

**ACTIVITY 5****Document-Based Questions****Absolutism and Revolution****Document-Based Essay****Part A**

**DIRECTIONS** Analyze the following documents. Use the documents and your knowledge of world history to answer the questions that follow each document. Your answers will help you to write a short essay related to the documents.

**Document 1**

A controversy has arisen about this: whether it is better to be loved than feared, or vice versa. My view is that it is desirable to be both loved and feared; but it is difficult to achieve both and, if one of them has to be lacking, it is much safer to be feared than loved.

For this may be said of men generally: they are ungrateful, fickle [unstable], feigners [fakers] and dissemblers [deceivers], avoiders of danger, eager for gain. While you benefit them they are all devoted to you. . . . But when you are hard pressed, they turn away. . . .

Men are less hesitant about offending or harming a ruler who makes himself loved than one who inspires fear. For love is sustained by a bond of gratitude which, because men are excessively self-interested, is broken whenever they see a chance to benefit themselves. But fear is sustained by a dread of punishment that is always effective. Nevertheless, a ruler must make himself feared in such a way that, even if he does not become loved, he does not become hated. For it is perfectly possible to be feared without incurring hatred. And this can always be achieved if he refrains from laying hands on the property of his citizens and subjects, and on their womenfolk. . . . But, above all, he must not touch the property of others, because men forget sooner the killing of a father than the loss of their patrimony.

—Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)

From *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli, edited by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price.  
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**1a.** Why did Machiavelli believe it is better for a ruler to be feared by his or her subjects than to be loved by them?

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**1b.** What advice did Machiavelli give monarchs to prevent their subjects from hating them?

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**Activity 5, Absolutism and Revolution, continued**

**DOCUMENT 2**

You will never do right . . . until you give God his due, the King his due (that is, my successors) and the people their due, I am as much for them as any of you. . . .

. . . And truly I desire their liberty and freedom as much as anybody whomsoever. But I must tell you that their liberty and freedom consists in having of government; those laws by which their life and their goods may be most their own. It is not for having share in government, Sir, that is nothing pertaining to them. A subject and a sovereign are clean different things, and therefore until . . . you do put the people in that liberty as I say, certainly they will never enjoy themselves.

Sirs. It was for this that now I am come here. If I would have given way to an arbitrary way, for to have all the laws changed according to the power of the sword I needed not to have come here. And, therefore, I tell you . . . that I am the martyr of the people.

—Charles I, king of England before his execution (January 30, 1649)

**2a.** What was King Charles's attitude toward the people he ruled?

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**2b.** What did King Charles profess to believe was the proper role of a monarch in ruling his or her subjects? What did he think was the role of the people?

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**Activity 5, Absolutism and Revolution, continued****DOCUMENT 3**

God establishes kings as his ministers, and reigns through them over the peoples. . . . All power comes from God. The Prince, adds Saint Paul, "is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; . . . for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil." So princes act as ministers of God and his lieutenants on earth. It is through them that He rules His empire. This is why . . . the royal throne is not the throne of a man, but the throne of God Himself. . . .

Saint Paul, after having said that the prince is the minister of God, concludes thus: "Wherefore Ye must needs be in subjection [submission]. . . ." And again, "servants, obey in all things your temporal [earthly] masters and whatsoever Ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not as unto men." . . . Saint Peter says, "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well." . . .

In order to render this idea odious [contemptible] and unbearable, many pretend to confuse absolute government with arbitrary government. But there are no two more dissimilar things. . . . The prince need render no account to anyone for the orders he gives. "I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment and that in regard to the oath of God. . . . Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto him, What dost thou?" Without this absolute authority the king can do no good, nor punish evil; his power must be such that no one can hope to escape it.

Men must therefore obey princes as they obey justice itself, without which there can be no order or purpose in things. They are Gods, and share in a fashion the divine independence. . . . There is only God who can judge their judgements and their persons.

—Bishop Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, *Treatise on Politics*

**3a.** How does Bossuet think people should act toward their monarch? Why?

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**3b.** To whom does Bossuet believe monarchs are responsible? What does he suggest will happen to rulers who behave improperly?

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**Activity 5, Absolutism and Revolution, continued**

**DOCUMENT 4**

The only way whereby anyone divests himself of his natural liberty and puts on the bonds of civil society, is by agreeing with other men, to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any that are not of it. . . .

