POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE: 15th AND 16th CENTURIES
1. THE POPULATION.

- In the XIV century the "Black Death" (the plague) that broke out in Europe in 1348, devastated the whole continent. A third the population died. In 1500 the population was recovered, and during the 16th century number grew.
2. THE ECONOMY.

- In the 15th and 16th centuries the European economy expanded because of the growth of the population.
- There was a greater demand for agricultural products and crafts.
- Geographical discoveries led to more trade.
- The banking system improved.
- Cities grew because of the fact that artisans and trade were concentrated there.
3. THE SOCIETY.

Royalty

Lesser nobility

craftsmen, merchants, peasants with land

upper nobility and clergy

SEPARATION OF PRIVILEGED AND NON-PRIVILEGED CLASSES

Bourgeoisie: powerful merchants, bankers

Poor: peasants, low paid workers
Society was still divided into 3 estates, but some important changes took place:

- The nobles and the clergy continued to be the privileged estates: they didn’t pay taxes, they held the most important positions,…

- However, the bourgeoisie became very influential. It was made up of rich and powerful merchant and banking families. Some of them married into noble families; others lent money to the kings and received privileges in exchange (e.g. the family of German bankers called Fugger, in Spain).
-Peasants continued to live under harsh conditions and most of them were very poor. However in Western Europe conditions improved, because they became free and were no longer serfs.
4. THE AUTHORITARIAN MONARCHIES.

- In the 15th century monarchs reinforced their power by reducing the influence of the nobles, the clergy, the municipalities and the Parliaments.
- In order to achieve an authoritarian monarchy, kings took the following steps:
  - They created a bureaucracy and a professional and centralised administration;
  - They built up an army that followed their orders;
  - They increased taxes to finance their activities;
  - They created a diplomatic system to maintain relations with other countries.
  - The court was settled down in a specific city.
5. THE EUROPEAN STATES.

- In the Middle Ages, Europe was divided into many small states. But in the 15th century, many states began to be united by marriage alliances and by conquest.

- **France**: after the Hundred Years War against England, the country was unified. France became a powerful rival in the continent. It fought against Spain because of the control of Italy. Charles VII and Francis I were 2 of the most important monarchs in this period.

- **Russia**: Ivan III the Great (1462-1505) unified the country and made himself czar. Ivan IV the Terrible (1533-1584) subdued the nobility and began the expansion of Russia to the South and towards Asia.
**England**: during the 15th century there was a civil war that weakened the nobility. **Henry VII** founded the new dynasty: the Tudors. His son, king **Henry VIII** (1509-1547), took advantage of this situation and increased royal power in the **early 16th century**.

**Portugal**: it was one of the greatest powers of Europe. Portugal created a vast **ultramarine empire**. In 1580 the king of Spain, **Philip II**, became king of Portugal, too.

**The Holy Roman Empire**: was divided into many small principalities, although every of its princes had to respect the figure of the **Emperor**.

**The Ottoman Empire**: **Mohamed II the Conqueror** (1451-1481) conquered Constantinople and part of the Balkans. **Soliman II the Magnificent** (1520-1566) extended the empire in Europe **as far as Hungary**.
European kingdoms
6. THE PENINSULAR KINGDOMS.

In the first half of the 15th century, the Iberian Peninsula was divided into 5 territories:

- The Crown of Castile: was marked by continuous revolts of the nobles in the 15th century. When king Henry IV died in 1474, the Castilians were divided between the supporters of his daughter Joanna la Beltraneja and the supporters of his sister Isabella. The latest one was proclaimed queen in 1479 after 5 years of civil war.
- **Crown of Aragón**: Martin I died with no heirs. In 1412, a branch of the Castilian royal family (the **Trastámara**), took the power with **Ferdinand of Antequera** as the king.

- **Navarre**: was a small kingdom enclosed between powerful neighbours (Castile, Aragón and France).

- **Islamic kingdom of Granada**: forced to pay parias to Castile in order to avoid the final conquest.

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7. THE DYNASTIC UNION OF SPAIN.

- 1469: Ferdinand, son of the king of Aragón, married Isabella, sister of the king of Castile.
- 1477: Isabella became queen of Castile.
- 1479: Ferdinand became king of Aragón.

Both of the crowns were united, and the Catholic Monarchs governed their territories together, but each kingdom had its own laws and institutions.

- 1504: Isabella dies, and Ferdinand became regent of Castile because of the insanity of Joanna the Mad, the Catholic Monarchs daughter.
- 1516: Ferdinand dies and his grandson Charles I became king of Castile and Aragón.
8. CATHOLIC MONARCHS´ RULE.

- Domestic policies:
  - They created the Holy Brotherhood, a judicial police force, to fight against bandits and the abuses of the nobility.
  - They reorganised justice.
  - They strengthened the Royal Council against the Cortes.
  - They appointed corregidores to establish royal authority in the towns.
  - They strengthened the Royal Treasury.
  - They created a permanent army.
Territorial expansion:
- 1492: Kingdom of Granada was conquered and the conquest of America began.
- 1496: they finished the conquest of the Canary Islands.
- 1497: Melilla was conquered, and later on Orán.
- 1504: the kingdom of Naples was annexed to the Crown of Aragón.
- 1512: they annexed the Kingdom of Navarre.
The territorial expansion
• **Religious unity:**
  - 1478: they founded the **Tribunal of the Inquisition** to prosecute heretics.
  - 1492: all **Jews** had to convert to Christianity or leave Spain. Converted Jews were called **Conversos**.
  - 1512: all **Mudejares** had to convert to Christianity or leave Spain. Converted Muslims were called **Moriscos**.