

3.7 Absolutist Approaches to Power

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 11 marks

KEY WORDS absolutism 专制主义 • parliament 议会

Objective

Build the skills to explain **absolutism** 专制主义 as a system.

You must be able to:

- state the theoretical justification of absolutist rule
- name the practical instruments of absolutist government
- explain the bargain between crown and nobility
- state the real limits on absolutist power

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ The justification

Authority is held to derive from God and to be answerable to God alone; the ruler's will is therefore law and is not subject to consent by subjects.

■ The instruments

A standing army, a professional bureaucracy of officials dependent on the crown, taxation collected without consent, and a court that concentrated status where the ruler could observe it.

■ The bargain

Nobles surrendered independent political power and received exemption from much taxation, monopoly of high office, and confirmed authority over their peasants. Absolutism was a settlement with elites, not a defeat of them.

■ The limits

Distance, poor communication, the cost of enforcement, provincial privileges and the practical need for noble cooperation all constrained what a ruler could actually do.

2 Practice

2.1 State the theoretical justification of absolutist rule. [2]

2.2 State two things nobles received under the absolutist bargain. [2]

2.3 A ruler's decree is ignored in a distant province.

(a) State one reason. [1]

(b) State what this shows about absolutism. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Under absolutist theory, the ruler is answerable to [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** parliament
 - B** God alone
 - C** the nobility
 - D** the courts

3.2 Absolutism is best described as [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** the defeat of the nobility
 - B** a settlement with elites
 - C** a republic
 - D** rule by consent

3.3 Nobles are exempted from much taxation.

(a) State what they gave up in return. [1]

(b) Explain why the crown accepted the exemption. [2]
