A Crown's Claim

Read how inherited rule and divine right supported absolute power.

MWH.C.3.1.C "Describe the theory of Absolutism which supports the exercise of unlimited power according to an inherited divine right to rule (e.g., Louis XIV)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the words that explain how Louis XIV gained the throne, circle the claims about the source of his authority, and number two examples of how he exercised power. Use your marks to describe how these ideas fit together.

Louis XIV and the Theory of Absolutism

1. In 1643, four-year-old Louis XIV inherited the French throne after his father died. His mother and advisers governed while he was a child, but he later took personal control of royal decisions. Louis argued that kings received their authority from God and that the crown passed within a ruling family. This belief, called divine right, treated obedience to the king as a religious duty, not simply a political choice. Absolutism joined that claim to the idea that the monarch held supreme governing power. Under this theory, no representative assembly had the right to overrule the king's commands.

2. At Versailles, Louis XIV brought powerful nobles into his court, where court duties kept them close to the king and away from independent power in their home regions. He chose ministers who answered to him, while royal officials collected taxes and enforced laws across France. When Louis made a major decision, he did not seek approval from the Estates-General, a representative assembly that he never summoned during his personal rule. His court presented royal commands as expressions of rightful authority, rather than requests that subjects could freely reject. These actions show how Louis concentrated governing decisions in his own hands.

3. The word unlimited describes the theory of the monarch's governing authority, not an ability to make every order work. War required money and soldiers, and local officials could resist or delay instructions. Louis also faced customs, existing laws, and pressure from influential groups. Yet these obstacles were different from a rule giving a representative assembly final authority over him. Supporters of divine right argued that God would judge a bad king, but subjects could not remove him simply because they disliked his policies. In this view, inherited position and sacred authority justified the king's claim to govern without sharing ultimate power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did inheritance and divine right work together to support Louis XIV's claim to rule?

2. How did Louis XIV's treatment of the Estates-General reflect the theory of absolutism?

3. Why does the passage say Louis XIV's power was unlimited in theory even though officials could delay his orders?

4. According to supporters of divine right, why could subjects not remove a king simply because they disliked his policies?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence speech for an imaginary absolute monarch addressing a council. Explain how the ruler gained the throne, why the ruler claims authority from God, what powers the ruler claims, and how the council should respond. Do not use Louis XIV or copy phrases from the passage.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the words that explain how Louis XIV gained the throne, circle the claims about the source of his authority, and number two examples of how he exercised power. Use your marks to describe how these ideas fit together. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did inheritance and divine right work together to support Louis XIV's claim to rule?	**Louis inherited the throne from his father. Divine right added the claim that a king's authority came from God, making obedience a religious duty.**
2	How did Louis XIV's treatment of the Estates-General reflect the theory of absolutism?	**He never summoned the assembly during his personal rule or sought its approval for major decisions, reflecting the claim that no assembly could overrule him.**
3	Why does the passage say Louis XIV's power was unlimited in theory even though officials could delay his orders?	**Delays made his power harder to exercise, but they did not give those officials final authority over the king.**
4	According to supporters of divine right, why could subjects not remove a king simply because they disliked his policies?	**They believed a king's authority came from God and that God, rather than dissatisfied subjects, would judge him.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My mother held this crown before me, and her death has placed it in my hands. I believe the Creator entrusted my family with the duty to govern, so my title depends on no vote. I will appoint advisers, command the army, and set taxes without asking this council for permission. Give me your counsel, then carry out the decisions I make.

Accept answers that distinguish the monarch's claim to supreme authority from practical limits on carrying out orders. In Part 3, look for four original sentences connecting inheritance, divine authority, claimed powers, and the council's limited role.