

CHAPTER  
**16**  
SECTION 5

## Section Summary

### ABSOLUTE MONARCHY IN RUSSIA

In the early 1600s, Russia was isolated from Western Europe and had remained a medieval state. It was not until the end of that century that a new tsar, **Peter the Great**, transformed Russia into a leading power.

To modernize Russia, Peter began a new policy of **westernization**—the adoption of Western ideas, technologies, and culture. Many resisted change. To enforce his new policy, Peter became an **autocratic** monarch—one who ruled with unlimited authority.

All Russian institutions were under Peter the Great's control. He executed anyone who resisted the new order. He forced the **boyars**—landowning nobles—to serve the state in civilian or military positions. Peter also stipulated that they shave their beards and wear Western-style clothes.

Peter pushed through social and economic reforms. He also increased Russia's military power and extended its borders. However, Russia still needed a **warm-water port**. This would increase Russia's trade with the West. The nearest port of this kind to Russia was on the Black Sea, but Peter could not defeat the Ottoman empire, which controlled the region.

Determined to expand Russia's territory, Peter also waged a long war against Sweden to win territory along the Baltic Sea. On this territory, he built a new capital city, **St. Petersburg**. It became the symbol of modern Russia. When Peter died in 1725, he left a mixed legacy. Although he had modernized Russia, he had used terror to enforce his absolute power.

In 1762, **Catherine the Great** ruled as an absolute monarch. She followed Peter's lead in embracing Western ideas and expanding Russia's borders. She was an efficient and energetic empress. Under her rule, laws were codified and state-supported education began for both boys and girls. After waging war, she defeated the Ottoman empire and finally won the warm-water port on the Black Sea.

In the 1770s, Russia, Prussia, and Austria each wanted Poland as part of their territory. In order to avoid war, the three kingdoms agreed to **partition**, or divide up, Poland. In 1772, Russia gained part of eastern Poland, while Prussia and Austria took over the West. Poland vanished from the map.

## Review Questions

1. What did Peter the Great do to modernize Russia?

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2. What were two achievements of Catherine the Great?

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### READING CHECK

Where was St. Petersburg built?

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### VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does *stipulated* mean in the underlined sentence? It comes from a Latin word that means "to bargain." Use this word-origins clue to help you figure out the meaning of *stipulated*.

### READING SKILL

**Identify Main Ideas** Write a new title for this Summary that identifies its main idea.

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