

Aim #4: Why did France erupt into revolution in 1789?

Stages of the French Revolution

National Assembly (moderate phase) 1789-1791

- Third Estate takes Tennis Court Oath
- Storming of Bastille
- Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen
- National Assembly sells church lands and puts Catholic Church under state control
- Paris Commune emerges
- Constitution of 1791 limits monarchy and creates Legislative Assembly
- Legislative Assembly declares war on Austria, Prussia, and Britain

National Assembly (radical phase) 1792-1794

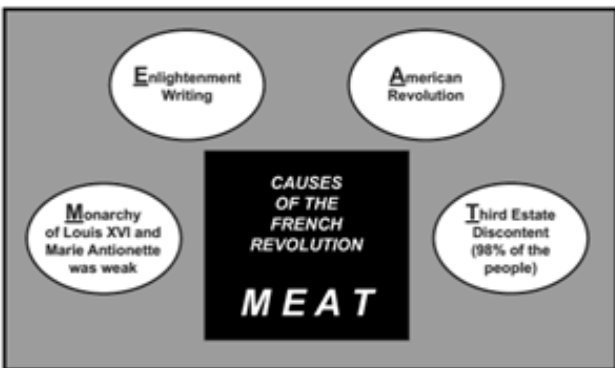
- Radicals take control of Legislative Assembly and set up National Convention
- National Convention abolishes monarchy and declares France a republic
- Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette executed
- Committee of Public Safety set up
- Robespierre leads Reign of Terror: 40,000 people executed

Directory 1795-1799

- Moderate Constitution of 1795
- Five-man Directory established
- Riots suppressed
- Corrupt leadership
- Chaos threatened

Age of Napoleon 1799-1815

- Napoleon Bonaparte helps overthrow Directory
- Consulate set up with Napoleon as first consul
- Napoleon names himself consul for life, and later Emperor of the French
- Economic and religious reforms instituted
- Napoleonic Code established
- Military victories create French empire in Europe
- French defeat in Battle of the Nations leads to Napoleon's abdication and exile



Mini Lecture

- Under France's **ancien regime**, there were 3 social classes or estates. **First Estate** (the clergy) & **Second Estate** (nobles) enjoyed great wealth, privilege, & held top jobs in gov't army, & courts. The vast majority of the population was the **Third Estate**, made up by the **Bourgeoisie** (middle class professionals), rural peasants, & poor urban workers.
- Members of the third estate resented the privileges enjoyed by their social betters- 1st & 2nd estates were exempt from paying taxes.
- There was also inequality in the judicial system where the king can imprison anyone for any reason for any period of time without even being tried for a crime.
- Enlightenment ideas led people to question the inequalities of the old social structure. The American Revolution served as model.
- Economic troubles added to the social unrest. **Deficit spending** brought forth by **King Louis XVI** (overspending on lavish courts) had left France deeply in debt. In the 1780s, bad harvests sent food (especially grain & bread) soaring & many hungry.
- To make reforms to solve the financial crisis, the King called for a meeting of the **Estates General** (a body that included representatives from all 3 classes) & asked all 3 Estates to prepare a list of grievances. Some lists demonstrated the high level of resentment among the classes.
- The Estates General met in May 1789. After weeks of stalemate on voting (3rd Estate outvoted), delegates of the Third Estate abandoned the meeting & formed the **National Assembly**- claiming to represent all the people. Later, when they were locked out of their meeting place, they took their famous **Tennis Court Oath**- swearing never to separate until they had established a just constitution.
- On July 14, 1789, the streets of Paris buzzed with rumors that royal troops were going to occupy the city & shut down the Assembly. More than 800 Parisians assembled outside the **Bastille** (a royal prison) demanding weaponry stored there. When the commander refused, the enraged mob stormed the Bastille, sparking the French Revolution.
- The **Storming of Bastille** was a symbol which gave Parisians a sense of empowerment against years of abuse by the monarchy. (**Bastille Day** is still celebrated in France today as Independence Day).
- In the countryside, peasants rose up against the nobles, burning manor houses & tax records. When people refused to pay taxes, the gov't broke down & the king was forced to accept the revolutionary gov't led by the National Assembly.
- The French Revolution was a political revolution in which French people challenged traditional society & overthrew King Louis's monarchy & instituted a more democratic gov't.

Review Questions:

1. Identify & explain 3 causes that led to the French Revolution?
2. What immediate cause (event) began the French Revolution?

Enduring Issue:

Power- fights over how to distribute power are common in history (Three Estates in France).



