**Frederick the Great-King of Prussia**

**Early Life**

Born Frederick Wilhelm, he became Frederick II after inheriting the throne

from his father in 1740. His father and family spent much of their lives creating

one of the best-trained armies in all of Europe. It was once said that “Prussia is not

a state which possesses an army, but an army which possesses a state.” The most

powerful nobles in Prussia, known as Junkers, had the highest positions in the

army. Frederick had no choice but to pursue a military career.

From a very early age Frederick was trained in the art of war. His father

hired a tutor to make his son love the profession of a solder and believe that

nothing else in the world could bring a prince fame and honor except warfare. He

was forced to read many military books, participate in military drill and training,

and set up miniature armies and conduct fake battles with toy soldiers.

Frederick had a problem; he did not want to be a soldier. He preferred to

play the flute and write poetry. He loved music, the theatre, and French literature.

These pursuits were unacceptable to his father, and he decided to run away. When

his plan was discovered he was thrown in prison and forced to watch a friend who

helped plan the escape, lose his head.

**Military Success**

Frederick gave in to his father’s demands and continued his military

education. When his father died he became king and began a successful military

career. He invaded Silesia, part of the Austrian Empires, and began the War of

Austrian Succession where his harsh military training took effect. During the

Seven Years War (1756-1763), he was able to defeat Austria, Russia, Sweden,

Saxony, and France. He later controlled a portion of Poland and ended Austrian

dominance over the German States. He made brilliant use of his disciplined army,

expanded Prussian territory, and forced all to accept Prussia as a great power. His

exploits earned him the name Frederick the Great.

**King and Administrator**

As ruler of Prussia, Frederick controlled all aspects of the government, and

closely monitored his officials. His many accomplishments included increasing

the size and efficiency of the army, improving agriculture, introducing

manufacturing, abolishing serfdom, developing a better education system, and

introducing the potato. He believed in religious tolerance, abolished torture and

capital punishment, and contributed to *The Academy of Sciences*.