

Exercise walk-through

Absolutist Approaches to Power ■ 3.7

eXercise

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

Method — 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.

Method — 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.

Method — 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.

Method — 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.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State the theoretical justification of absolutist rule.

Solution 2.1

Worked steps

authority derives from God **B1** and is answerable to God alone, so it is not subject to subjects' consent **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

State two things nobles received under the absolutist bargain.

Solution 2.2

Method: The bargain

Worked steps

any two of: exemption from much taxation; monopoly of high office; confirmed authority over peasants [B2](#).

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

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

- (a) State one reason.
- (b) State what this shows about absolutism.

Solution 2.3

Worked steps

(a) distance, poor communication or the cost of enforcement **B1**. (b) that absolutist power was limited in practice however it was described in theory **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Under absolutist theory, the ruler is answerable to

A parliament

B God alone

C the nobility

D the courts

Solution 3.1

Method: The justification

A parliament

B God alone 

C the nobility

D the courts

Worked steps

B. divine sanction with no earthly check is the claim.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

Absolutism is best described as

A the defeat of the nobility

B a settlement with elites

C a republic

D rule by consent

Solution 3.2

A the defeat of the nobility

B a settlement with elites 

C a republic

D rule by consent

Worked steps

B. elites exchanged political power for privilege.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

Nobles are exempted from much taxation.

- (a) State what they gave up in return.
- (b) Explain why the crown accepted the exemption.

Solution 3.3

Method: The bargain

Worked steps

(a) independent political power **B1**. (b) noble cooperation was needed to govern the provinces **B1**, and exemption bought it more cheaply than coercion **B1**.