. . . To this end it is that men give up all their natural power to the society they enter into, and the community put the legislative power into such hands as they think fit, with this trust, that they shall be governed by declared laws. . . .

Absolute arbitrary power, or governing without settled standing laws, can neither of them consist with the ends of society and government.

As usurpation is the exercise of power which another hath a right to, so tyranny is the exercise of power beyond right, which nobody can have a right to; and this is making use of the power any one has in his hands, not for the good of those who are under it, but for his own private, separate advantage. When the governor, however entitled, makes not the law but his will the rule, and his commands and actions are not directed to the preservation of the properties of his people, but the satisfaction of his own . . . passion [that is tyranny]. . . .

Wherever law ends, tyranny begins, if the law be transgressed to another's harm; and whosoever in authority exceeds the power given him by the law, and makes use of the force he has under his command . . . upon the subject which the law allows not, ceases in that to be a magistrate, and . . . may be opposed, as any other man who by force invades the right of another. . . .

May the commands, then, of a prince be opposed? . . . May he be resisted, as often as any one shall find himself aggrieved, and but imagine he has not right done him? This will unhinge and overturn all politics, and instead of government and order, leave nothing but anarchy and confusion.

To this I answer: That force is to be opposed to nothing but to unjust and unlawful force. Whoever makes any opposition in any other case draws upon himself a just condemnation, both from God and man.

—John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (1690)

**4a.** According to Locke, how are law, power, and tyranny related?

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**4b.** Under what circumstances does Locke think people may oppose their rulers?

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**Activity 5, Absolutism and Revolution, continued**

**DOCUMENT 5**

1. The Christian Law teaches us to do mutual Good to one another, as much as we possibly can.

2. Laying this down as a fundamental rule prescribed by that Religion, which has taken, or ought to take Root in the Hearts of the whole People; we cannot but suppose, that every honest Man in the Community is, or will be, desirous of seeing his native Country at the very Summit of Happiness, Glory, Safety, and Tranquillity.

3. And that every Individual Citizen in particular must wish to see himself protected by Laws, which should not distress him in his Circumstances, but, on the Contrary, should defend him from all Attempts of others, that are repugnant to this fundamental Rule.

4. In order therefore to proceed to a speedy Execution of what We expect . . . We . . . ought to begin with an Inquiry into the natural Situation of this Empire. . . .

8. The Possessions of the Russian Empire extend upon the terrestrial Globe to 32 Degrees of Latitude, and to 165 of Longitude.

9. The Sovereign is absolute; for there is no other Authority but that which centers in his single Person, that can act with a Vigour proportionate to the Extent of such a vast Dominion.

10. The Extent of the Dominion requires an absolute Power to be vested in that Person who rules over it. It is expedient so to be, that the quick Dispatch of Affairs, sent from distant Parts, might make ample Amends for the Delay occasioned by the great Distance of the Places.

11. Every other Form of Government whatsoever would not only have been prejudicial to Russia, but would have even proved its entire Ruin.

12. Another Reason is: That it is better to be subject to the Laws under one Master, than to be subservient to the many.

13. What is the true end of Monarchy? Not to deprive People of their natural Liberty; but to correct their Actions, in order to attain the *supreme Good*.

—Catherine II, Czarina of Russia (1767)

From "The Instructions to the Commissioners for Composing a New Code of Laws, 1767" from *Documents of Catherine the Great*, edited by W. Reddaway. Copyright 1931 by Cambridge University Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

**5a.** What two reasons does Catherine give for why she should have absolute power?

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**5b.** According to Catherine, for what purposes should rulers make laws?

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**Activity 5, Absolutism and Revolution, continued**

**DOCUMENT 6**

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes. . . . But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably from the same Object, evinces [shows] a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism [oppression], it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains [requires] them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpation, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. . . .

In every stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free People. . . .

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress Assembled . . . do . . . solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved.

—The Declaration of Independence (1776)

**6a.** According to the Declaration of Independence, what is the purpose of government?

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**6b.** What reasons do the colonists state in this document to justify their revolt against the British Crown?

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*Activity 5, Absolutism and Revolution, continued*

**DOCUMENT 7**

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can be based only upon public utility.

2. The aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible [that which cannot for any reason be legally taken away or abandoned] rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression.

