

# FREDERICK THE GREAT

b. January 24, 1712 – d. August 17, 1786

*“The greatest and noblest pleasure which men can have in this world is to discover new truths; and the next is to shake off old prejudices.”*

Frederick II, also known as Frederick the Great, ruled as King of Prussia from 1740-1786. Through innovative military tactics and tolerant domestic policies, King Frederick united previously disconnected territories on opposite ends of the Holy Roman Empire into a cohesive kingdom with Prussia.

Frederick's predecessor, his father, presided over both his kingdom and his family without compassion. In 1730, when Frederick was 18 years old, he planned a getaway to England with Lieutenant Katte. Before the two men could depart, they were arrested and condemned to death for desertion. Frederick I had Katte executed in his son's presence. Frederick II escaped death and was sentenced to prison.

Frederick II received a royal pardon six months into his sentence. He ascended to the throne in 1739. He immediately began expanding Prussia's territory during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748). During the first stage of this war, the First Silesian War (1740-1742), Frederick II captured the rich Austrian city of Silesia.

Regarded as one of the greatest tactical geniuses of all time, Frederick II used advanced techniques, such as the oblique order, to overwhelm foes that outnumbered Prussian forces. During his reign, Austria, France, Russia, Saxony and Sweden were allied as part of the Diplomatic Revolution. Frederick the Great's invasion of Saxony in 1756 initiated the Seven Years' War. Though allied with only Great Britain and Hanover, Prussia prevailed when the anti-Prussian coalition collapsed in 1763. Frederick II's ability to retain Silesia during this battle solidified Prussia's status as a power.

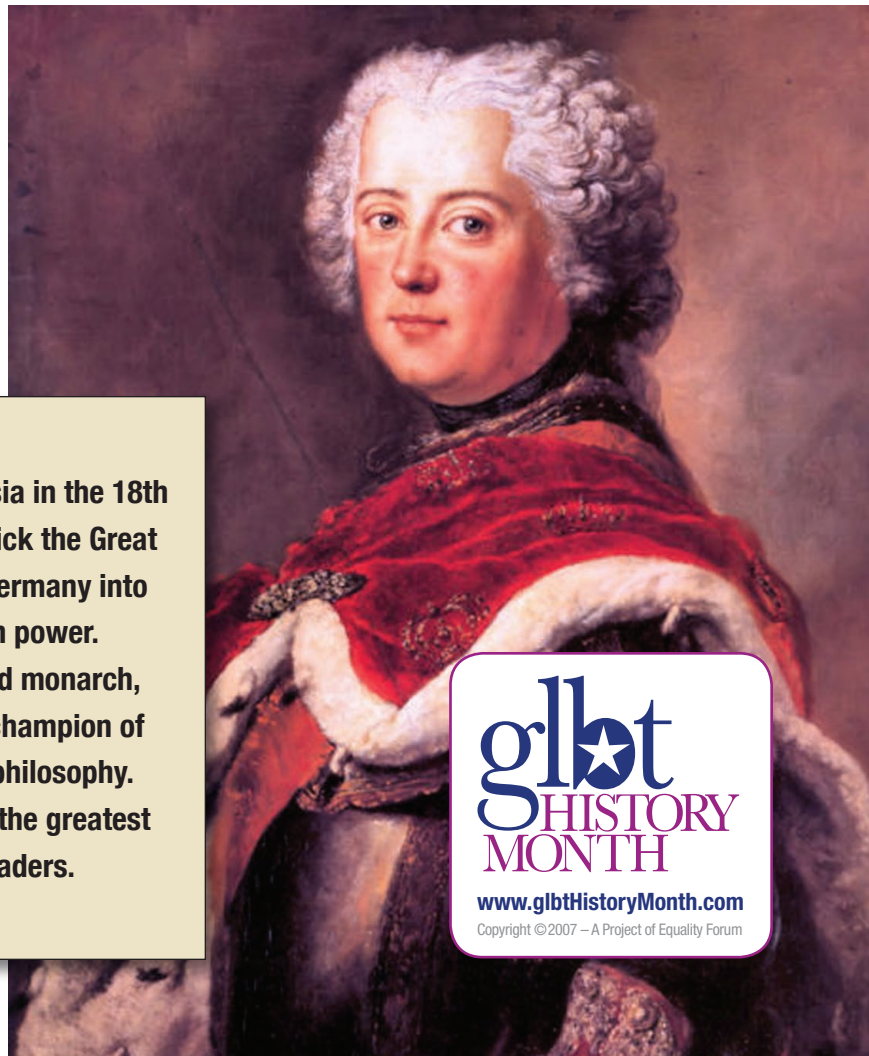
In addition to his military successes, which included the annexation of part of Poland in 1772, Frederick II modernized much of Prussia and fostered economic and artistic growth in his kingdom. State revenues doubled as he simultaneously promoted philosophy and the arts. A musician, Frederick the Great played the transverse flute and composed 122 sonatas and four symphonies.

Disagreeing with Machiavelli's ruthless “ends justify the means” philosophy of rule, Frederick the Great ran his kingdom according to the more modern ethical code he laid out in the “Anti-Machiavel” (1739). Under his reign, Frederick II abolished torture and corporeal punishment and provided religious freedom.

**As King of Prussia in the 18th century, Frederick the Great transformed Germany into a European power.**

**An enlightened monarch, he became a champion of the arts and philosophy.**

**He was one of the greatest military leaders.**



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