

The Transformation of the West: 1450–1750

The First Big Changes: Culture and Commerce, 1450–1650

- Francesco Petrarch was one of the first Europeans to typify the new spirit of the Renaissance.
- The Italian Renaissance, after an abortive start in the 1300s, took shape in the 1400s. Humanism, the intellectual basis of the movement, looked to ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration. Humanity, particularly in a secular setting, was the focus of artistic and intellectual endeavor.
- The Northern Renaissance, starting some time after the Italian, but also spurred by merchant wealth, took its own direction. It focused on the perfection of man in a Christian context with extraordinary writers such as Shakespeare and Rabelais. Monarchy experienced a period of cultural and political dynamism.
- Communication was deeply changed by the adoption of the printing press in the 1400s. In a different sphere, the enduring **European-style family** became prevalent, based on the nuclear family.
- The Protestant Reformation, begun by Martin Luther, reshaped the religious, then the political, map of Europe. Reformers promoted public education, particularly in Calvinist areas. The role of the Catholic Church was curtailed. However, responding to the Reformation, the Catholic Church finally acquiesced to the attempts of its members to reform itself.
- Religious strife both led to and inflamed growing nationalist conflicts. The Thirty Years War between Spain and the Holy Roman Empire was fought over religious and nationalist issues. In England, the Civil War was fought over religion, the extent of parliamentary control, and royal claims to sovereignty. While the religious conflicts that afflicted Europe were resolved, the balance of political power had been seriously upset. Social changes also resulted, with some improvement in women's roles.
- An influx of gold and silver from Latin America, and markets that grew as colonization advanced, transformed the European economy. Commercial agriculture became the rule in Europe. Material wealth for the average European greatly increased.
- Others were hurt by economic change, notably the emerging **proletariat**. Popular uprisings were common in the 1600s, often leading to calls for a greater political voice. At the same time, persecution of witches burst out, fueled by fear and hatred on the part of the dispossessed poor.

Science and Politics: The Next Phase of Change

- The impact of the Scientific Revolution spread beyond its immediate sphere, deeply transforming all areas of thought in Europe.
- Copernicus discovered, or possibly passed on, the heliocentric theory, revolutionizing the western view of the cosmos. Regardless of how he developed his theory, it had an immense influence on scientific studies.
- The work of Copernicus was furthered by Kepler's planetary observations, and Galileo's research using the telescope. Broad, fundamental work done by Descartes and Newton established the scientific approach to knowledge. Scientific studies became popular, and influenced the philosophy known as Deism. According to Locke, everything could be known through the sense, with the use of reason.
- Led by France, monarchy entered a new phase: **absolutism**. Larger bureaucracies and elaborate court ritual raised monarchs to new heights. Central European monarchs followed the French model, their power strengthened by the defeat of the Turks. At the same time, ideas of the sovereignty of the people developed. In Britain and the Netherlands, representative law-making bodies limited the power of monarchs.
- All of the European countries had commonalities as nation-states: peoples bounded by common culture, within clearly defined boundaries, constantly at odds with other nations-states.

The West by 1750

- Political forms crystallized around 1750, with few important developments. Only Prussia under Frederick the Great showed any dynamism, improving agriculture and expanding religious toleration.
- The **Enlightenment**, the spread of the Scientific Revolution to all areas of intellectual endeavor, took hold in the 18th century. With great faith in the goodness and capacity of humanity, and the power of the human intellect, Enlightenment thinkers set out to fix the world. The movement took place in salons, in coffeehouses, in lecture halls, and was promoted by the growth of scholarly journals.
- Consumer demand for imported products influenced colonization. Agriculture developed with improved drainage and the importation of New World crops. Manufacturing, fueled by capitalism and employing large numbers of workers, increasingly drove the economy.
- Developments in commerce, the economy, and political forms were largely independent, but together they transformed the West.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. The Protestant Reformation in Germany was equally a religious and political revolution because it challenged all of these authorities EXCEPT:
 - (A) the papal position as head of the western church.
 - (B) the noble and aristocratic class structure within society.
 - (C) the influence of the Emperor as head of the Holy Roman Empire.
 - (D) the church's ownership of land in Germany.
 - (E) the influence of the Roman church and Italy in Germany.