THE FRENCH BUDGET: 1788

Expenses	Francs
Interest on debts	318,000,000
Court	35,000,000
Other purposes	276,000,000
Total	629,000,000
Revenue	503,000,000
Deficit	126,000,000

What were the social, economic & political issues that led to the French Revolution?

Historical Context

Regular people were unhappy with their situation in France because the estate system divided people into three groups and gave all of the power and wealth to the first two estates. In addition, the government was an absolute monarchy, so the king had all of the power and the people had very little. The kings of France put the country into debt by building palaces like the Palace of Versailles and waging expensive wars. The people of France had to pay for the debt with taxes, which made them frustrated. Eventually, the inequality and abuses of the government led to the French Revolution.

Social Issues: The Three Estates

The **estates system** was the **class structure** or **hierarchy** in France before the French Revolution. The same groups that held power during the Middle Ages still had control after the Middle Ages ended. **clergy**: people who work for the church like the Pope, bishops, and priests. Nobility were wealthy landowners & people with high status in society. Commoners were peasants & city workers.

Image 3 The Three Estates, You Should Hope this Game Will Be Over Soon, 1788



Image 1

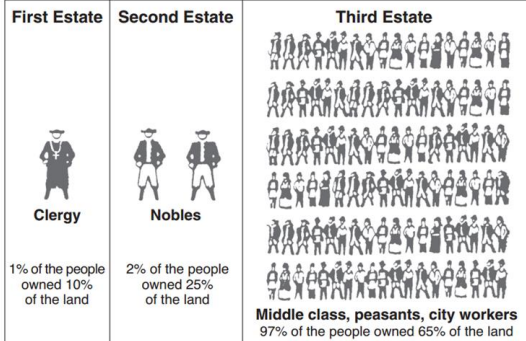
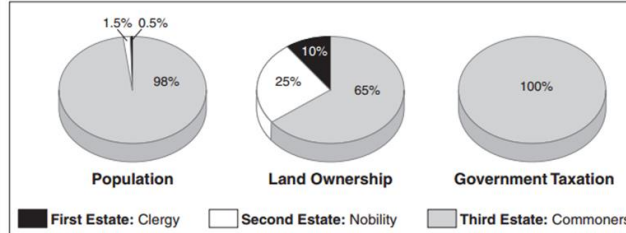


Image 2



- 1) What does image 3 reveal about social issues in pre-revolutionary France?
- 2) Based on the images above, identify the social issues facing pre-revolutionary France & how might that lead to a revolution?

Political Issues: Absolute Monarchy

... **Powers of the king.** —The King, Louis XVI, was absolute. He ruled by the divine right theory which held that he had received his power to govern from God and was therefore responsible to God alone. He appointed all civil officials and military officers. He made and enforced the laws. He could declare war and make peace. He levied taxes and spent the people's money as he saw fit. He controlled the expression of thought by a strict censorship of speech and press. By means of *lettres de cachet* (sealed letters which were really blank warrants for arrest) he could arbitrarily [without reason] imprison anyone without trial for an indefinite period. He lived in his magnificent palace at Versailles, completely oblivious to the rising tide of popular discontent [frustration]. ...



- 3) Using the text above, identify 5 powers held by King Louis XVI & describe why these powers may lead the French people to revolt against their government.

Economic Issues: Debt and Rising Costs

Debt is money that is owed to someone else. When a country is in debt, it means that they have to pay the money back to whomever it is owed leaving less money for the country to pay for other things.

Palace of Versailles

The Palace of Versailles was a royal château [castle] in Versailles and was the center of political power in France from 1682 until 1789. Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette lived in the palace before the French Revolution. They were known for throwing lavish parties.

France's government was in enormous **debt**. King Louis XIV (1638-1715), Louis XV (1710-1774), and Louis XVI (1754-1793) added to the debt, borrowing money to finance the following:

Date	Event that Increased the French Debt
1678-1789	Building of, additions to, and upkeep of the Palace of Versailles
1756-1763	Seven Years' War: Fought against their rivals at the time, Great Britain, and several other European powers in Europe and North America.
1775-1783	American Revolution: France lent 1.3 billion livres, soldiers, and ships to the American colonists in their fight against the British.
1678-1789	Extravagant lifestyles of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette

- 4) What did the kings of France spend money on that put the country into debt?
- 5) Which of these costs seem justified? Which costs seem unjustified?
- 6) Often to pay back debt, a government will do two things. One, they will cut back on the amount of money they spend. Two, they will raise taxes. Based on your understanding of the estates system, if the king raised taxes in 1789, who would have to pay them?