3. The source of all sovereignty is essentially in the nation; no body, no individual can exercise authority that does not proceed from it in plain terms.

4. Liberty consists in the power to do anything that does not injure others. . . . These limits can be determined only by law.

5. The law has the right to forbid only such actions as are injurious to society. Nothing can be forbidden that is not interdicted [prohibited] by the law, and no one can be constrained [required] to do that which it does not order.

6. Law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to take part personally, or by their representatives, in its formation. It must be the same for all whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in its eyes, are equally eligible to all public dignities, places, and employments, according to their capacities, and without other distinction than that of their virtues and their talents. . . .

11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man; every citizen then can freely speak, write and print, subject to responsibility for the abuse of this freedom in the cases determined by law.

12. The guarantee of the rights of man and citizen requires a public force; this force then is instituted for the advantage of all and not for the personal benefit of those to whom it is entrusted. . . .

15. Society has the right to call for an account of his administration from every public agent.

16. Any society in which the guarantee of rights is not secured, or the separation of powers not determined, has no constitution at all.

—The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789)

**7a.** According to the document, what is “law”?

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**7b.** What limits does the document put on the law? What limits does it put on the power of rulers?

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*Activity 5, Absolutism and Revolution, continued*

**DOCUMENT 8**

It is said, that twenty-four millions [of people] ought to prevail over two hundred thousand. True; if the constitution of a kingdom be a problem of arithmetic. This sort of discourse . . . to men who *may* reason calmly, . . . is ridiculous. The will of the many, and their interest, must very often differ; and great will be the difference when they make an evil choice. . . .

Far am I from denying in theory . . . the *real* rights of men. . . . If civil society be made for the advantage of man, all the advantages for which it is made become his right. . . . Men have a right to live by that rule; they have a right to do justice; as between their fellows, whether their fellows are in politic function or in ordinary occupation. They have a right to the fruits of their industry; and to the means of making their industry fruitful. . . . Whatever each man can separately do, without trespassing upon others, he has a right to do for himself; and he has a right to a fair portion of all which society, with all its combinations of skill and force, can do in his favour. In this partnership all men have equal rights: but not to equal things. He that has but five shillings in the partnership, has as good a right to it as he that has five hundred pounds has to his larger proportion. But he has not a right to an equal dividend in the product of the joint stock; and as to the share of power, authority, and direction which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society. . . .

. . . One of the first motives to civil society, and which becomes one of its fundamental rules, is, *that no man should be judge in his own cause*. . . . He abdicates [gives up] all right to be his own governor. . . . Men cannot enjoy the rights of an uncivil [natural] and of a civil state together. That he may obtain justice, he gives up his right of determining what it is in points the most essential to him. That he may secure some liberty, he makes a surrender in trust of the whole of it.

—Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790)

**8a.** What is Burke's view of democracy?

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**8b.** What does Burke mean when he states, "all men have equal rights: but not to equal things"?

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*Activity 5, Absolutism and Revolution, continued*

## Document-Based Essay

### Part B

**DIRECTIONS** Using the information in the documents provided and your knowledge of world history, write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, a body of several paragraphs, and a conclusion.

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The 1600s and 1700s were a time of political transition in Europe. In some countries, groups began to question a monarch's right to rule with absolute control and unchecked power, and they began to demand a greater voice in government. Such challenges led to a civil war in England in the mid-1600s and to a revolution in France in the late 1700s. These currents of political change were also felt in the Americas, where in 1776 some British colonists rejected the rule of their king and declared their independence from Great Britain.

#### TASK

Using information in the documents and your knowledge of world history, write an essay in which you:  
Take a position on whether a monarch's authority to govern should be absolute or if his or her right to rule should be limited by the people. In your essay, support your opinion by discussing the advantages of the type of government you favor. Also address the arguments that would support the opposite point of view. Finally, indicate what might make you support the opposite point of view if you lived in a country with your favored form of government.

#### GUIDELINES

**Be sure to:**

- Address all aspects of the *Task* by accurately analyzing and interpreting at least four of the documents.
- Use information provided in the documents in the body of your essay.
- Incorporate relevant outside information in your essay.
- Support your arguments with facts and information that address the theme.
- Be sure to organize your essay in a clear and logical way.
- Establish a framework that is more than a simple restatement of the *Task* or *Historical Context*.
- Conclude the essay with a summation of the theme.