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2. The Renaissance was largely influenced and financed by
 - (A) Roman Catholic church monasteries.
 - (B) medieval institutions.
 - (C) popular culture and the lifestyle of the masses.
 - (D) scientists and the Scientific Revolution.
 - (E) the urban environment and the commercial economy.
 3. In western Europe following the religious wars in the 16th and 17th centuries,
 - (A) the popes reestablished their dominant religious and political positions.
 - (B) Christian unity was restored, but the pope was no longer head of the church.
 - (C) full religious freedoms were granted to practice one's faith.
 - (D) the different Christian sects accepted a limited toleration of other groups.
 - (E) Europe abandoned religions totally because they promoted social divisions.
 4. The cause of the massive inflation in 16th century Europe was the
 - (A) Renaissance rulers' increased demand for art.
 - (B) Reformation's challenge to trust in the economy.
 - (C) extensive importation of gold and silver from overseas colonies.
 - (D) religious warfare that destroyed the economic structures.
 - (E) trade between Europe and the Muslim world.
 5. The growing commercialization of Western Europe's economy most negatively impacted the
 - (A) rulers and bureaucracy.
 - (B) aristocracy and the ruling elite.
 - (C) churches and religious establishments.
 - (D) merchants.
 - (E) peasants, serfs, and the working poor.
 6. The 17th century Scientific Revolution in western Europe was heavily influenced by
 - (A) the work of Muslim scientists.
 - (B) Hindu mathematics.
 - (C) Chinese mystical Daoism.
 - (D) Greek rational philosophies and classical scientists such as Aristotle.
 - (E) Christian theology.
 7. In Early Modern Europe, in order to secure their predominant political positions within their states, rulers of west European states had to
 - (A) limit the rights of nobles and privileges of their institutions.
 - (B) replace the Christian clergy.
 - (C) restrict the power and influence of the military.
 - (D) discourage economic and entrepreneurial incentives.
 - (E) limit the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.
 8. Mercantilism differs from capitalism because mercantilism
 - (A) discourages colonies and overseas adventures.
 - (B) encourages skilled workers to demand better pay and benefits.
 - (C) does not encourage state or government intervention in the economy.
 - (D) allows imports and exports without tariffs and barriers.
 - (E) promotes the wealth of a national economy at the expense of free trade.
 9. A nation-state differs from an empire or many medieval states because it
 - (A) grants rulers absolute rights to govern.
 - (B) rules a state with one dominant people, government, language, and culture.
 - (C) limits the power of monarchs and rulers.
 - (D) has many large and different ethnic groups under a common government.
 - (E) is democratic and representative of the people's wishes.

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10. The relationship between the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment is
- (A) that the Scientific Revolution's rational approach was rejected by the Enlightenment.
 - (B) that Enlightenment philosophies were founded on the rational approach of the Scientific Revolution.
 - (C) that both embraced Christian mysticism.
 - (D) that both rejected the empirical approach to the truth.
 - (E) that Enlightenment ideas formed the basis of the Scientific Revolution.

Document-Based Question

How did the views toward children in different societies affect their education, and their economic and social status in the period 1450 to 1750? Do you see more commonalities or regional/cultural differences? What types of additional documents could help you understand views toward children in the world at this time?

Historical Background: The period 1450–1750 saw a rise of several new trends in western European intellectual history, including: the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment as well as a Commercial Revolution and the inclusion of the Atlantic Basin in the global trade network. It also was a period of the development of Neo-Confucianism in Asia and an emphasis on domestic trade and industry in China and Japan.

DOCUMENT 1 Source: Letter from George C. to Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper of the House of Commons, 1668. Although such a bill was introduced and debated in Parliament in 1670/71, it was not passed.

I have inquired after the child that was lost, and have spoken with the parents. His name was John Brookes. The last night he was after much trouble and charge freed again, and he relates that there are divers other children in the ship crying, that were enticed away from their parents, that are kept and detained in the ship. The name of the ship is the Seven Brothers and as I hear bound for Virginia; and she is now fallen down to Gravesend, and, if a speedy course be not taken to stop her she will be gone. I heard of two other ships in the river that are at the same work, although the parents of the children see their children in the ship, yet without money they will not let them have them. The woman and the child will wait on you, where you approach and when to give you this relation and 'tis believed there are divers people and others carried away that are strangers come from other parts, so that it were good to get the ships searched, and to see who are against their wills, carried away. Pray you move it in the House to have a law to make it death.* I am confident your mercy to these innocent children will ground a blessing on yourself your own. Pray let not your great affairs put this good work out of your head to stop the ships and discharge the children.

Your most humble servant
George C. [last name torn away]

SONG XX AGAINST IDLENESS AND MISCHIEF

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower.

How skilfully she builds her cell!
How neat she spreads the wax!
And labors hard to store it well
With the sweet food she makes.

In works of labour or of skill,
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

In books, or works, or helpful play,
Let my first years be past:
That I may give for every day
Some good account at last.

SONG XXII OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

Let children that would fear the Lord
Hear what their teachers say;
With reverence meet their parents' word,
And with delight obey.

Have you not heard what dreadful plagues
Are threaten'd by the Lord,
To him that breaks his father's law,
Or mocks his mother's word?

What heavy guilt upon him lies!
How cursed is his name!
The ravens shall pick out his eyes,
And eagles eat the same.

But those who worship God, and give
Their parents honour due.
Here on this earth they long shall live,
And live hereafter too.

DOCUMENT 3 Source: From “Boston Records, 1600–1701,” in *Seventh Report of the Boston Record Commissioners* (Boston, 1881), p. 67

Boston Case Regarding Poor Children, 1672

It was ordered that notice be given to the several persons under-written that they, within one month after the date hereof, dispose of their several Children (therein nominated or mentioned) abroad for servants, to serve by Indentures for some term of years, according to their ages and capacities, which if they refuse or neglect to do the Magistrates and Selectmen [city officials] will take their said children from them, and place them with according to this order dispose of their children do make return of the names of Masters and children so put to service, with their Indentures to the Selectmen at their next monthly Meeting being the last Monday in April next.

John Glovers daughter about twelve years of age.

Bryan Morohews daughter-in-law Martha Dorman about twelve years.

John Bohamans daughter Mary about fourteen years.

Robert Peggs daughter Alice above twelve years.

John Griffens daughter about ten years.

William Spowells daughter about twenty years.

William Brownes daughter about fifteen years unless she can excuse the service of a Nurse attending upon her weak Mother.

Widow Crocums three daughters.

William Hambeltons daughter about twelve years.

Edward Golds son about twenty years.

John Dawes his son about seventeen years.

Thomas Williams his son Charles about eight years.

DOCUMENT 4 Source: *Common Sense Teachings for Japanese Children*, a manual for tutors of aristocratic children, Kaibara Ekiken (1630–1714), physician, tutor, and Confucian scholar for the Kuroda lords, Fukuoka, Japan

In January when children reach the age of six, teach them numbers one through ten, and the names given to designate 100, 1,000, 10,000 and 1000,000,000. Let them know the four directions, East West, North, and South. Assess their native intelligence and differentiate between the quick and slow learners. Teach them Japanese pronunciation from the age of six or seven, and let them learn how to write....From this time on, teach them to respect their elders, and let them know the directions between upper and lower classes and between the young and old. Let them learn to use the correct expressions.

When the children reach the age of seven, do not let the boys and girls sit together, nor must you allow them to dine together....

For the eighth year. This is the age when the ancients began studying the book *Little Learnings*.^{*} Beginning at this time, teach the youngsters etiquette befitting their age, and caution them not to commit an act of impoliteness....Children must also learn how to behave while taking their meals.

Children must be taught filial piety and obedience. To serve the parents well is called filial piety, and to serve one's seniors well is called obedience.... Then comes the next lesson which included respect for one's seniors, listening to their commands and not holding them in contempt. One's seniors include elder brothers, elder sisters, uncles, aunts, and cousins who are older and worthy of respect.... As the children grow older, teach them to love their younger brothers and to be compassionate to the employees and servants. Teach them also the respect due the teachers and the behavior codes governing friends.... Teach them how to pay respect to others according to the social positions held by them.... Caution them not to desire the possessions of others, or to stoop below one's dignity in consuming excessive amounts of food and drink....

Those who are born in the high-ranking families have the heavy obligations of becoming leaders of the people, of having people entrusted to their care, and of governing them. Therefore, without fail, a teacher must be selected for them when they are still young.

* The *Little Learning* was written in 1187 by the Song Scholar Liu Zucheng, a disciple of Zhu Xi. A book of instruction for young children, it contains rules of behavior and excerpts from the Classics and other works.

DOCUMENT 5 Source: Agreement Made Between Parents of a Boy About to Become an Apprentice and His Master—Early 17th-Century London

Taverns and alehouses he shall not haunt, dice, cards or any other unlawful games he shall not use, fornication with any woman he shall not commit, matrimony with any woman he shall not contract. He shall no absent himself by night or by day without his master's leave but be a true and faithful servant.

Finding and allowing unto his said servant meat, drink, apparel, washing, lodging and all other things during the said term of seven years, and to give unto his said apprentice at the end of the said term double apparel, to wit, one suit for holydays and one suit for worken days.

DOCUMENT 6 Source: Olaudah Equiano, *Enslaved Captive* (an autobiography. He was born in 1745)

My father, besides many slaves, had a numerous family, of which seven lived to grow up, including myself and a sister, who was the only daughter. As I was the youngest of the sons, I became, of course, the greatest favorite with my mother, and was always with her; and she used to take particular pains to form my mind. I was trained up from my earliest years in the arts of agriculture and war: My daily exercise was shooting and throwing javelins; and my mother adorned me with emblems, after the manner of our greatest warriors. In this way I grew up till I was turned the age of eleven, when an end was put to my happiness in the following manner:—... One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual, and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both; and, without giving us time to cry out, or make resistance, they stopped our mouths, and ran off with us into the nearest wood.

Free-Response Question

Compare the impact of the Protestant Reformation and the Scientific Revolution.

What areas of life did each affect, and how deeply did each add to the transformation of Europe?

ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS

Multiple-Choice Questions

- **1. (B) is correct.** The only challenges were to those traditional structures that involved the church. Popular challenges to aristocratic privileges would come much later.
- **2. (E) is correct.** Merchants and rulers of highly urbanized areas drove the Renaissance both by their financial support and by the influence of their own tastes.
- **3. (D) is correct.** The Wars of Religion did result in a general acceptance of religious freedom—for the Christian religions. This excluded a general intolerance for Catholics in the British Isles.
- **4. (C) is correct.** The massive influx of gold and silver from looting in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies caused widespread inflation.
- **5. (E) is correct.** Economic change brought profit to rulers, nobles, and merchants, but dislocation often had an adverse impact on the rural poor and the growing proletariat.
- **6. (D) is correct.** While many of the scientific principles of the Scientific Revolution were based on the work of Arab scholars, the rational approach that drove it was based on Greek thought.
- **7. (A) is correct.** The nobility of Europe in the Middle Ages had possessed political, judicial, and military privileges, which had to be curtailed to increase central power.
- **8. (E) is correct.** Mercantilism differs from capitalism in promoting national wealth over free trade and individual gain. It relies on tariffs obtained through government intervention, and is based on colonies.
- **9. (B) is correct.** B is the definition of a nation-state. Unlike A, C, and E, it does not imply any particular *form* of government. D is the antithesis of the nation-state.
- **10. (B) is correct.** In the Enlightenment, the principles of the Scientific Revolution became an all-embracing philosophy, applied to all areas of human thought and endeavor.

Document-Based Question Sample Response

How did the views toward children in different societies affect their education, and their economic and social status in the period 1450 to 1750? Do you see more commonalties or regional/cultural differences? What types of additional documents could help you understand views toward children in the world at this time?

Attitudes towards children in the early modern period (1450–1750) in the world varied due to their social status and this, in turn, affected their educa-

tion. In all societies children were trained to be productive adult members of society, so training differed both by class and by gender. Religious tradition, in particular Neo-Confucianism and Protestantism, played a part in molding these views, as did the changing economic conditions of the early modern period. In order to better assess various cultural differences in attitudes towards children it would be helpful to have documents from Islamic countries to compare or contrast religious views of Muslims, Christians, and Neo-Confucianists as they advocate types of education. This is especially important in a culture that stressed literacy in order to read the Qur'an and was formerly a center of culture and learning. Native American views of economic and social status of children both before and after contact with European cultures would be helpful in assessing possible change in attitude due to the cultural exchange that occurred in the Americas at this time.

As the Americas were brought into the world trade network in the early modern period, three centuries of economic growth followed. As many of the native populations had been decimated by European diseases, the demand for labor increased. This was partially satisfied by using child labor. Children were transported, either legally or illegally, as indentured servants in the colonies (**DOCUMENT 1**) supplementing children born in the colonies (**DOCUMENT 2**). However, even this was not sufficient to satisfy the labor needs in the Americas. Many children laborers were slaves captured in Africa as part of the extensive slave trade that operated across the Atlantic at this time (**DOCUMENT 6**). Despite the economic conditions that seemed to justify child labor and thus apprentice training for such labor (**DOCUMENT 5**), not all in western societies believed that children should be forced at such a young age to be transported for labor. The British author of the letter to the British House of Commons objected to the plight of these children. Judging by the quality of the writing and the passionate plea, it may be surmised that George C. was a member of the English gentry, but not in a position of power to change the situation. Although he tried to appeal to the emotions of the representatives in government, Parliament did not pass a bill to curb illegal transport of child labor by instituting a death penalty for the offense. Government approval for child labor is also evident in Boston, where the city ordered parents apprentice or indenture their children. There was definitely a class bias in this action as the law was applied to children of poor families. (**DOCUMENT 3**). Thus in western culture, the children of the working and poor classes were expected to work or be trained to work.

Western societies were not the only societies that saw a need to educate children differently due to their social and economic status. The Japanese and African elites designated different kinds of training for those expected to lead. "Those who are born in the high-ranking families have the heavy obligations of becoming leaders of the people, of having people entrusted to their care, and of governing them. Therefore, without fail, a teacher must be selected for them when they are still young." (**DOCUMENT 4**). The son of a warrior, Olaudah Equiano was trained as a child in the arts of agriculture and war, two activities he would be expected to continue as an adult in Africa. (**DOCUMENT 6**).

Religious attitudes during this age formulated attitudes toward children, in particular stressing obedience and industriousness. Rhyming tunes reinforced the Protestant work ethic in the early modern period. (**DOCUMENT 2**). The very name of the song links idleness with mischief, and those not working hard leave themselves open for the devil's influence.

Free-Response Essay Sample Response

Compare the impact of the Protestant Reformation and the Scientific Revolution.

What areas of life did each affect, and how deeply did each add to the transformation of Europe?

The Protestant Reformation changed the political map of Europe, and added a new bone of contention to conflict among nations. It also meant cultural fragmentation in Europe, as the unifying dominance of the Catholic Church was ended. The Reformation brought with it changes in marriage and attitudes towards children, and an emphasis on education. It can be argued that its impact was limited to the cultural sphere. The Scientific Revolution, confined initially to intellectuals, became extremely popular, and its methods and mental approach of skepticism profoundly changed the western mentality. The Enlightenment that was its product saw changes in political traditions, social reforms, the economy, and intellectual traditions. Together they produced deep changes in European life and culture.