back to the documents for supporting information, circle anything that relates to these two questions and write an A or B next to the circle. This will help later.

A. Describe actions taken by Louis XIV that show this individual was an absolute ruler:

B. Discuss the extent to which this Louis XIV's use of absolute power helped and/or hurt his country or his people: