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The French Revolution

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CHOICES
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Michael Kennedy
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France in 1789

Introduction: The Summer of 1789

On July 14 1789, several thousand French workers attacked and captured the Bastille—a military fortress and prison in the city of Paris. Many were hungry and looking for food. They were also looking for gunpowder to defend themselves against soldiers called to Paris by France's King Louis XVI. The king had said that the soldiers were there to preserve public order. But the workers suspected the soldiers were there to disband the National Assembly, a new representative body that had just formed against the wishes of the king.

The National Assembly hoped to solve the serious problems facing France. Economic conditions were desperate and France's government was nearly bankrupt from fighting a succession of wars. Most recently France had spent a fortune helping Britain's American colonies achieve independence. Many of France's people faced hunger and starvation. Riots over the price of bread were common.

Worries about the arrival of the king's troops disrupted the work of the month-old National Assembly. When they found themselves locked out of the assembly's regular meeting place, the delegates swore an oath on a nearby tennis court to remain in session until they created a new constitution for France. This, they believed, was an important step to solving France's troubles.

> ***"We swear never to separate ourselves from the National Assembly, and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the realm is drawn up and fixed upon solid foundations."***
>
> —The Tennis Court Oath, June 20, 1789

Today the fall of the Bastille is the event that France and the world use to mark the French Revolution. But the revolution did not occur in a single moment. In fact, the fall of the Bastille was closer to the beginning of the revolution than the end. The French Revolution would last for another ten years. During this time France would have three constitutions and repeated changes of government. It would fight a series of international wars and a civil war. It would go through a period of brutal dictatorship known as the Terror. It would also produce "The Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen," a document that has had a profound impact on contemporary thinking about human rights and the role of government.

Why is the French Revolution important to understand today?

The ten years of the French Revolution were a time of intense debate and upheaval. The upheaval would have profound effects in France and beyond. Borders in Europe would change, many would suffer and die, and new ideas about politics and individual rights would emerge that would reshape the world. It is these far-reaching effects that contribute to our interest in the French Revolution today.

As you read in the coming days, try to consider the following questions: Why was there upheaval and change in France? What were the events that led to the storming of the Bastille and eventually to revolution? How did the French people determine what sort of government they would have? Why did efforts to create a democratic republic fail? Why did those committed to political rights resort to terror and dictatorship? How did the French Revolution contribute to new thinking about the relationship between people and their government?

In these readings and the activities that accompany them, you will explore the social, political, and economic conditions of France in the eighteenth century. You will then be asked to recreate the debate in the National Assembly as it pondered what should be in the constitution of France. Finally, you will consider the outcome of these debates and the course of the French Revolution.

Part I: France under the Old Regime

What was life like in eighteenth century France? It is safe to say that it was very different from the life we are familiar with today. Yet without some sense of the life and beliefs of the French people at the time, it is difficult to answer the question: why did the French Revolution take place?

To help you understand what led to the revolution that began in 1789, Part I of your reading traces the contours of French social and political life during the Old Regime (Old Regime was a name given to the system of rule in France before 1789). You will read about the economic conditions facing the French people. You will examine the role of social classes and of the Roman Catholic Church, and see how political decisions were made. You will also consider some of the new ideas about society that were beginning to circulate in France at that time.

A New King

In May 1774, a young man of nineteen became King Louis XVI of France. He succeeded his grandfather who died at the age of sixty-four from smallpox. His father had died when the king was eleven. Like his grandfather before him, Louis XVI came to the throne through dynastic succession (when members of a family continue to hold political power from generation to generation). The king was a member of the Bourbon family, which had ruled France since 1589.

How much power did the king claim for himself?

The king was at the top of the social and political order in France. At the time, most French people believed that God had given the king authority to rule. This idea is known as the "divine right of kings." Not only did the king represent France, but all authority of the government resided in him. (This type of government is referred to as an absolute monarchy.)

> ***"It is in my person alone that sovereign power resides.... It is from me alone that my courts derive their authority; and the plenitude of their authority, which they exercise only in my name, remains always in me.... It is to me alone that legislative power belongs, without any dependence and without any division.... The whole public order emanates from me, and the rights and interests of the nation...are necessarily joined with mine and rest only in my hands."***
>
> —King Louis XV, 1766

King Louis XVI certainly also thought of his power as absolute, but France in the late eighteenth century was a complex society with competing ideas and political interests. Some in France were beginning to question the absolute authority of the king.

French Society

When Louis XVI became king, France had about twenty-six million inhabitants, not counting its colonies overseas. There were distinct social classes, complex political divisions, and rigid hierarchies. Roughly speaking, the wealthiest and most powerful group were the nobility, who numbered approximately 300,000. Beneath this group were the approximately three million *bourgeoisie*, a social class made up of professionals such as merchants, judges, legal officials, and small factory owners. The largest group was the peasants, numbering more than twenty million. (The word peasant is derived from the Old French word *paisent*, meaning "someone who lives in the country.") The peasants were at the bottom of the hierarchy; the king was at the top. Life was often very difficult for those near the bottom.

Who were the peasants?

Peasants lived all over France, had different customs, and even spoke different

languages. The vast majority of peasants (more than 85 percent) worked in agriculture. Although there was no such thing as a typical peasant—life varied widely in the different regions of France—all shared certain experiences. Peasants were expected to obey their "betters" and pay dues and taxes to local nobility, the church, and to the crown. Life was filled with hardship, hunger, and suffering. Death was commonplace due to overwork, poor nutrition, and illness. One in five died before reaching the age of one. Less than half lived to the age of fifteen.

What was life like for peasants in the countryside?

Poverty was the greatest challenge for peasants in the countryside. Most peasant families could afford a one or two-room dirt floored house, which they might share with any farm animals that they owned. These houses generally had little to no ventilation and were breeding grounds for disease.

Even though most peasants worked in agriculture, their nutrition tended to be poor. Diets often did not include meat—it was too valuable to butcher—or even green vegetables. Child mortality rates increased in the months before and during harvests, when breast-feeding mothers had to work long hours in the fields and supplies of food from the last harvest were running low. Farming techniques were not innovative and relied heavily on manual labor. Agriculture was the most important economic activity in France, but harvests were often poor.

In addition, peasants were heavily taxed by a variety of sources. For example, a peasant renting land might be expected to pay the land owner half of all crops that he produced. In addition, the Roman Catholic Church collected a tithe (a tithe is from the Old English word meaning one-tenth, but the church collected anywhere from 8 to 15 percent of the value of the harvest). There were also likely to be fees paid to local nobility as well as other taxes. Peasants could hope for some profit from about 15 to 20 percent of their crops and livestock.

Drawing by Charles Eschard. 1748-1810. Wikimedia Commons.

This eighteenth century drawing is called "Peasants Resting."

The difficulty of making enough to survive in farming forced many peasants to look for additional work. Many added to their income by spinning and weaving in their homes. Other peasants occasionally took jobs in rural towns as stone masons, chimney sweeps, ropemakers, and papermakers. In fact, most of France's industry was in rural areas.

The financial pressures of having a family meant that men often waited until their late twenties to get married. Women usually married a few years earlier. Although these distinctions varied, men usually worked away from the immediate area of the home, for example in the fields, fulfilling obligations to local nobility, or fixing roads (a requirement regularly imposed by the state). Women tended to work closer to home, for example tending small livestock, or growing and selling produce at local markets.

What was life like in the city?

During the reign of King Louis XVI, hardship in the countryside led many peasants to come to urban areas to find work. Paris,

France's largest city with a population of about 700,000 in 1789, grew by 100,000 during the eighteenth century. Most people who lived in urban areas were poor, unskilled workers. Poverty and hunger were the greatest challenges to those who lived in cities.

A central component of the diet of the working class was bread. The average male worker would spend about half of his wages just to buy this bread. In times of bread or grain shortages, the cost of bread would rise even higher—up to about 75 percent of income. Women workers earned considerably less than men. The challenge of providing for a family was high.

> ***"Workmen today need twice as much money for their subsistence, yet they earn no more than fifty years ago when living was half as cheap."***
>
> —Jean Marie Roland, manufacturing inspector, 1777

A large group of workers worked as servants to the well-off. Servants made up about 5 to 7 percent of the population of cities. Paris is thought to have had about fifty-thousand servants during the reign of Louis XVI. Many servants were new arrivals from the countryside. Although they enjoyed advantages, including regular food, clothing, and a place to sleep, the high turnover rate suggests that many servants found the disadvantages to be significant. Servants were forbidden to marry or have relationships, and often were poorly treated by their masters. Many servants despised their masters and many masters thought poorly of their servants.

> ***"Today, servants who go from house to house, indifferent to masters whom they serve, can meet a master they just left without feeling any sort of emotion. They assemble only to exchange the secrets they have unearthed; they are spies, and being well paid, well dressed, and well fed, but despised, they resent us, and have become our greatest enemies."***
>
> —Louis Sébastien Mercier, 1783

The well-off were also worried about rioting and violence by peasants, particularly when shortages led to rises in the price of bread. There were numerous instances of riots and violence over high prices and shortages of bread during the reign of Louis XVI. Because of their role in preparing and providing food, women often participated and even led these demonstrations.

Shortages and high bread prices contributed significantly to public dissatisfaction and would play an important role in the early days of the revolution. Women, as important participants in these demonstrations, began to have a larger role in public life.

Who were the bourgeoisie?

The largest group of well-off people in France were the bourgeoisie, or what today would be called the middle class. In 1789, they numbered two to three million, about 10 percent of the overall population. Most made their money as merchants and businessmen in industry, commerce, and trade. As the economy grew between the reigns of Louis XIV (1661-1715) and Louis XVI, the number of bourgeoisie tripled. During the same period the population of France only grew by 25 percent. As a result, the role of bourgeoisie in French society became more important.

As the wealth of the bourgeoisie grew, they invested heavily in land and new businesses. They bought luxury goods like sugar and coffee from the Caribbean. They built new houses and decorated them with silks and wallpaper produced in France. They wore fancy clothing and had servants. Their lives were very different from the peasants who struggled to survive in the countryside, cities, and towns.

> ***"The distance which separates the rich from other citizens is growing daily and poverty becomes more insupportable at the sight of the***

astonishing progress of luxury which tires the view of the indigent [poor]. Hatred grows more bitter and the state is divided into two classes: the greedy and insensitive, and murmuring malcontents."

—Louis Sébastien Mercier, 1783

In addition to investing in land, the bourgeoisie bought public "offices" from the crown. For example, a Roman Catholic member of the bourgeoisie could buy an "office" (position) as a judge. (French law barred Protestants and Jews from buying offices.) By paying an annual tax, holders of these offices could keep them and then pass them on to their children. Under Louis XVI, there were approximately fifty thousand of these offices. They were a valuable source of revenue for the king. A few of the offices even gave the purchaser the status of nobility. The bourgeoisie saw these offices as an important means of achieving social status as well as providing a well-paying job.

Members of the bourgeoisie also invested in education, which they saw as a way to help future generations prosper. During the eighteenth century, the number of schools and universities increased. There was growth in the number of newspapers, public libraries, theaters and clubs. All of these factors contributed to the introduction and circulation of new ideas in France. More of the French bourgeoisie began thinking about the relationship of art, culture, philosophy and economics and to their own lives and society.

What was life like for the nobility?

Life in the nobility brought status that many members of the bourgeoisie found highly desirable. They had special privileges and were exempt from many of the numerous and complex taxes that the bourgeoisie and peasants had to pay. If they were accused of a crime they were entitled to be tried in a special court and they could not be drafted into the military.

While there were only about 300,000 members of the nobility, customs and tradition helped them amass wealth. The nobility owned about one-third of the land. They also held special rights over the rest of the land, which entitled them to collect fees and taxes on those who used or lived on the land. They owned most of the valuable public offices. About 25 percent of the revenues of the Roman Catholic Church went to those clergy who were also members of the nobility.

Antoine François Callet (1741-1823). Wikimedia Commons.

Louis XVI.

The nobility also had political influence and power. Most of the senior advisors to the king were nobles. It would have been extremely unusual for the king even to meet someone who was not a noble.

Nobility was no guarantee of wealth. (But great wealth for a member of the bourgeoisie did guarantee eventual membership in the nobility.) In fact, about half of the nobility were not as well off as an average member of the bourgeoisie. This had two important consequences. First: most of the wealth and political power in France was concentrated in very few hands. Second: nobility who were not wealthy relied on collecting the numerous fees and

taxes on their lands and asserting their social superiority—all of which heightened resentment against them.

What was life like for the king and the royal family?

The queen and the king lived a life of plenty, and they were the top of the hierarchy in France. King Louis XVI ruled France from his Palace of Versailles, which was about twelve miles from Paris. Approximately ten thousand people worked at the Palace of Versailles to serve the king and the court (the court was made up of the entourage of the king). The expense was tremendous; it was paid for with taxes and revenues that the king collected from the people of France.

A place at the royal court brought status and privilege and was therefore highly desirable. To be a courtier (a member of the court), one had to have a noble family stretching back to the year 1400, or have special permission from the king. Only a thousand families met this criterion. Many chose not to attend or simply could not afford to live the very expensive life at court. Those who could were the elite of France; they were from the wealthiest, most powerful families. By being close to the king, they had status and influence.

One example of the rituals of the court shows the exalted status of the king and queen—and the desire of the courtiers to be as close to them as possible. Every day courtiers crowded into a large room simply to watch the king and queen eat their midday meal. Those most in favor got to sit on stools, others simply stood and found places to watch the royal couple who sat at a table facing the crowd and ate their meal.

The Political Structure

King Louis XVI wanted to be a conscientious ruler, but there were signs that he felt burdened by his responsibilities. He preferred working in his own locksmith shop or carving wood to consulting with his ministers on matters of the state or dealing with the large problems facing France. When one of his ministers resigned, the king said, "How lucky you are! Why can't I resign too?"

What factors complicated the task of governing France?

The king inherited the throne and with it a political structure and organization to France that had developed over centuries. It was a tangled web of overlapping jurisdictions. This made governing France an extremely complex and often inefficient process.

One example of this was how France was divided internally. France had thirty-nine provinces that each had governors. (A province is a geographic area like a state.) At the same time, France was divided into thirty-six *généralités* (pronounced zhen-air-al-itay). It was the *généralités*, not the provinces, that

Marie Antoinette

King Louis XVI had married his wife Marie Antoinette when he was fifteen and she fourteen. She was the daughter of the empress of Austria who had sent her to help strengthen Austria's relationship with France. Although the king and queen were both popular at first, Marie Antoinette became the target of pamphlets that attacked her in later years. Her failure to bear the king an heir for seven years, the fact that she was foreign born, and her financial extravagances made her the subject of gossip and criticism. Many in France distrusted her and even considered her to be a spy.

Although she was often harshly criticized, one of the most famous and lasting stories about Marie Antoinette is probably untrue. During one of the periods of famine, she is alleged to have been told that common people couldn't afford bread to which she replied, "Then let them eat cake." There is no actual evidence to support this story, but it was probably told to show that the queen was out of touch with the reality of her subjects' lives.

assumed most responsibility for administering and governing the regions of France, including the essential function of collecting taxes.

The king claimed absolute authority throughout France, but the regions farthest from the site of his rule in Paris often exercised some autonomy. For example, the regions in southern France established their own rates of taxation in consultation with the king's ministers.

Although the peoples of France were unified by the fact that Louis XVI was their ruler, there were in fact great variations throughout the kingdom. For example, in the provinces around Paris French was the language spoken. But there were other dialects and languages spoken in other provinces, including Basque, Breton, and German. Taxes were also administered differently. For example, salt was taxed at different rates throughout France. In some areas people were taxed, in other areas, only land was taxed.

How was the king able to rule France?

Although the king claimed absolute power and final say over all decisions and policies of France, he depended on the nobility and officials to carry out his policies. Many of them did this simply because it benefitted them. For example, the tens of thousands of officials who had purchased "offices" and paid taxes so that they could pass the office on to their offspring wanted to preserve the source of their income. It served their personal interests to perpetuate the system of government. After all, if it had not made them wealthy, it at least made them financially secure. They were free from the fear of hunger, something that the vast majority struggled with daily.

France was a complex maze of jurisdictions and inconsistent rules that the privileged and powerful used to benefit themselves. Some historians have called the government of pre-revolutionary France a plutocracy (government for and by the wealthy). The king depended on a minority of the French people, who were in the nobility or clergy, to preserve his rule. This small minority depended on and used the system he headed for wealth, status, and power.

What was the role of the Roman Catholic Church?

France was primarily a country of Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholic Church was both wealthy and politically powerful. By law and tradition, clergy were considered the most important group in France, ahead of the nobility. All of the king's subjects were legally designated as Catholics and no one was permitted to practice any other religion publicly. Protestants, who numbered about 550,000, had no civil rights and were not tolerated except in the province of Alsace. About thirty thousand Jews lived in France and their rights were similarly curtailed.

The Catholic Church played an important role in the lives of ordinary people. The

Photograph by Pline. Wikimedia Commons. GNU free documentation license.

This photograph shows the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Notre Dame in present-day Paris. The cathedral was built between 1163 and 1345 CE.

church was responsible for most of the education system and provided aid and charity to the poor. It ran almost all of the hospitals and orphanages as well. For the many poor people of France, the church provided vital services that they would not otherwise be able to afford.

When life was filled with hardship, death, and uncertainty, the church also provided hope to peasants in the countryside. Priests blessed crops and animals. Church bells were rung in the belief that they could prevent thunderstorms, which would spoil a harvest.

The church also had an important administrative role. It kept records of births, deaths, and marriages. It had the power to censor or suppress publications of which it did not approve. Government decrees or warnings were often issued through the church.

The church owned about 10 percent of the land in France and earned revenue from the tithes it collected. While many French people loved their parish priests, they resented the wealth collected from the tithes by higher-ranking clergymen, for example, bishops and cardinals. These higher-ranking clergy were appointed by the king and were often members of the nobility as well.

The church and clergy paid no taxes of their own, but regularly gave the crown a gift of cash. Positions of power in the church were usually controlled by nobles, many of whom saw the church as way to increase their own family wealth.

What was the Estates General?

France did not have a representative body like a parliament or Congress when Louis XVI came to power. The king could convene what was known as the Estates General, which was meant to be a representative body. The Estates General was made of three groups: the First Estate, which was the clergy; the Second Estate, the nobility; and the Third Estate, which included everyone else. King Philip III had established the Estates General in 1302 to provide counsel in times of crisis. Normally French kings convened the Estates General in order to get support for new taxes. By the time King Louis XVI came to the throne, the Estates General had not met since 1614.

What were parlements?

France had thirteen *parlements* that served as the highest courts of law in the land. The king registered all new laws and edicts with the *parlements*; the *parlements* had the right to criticize these edicts, but ultimately could not overrule the king.

The jurisdiction of these courts was geographic and often covered multiple provinces and *généralités*. These overlapping administrative boundaries often led to disputes over which laws should apply. The fact that the laws and legal code varied throughout the provinces complicated the situation further. The northern provinces of France relied on customary law (unwritten law established by being used over a long period of time). The southern provinces used laws with their origins in the Roman empire.

France and the Age of Enlightenment

There were many problems in France, including widespread poverty. In spite of this, the king was still a popular and exalted figure. For example, many wept with joy at his coronation or even fainted in his presence. The idea of the "divine right of kings" was still widely accepted in the eighteenth century.

During the reign of Louis XVI, about one-third of the French people were literate, and one in fifty-two boys would attend a high school. Only the well-off could afford to purchase journals or books or have time to read. Yet France was changing. Education and literacy rates had increased even among the poor. Newspapers and journals grew in importance. The number of libraries increased as did the places where political discussions could take place. For example, people gathered in public coffee houses to discuss issues. Private gatherings known as *salons*, often sponsored by wealthy women, were another place for the airing of new ideas.

It was in this environment that writers and philosophers introduced new ideas and ways of thinking about society and government. This period came to be known as the Age of Enlightenment and it occurred not only in France, but in all of Europe.

The beginning of this period in France can be traced to King Louis XIV's decision to eliminate the rights of French Protestants in 1685. Hundreds of thousands fled France to neighboring countries where some were able to publish works that criticized France's Old Regime.

Changes in scientific understanding also contributed to the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment. The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, with its emphasis on observation, measurement, and rationality as a means to understand the physical world, influenced the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Philosophers tried to address questions of government and society using the same approach. Although their goal was to improve society and increase human happiness through criticism and reform, they were not advocates for revolution.

"We will speak against senseless laws until they are reformed; and while we wait, we will abide by them."

—Denis Diderot, Enlightenment philosopher

What was the object of the Enlightenment?

Not all of the writers of the Enlightenment agreed with each other or made the same arguments. What the philosophers and writers did share was the idea that society could be improved by using the principles of rationality and reason.

The ideas of the Enlightenment challenged the fundamental principles of French society, including the authority of the king and the Catholic Church. Enlightenment writers believed that rationality, not merely tradition or religious ideas, should be the driving force behind all decisions. Philosophers sought to shape the opinions of educated members of the public. Many of the philosophers were exiled from France and their writings banned.

By Jean-Honoré Fragonard, (1732-1806). Wikimedia Commons.

Denis Diderot.

Who was Voltaire?

Voltaire was the pen name of Frenchman François-Marie Arouet who lived from 1694 to 1778. Early in his life Voltaire was exiled to England. There he published *Letters Concerning the English Nation,* in which he compared Britain's constitutional monarchy and parliamentary government to France's absolute monarchy. Voltaire admired the British Bill of Rights, which was written in 1689, because it made freedom of speech a right and gave Protestants freedom of religion. (He did not mention the fact that Roman Catholics did not have rights in Britain.) Although this book was banned in France, it nevertheless became a best seller. Voltaire spoke out frequently against the Catholic Church and religious persecution.

"If this world were as good as it seems it could be, if everywhere man could find a livelihood that was easy and

assure a climate suitable to his nature, it is clear that it would be impossible for one man to enslave another.... If all men were without needs, they would thus be necessarily equal. It is the poverty that is a part of our species that subordinates one man to another. It is not inequality, it is dependence that is the real misfortune. It matters very little that this man calls himself 'His Highness,' or 'His Holiness.' What is hard is to serve him."

—Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, 1765

Who was Montesquieu?

The Baron de Montesquieu was the noble title of the Frenchman Charles-Louis de Secondat who lived from 1689 to 1755. Montesquieu's most famous contribution to political thinking was his work *The Spirit of Laws.* In this work he outlined the principal of the separation of governmental power into three branches of government: the executive, the judicial, and the legislative. This form of government, he argued, was the best way to encourage political liberty. Montesquieu's ideas were important in France, and also influenced the authors of the U.S. Constitution.

"In order that power be not abused, things should be so disposed that power checks power."

—Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, 1748

Who was Diderot?

Denis Diderot lived between 1713 and 1784. He helped author and publish a multi-volume collection of knowledge. It was called *Encyclopedia,* but its purpose was more than simply summarizing what was already known. Diderot intended to promote an understanding of the world based on rationality, and also a critical attitude towards all things, particularly the church and the authority of the state. Although both church and crown tried to suppress publication, by 1789 about twenty-five thousand copies had been sold in France and in other countries.

"I am a man, and I have no other pure, inalienable natural rights than those of humanity…the laws should be made for everyone, and not for one person [the king]."

—Denis Diderot, *Encyclopedia*, 1755

Who was Rousseau?

Jean-Jacques Rousseau lived from 1712 to 1778. He was also a philosopher of the Enlightenment, but he disagreed with many of the arguments made by others of the era. For example, he believed that progress in arts and science had hurt rather than helped humanity. One of his most important works was *The Social Contract.* Rousseau set out the ways that he thought government could legitimately establish authority while protecting the liberty of citizens. *The Social Contract* was condemned for its attacks on the church and priests and Rousseau fled France for eight years.

Rousseau's political ideas were radical for the time. He argued that all adult male citizens had the same innate rights, and that governments could only gain legitimacy by protecting the rights of each citizen. Rousseau also placed great importance on the "general will" of the populace as a guide for establishing political authority. He claimed that the king received his authority from the "general will" not from God.

"The Sovereign [king], having no force other than the legislative power, acts only by means of the laws; and the laws being solely the authentic acts of the general will, the Sovereign cannot act save when the people is assembled."

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 1762

In Part I of the reading, you have explored the structure of French society during the era of King Louis XVI. You have read about the social distinctions in France. In particular, you have read how the vast majority often struggled to get by, while a much smaller group including the bourgeoisie and nobility, worked to ensure their own social and economic status.

You have seen how the king had absolute authority and there was no representative government, but also that France was a land with complex political jurisdictions and interests. You have seen how the political system was used to further the wealth, status, and power of the nobility, clergy, and the king. You have also read about the increased role of education and the growth in newspapers, coffee houses, and salons. Finally, you read about some of the important ideas of French writers of the Enlightenment.

In Part II of your reading, you will explore the events leading up to the beginning of the French Revolution. As you read Part II, try to keep in mind what you have read about here. Ask yourself what roles social classes, political structure, and ideas play in the events you are reading about. How important are each of these factors? These are the types of questions historians ask when considering events. For example, scholars have debated how much of an effect the Enlightenment had on the French Revolution. These questions will help you consider the reasons behind the next dramatic events in France.

Part II: Crises and Change—1774-1789

Louis XVI's coronation in 1775 coincided with the Flour War—not actually a war, but a series of riots and protests in France over the price of bread that had to be put down by the army.

The crisis began with the minister of finance's decision to stop setting the prices of grain at an artificially low and more affordable level. Freed from government price controls, merchants raised prices. Many people who could no longer afford this staple of their daily diet took to the streets in many cities, particularly around Paris. Violent protests erupted.

Why did the government want to reform France's agricultural production?

The king's finance minister had stopped setting the price of grain for a reason. He believed that low prices discouraged production and caused scarcity and, in turn, hunger. This had been a frequent problem. The new minister found inspiration in the principles of the Enlightenment and sought to reform France through rational, reasoned policies that put the latest knowledge to public use. He had the support of the king.

Agriculture was ripe for reform and improvement. The finance minister's goal was to increase production of grain by making it more profitable to grow. This was part of a larger reform effort to minimize government interference, simplify taxation, and increase efficiency. (Today, we would call these "free market" principles.)

French peasants and workers struggling to feed themselves and their families everyday reacted angrily to the price increases. Some decided to seize the grain and then sell it at what they saw as a fair price. Many of the poor even saw the government's action as an attempt to starve the lower classes and benefit the wealthy. The *parlement* (high court) of Paris objected to the legality of some of the reforms. Members of the middle class and nobility who benefited financially within the traditional system also felt threatened by the new reforms. Their livelihoods affected, they too made their displeasure known.

The reforms were repealed, the minister of finance resigned, and his successors anxiously tried to avoid provoking protests. The Flour War illustrates the tightly tangled web that France was. Reform was needed, but changing the intricate and interconnected customs of the social, economic, and political spheres was no easy task. Despite his intentions to improve conditions, Louis XVI would prove neither confident enough nor decisive enough to implement change.

Financial Crises

The Flour War was one of many crises that would occur during the reign of Louis XVI. Many of these crises had financial causes. It was these financial problems that would expose the fault lines in French society and ultimately threaten the Old Regime and the rule of Louis XVI.

What were the causes of France's financial crises?

France was one of the great powers of Europe. Throughout the eighteenth century France had fought Great Britain in a series of wars. These wars were fought to gain wealth and power and prevent other countries from gaining power. At the same time, the wars were expensive. They became the primary source of France's financial difficulties. The wars extended to four corners of the globe and required France to have a powerful navy as well as an army. The government needed ways to pay for its expensive wars. For example, during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) the government introduced a new tax, which remained in place after the war ended.

Another war that began in 1756 ended poorly for France. Known as the Seven Years War, this war saw French military losses to Britain in India, Canada, and the Caribbean. In

the Treaty of Paris of 1763, France gave up all of its possessions in North America. Not only did this war cost France many of its overseas colonies, it had cost nearly twice as much per year as the previous war. The government had increased taxes, but was also forced to borrow money. When it turned out that the government could not repay its loans, it declared it would only pay back part of what it promised. (This is known as "writing off" debt.) This diminished confidence in the government. King Louis XVI decided that during his reign, writing off debt was something that he would avoid at all costs.

Why did France support the American Revolution?

The defeat suffered in the Seven Years War had wounded the pride of France. When thirteen of Great Britain's North American colonies began to seek their independence, France saw an opportunity to restore its national pride while weakening Britain. King Louis XVI and his ministers certainly did not choose to support the North American colonies because of their basic aims, which included ending rule by the king and creating a more representative government. Instead they saw an opportunity to strike a blow at Britain's power.

> ***"Providence has marked out this moment for the humiliation of England."***
>
> —Count Charles Gravier Vergennes, French foreign secretary, March 1776

France entered a formal alliance with the thirteen colonies in 1778. The French contributed men and financial support. All of this was funded by borrowing vast sums of money. The French navy played an important role in the decisive battle of the war at Yorktown in 1781 by preventing the encircled British forces from escaping by water. British forces surrendered at Yorktown and two years later, the 1783 Treaty of Paris gave the colonies their independence.

What effect did the American Revolution have on France?

Some of the ideas of the American rebellion were met with sympathy in France. Pamphlets like Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and the Declaration of Independence were widely read. Noted leaders like John Adams and Benjamin Franklin were welcomed as "friends of liberty."

Another important effect was the high cost to France of supporting the American colo-

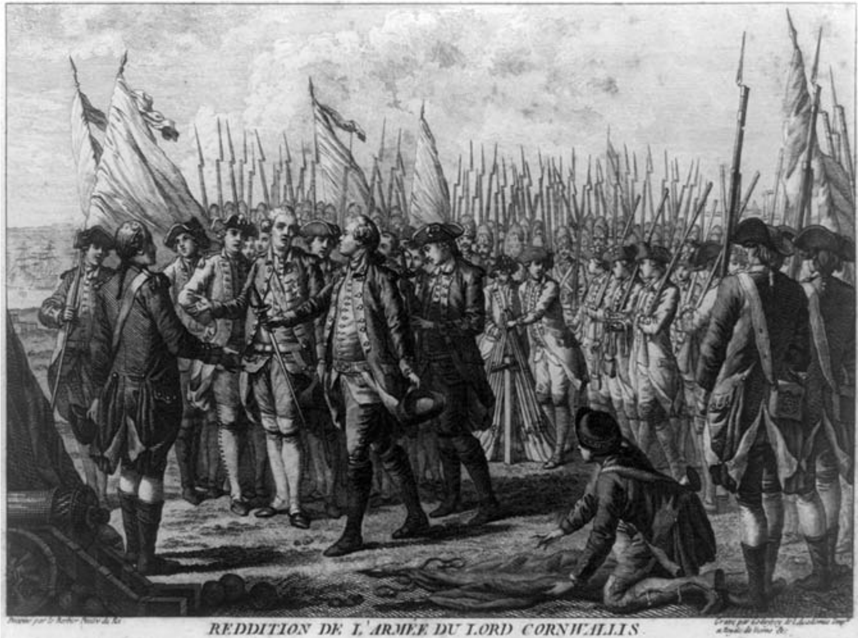
France's Colonies in the Caribbean

In its pursuit of wealth and power, France had created colonies in North America, Asia, and the Caribbean. Though it had lost its colonies in Canada and India to Britain in 1763, it kept colonies in the Caribbean, including the islands Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), Guadeloupe, and Martinique. By 1789, Saint-Domingue produced more wealth than any other colony in the world. One in eight French people depended on commerce with the colonies to make a living.

The primary source of this wealth was the sugar grown on Saint-Domingue. Growing sugar was labor intensive and the French colonists relied on slaves brought from Africa. By 1789, there were 500,000 slaves, about 32,000 whites, and 28,000 free people of color on Saint-Domingue, which was smaller than the U.S. state of Maryland. (In comparison, there were about 700,000 slaves in the much larger United States at this time.) Conditions for slaves were extremely harsh. Although purchasing a slave was expensive, the sugar trade was so profitable that owners did not hesitate to work their slaves to death.

French law permitted and regulated slavery in its colonies. For example, non-Catholics were not allowed to own slaves and the laws, known as the "Black Code," permitted brutal treatment of slaves. Slaves had no rights or privileges. Opposition to slavery grew very slowly in France and was led by a few French Enlightenment writers who criticized the harsh treatment of slaves.

nists. War was not cheap. France found itself unable to act on other foreign policy issues simply because it did not have the money to do so. France struggled to compete with Britain for a worldwide empire and the wealth that colonies brought. The high cost of its foreign policy put the government of France under severe strain. It desperately needed more money.



By François Godefroy and Jean Lebarbier. Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. LC-USZ62-2663.

This French engraving from 1784 shows the British army's surrender at Yorktown. The French General Rochambeau directs the British General to give his sword to General Washington.

> ***"It is impossible to tax further, ruinous to be always borrowing, and not enough to confine ourselves to economical reforms...."***
>
> —Comptroller General Charles Alexandre de Calonne, August 20, 1786

The ongoing financial crises forced the government to take loans, and also to raise taxes. New taxes were never popular, but France's complex system of administration and traditional privileges made collecting enough taxes to meet the government's needs nearly impossible. For example, the privileged and most wealthy were exempt from taxation. The Catholic Church did not have to pay nor did the nobility. France's system of privileges meant the burden of taxes fell on those least able to pay them.

There were other complications. Various regions of France were taxed at various rates. For example, the government taxed salt at six different rates. In some locations, residents were obliged to pay tax on a minimum amount of salt each year, even if they did not use or buy that amount of salt. The taxes and inconsistencies were deeply resented and difficult to administer; people tried to avoid paying them when they could.

Throughout the reign of Louis XVI and particularly during the 1780s, the government found itself faced with increasing budget deficits (spending more money than it received). By 1788, 55 percent of government spending was going to payments on loans. The high amount of money owed made it harder to get more loans, and increasing taxes again would meet with resistance. The economy was reaching the breaking point.

Political Evolution

The financial challenges faced by France led to efforts to reform the system of government throughout the reign of Louis XVI. You have already read about the reforms that led to the Flour War in 1775. Other efforts at reform picked up again in the 1780s, made necessary by the worsening financial situation.

How did the role of public opinion change in France?

The public was well aware of the financial troubles. The effects of the crisis were hammered home to them in the form of unequal taxes and high prices for basic goods like bread. People expressed their feelings in a variety of ways: in public and private gather-

ings, in pamphlets or other writings, and even in demonstrations and riots.

Officials began to recognize the increasing importance of public opinion in politics. With the permission of the king, Minister of Finance Jacques Necker published an account of the budget of France in 1781. This made Necker extremely popular, but the release of the *Accounts of the King* actually misled the public by inaccurately claiming more revenues than expenditures.

> ***"This report would also allow each of the people—who are part of YOUR MAJESTY'S Councils—to study and follow the situation of Finances. Such an institution could have the greatest influence on public confidence."***
>
> —Minister of Finance Jacques Necker, 1781

Nevertheless, the very idea that the king's accounts could be subjected to public scrutiny represented a significant evolution in French politics. Some of the king's ministers thought that this threatened France's absolute monarchy. They worried that it could lead to a government more like Great Britain's constitutional monarchy. Although the king still regarded himself as an agent of God, his actions indicated that he considered the interests of his people as important.

What was the outcome of a proposal for sweeping reforms in 1786?

Louis XVI dismissed Necker in 1781. His successor's efforts to increase taxes were resisted by the *parlements*. Louis XVI appointed Charles Alexandre de Calonne in 1783 as minister of finance. Calonne was able to borrow vast sums of money to keep the government running. But he realized that such massive borrowing could not continue much longer and, with the support of the king, proposed massive reforms.

> ***"[W]ith matters as they are, ordinary ways being unable to lead us to our goal...the only means of managing finally to put our finances truly in order, must consist in revitalizing the entire state by reforming all that is defective...."***
>
> —Comptroller General Charles Alexandre de Calonne, August 20, 1786

Calonne's proposal had three parts. First, there would be a uniform tax system on landowners with no exemptions. He suggested that the new tax system be administered by new provincial representative assemblies. Second, to increase efficiency and productivity, he wanted to end internal customs controls and stop regulating the price of grain. Finally, Calonne realized that France would need to borrow money again until his reforms took effect. Knowing that the *parlements* were opposed to borrowing more money, he proposed that the king pick an Assembly of Notables to approve of these reforms.

What was the purpose of the Assembly of Notables?

France had a means to establish a representative forum to deal with national crises. The Estates General (whose members would be elected, not picked by the king) was meant to be a national representative body that could be called to meet by the king. No king had called an Estates General since 1614.

Calonne, whose reform proposals met resistance from the *parlements,* thought the Estates General might prove difficult to control. He hoped that this Assembly of Notables, made up of hand-picked members of the nobility, would support his proposals and influence public opinion to support his reforms. Things did not go according to plan.

The king called the Assembly of Notables to meet in January 1787. Although the delegates generally supported some of Calonne's ideas, Calonne was personally and politically unpopular and met resistance. The assembly refused to approve the idea of additional loans without seeing estimates of the budget. When Calonne realized that he was failing to convince the assembly, he began to publish anonymous pamphlets against the notables,

who in turn complained to the king. The king, who had hoped that reforms could be passed, realized that neither Calonne nor the Assembly of Notables would solve France's problems. Pressure began to mount to call the Estates General.

Even as the Assembly of Notables ended, the king attempted to register some of Calonne's proposed reforms as new laws with the *parlements*. Some were accepted (including the provincial assemblies), but the *parlement* of Paris refused to accept new tax increases. Public interest was high and crowds gathered to hear the *parlement*'s debate about the tax issue in August 1787. The king ordered troops to keep public order and exiled the *parlement* temporarily to the city of Troyes for its refusal to accept the new taxes.

The Estates General

As the financial crises worsened, political challenges continued. The king attempted to restructure the justice system by reducing the role of the *parlements*. Violent protests broke out. There was a vast public outcry against "despotism" (the use of absolute power in a cruel way).

Other factors contributed to the growing crises. Terrible storms during the summer of 1788 destroyed much of the grain harvest and pushed the price of bread through the roof. Hunger and hardship were widespread, particularly during the winter months.

> ***"The wretchedness of the poor people during this inclement season surpasses all description."***
>
> —The Duke of Dorset, January 8, 1789

There was increasing unrest and protest, which some believed could lead to civil war. Not only was France financially weak, the king's inability to lead France out of its troubles had weakened him in the eyes of many.

> ***"The king is carried along endlessly from one policy to another, changing them, adopting them, rejecting them with an inconceivable capriciousness; exercising force, then weakly retreating. He has entirely lost his authority."***
>
> —Adrien-Cyprien Duquesnoy, May 1789

The refusal of financiers to lend the government any more money meant that France was approaching bankruptcy. The king agreed to call the Estates General, which would meet in May 1789. He also reappointed Jacques Necker, who remained immensely popular, as minister of finance. Necker announced an end to government controls on the press and publishing. This allowed public debate about the future of France to flourish.

Who were the deputies of The Estates General?

The Estates General was made up of three groups of deputies: the First Estate, which was the clergy; the Second Estate, the nobility; and the Third Estate, which represented everyone else.

Elections for the Estates General were held. The First and Second Estates voted for their representatives. Men over the age of twenty-five who were property holders were permitted to vote for delegates to the Third Estate. (There were members of the nobility elected to each of the Estates.) Members of the Estates General were male, and tended to be well-off and educated.

Traditionally, each of the Estates had one vote, even though the First Estate and Second Estates represented only about 300,000 out of a population of twenty-six million. Because the clergy and the nobility shared an interest in preserving their privilege, many in the Third Estate worried that they could be outvoted 2-1 if the other two Estates wished to block reforms favored by the Third Estate.

An intense public campaign began in pamphlets and newspapers demanding a greater role for the Third Estate, which would represent most of the population of France.

Hippolyte Prudhomme. Library of Congress. LC-USZ62-99705.

Opening of the Estates General at Versailles, May 5, 1789.

"1. What is the Third Estate? Everything.
2. What has it been heretofore in the political order? Nothing.
3. What does it demand? To become something therein."

—Abbé Sieyès,
What is the Third Estate? 1789

The king went along with public sentiment and agreed to double the number of representatives in the Third Estate from three hundred to six hundred, but did not change the number of votes per estate from one each. The First and Second Estates each had three hundred delegates.

What were the lists of grievances?

In addition to voting, voters also contributed to a "list" or "register of grievances" that would be taken to the Estates General by the newly-elected representatives.

The lists of grievances were assembled and compiled for the Third Estate's representatives in villages and towns throughout France. The grievances did not call for revolution. The most repeated themes were calls for fairness in taxation, a limit to the privileges of the nobility, and an end of tithes to the church. Many of them even expressed devotion to the king.

Women and Politics

The difficult economic conditions led many women to play an active political role during the early period of the French Revolution. Because women organized households and had an important role in feeding families, the shortages of bread spurred many to take political steps. For example, it was not uncommon for crowds led by women to seize bread and then to sell it at a "fair" price. Many working-class women participated in these demonstrations. Women who were well-off organized salons or meetings where political ideas were discussed. As France moved toward revolution, some believed that women should be given the same political rights as men. Many others were sceptical of that idea and thought that women should confine themselves to "traditional" roles.

"The lands of nobles and the church, should they not be submitted to taxation? Why subject the lands of poor people exclusively to it, and why thrust thus upon the Third Estate all the burden of taxation?"

—From the list of grievances of the community of Saint-Vincent-Rive d'Olt

What led to riots and violence in the spring of 1789?

As the Estates General prepared to meet, many of the people of France were frustrated. Shortages in the winter of 1789 had caused the price of bread to double.

"Monsieur, are they thinking of lowering the price of bread? I have eaten none for two days...it's so dear.... Ah Monsieur don't forget us, we will pray for you."

—Unknown citizen in Paris to a delegate of the Estates General, April 27, 1789

Anger and resentment were widespread. There was a general distrust of the nobility, whom many assumed were trying to enrich themselves even if it meant starving the poor.

"Death to the rich! Death to the aristocrats! Death to the hoarders!"

—Crowd in Paris, April 27, 1789

In late April, violent riots broke out in Paris after the owner of a wallpaper factory was heard to say that lower bread prices would make it possible to lower wages. Apparently, he thought this would help the economy. His words quickly spread and led to protests, marches, and violence around the city. The army was called out to suppress the thousands who had taken to the streets. As the soldiers moved through Paris's narrow streets after the crowds, hundreds of Frenchmen clambered to the rooftops and hurled stone shingles from the roofs at the soldiers. The soldiers began to fire on the crowds. Hundreds were killed and wounded.

"Liberty. Murderers! We won't give way. Long live the Third Estate. Long live the king!"

—Crowd in Paris, April 28, 1789

There was violence not only in Paris, but across France during the spring of 1789. Peasants rioted against high grain prices, seized church property, and said they would refuse to pay the tithes of their harvests to the church. Starving peasants hunted wild game and took firewood from the estates of the nobility, things they were prohibited from doing. Tax offices were destroyed and many refused to pay the internal customs duties. Driven by hunger and fueled by resentment and mistrust of the privileged, the common people of France had struck a blow against those who they believed oppressed them. They had resisted the army and had stopped accepting the authority of the government.

As the Estates General prepared to meet, France faced insurrection (violent uprising). The traditions and institutions of France were being challenged by the peasants and workers, but also by the privileged classes who represented the Third Estate in the Estates General.

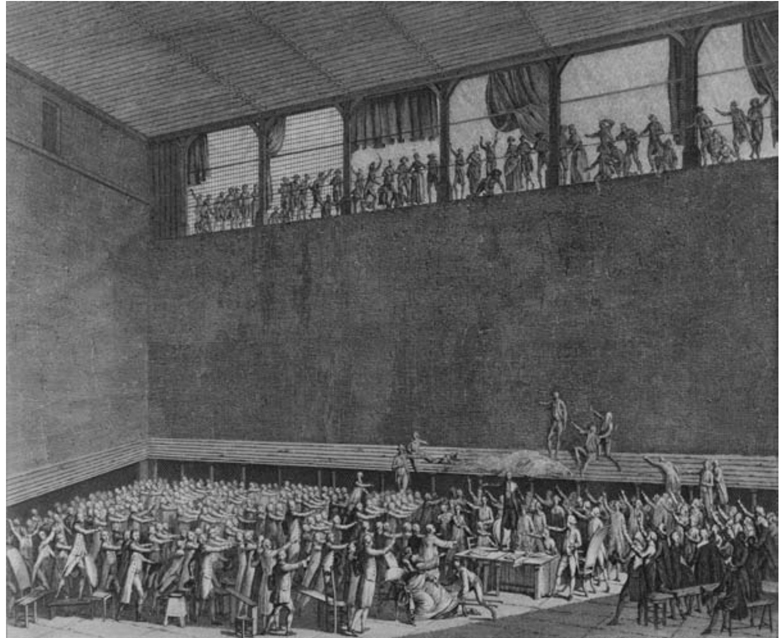
Why was the Estates General unable to make progress solving France's problems?

The opening meeting of the Estates General took place on May 5, 1789. Each of the three Estates paraded in separately, wearing the clothing required by tradition. The First Estate (clergy) wore the robes of the clergy, the Second Estate (nobility) wore silk clothes, with gold cloth belts, swords, and white-plumed hats. The Third Estate (everyone else) were all in black.

The Estates General made little to no progress on the issues facing France. Much of its time was spent wrangling over whether each Estate would get one vote or whether each elected member of the Estates would get one vote, known as voting by head. A majority of the First and Second Estates opposed one vote per head, for though they represented a minority of delegates and of the French population, they hoped to preserve their ability to outvote

the Third Estate, 2-1. The Third Estate, with six hundred delegates, saw an advantage to voting by head.

The Estates met separately and debated what steps to take. While the nobility met in private, the Third Estate opened their sessions to the public. The debates were often chaotic. For example, the moderator of the Third Estate was once knocked to the floor by a group of deputies rushing to request a chance to speak.



"Tennis Court Oath. June 20 1789." This etching was done in 1789.

Pierre Gabriel Berthault. Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. LC-USZ62-117942.

> ***"[Imagine]…more than five hundred men thrown together in a room, brought in from different regions, unknown to one another, with no leader, with no hierarchy, all free, all equal, none with the right to give orders and none ready to obey them; and everyone in the French manner, wishing to speak before they listen."***
>
> —Count Mirabeau, May 1789

The Third Estate tried to get the other Estates to meet with them, but the other Estates resisted at first. Abbé Sieyès, a member of the Third Estate, proposed that they call themselves the National Assembly and act on their own if the other two Estates would not join them. On June 19, the clergy voted to join the National Assembly.

What was the Tennis Court oath?

King Louis XVI had become frustrated at the lack of progress by the Estates General. He decided to call a meeting of all the Estates for June 23, 1789 where he would chart a course forward and assert his authority as king. He planned to use the hall where the Third Estate met for the meeting; it was large enough to hold all the delegates of all of the Estates. The king ordered the hall locked and prepared for the joint session of the Estates.

When the delegates of the Third Estate arrived at their hall on the morning of June 20 and found it locked they reacted with anger. The king had not told the Estates what he was doing. The delegates feared the king planned to dissolve the assembly. They moved their meeting to a nearby indoor tennis court where they took an oath not to disband until a new constitution could be written.

How did the king respond to the Tennis Court Oath?

The king spoke to the full Estates General on June 23. The hall was surrounded by large numbers of soldiers. He proposed some reforms including trying to make the tax system fairer and ending arbitrary imprisonment. But he insisted that the three Estates continue to meet separately and that each have only one vote. He also said that the nobility and clergy had the right to veto any proposed changes to their privileges. He reminded the Estates that nothing they did was valid without his approval. He told the Estates to leave and resume meeting separately the next day and left the hall.

While the First and Second Estates filed out, the Third Estate remained as did some

members of the clergy. When they were reminded that the king had ordered them to leave, they refused.

> ***"I declare that if you have been ordered to make us leave, you must seek orders to employ force, for we shall not leave except by the force of bayonets."***
>
> —Count Mirabeau, June 23, 1789

The Fall of the Bastille

The king chose not to order the army to expel the delegates. But in the days that followed, he faced increasing turmoil and protests. Tens of thousands were on the streets in Paris intimidating and threatening those they saw as supporters of the Old Regime. Soldiers who had fired on rioters two months earlier now refused to help control the crowds.

On June 25, forty-eight nobles decided to sit with the National Assembly. Four days later the king changed course and decided to order the First and Second Estates to join the National Assembly. At Versailles, the king and the queen wept on their balcony as they were cheered by adoring crowds, who believed that the king truly supported reform.

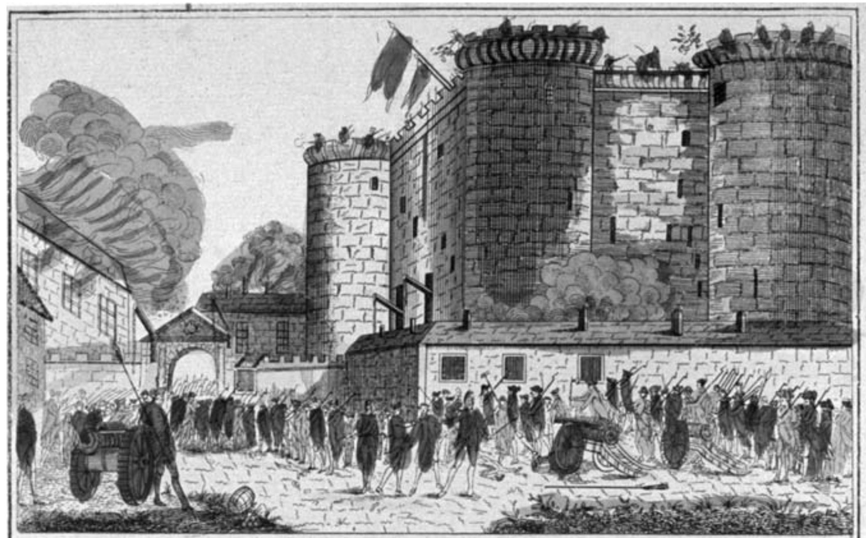
> ***"The whole business now seems over and the revolution complete."***
>
> —Arthur Young, British traveler, June 27, 1789

The revolution was not complete. In fact, it had just begun. While members of the National Assembly hoped finally to begin writing a constitution, popular unrest continued. Some members of the army in Paris mutinied. As a consequence, the government ordered a military force of about twenty thousand from the border regions to Paris. Some of these soldiers were mercenaries (soldiers from other countries who had been hired by the king). Most believed that the mercenaries would be less reluctant to use force against French people than French soldiers. Members of the assembly worried that they would be arrested or even killed. Many people believed that the troops would forcibly disband the assembly.

What was the response to the king's decision to replace his ministers?

In Paris, nerves were stretched taut by the presence of so many troops. The king's decision to replace four of his ministers with more conservative ones proved to be a breaking point that prompted a powerful reaction from the people. One of the fired ministers was Jacques Necker, who was popular with many because he supported keeping the cost of bread low.

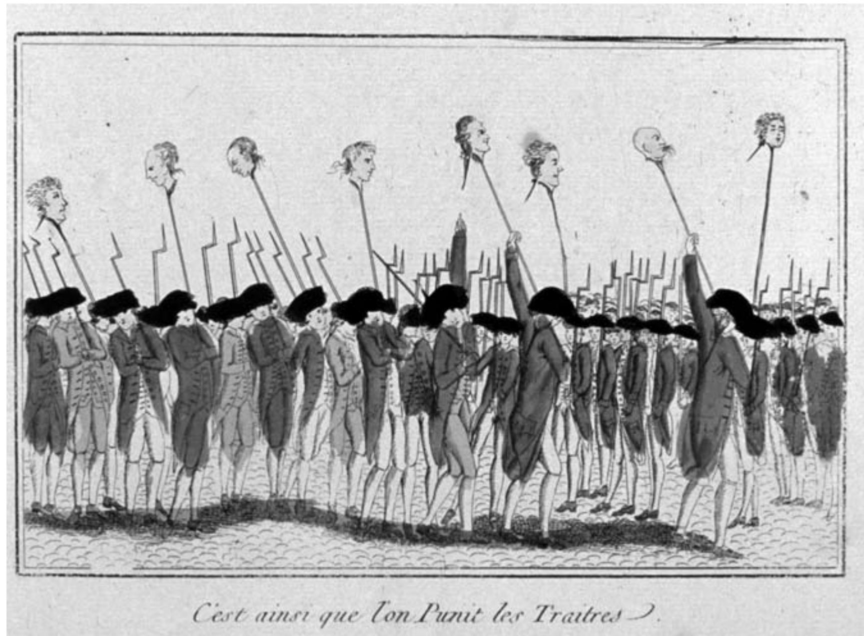
The king fired his ministers on July 11, 1789. The public discovered this the next day,



Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. LC-USZC2-3565.

"The Taking of the Bastille by the Citizens of Paris...." This print was done in 1789.

a Sunday, when most were not at work. Crowds gathered and were attacked by foreign cavalry (soldiers on horses). In response, the crowds burned the toll stations around the city, which they associated with the high price of bread. Worried that the mercenaries would move against them, the people of Paris tried to get their hands on weapons wherever they could find them.



"This is how we punish traitors." 1789.

Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. LC-USZC2-3565.

Why did crowds attack the Bastille?

The search for weapons led the crowds, who had been joined by mutinous members of the army, to the gates of the Bastille. The Bastille was a prison, but also Paris's largest arsenal of gunpowder. An initial attempt to break in was unsuccessful. When the crowds dragged a captured cannon to the gates of the prison, the governor of the Bastille decided to surrender. About one hundred Parisians died attacking the Bastille; only one defender died. Crowds killed the governor of the Bastille, put his head on a pike, and paraded it through the streets. The king's ministers told him he could no longer rely on the loyalty of his soldiers.

> ***"The defection of the army is not one of the causes of the Revolution, it is the Revolution itself."***
>
> —Antoine Rivarol, writer, 1789

On July 15, the king told the National Assembly that he was ordering all troops withdrawn from Paris and agreed to work with the assembly. He also agreed to reappoint Jacques Necker as finance minister. His announcement was greeted with applause, cheers, and shouts of "long live the king."

The members of the Estates General were swept up in a tide of emotions. The fear of violence against them was temporarily replaced with patriotic fervor and hope. Nobles and clergy were now attending sessions of the assembly with members of the Third Estate. Newly renamed the National Constituent Assembly, it was now an integrated representative body of the three Estates.

When the king visited Paris on July 17, he accepted a red, white, and blue cockade (a decorative knot of ribbons), which was the symbol of the revolution. There were 150,000 citizens carrying weapons on the streets of Paris. When they saw the king wearing the revolutionary cockade, they cheered him.

What was the "Great Fear"?

During the second half of July 1789, the insurrection that had torn through Paris spread to about two-thirds of France. This period, which would last into August, has become known as the "Great Fear."

Hunger and grain shortages drove many to desperation and violence. Rumors spread throughout the countryside among peasants that they would be attacked or their crops

stolen by bandits. Peasants lashed out against the tax system, refusing to pay tithes and even burning the records that showed how much they owed the nobility. Many peasants suspected the nobility of hoarding grain and of hiring criminals to steal their crops. Others thought that the British government was paying to incite riots throughout France. Unrest spread to small towns and cities. In the city of Rouen, textile workers destroyed machines that they thought might replace them in the factories. Rumors flew. Fear spread.

> ***"There is no longer any governing authority and Louis XVI is no more king than you are."***
>
> —Jean André Périsse Du Luc, member of the National Constituent Assembly, in letter to a friend, July 24, 1789

In its first weeks of existence, the National Constituent Assembly faced severe challenges. For the time being, the delegates were united by hope and the desire for change. Nevertheless, the economic and political problems that had led to insurrection throughout France remained. The assembly had integrated the three estates into a single representative body. Now would come the challenge of fixing the problems facing France.

> ***"The union existing among the three orders, held together by a rapprochement of ideas and a unity of desires,...will eliminate the arrogant and destructive principles of the aristocracy.... Frenchmen of all ranks and all classes bring to an end the vain distinctions which have divided them and will unite to build the foundations of freedom and happiness."***
>
> —Antoine-Francois Delandine, member of the National Constituent Assembly, July 1789

Members of the Constituent Assembly were proud they had integrated all the three Estates. Many shared a sense of optimism and hope for the future. But the task of constructing a new France would prove formidable.

> ***"It is not enough to destroy; we have to rebuild and I confess that the task frightens us."***
>
> —Jacques-Athanase de Lombard-Taradeau, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 13, 1789

In Part II of the reading, you have explored the origins of France's financial crises. You have seen how these crises created momentum for reform and political change. By 1789, all segments of French society, the peasants, clergy, bourgeoisie, and the nobility were caught up in the process and uncertainties of a changing France. The authority of the king had been undermined and the king himself appeared to accept a new role for the assembly. In truth, he had little choice in the matter. The assembly faced the daunting challenge of creating a new system of government while trying to deal with instability and the continuing economic crisis.

The National Constituent Assembly and the Future of France

The deputies faced the enormous task of trying to develop a new constitution while governing a country torn by unrest and fear. They began working long days. New city governments were formed throughout the country and support for the National Constituent Assembly increased. Some deputies felt overwhelmed by the size of their task.

> ***"I am far from sharing the optimism of some of our colleagues. The masses of starving people, the numbers of discontented, the difficulties of every sort imaginable...all combine to discourage me."***
>
> —Jean-François Campmas, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 13, 1789

As stories of the Great Fear spread, the assembly made a radical decision. Swept up by the spirit of reform and working late into the night on August 4, 1789 the assembly decided to end many of the privileges of the nobility. The deputies hoped that this would calm the peasants and decrease unrest. Some also hoped that it would reduce the power of the nobility, particularly those they worried were out to end the revolution. In a single evening, the assembly upended the centuries-old social hierarchy of France. Some historians believe that this was the most significant result of the French Revolution.

> **"Men are born and remain free and equal in rights."**
>
> Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

Many of the rights and privileges of the nobility were eliminated. For example, the assembly (which included nobles) ended the system of dues and taxes that peasants had to make to the nobility. These had been deeply resented and had appeared often in the "lists of grievances." The nobility's exclusive hunting rights and private tolls also were abolished. The deputies ended the payment of tithes and the purchase of public offices. In theory, positions would be obtained based on ability.

> ***"In the future, only wealth, talent, and virtue will distinguish one man from another.... We are a nation of brothers. The king is our father and France is our mother."***
>
> —Claude Gantheret, member of the National Constituent Assembly, letters of August 5 and 11, 1789

A few voices in the assembly of more than a thousand also called to end slavery in France's colonies, to give Protestants full religious freedom, and to ban nobility outright. These issues were not acted on, but would become issues for debate in the coming months. After the assembly's action, unrest in the countryside slowly began to decrease.

Why did the deputies write the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen?

On the afternoon of August 4, the deputies had agreed to write a preface to the new constitution as quickly as possible. After several weeks of discussion, prolonged by members of the clergy reluctant to allow complete freedom of worship, the assembly voted to approve this preface, now called the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. The document was influenced by the Virginia Declaration of Rights written in 1776 by George Mason. The Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen promised liberty and equality to citizens and emphasized the need for constitutional protections for these rights. It also said that sovereignty (the right to rule) rested in the people of the nation and not just the king.

Courtesy of the Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

"Quick, quick, quick
Hit it while it's hot
quick, quick, quick
Keep at it!
Our hearts must be in the work."

This print shows the Three Estates working cooperatively to forge the new constitution.

The approval of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen raised many important questions and issues about how to interpret and enact this document. What was the role of the king? Did he have the final say (or veto power) over new laws? What exactly was a citizen? Who would be eligible to vote? Were women citizens? Did they have equal rights? Should there be a bicameral legislature? Should there be religious freedom in France? If men are born and remain free, should slavery be abolished?

What were the divisions in the assembly?

As the assembly began to consider just what the principles laid out in the Declaration meant, three factions began to emerge. The differences that had been temporarily put aside in the revolutionary fervor of July had resurfaced.

The first group made up the majority of the assembly and were considered moderates. This group believed the revolution was over and imagined that France would become a constitutional monarchy, perhaps like Great Britain.

A second and much smaller group of conservative nobility and clergy thought that maybe the revolution had gone too far. They believed that the king should retain his authority and that the privileges renounced on August 4th by nobility and clergy should be reclaimed.

The third group was also a small minority of the assembly. These were the radical "patriot" deputies, who wanted more rights for all. For example, they wanted political rights and legal equality for Protestants. It is important to note that they did not argue for ending the monarchy.

The seating of the assembly was arranged in an oval with the president sitting on one side. The conservatives sat to the right of the president, the radical patriots to the left. The moderates, in the middle. This is the origin of the political terms we use today: conservatives are referred as the "right"; moderates are called "the center"; liberals are referred to as the "left."

In the coming days, you will recreate the debate among these three groups as they tried to write a new constitution for France.

You will consider whether the king should have a veto over laws and who is eligible to vote. You will consider questions of religious freedom, the role of women in politics, the role of the Catholic Church and religion in society, and whether slavery should be ended in the colonies.

The actual debates took place over a period of months and were complicated by the fact that the assembly needed to govern France as well as write a constitution.

"Overwhelmed with responsibilities and distracted by endless contingencies, we must work now on one question, now another, despite our strong desire to concentrate on one issue at a time."

—Jacques-Athanase de Lombard-Taradeau, member of the National Constituent Assembly, October 15, 1789

The people of France followed the arguments in the assembly closely. The number of newspapers had increased from one daily paper in 1777 to more than thirty by end of 1789. Those who could not read could go hear the news read aloud in public. All over France, people formed political clubs where they argued about the issues in front of the assembly.

While the members of the assembly, most of whom were well-off, began to debate the future of French government, the people of France followed events closely. As you will see, they would find ways to make their opinions known.

Options in Brief

Option 1: Conserve the Power of the King

France is one of the world's great powers. We have achieved this through the greatness of our kings and their leadership. Our system is based on the will of God. We have followed this system since the eleventh century. How dare we consider replacing it? While our views are not popular, we must work to conserve the power of the king. It is only this way that we can conserve France's greatness. The king is the source of all authority and we must remind all the French people that they are his subjects. Let us band together to protect the power of the king, the sanctity of the church, and the future of France.

Option 2: Create a Constitutional Monarchy

We continue to love our king with all of our hearts. But the world is changing. We need only to look across the water to our eternal foe Great Britain for a model of what kind of government works well. Here in France we should create a constitutional monarchy and a representative assembly. Rationality and reason can help us create a new constitution for France. It is time to cast away the ancient traditions that prevent France from moving forward, but let us be cautious. We must be careful so that we do not discard what makes us great and what has unified us. Let us all join together and celebrate the beginning of a new glorious era for France. Long live the king!

Option 3: Liberate France from the Old Regime

Men are born free, but everywhere they are in chains. So began the Enlightenment writer Rousseau's famous work, *The Social Contract.* Like Rousseau, we wonder: why must this be so? Now it is time for us to begin to break the chains. We must work to create a new, just, and fair society. The social distinctions of the past too often are used to tyrannize and preserve the privileges and wealth of a few. We must use all of our rational abilities and reason to improve conditions in France, to end hunger, and to create a society based upon the principles of liberty and equality.

Option 1: Conserve the Power of the King

France is one of the world's great powers. We have achieved this through the greatness of our kings and their leadership. We have established colonies overseas that bring great wealth and glory to France. It is the soundness of our system that has allowed us to achieve so much. The system of Estates reflects the right and true order of the world. The king is nearest to God and then each of the Estates follow in order. The lowest-ranked priest must take precedence over any member of the nobility. Any member of the nobility must take precedence over even the wealthiest and most successful member of the Third Estate. Our system is based on the will of God. We have followed this system since the eleventh century. How dare we consider replacing it?

The financial crises of the past years have swept France into a kind of revolutionary fever. This is a dangerous path to follow. While our views are not popular, we must work to conserve the power of the king. It is the only way that we can conserve France's greatness. God has made the king the source of all authority and we must remind all French people that they are his subjects. They are here to serve him. The king must have an "absolute" veto that gives him final say over all legislation. We must not allow the uneducated masses into the political process. The idea that religions other than Roman Catholicism should be tolerated is both dangerous and absurd. That would only bring chaos and violence to France. We also know that women are not capable of participating in politics, and ending slavery is naive and foolish. Democratic ideas are dangerous as are the delusions of those in love with abstract ideas. But abstract ideas are no basis for governing. Ideas such as equality and liberty threaten the foundations of our society, including the king, the church, and our own wealth and privilege. Let us band together to protect the power of the king, the sanctity of the church, and the future of France.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 1

1. The king is God's agent on earth. The power to rule the nation remains in the king alone and comes from God.

2. The system of privileges for the nobility and clergy are what have made France a great empire. They must be preserved.

3. Change will bring instability and chaos to France and Europe.

4. The French masses are not worthy or capable of participating in politics. They are dangerous and must be ruled by their betters.

Supporting Arguments for Option 1

1. The king remains well-loved and is best-positioned to help solve the financial crisis.

2. Radical change could embolden the uneducated mobs like the ones seen at the Bastille. This is a danger to public safety.

3. Our eternal enemy Great Britain will take advantage of us if we weaken the authority of the king.

From the Historical Record

General Principles

Abbé Barruel, priest and writer, 1791

"You subject God's agent [the king] to the people; you substitute the will of the people for the will God! What is this theology which puts the people in the place of God!"

Abbé Maury, Archbishop of Paris, member of the National Constituent Assembly, January 23, 1790

"The tyranny of a king is better than the tyranny of twelve hundred deputies.... If the people, as is claimed, are the source of all the political powers, the throne, in a monarchy, is their reservoir."

Comte d'Antraigues, member of the National Constituent Assembly, pamphlet dated April 1790

"One could perhaps say that the existence of the throne is by divine right in this sense: that God himself has traced the duties of subjects toward kings; that as a result this form of government has received in advance the divine sanction, and that the duties of peoples toward kings and of kings toward peoples form a part of the obligations imposed on Christians by the law of God."

Letter of King Louis XVI, August 26, 1789

"I will never consent to the plundering of my clergy and my nobles. Fine actions had earned them their privileges; the King of France must conserve those privileges for them."

Jean-Joseph Mounier, member of the National Constituent Assembly, 1789

"We will never abandon our rights, but we cannot exaggerate them. We must not forget that the French are not a new people, recently emerged from the depths of the forest in order to form an association, but a society of 24 million men which wishes to strengthen the ties between its various parts, which wishes to regenerate the kingdom so that the principles of a true monarchy might be forever sacred."

André-Boniface-Louis, Vicecount of Mirabeau, pamphlet

"The same factions, the same conspirators who in France have sapped the foundations of throne and altar, who have delivered the royal family, the clergy, nobility, magistrates, and proprietors of all classes to the fury of a blind, unbridled people, would like to entrain in the same downfall all the princes and governments of Europe; the scoundrels see safety only in increased numbers of victims and accomplices."

Veto

André-Boniface-Louis, Vicecount of Mirabeau, pamphlet dated 1789

"It is not for his particular advantage that the monarch intervenes in legislation, but for the very interest of the people; …the royal sanction is not the prerogative of the monarch, but the property, the domain of the nation."

Jean-Joseph Mounier, member of the National Constituent Assembly, September 5, 1789

"Democracy is a foolish dream in a large state. If the throne loses authority only to give way to the degrading yoke of aristocracy; and

feudal tyranny was established in France by the successive invasions of those who composed the general assemblies under the first and second dynasties of our kings; thus defense of the crown's independence is defense of the people's liberty.

"Therefore, we must give the greatest possible attention to the means by which we may secure executive power from all encroachments by legislative power. The most obvious means is to make the king an integral part of the legislative body and to require that the representatives' decisions be invested with the royal sanction in order to become laws."

Political Participation

Petition of property owners, December 1788

"It must be recognized that there is a class of men who, by nature of their education and the kind of work to which they are doomed by their poverty, are equally devoid of ideas and willpower, and incapable, at present of taking part in public business."

Jacques Antoine Marie de Cazalès, member of the National Constituent Assembly, February 5, 1791

"I do not think it necessary to point out… that proprietors [owners of property] alone are veritable citizens, that they constitute society itself, that it is only for the conservation of property that society is formed, that the public functions must be confided only to proprietors."

Women's Role in Politics

Jean-Baptiste Amar, deputy to the Convention, October 30, 1793

"Should women exercise political rights and get mixed up in the affairs of government? Governing is ruling public affairs by laws whose making demands extended knowledge, an application and devotion without limit, a severe impassiveness; governing is ceaselessly directing the action of constituted authorities. Are women capable of these required attentions and qualities? We can respond in general: no... In general, women are hardly capable of lofty conceptions and serious cogitations."

Religion

Abbé Maury, archbishop of Paris, member of the National Constituent Assembly, December 23, 1789

"Calling Jews citizens would be like saying that without letters of naturalization and without ceasing to be English and Danish, the English and Danish would be French... The sweat of Christian slaves waters the furrow in which the opulence of the Jews germinates.... People feel for the Jews a hatred that cannot fail to explode as a result of this aggrandizement. For their own safety, we should table this matter.

"It should not be concluded from what I have said about Jews that I confuse Protestants with them. Protestants have the same religion and the same laws as us, but they do not have same creed... I see no reason to deliberate on the section that concerns them in the proposed motion."

Slavery

Governor of Guadeloupe, October 1789

"We must expect strange revolutions. Not only must we fear an insurrection by the whites but even one by our natural enemies [the slaves], whose behavior suggests hidden cabals [plots]."

Monseron de L'Aunay, deputy of the Nantes Chamber of Commerce, December 24, 1789

"You send me alarming news from our sugar islands, principally from Saint Domingue. The inhabitants of that island may all be currently being held at knife point by negroes in revolt....

"Consider that these colonies are France's destiny. Consider the sixty million [francs] profit from their exports each year. Consider that their capital of three billion [francs] is the sacred property of their owners....

"Our eternal rival [Great Britain]...smiles at our misfortunes and...foresees the scepter of their world-wide domination that no human force would be able to take from them."

Option 2: Create a Constitutional Monarchy

We continue to love our king with all of our hearts. But the world is changing. We need only to look across the water to our eternal foe Great Britain for a model of what kind of government works well. Here in France we should create a constitutional monarchy and a representative assembly. The king is a great man who loves his people, but he is not well served by the courtesans whose primary goal is to preserve their wealth and privileges. Look where that has gotten us. We have faced an ongoing financial crises and many of the people of France go hungry. This need not continue. Times have changed. As our understanding of the principles that govern the universe has changed so has our understanding of what principles should govern the people of France. Rationality and reason can help us create a new constitution for France that gives the king a role in a more representative government.

It is time to cast away the ancient traditions that prevent France from moving forward. But let us be cautious. We must be careful so that we do not discard what makes us great and what unifies us. The king must understand that his purpose is to serve the people of France, and that it is only through their consent that he rules. The king must not be given an "absolute" veto over legislation. A "suspensive" veto, which will allow him to reject legislation unless it is passed by three consecutive assemblies is a better approach. This is one step towards creating a system of checks and balances between the different branches of government. Although the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen embraces equality, let us define carefully what we mean by equality. For example, although the system of slavery is oppressive, we can not afford to end it. We must create a representative assembly that property-owning Frenchmen can select. Neither women nor those who do not pay taxes are ready to participate in politics. We must open our minds and tolerate other religions besides Roman Catholicism. Let us not be divided by our religious beliefs; let us be united by the fact that we are citizens of a new France. Let us all join together and celebrate the beginning of a new glorious era for France. Long live the king!

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 2

1. The king remains the rightful ruler of France. A constitutional monarchy is the way for France to solve its problems.

2. We must rely on rationality and reason to improve the function of our government.

3. A well thought-out system of checks and balances in our new constitution will prevent abuses of power, tyranny, and corruption.

4. Radical political ideas and too much change would be dangerous.

Supporting Arguments for Option 2

1. Preserving a central role for the king in governing France is supported by the majority.

2. Great Britain provides an excellent model of a functioning constitutional monarchy. Although they are our great rivals, we would be happy to match their success.

3. Ending corruption and unfair privileges of the nobles and clergy will unshackle the French economy and allow France to prosper.

From the Historical Record

General Principles

Jérôme Pétion de Villeneuve, member of the National Constituent Assembly

"There is said to be a contract between the king and the nation. I deny the principle. The king can only govern according to the laws that the nation presents to him."

Pierre Victor Malouet, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 1, 1789

"The nation is waiting for us; it wants order, peace, and protective laws…. I believe, sirs, that it is necessary in a large empire for men placed by circumstances in a dependent condition to see the just limits on [liberty] as much as the extension of natural liberty…."

Jean-Baptiste-René Robinet, writer and scientist, November 1789

"There are no longer any provinces!... Instead, say that there are provinces, and that they are all national, all French, because there are no longer any distinctions, or privileges, or interests or spirit of particularism. Patriotism is not in the names, but the soul.... Let us conclude that new divisions are not necessary.

"You have made some indispensable destructions, some advantageous and infinitely useful destructions. It is necessary to take care not to push too far. It will no longer be regeneration: it will be abuse and excess."

The National Constituent Assembly, August 4-11, 1789

"The National Assembly solemnly proclaims King Louis XVI Restorer of French Liberty.

"The National Assembly abolishes the feudal regime entirely…."

Reynaud de Montlosier, member of the National Constituent Assembly

"Obviously, I had no desire for the exaggerated liberty and Revolutionary equality as they were conceived...but neither did I wish to return to the despotism of the Old Regime. [I seek] suppression of past abuses, while respecting the principal foundation of the previous system."

Pierre Victor Malouet, July 21, 1789

"It is important to be sensible, deliberate, moderate, cool…otherwise we will destroy and tear and break everything, and whatever we build will not stand."

Administrative Department of Cantal message to the National Constituent Assembly, 1790

"Subservient to the will of a single individual, debased by the feudal regime, they groaned under arbitrary laws that favored the rich and powerful and weighed down only those whom they were supposed to protect. They were not free and [now] they are free under the single dominion of a common law found on reason and equality.

"We reiterate, gentlemen, in the name of all the inhabitants of the Department of Cantal, the inviolable oath that they carry in their hearts to be forever faithful to the constitution, to the nation, to the law and to the king."

Veto

Abbé Henri Grégoire, member of the National Constituent Assembly, September 4, 1789

"Unfortunately, kings are men; flattered by courtesans, and often escorted by lies, truth reaches their thrones only with difficulty.

Unfortunately, kings, badly brought up for the most part have tumultuous passions. One of the most deeply rooted in the human heart, one of the most ardent, is the thirst for power and the penchant for extending its empire. A king capable of dominating by the ascendancy of his genius, like Louis XIV, who did everything out of vanity, and who will always put himself before his people; by virtue of an absolute veto, such a king will rapidly encroach upon legislative power by the facility of wielding the lever of executive power alone.... You will have a despot.

"I opine for the suspensive veto, which being only an appeal to the people retains their right to it; but I am opposed with all my might to an absolute veto, which reduces the Nation to a subaltern role, whereas it is everything, and which becomes the most terrible arm of despotism."

Political Participation

Abbe Sieyès, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 1789

"All the inhabitants of a country should enjoy the rights of a passive citizen; all have the right to the protection of their person, their property, their liberty, etc.; but all do not have the right to take an active part in the formation of the public authorities: all are not active citizens. Women, at least in the present state, children, foreigners, those who contribute nothing to maintaining the public establishment, should have no active influence on public affairs."

Women's Role in Politics

Louis-Marie Prudhomme, newspaper publisher, "On the Influence of the Revolution on Women," February 12, 1791

"Many women have complained to us about the revolution. They report to us for two years now it seems there is but one sex in France. In the primary assemblies, in the sections, in the clubs, etc., there is no longer any discussion about women, as if they no longer existed. They are accorded, as if by grace, a few benches for listening to the session of the National Assembly.

"Citizenesses of all ages and stations! Leave your homes all at the same; rally from door to door and march toward city hall.... Once the country is purged...we will see you return to your dwellings to take up once again the accustomed yoke of domestic duties."

Abbe Sieyès, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 1789

"Women, at least in the present state, children, foreigners, those who contribute noting to maintaining the public establishment, should have no active influence on public affairs."

Religion

Count de Clermont Tonnerre, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 1789
December 23, 1789

"...an honorable member has explained to us that the non-Catholics of some provinces still experience harassment based on former laws, and seeing them excluded from the elections and public posts, another honorable member has protested against the effect of prejudice that persecutes some professions....

"[Some] say to me, the Jews have their own judges and laws. I respond that is your fault. We must refuse everything to Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals.... In short, Sirs, the presumed status of every man resident in the country is to be a citizen."

Slavery

Antoine-Pierre Barnave, member of the National Constituent Assembly, March 8, 1790

"Abandon the colonies, and these sources of prosperity will disappear or diminish.

"Abandon the colonies, and you will import, at great price, from foreigners what they buy today from you."

Antoine-Pierre Barnave, member of the National Constituent Assembly, September 1791

"This regime is oppressive, but it gives a livelihood to several million Frenchmen. This regime is barbarous but a still greater barbarity will result if you interfere with it without the necessary knowledge."

Option 3: Liberate France from the Old Regime

Men are born free, but everywhere they are in chains. So began the Enlightenment writer Rousseau's famous work, *The Social Contract.* Like Rousseau, we wonder: why must this be so? Now it is time for us to begin to break the chains. Our ideas are sharply different from those of the past, but they will create the kind of radical change that France needs. We must work to create a new, just, and fair society. The social distinctions of the past too often are used to tyrannize and preserve the privileges and wealth of a few. This must end. We must use all of our rational abilities and reason to improve conditions in France, to end hunger, and to create a society based upon the principles of liberty and equality.

France's new constitution must give the will of the people the most prominent place in the political decisions of France. The king must subordinate himself to the will of the people. We are reluctant to give the king any veto power, because it implies he puts his own opinion above that of the nation. By what right does he claim that power? From God? We think the authority to rule only comes from the people. We must create a society where people are able to advance based on their abilities and talents. All men and women from all walks of life should have the right to participate in politics. France must break the shackles of slavery in its colonies—the freedom of all from birth is one that we hold dear. And let us end the monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church in France on religious practice. That tyranny is unjust and serves to fill the pockets of wealthy clergy with money. A new day is dawning in France; we must use all of our energy to forge ahead and remain wary of those nobles and others who want a counter-revolution.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 3

1. All are born free and equal before the law. Adhering to the principles of liberty, equality, and opportunity will allow us to create a better France.

2. We must end the old privileges and false social distinctions that have divided France.

3. The authority to rule France comes from the people of France and not a single person. The purpose of the government of France should be to serve the people.

4. We can use reason and rational thought to reorganize France and make a better society.

Supporting Arguments for Option 3

1. The vast majority of French people have had no voice in political decisions. Increasing participation will appeal to them and give them a stake in making change succeed.

2. Ending unfair privileges and creating a society with equality, opportunity, and justice as its centerpiece will strengthen France.

3. France has no choice but to attempt radical change. In the past, moderate reforms have been blocked at every turn by those seeking to preserve their wealth and privileges.

From the Historical Record

General Principles

Voltaire, 1765

"Does a dog need another dog, or a horse, another horse? No animal depends on any other of its species. Man, however, has received that divine inspiration that we call Reason. And what has it wrought? Slavery almost everywhere we turn. If this world were as good as it seems to be, if everywhere man could find a livelihood that was easy and assured a climate suitable to his nature, it is clear that it would be impossible for one man to enslave another."

Ménard de la Groye, member of the National Constituent Assembly, July 20, 1789

"Ah, the good people, the good French people. How slandered they have been by those who have said that liberty would never suit them."

Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, August 26, 1789

"1. Men are born free and equal in rights. Social distinction may be based only on common utility."

Government of Bas-Rhin in Strasbourg, April 14, 1790

"Until the moment of the most successful revolution, France could be regarded only as a vast body, in which no tie bound the parts. The provinces, isolated from each other, formed to some extent different nations: manners, customs, language, forms of administration all tended to disunite them, and to make them indifferent to each other.

"Today everything has changed. Our rights, our duties, our interests are the same; the privileges that divided us no longer exist; we are all brothers, all equal, all free: in a word, we are all French."

Veto

Théodore Vernier, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 1789

"I have come increasingly to realize that our Assembly is divided and that the nobles and the clergy want to make use of the veto to have all of our reforms rejected."

Maximilien Robespierre, member of the National Constituent Assembly

"…the person [king] who can impose a condition on the constitution has the right to prevent it [the constitution]; he puts his will above the right of the nation."

Abbe Sieyès, 1789

"The absolute or suspensive veto, no matter which, seems to me to be no more than an arbitrary order: I can only see it as a *lettre de cachet* [king's warrant for arrest or execution] launched against the national will, against the entire nation."

Political Participation

Abbe Sieyès, member of the National Constituent Assembly

"The people of the nation can have but one voice, that of the national legislature."

Maximilien Robespierre, member of the National Constituent Assembly, October 22, 1789

"All citizens, whoever they are, have the right to aspire to all levels of officeholding. Nothing is more in line with your declaration

of rights, according to which all privileges, all distinctions, all exceptions must disappear. The constitution establishes that sovereignty resides in the people, in all the individuals of the people. Each individual therefore has the right to participate in making the law which governs him and in the administration of the public good which is his own."

Women's Role in Politics

Nicolas de Condorcet, philosopher and mathematician, July 3, 1790

"...[I]t would be completely absurd to limit the rights of citizenship and the eligibility for public offices...why should women be excluded rather than those men who are inferior to a great number of women?

"Mothers, daughters, sisters, female representatives of the nation ask to be constituted as a national assembly. Considering that ignorance, neglect, or contempt for the rights of woman are the sole cause of public misfortune and governmental corruption, they have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of woman...."

Olympe de Gouges, playwright and political activist, Declaration of the Rights of Woman, September 1791

"1. Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on common utility...."

Religion

Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, August 26, 1789

"10. No one should be disturbed for his opinions, even in religion, provided that their manifestation does not trouble public order as established by law."

Zalkind Hourwitz, political activist, 1789

"The means of making the Jews happy and useful? Here it is: stop making them unhappy and unuseful. Accord them, or rather return to them the right of citizens, which you have denied them against all human laws and against your own interests, like a man who thoughtlessly cripples himself...."

Brunet de Latuque, member of the National Constituent Assembly, December 21, 1789

"I have the honor of proposing to you, Sirs, a decree in the following form that requires no further interpretation:

"1. That non-Catholics who have fulfilled all the conditions laid down in preceding decrees in order to be electors and eligible for office can be elected to every level of the administration, without exception.

"2. That non-Catholics are eligible for every civil and military post, like other citizens."

Slavery

Jean-Louis Viefville des Essars, "On the Emancipation of Negroes," 1790

"Freedom is the first right that man receives from nature. It is a sacred and inalienable right, and nothing should take it from him. Slavery is therefore nothing more than an abuse of power."

The Revolutions of Paris (Newspaper), September 5, 1790

"As for the slave trade and the slavery of Negroes, the European governments will find it useless to oppose the cries of philosophy and the principles of universal liberty that germinate and spread throughout the nations.... The new order of things will rise up despite all the precautions that have been taken to prevent it. Yes! We dare to predict with confidence that the time will come, and that is not far off, when you see a frizzy-haired African, with no other recommendation than his good sense and virtues, come and participate in the legislative process at the heart of our national assemblies."

Part III: A Revolution, a Republic, and the Terror

The debates over a new constitution took place in the assembly and among the public between 1789 and 1791. At the same time, the assembly had to conduct the day-to-day business of governing France.

All over France, people formed political clubs where they argued about the issues in front of the assembly. The clubs would write each other and affiliate themselves with a club in Paris. The most famous was the Jacobin Club, a pro-revolutionary reform group. It was not what today we would call an organized political party, but rather a coalition of like-minded individuals. It got its name from the Jacobin convent where it met. By July 1791, the Jacobin Club would have more than nine hundred affiliated clubs around France.

The assembly enacted reforms that changed all of the institutions of French government and reshaped much of life in France. While these political changes swept away much of the Old Regime, hunger and hardship for many French people remained. The financial crisis caused by great government debt also continued to plague the new government.

While King Louis XVI still sat on the throne, his power had been greatly diminished. He could no longer propose new laws and his salary was now set by the legislature. Using the idea of the separation of powers (an idea of the Enlightenment writer Montesquieu), the assembly decided the king could not select any of his ministers from the legislature.

Revolutionary France

On September 10, 1789, the assembly agreed that there would be a unicameral legislature in the new constitution. The assembly also voted 673-352 to give the king what was called a "suspensive" veto, which meant that the king could choose not to approve legislation. Only if the assembly passed the legislation three sessions in a row (a process that could take six years) would the legislation be enacted.

How did the public react to the suspensive veto?

This decision was not what the Parisian public wanted. Public anger about the decision, combined with the ever-present difficulty of buying bread, caused thousands of women to lead a march to Versailles on October 5. Joined by men along the way, the crowds invaded the palace and demanded that the king return to Paris with them.

The king and his family went to Paris in carriages escorted by a crowd of sixty thousand. The assembly decided a few days later to move the site of their meeting from Versailles to Paris as well. The power of the crowds of Paris continued to grow in importance.

How did the assembly decide who could vote and participate in politics?

On October 29, the assembly determined that only "active" citizens could vote. Active citizens were men over the age of twenty-five who paid a certain amount of taxes. This gave the vote to 4.3 million Frenchmen. (There were twenty-six million people in France.) The other category was so-called "passive" citizens who were entitled to civil rights, but not political rights of participation. For some, the distinction seemed to challenge the broad principles of equality spelled out in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.

> ***"But what is the much repeated word active citizen supposed to mean? The active citizens are the ones who took the Bastille."***
>
> —Camille Desmoulins in the newspaper *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, October 1789

In December 1789, the assembly gave Protestants civil equality and refused to declare Catholicism as the state religion. (Jews were given full political rights in September 1791.) But continued tensions between Catholics and Protestants led to violence between the two

groups in southern France. Although women were not given the right to vote, they continued to play an active political role during this period.

How did the assembly reorganize France?

The assembly also reorganized the administrative divisions in France. The provinces and *généralités* were replaced by eighty-three departments, all roughly equal in size. These were divided further into districts and communes. The central government would appoint no officials to govern. Instead citizens would elect their own local officials. The central government delegated a great deal of authority to local officials.

The assembly also created a national guard, disbanded the *parlements*, reformed the judicial system, and made trial by jury the standard. By all measures, France had become the most democratic European nation.

How did the assembly try to change the Roman Catholic Church in France?

On November 2, 1789 the assembly decided that the lands and properties owned by the Catholic Church in France belonged to the nation. They decided to sell these lands to help pay the government's debts. This measure was controversial for many of France's Roman Catholics. The assembly also made other decisions about the Catholic Church that heightened tensions within France and reduced popular support for the Revolution.

In July 1790, the assembly attempted to reorganize the church as it had reorganized the government. It enacted the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which said priests and bishops would be elected by the people. It also reduced the authority of the pope in governing the Catholic Church in France. The pope rejected this as did many of the clergy because they believed it contradicted their beliefs. In

Augustin Challamel, 1842. Wikimedia Commons.

This 1842 drawing depicts the march of women to Versailles to demand bread. These events came to be called "The October Days." The crowd broke into the palace to find the king and queen. One participant in the march is reported to have said, "Oh that little Marie-Antionette, if we had caught her we would have made her dance the dance she deserves. That is indeed what she deserves, because she alone is the cause of all the ills we suffer." The march caught the assembly and other officials completely by surprise.

response, in November 1790 the assembly insisted that priests take an oath of loyalty to the new government. About half of the clergy refused.

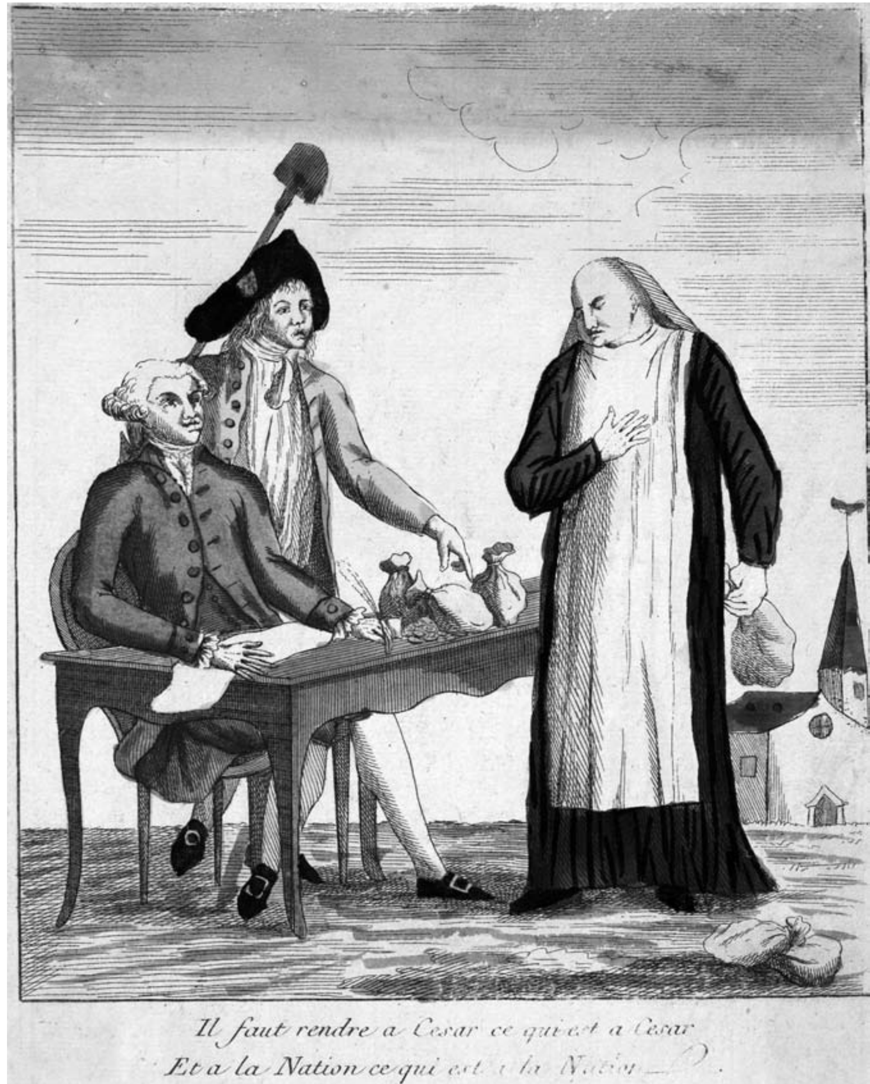
How did the Civil Constitution of the Clergy reduce popular support for the Revolution?

This issue would prove to be one of the most contentious and divisive matters of the Revolution. Pro-revolutionary "patriots" tried to force compliance with the oath. Those citizens who accepted the sacraments from priests who had not sworn the oath were labelled as disloyal to the Revolution. In contrast, some rural communities tried to prevent priests from taking the oath, which they saw as threatening their religious practices. Both sides used threats and violence to intimidate opponents. Most people in France were Catholic and faced the dilemma of choosing between "constitutional" clergy and the tens of thousands of priests who would not swear the oath.

The Civil Constitution of the Clergy caused a serious split in the French public and undermined support for the Revolution, particularly in rural areas of France. Two extremes developed. One saw the Civil Constitution of the Clergy as an attempt to destroy the church. The other saw priests who refused the oath as dangerous counter-revolutionaries (a counter-revolutionary is someone wants to reverse the results of a revolution).

What did the assembly decide to do about slavery?

Some of the Enlightenment philosophers and writers had condemned slavery and called for its abolition. A few groups seized on the opening words of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen: "Men are born free and remain equal in rights" and claimed that it should apply to all.



"It is necessary to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to the nation what is the nation's."

Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. LC-DIG-ppmsca-07709.

This drawing from 1789 shows a member of the clergy holding a bag of money that he is reluctant to add to the bags on the table. Behind the table with a shovel over his shoulder is a man from the Third Estate insisting that the cleric return to the nation the money that belongs to the nation.

> ***"As for the slave trade and the slavery of Negroes, the European governments will find it useless to oppose the cries of philosophy and the principles of universal liberty that germinate and spread throughout nations."***
>
> —*Révolutions de Paris* [a radical newspaper], September 1790

The majority of French people did not share the desire for the abolition of slavery. In fact, this radical idea had appeared in only a few of the lists of grievances. In March 1790, the assembly decided to exempt the colonies from the new constitution (and the rights it granted) and to make it a crime to support slave uprisings.

But the ideas of equality and liberty reached the colonies. On August 22, 1791, inspired by events in France, the enslaved people of Saint-Domingue revolted. A long bloody struggle began, which would last until January 1, 1804 when the new republic of Haiti claimed its independence from France.

The Flight to Varennes

The dramatic changes since 1789 had led to growing tensions and divisions in France. Throughout it all, the king had publicly supported the changes put in place by the National Constituent Assembly. Privately, he was deeply opposed to much of what had happened. In the midst of the Revolution, many French people had kept their affection for the king. This was about to change.

Why did the king and his family want to escape from Paris?

In April 1791, the king attempted to travel from Paris to his mansion in nearby St. Cloud. He hoped to be able to celebrate the Easter holiday with a priest who had not sworn the oath of loyalty to the new government. As he set out, crowds surrounded his carriage and refused to let him leave. He realized that he was essentially a prisoner in Paris. He and the queen decided that they needed to escape.

> ***"The event which has just occurred makes us even more resolute in our plans. The chief menace comes from the [national] guard that surrounds us. Even our lives are not safe. We have to give the impression of agreeing to everything until the moment we can act, and for the rest our state of captivity proves that nothing we are doing is of our own free will."***
>
> —Marie Antoinette, April 1791

On June 21, 1791 the king and his family left Paris in the middle of the night in disguise. The king hoped to reach the fortified town of Montmédy where he would stop and rally the country against the revolution. When the king reached the town of Varennes, he was recognized and forced to return to Paris.

The king's decision to flee Paris marked another important milestone in the revolution. It would strengthen radical voices hostile to the continued existence of the monarchy. It was really only after the flight to Varennes that significant numbers of people began to talk about the virtues of democratic and republican government.

How did the public respond to the flight to Varennes?

The king had left behind a letter when he had attempted his escape. The letter criticized the results of the revolution and worried about the threat of anarchy and unrestrained political freedom.

Prior to the flight to Varennes, many in France had retained some affection for the king. The discovery of the letter changed that. Radicals in the Jacobin Club, led by Maximilien Robespierre, began to call for a republic (a representative government without a king).

> ***"How could one ever again have confidence in anything the king might say?"***
>
> —*Journal de Perlet* [newspaper], June 1791

The king's attempted flight and the public reaction shocked many in the assembly, which was still dominated by moderates. The assembly decided to retain the king, but his limited powers would be restored only after the constitution was completed and the king had accepted it. The assembly worked quickly to finish the constitution. The constitution now said that if the king left the country, retracted his oath to the constitution, or led a rebellion against France he would be removed from power.

On September 13, 1791 the king accepted the new constitution. He had little choice in the matter. The National Constituent Assembly had finished its work and disbanded on September 30. Its members agreed that they would not stand for election in the new legislative body that would replace the assembly.

The Republican Revolution

The National Constituent Assembly was replaced by the Legislative Assembly. Theirs was not an easy task either. French politics were polarized and delegates faced public discontent and suspicion. As the new assembly began to meet, they faced an immediate crisis: the threat of war.

There were reasons for worry about war. The king's brothers had been busy trying to convince other rulers in Europe to invade France and restore the full authority of the French king. On August 27, 1791, the King of Prussia and Emperor Leopold II of Austria (Marie Antoinette's brother) had issued a declaration that they would intervene in France if they were joined by other European powers. In truth, it was unlikely that other European powers would join them. Nevertheless, the Declaration of Pillnitz, as it was known, provoked great anxiety in France about counter-revolution and invasion by foreign powers.

There were other supporters of a counter-revolution. Many members of the nobility and two-thirds of the army's officers, unhappy with the direction of the revolution, had fled France. These émigré groups also saw military intervention as a way to restore the authority of Louis XVI. The assembly decreed that émigrés who did not return to France would be punished with death. The king refused to agree to this and used the suspensive veto power given to him in the new constitution. The relationship between the new assembly and the king was not off to a good start.

Who were the Girondists?

A growing number of delegates to the assembly were distrustful of the king and fearful of counter-revolutionary plots. Many belonged to one faction in the assembly, an offshoot of the Jacobins known as the Girondists (named after the region of Gironde). The Girondists, led by Jacques-Pierre Brissot, began to call for war to protect the revolution from foreign intervention.

> ***"[I]t is necessary to make war now. We are sure of success in being the first to attack; all the advantages await us on enemy territory; all the disasters will follow us in our homes."***
>
> —Jacques-Pierre Brissot, January 20, 1792

Both the king and Maximilien Robespierre believed that France's disorganized army would be defeated in a war. Robespierre was the leader of a faction in the Jacobins known as "The Mountain" (because they sat so high in the assembly hall). Robespierre believed that war threatened the revolution and France. The king believed the same, but he saw it as his best hope for rescue. When the Legislative Assembly declared war on April 20, 1792, he was happy to go along with it. For most of the next twenty-three years, France would be at war with much of Europe.

What were the consequences of war?

The French armies were badly beaten in their first battles against the Austrian and Prussian forces. There were suspicions of treachery and counter-revolutionary plots within the army. The suggestions of some French generals to negotiate for peace were seen by many revolutionaries as treasonous

and as part of a plan to restore the power of Louis XVI.

Fear and anger spread. Grain shortages and hunger persisted in making life difficult. The king continued to veto laws wanted by more radical revolutionaries. Growing crowds, made up of working class French people, took to the streets of Paris to protest the lack of political and economic progress. These groups were called the *sans culottes.* (*Sans culottes* means "without knee breeches." Knee breeches were the clothing of wealthier people; the *sans culottes* usually wore long pants.) The *sans culottes* tended to be fierce supporters of the most radical ideas of the Revolution. On June 20, 1792, crowds invaded the hall of the Legislative Assembly and threatened the king and his family in the Tuileries palace.

"The Constitution has this Day I think given its last Groan."

—Gouverneur Morris, U.S. ambassador to France, June 20, 1792

Courtesy of the Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

On June 20, 1792, the sans culottes entered the Tuileries palace and forced Louis XVI (center) to wear the "cap of liberty."

The French General Marquis de Lafayette (famous in the United States for his participation in the War for Independence) returned from the front and spoke to the assembly. He argued that the demonstrators needed to be punished and that the Jacobin Clubs and factions should be silenced. His actions increased distrust of the army among the public.

The commander of the Prussian armies issued a declaration saying that his war aims were to end anarchy in France and restore the king's authority. He warned that if the king or his family were harmed, he would take revenge and Paris would be destroyed. The declaration, which was meant to frighten Parisians, instead strengthened their desire to resist the forces trying to restore the king's power.

Why did the sans culottes *attack the Tuileries Palace?*

The *sans culottes* began to play an increasingly important role in this phase of the French Revolution. While members of the assembly debated how to respond to the threats and problems facing France, the *sans culottes* took to the streets.

On August 10, 1792, twenty thousand *sans culottes* and members of the National Guard attacked the king's residence in Paris, the Tuileries Palace. The king had fled to the Legislative Assembly, but his guards were all killed—many hacked to death by the angry mob.

The assembly voted to suspend the monarchy. They also decided to disband themselves and called for elections for a new body to write a new constitution. The new assembly would be called the Convention. All men in France would be eligible to elect its members, even those who did not own property or pay taxes.

What were the "September Massacres"?

The advance of the Prussian army into France in the late summer of 1792 fueled panic. The Paris Commune (the city government)

ordered drastic measures. Thousands suspected of being counter-revolutionaries were thrown in jail. In early September, the *sans culottes,* believing more drastic measures were needed, removed more than one thousand prisoners from the Paris jails and executed them. This, they believed, would eliminate enemies of the revolution and prevent an uprising. Some of those executed were priests and nobles, but the majority were common criminals. A well-known radical journalist named Jean-Paul Marat wrote that the rest of France should follow the example of Paris and kill political prisoners.

> ***"The Paris Commune hastens to inform its brothers in all the Departments of France that a group of ferocious conspirators detained in its prisons have been put to death by the people. Acts of justice which seemed essential in order to terrorize the legions of traitors, hidden behind its walls, at the very moment when they were about to march on the enemy. Doubtless, the whole nation, after this series of treacherous acts which brought the country to the brink of the precipice, will hasten to adopt these methods so vital to the public safety, and all the French people will cry out like the Parisians: 'We are marching to the enemy, but we will not leave these brigands behind us to cut the throats of our wives and children.'"***
>
> —Jean-Paul Marat, September 3, 1792

After the executions, thousands of *sans culottes,* who believed Paris was now safe from counter-revolution from within, streamed to the front to fight the invading Prussian army. Filled with patriotic enthusiasm, and outnumbering their opponent, they helped French forces win a decisive battle.

On September 22, 1792, the Convention met for the first time in Paris. It abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic. This was the beginning of the republican phase of the French Revolution. Universal suffrage for men meant that France was now the most democratic nation in the world.

Most members of the Convention were middle class professionals and lawyers who had developed their political beliefs in the Jacobin clubs. They wanted a republic that would listen and respond to the needs of the common people. Out of 750 members, only about 70 members of the Convention were nobles or clergy.

What did the Convention decide to do with the king?

One pressing issue facing the Convention was the question of what to do with the king. The Convention decided to put the king on trial for treason.

Two factions of the Convention disagreed on what should be done. Several hundred of the deputies made speeches or published their opinion about the fate of the king. The debate was heated.

One faction was the Mountain. Led by Maximilien Robespierre, it argued for the immediate execution of the king. For these deputies, the fates of the king and the Revolution were intertwined. The continued existence of this king, or any king for that matter, challenged their idea of the Revolution itself.

> ***"[I]f Louis is acquitted, if Louis can be presumed innocent, what becomes of the Revolution?... Louis must die because the nation must live."***
>
> —Maximilien Robespierre, December 3, 1792

On the other side, the Girondists argued that the king had the right to a hearing and that the people of France should vote on the king's fate. Some even suggested that he be exiled to the United States. The Girondists worried about the growing power of the *sans culottes* and Parisian radicals.

The king defended himself by denying the charges against him. He claimed that he had

not violated any laws. He also said that he had not knowingly shed any of his subjects' blood. His lawyer questioned the appropriateness of the Convention in trying the King. He also argued that Louis had not been a tyrant, but someone who acted in the interest of the people.

"Louis XVI dismisses the accusations of having ordered the shooting of the people." (Louis XVI is sitting in the chair to the right.)

Jean-François Pourvoyer. cir. 1840. Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. LC-US262-124576.

"Citizens, I will speak to you here with the frankness of a free man. I search among you for judges, and I see only accusers.... Louis ascended the throne at the age of twenty, and at the age of twenty he gave to the throne the example of character. He brought to the throne no wicked weaknesses, no corrupting passions. He was economical, just, severe. He showed himself always the constant friend of the people. The people wanted the abolition of servitude. He began by abolishing it on his own lands. The people asked for reforms in the criminal law...he carried out these reforms. The people wanted liberty: he gave it to them."

—Raymond de Sèze, lawyer for Louis XVI, December 26, 1792

On January 15, 1793, 683 deputies voted for a guilty verdict, none for acquittal. But the question of the king's sentence continued to divide the Convention. The final vote was close (380-310), but the king was sentenced to death and taken to the guillotine (a machine that chopped off people's heads) on January 21, 1793. Some historians believe that the threat of violence from the *sans culottes* influenced the vote for execution.

The decision to execute the king shocked many people in France and raised the stakes for those who had voted for his execution. If the Revolution were to fail, or the government to fall, they would probably face trial and execution for killing the king.

What was the reaction to the death of the king?

The death of the king shocked the leaders of other European states as well. Spain and Great Britain declared war on France as did the Dutch Republic. The Convention decided to draft 300,000 new troops, a move that was unpopular and sparked popular resistance, particularly in the western and southern areas of France.

The king's execution and the continued efforts to enforce the loyalty oath on Catholic clergy also created further divisions in France. In the west, in an area known as the Vendée, an armed group called the "Catholic and Royal Army" clashed with the National Guard and rebelled against revolutionary governmental authorities. This developed into a civil war.

"We want our king, our priests, and the Old Regime."

—Rebel slogan in the Vendée, March 13, 1793

The Terror

The republican government of France now had to fight an international war and a civil war against royalist rebels. Continuing financial trouble, made worse by the costs of these new conflicts, led to skyrocketing food prices. The government decided to take emergency measures. In early April 1793, the Convention created the Committee of Public Safety to help guide the government. Made up of twelve men, the committee would claim more and more power for itself over the next year until it had established a totalitarian state which used terror and fear to subdue its opponents. It would claim to do this in the name of "liberty, equality, and justice." Maximilien Robespierre was the spokesman of the Committee of Public Safety.

How did the Mountain gain control of the Convention?

How to solve the crises facing France divided the Convention and led to a showdown between the Girondists and the Mountain. Worried about the influence of the Paris *sans culottes* on government policies, the Girondists argued that The Convention should be moved away from Paris.

The Girondists also arranged for the journalist Marat to be tried before the Convention's Revolutionary Tribunal. Marat had advocated for more executions of people deemed traitors and for a temporary dictatorship. Marat was acquitted and carried from the court by cheering crowds. In June, the *sans culottes* stormed the Convention and successfully demanded that the Girondists be arrested and expelled from the assembly. The Mountain now had control of the assembly. A supporter of the Girondists named Charlotte Corday assassinated Marat in July 1793. The assassination fueled fears among members of Committee for Public Safety that there was a massive plot against them. Committee members believed the government was not strong enough to deal with France's internal and external crises.

"The evil which besets us is that we have no government."

—Jeanbon Saint-André, member of the Committee for Public Safety, August 1, 1793

How did the Terror begin?

High prices and shortages of food and goods continued to plague the public. The Committee set maximum prices for food known as the "Law of the Maximum." It also set about trying to win the war against foreign enemies as well as the civil war. To do this it established a military draft for all men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.

The Committee dispatched forces to recapture cities held by rebel forces including Marseilles, Lyon, and France's large naval base at Toulon. After the French army won Lyon and Marseilles, the rebels decided to surrender Toulon to the British navy. This provoked outrage against the rebels as well as fear. An influential populist newspaper (populist means appealing to ordinary people) called for radical measures—including violence and executions—to be taken against enemies of the revolution. This included those who were hoarding grain or other basic goods. In September 1793, thousands of *sans culottes* marched to the Convention to demand drastic action against hoarders and other enemies of the Revolution. The Convention agreed immediately.

"Terror is the order of the day."

—The Convention, September 5, 1793

What was the "Law of Suspects"?

The Convention began a campaign to eliminate those perceived to be "treasonous." It enacted the "Law of Suspects," which limited judicial protections for those accused of a crime. It also expanded the definition of what was a political crime. Eventually, no one felt safe from suspicion.

In October 1793, Marie Antoinette was tried and executed, as were most of the Girondists. Former nobles were arrested and tried if they had not demonstrated loyalty to

the revolution. Many others were swept up in what was known as "The Terror." The Terror would last until July 1794. About sixteen thousand were tried and sentenced to death. Up to 500,000 went to prison as suspects. As many as ten thousand may have died in prison because of poor conditions.

"Terror is nothing but prompt, severe, inflexible justice; it is therefore an emanation of virtue.... The government of the revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny."

—Maximilien Robespierre, February 5, 1794

The Terror spread beyond Paris, particularly to areas associated with rebellion against the republic. For example, after the city of Lyon was recaptured from royalist rebels, the Committee of Public Safety vowed to make Lyon an example. They issued a decree that the city should be destroyed. About two thousand were executed.

"When I came to the guillotine, the blood of those who had been executed was still running in the streets... I said to a group of sans culottes...that it would be decent to clear away all of this human blood. 'Why should it be cleared?' one of them said to me. 'It's the blood of aristocrats and rebels. The dogs should lick it up.'"

—Eyewitness account in city of Lyon, January 22, 1793

The draft and other measures enacted by the Committee on Public Safety greatly strengthened France's army. After defeating rebels in Lyon it proceeded to Toulon and drove out the British fleet. It was also able to end the civil war by defeating royalist rebels in the Vendée region of France. Historians estimate that up to 250,000 died in this rebellion, many of them women, children, and non-combatants.

How did the Convention reduce the role of the Catholic Church?

The writers of the Enlightenment had wanted to create a more egalitarian society based on principles of reason. Their ideas had inspired many of the participants in the French Revolution, including representatives of the Convention.

The Convention made dramatic changes to French society. It introduced the metric system and created laws for equal inheritances within families, including girls. Representatives to the Convention believed they had to reduce the

The Terror: Circumstances or Ideology?

Historians have both puzzled and argued over why the Terror happened. It is an argument that continues to this day. Some historians have argued that the Terror was the result of **circumstances**. They suggest that the Terror was a necessary response to foreign invasion, civil war, and the need to enforce the Convention's new laws, particularly the "Law of the Maximum." Other historians have suggested the Terror was a logical outgrowth of revolutionary **ideology** and the ideas of the Enlightenment—for example, Rousseau suggested in *The Social Contract* that some may need to be "forced to be free." Other historians have chosen to synthesize the role of **circumstances** and **ideology.** These historians suggest that both circumstances and ideology played a role. Still others choose to focus on other questions about the Terror. For example, did the threat of violence by the *sans culottes* influence the imposition of the Terror?

Other questions about the French Revolution remain of particular interest to all of us today. For example, what lessons from the French Revolution exist for us today as societies undergo political change? Why did the attempt to create a democratic republic in France fail? What are the roles and responsibilities of citizens in political transitions?

role and power of the Catholic Church in order to remake French society. The Convention abandoned the Christian calendar and created a new calendar that renamed the months of the year, made weeks ten days long, and began with year one.

The Convention also removed responsibility for education from the church and put it in the hands of the government. It required births, deaths, and marriages to be registered at city hall and not with the church. Divorce, prohibited by the Catholic Church, was legalized. Other matters were taken out of the hands of the church with unintended yet severe consequences for many of the poor.

The intent of the Convention was to improve conditions for France's many impoverished people. But the decision to take responsibility from the church for all the hospitals and charities that cared for the sick, the elderly, orphans, and the very poor proved to be a mistake. The government simply did not have the money to provide the services that so many depended on. The revolutionary government was unable to replace the safety net once it had destroyed it. The controls on prices of food items put in place to help the poor did not work well either. For those who depended on the Church, the Revolution brought more suffering and hardship.

What was de-Christianization?

Some revolutionaries took the campaign against the Church a step further. They concluded that resistance to their agenda came from the Catholic Church. The movement was known as de-Christianization. It was not organized by the Committee for Public Safety or the Convention, but by government officials acting on their own.

In spite of this, de-Christianization became a part of the Terror carried out by local officials. This was particularly the case in the areas of France that had rebelled against the revolutionary government. In Paris, the Paris Commune closed all churches and renamed the cathedral of Notre-Dame "The Temple of Reason." The word "Saint" was removed from street signs. Churches were vandalized or closed, and priests forbidden to wear religious clothing. If a priest was denounced by six citizens, he was subject to deportation from France. Many priests and nuns were forced to marry.

Robespierre worried that de-Christianization in such a religious country would create a backlash against the republican government. He and the Committee on Public Safety warned about the danger of this anti-religious fervor and persecution. The Convention declared that religious freedom was one the founding principles of the Revolution. Nevertheless, by the spring of 1794, local authorities had closed most of the churches in France.

The fact that such a movement could begin worried the Committee of Public Safety. Robespierre worried about the lack of centralized control and took steps to centralize decision-making and put more authority in the hands of the Committee. The Committee claimed the power to hire and fire local officials. This represented a significant change from reforms enacted in 1789, when the public chose local officials through elections. Robespierre justified all of these actions in the name of liberty and equality.

> ***"What is the end towards which we are striving? The peaceful enjoyment of liberty and equality; the reign of that eternal justice whose laws are engraved...in the hearts of all men."***
>
> —Maximilien Robespierre, February 5, 1794

How did the Terror end?

With France's success ending its civil war and on the battlefields of Europe, some of the justifications for the Terror disappeared. To criticize the Terror was to risk being swept up in its wide net. Nevertheless, public doubts grew about the Committee's methods.

In the spring of 1794, Robespierre began a campaign to promote civic virtues like justice, heroism, and modesty. The goal was to create a civic religion known as "The Cult of

the Supreme Being." Robespierre hoped this would unify France and not divide society like he believed Catholicism did. Robespierre's prominent role in promoting "The Cult of the Supreme Being" led some to accuse him of trying to become a dictator.

> ***"It's not enough for him to be master, he has to be God."***
>
> —Jacques Alexis Thuriot, a critic of Robespierre, June 8, 1794

In early June, a new law increased the government's power to seek "enemies of the people." The new law defined treason more broadly and vaguely. For example, it was a political crime to "inspire discouragement." Witnesses were not necessary and prisoners were not allowed to have lawyers. Mass trials were held where suspects were tried together even if their cases were unrelated. Representatives of the Convention feared that they too could be accused of treason. June and July of 1794 came to be called "The Great Terror. "

Jean Duplessi-Bertaux (1750-1818). Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. LC-USZ62-117945.

"Robespierre lies wounded in the ante-room of the Committee of Public Safety. the 28th of June 1794 or the 10th of Thermidor in year two of the Republic."

Robespierre tried to kill himself just prior to his arrest but only succedeed in wounding himself in the jaw. In the picture he is lying on the table.

More than fifteen hundred were guillotined in Paris during this period.

Fear and doubts about the continuing necessity of the Terror provoked a backlash against the Committee for Public Safety in the Convention. On July 27th, 1794, Robespierre was arrested. He, most members of the Committee, and more than one hundred others were sent to the guillotine. The Terror was over.

Thermidorian Reaction

Robespierre's arrest had fallen during the newly named month of Thermidor (derived from a French word that means heat). Other months were named for their seasonal characteristics. For example Floreal, which meant "flowering," began at the end of April.

After the fall of Robespierre, the policies of the revolutionary government became far less radical. Today, the term Thermidorian Reaction, is used by historians to describe a reactionary moment in a revolution where a radical regime is replaced by a more conservative one.

The Convention set about revoking the harshest and most resented laws from the period of the Terror. Prisoners arrested during the Terror were released from prison. The Convention declared that religions could be freely practiced but that all religious ceremonies had to be held indoors and members of the clergy could not wear religious clothing. Many Catholics felt safe enough to practice their beliefs again. Catholicism underwent a tremendous resurgence throughout the country.

Public sentiment ran so strongly against the Terror and what it represented, that talk of restoring the monarchy and replacing the republic began to increase. Those who hoped for this were known as royalists or monarchists. Louis XVI's uncle issued a statement from Italy vowing to restore the institutions of the Old Regime and promising revenge against those who had killed his nephew.

How did shortages of bread continue to trouble France?

In addition to rumblings from royalists hoping to restore a king to France, the Convention faced pressure from the *sans culottes*. Disastrous harvests had led to famine again in 1795. Crowds took to the streets in Paris calling for bread and a return to the radical policies of the previous year.

> ***"Under Robespierre, blood ran and we had bread; today blood does not run and we don't have any bread, and we ought to make some blood flow to get some."***
>
> —Protestor, May 20, 1795

Many of those who had organized influential protests by the *sans culottes* had fallen victims to the Terror. The Convention was able to suppress this new uprising without much difficulty. The influence of the *sans culottes* in Paris had decreased.

What did the Convention include in the new constitution?

In 1795 the Convention prepared another constitution. It was France's third constitution in five years. Designed to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of a few that had made the Terror possible, it ended universal suffrage for men. Instead the new constitution required voters to be men who paid taxes or had served in the army. It established a bicameral legislature that selected an executive body called the Directory, which had five directors.

The Convention also proposed that two-thirds of the new assembly be composed of members of the Convention. This met resistance from the royalists. They saw this measure as an effort by supporters of the republic to avoid elections and hold on to power. When twenty-five thousands royalists began an insurrection in Paris in October to overturn the constitution, it was put down by the army led by a young general named Napoleon Bonaparte.

What political issues did the Directory face?

The Directory faced a continuing struggle to solve France's economic problems. Some of their policies helped stabilize the economy as did slightly better harvests. Nevertheless, hardship, hunger, and the great contrasts between the extremely wealthy and the poor remained. Political struggles among the Jacobins, royalists, and other factions continued. These struggles, and memories of the Terror created, an atmosphere where the political stakes were very high.

One group, led by François-Noël Babeuf, came to be known as the "Conspiracy of Equals." Babeuf favored a redistribution of property to all. (Today, some see his ideas as a forerunner to Marxism and Communism.) Babeuf's plan to overthrow the government was discovered and he was sent to the guillotine.

> ***"The aim of the Revolution also is the well being of the greatest number; therefore, if this goal has not been achieved, if the people have not found the better life they were seeking, then the Revolution is not over."***
>
> —François-Noël Babeuf at his trial, February-May 1797

In the spring of 1797, elections were held for one-third of the seats of the legislature. When substantial numbers of royalists were elected, three of the five directors conspired with the army to void the elections and remove many of the royalists from government. The principle of governing with the consent of the people had fallen by the wayside. Instead, the Directory governed because it was backed by the army. The Directory "adjusted" the elections of 1798 and 1799 to suit its needs as well.

How did Napoleon Bonaparte take power in France?

While political struggles continued in France, France's armies were very successful during the time of the Directory. France defeated Prussia and conquered parts of Italy and Austria. The wars brought profits to the government and created heroes for the public to admire. One of these heroes was the ambitious general Napoleon Bonaparte.

The French government began to think of ways to strike at its traditional enemy, Great Britain. Napoleon was named head of the force to invade England. He also persuaded the Directory to send his troops to invade Egypt. There French forces suffered a defeat at the hands of the British navy and Napoleon's soldiers were left behind in Egypt. The decision to invade Egypt also made allies of the Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the British Empire against France.

Napoleon's reputation did not suffer in France with the troubles of his army in Egypt. Instead he returned to France to take advantage of political developments.

In November 1799, the political situation had shifted once again. The Jacobins had recovered some of their political strength and created harsh new laws against counterrevolutionaries. Some feared a returned to the Terror. Among them was Abbé Sieyès, who had written *What is the Third Estate?* in 1789.

Sieyès believed that France could only face its external threats and solve its internal problems with a more authoritarian government. He turned to the popular army general Napoleon Bonaparte for help. In early November, the army led by Bonaparte ordered the assembly to disband itself and appoint Sieyès, Bonaparte, and another man named Roger Ducos as France's leaders. Sieyès had planned to lead a new government, but Bonaparte outmaneuvered him and took the most powerful position of First Consul for himself. He would rule France for the next sixteen years.

> ***"Citizens, the revolution is established on the principles with which it began. It is over."***
>
> —Napoleon Bonaparte, December 15, 1799

Conclusion

Bonaparte was right, but only in part. The events of the French Revolution were over, but he would not demonstrate loyalty to the principles with which it began. Napoleon Bonaparte placed stability above liberty and rights. During his reign, he would concentrate power in his hands and create a police state that severely restricted political expression. He also enacted reforms to make the government efficient, reformed the legal system, and ended the struggle over the role of the Catholic Church by signing an agreement with the pope. He would commit France to building a foreign empire and crown himself emperor in 1804. It was this quest for foreign empire that would eventually lead to his defeat in 1815, but his actions would change international politics forever.

In another sense, the Revolution was not over. It would continue to have profound effects that would stretch across borders and time. In France, it had transformed the relationship between the people and the government. It had ended an absolute monarchy, and challenged the power of the church and hereditary nobles. Over the next century, these ideas would begin to take root in other parts of Europe and across the world as well.

Yet the French Revolution was not only about lofty ideas. It was also an example of the misuse of power by government. The Terror is one of the dark episodes of history. More than sixteen thousand were executed, and hundreds of thousands were imprisoned by a government who intended to terrorize its political opponents into submission. It was a far cry from the rights espoused so fervently in 1789.

The Revolution also had terrible costs in terms of loss of life. The civil war in France led to the deaths of about 250,000. France's European wars during the revolutionary period and the reign of Napoleon resulted in the death of some five million people. In many ways, the French Revolution was as much about power and violence as it was about progressive political ideas.

Nevertheless, the political ideas of the French Revolution have had a lasting impact. Equality and rights became important political issues. The ideas in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, including the freedom of expression, the right to vote, and the freedom from arbitrary imprisonment, would influence political reformers around the world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Questions about religious freedom, the rights of women, and whether to abolish slavery also became prominent, just as they had during the French Revolution.

Finally, the French Revolution was an important source of a number of principles of government that are widely accepted today: in particular the idea that citizens are equal before the law and should have equal opportunity, and that the authority of the state must come from its people.

Auguste Desnoyers. Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. LC-DIG-pga-03143.

"Napoleon the Great"
Compare this 1805 portrait to the one of Louis XVI on page 5.

Supplementary Document: Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

Approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789

The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties; in order that the acts of the legislative power, as well as those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all political institutions and may thus be more respected, and, lastly, in order that the grievances of the citizens, based hereafter upon simple and incontestable principles, shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all. Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Articles:

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.

2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.

4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.

5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law.

6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.

7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.

8. The law shall provide for such punishments only as are strictly and obviously necessary, and no one shall suffer punishment except it be legally inflicted in virtue of a law passed and promulgated before the commission of the offense.

9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.

10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly,

speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

12. The security of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces. These forces are, therefore, established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those to whom they shall be intrusted.

13. A common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces and for the cost of administration. This should be equitably distributed among all the citizens in proportion to their means.

14. All the citizens have a right to decide, either personally or by their representatives, as to the necessity of the public contribution; to grant this freely; to know to what uses it is put; and to fix the proportion, the mode of assessment and of collection and the duration of the taxes.

15. Society has the right to require of every public agent an account of his administration.

16. A society in which the observance of the law is not assured, nor the separation of powers defined, has no constitution at all.

17. Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be deprived thereof except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it, and then only on condition that the owner shall have been previously and equitably indemnified.

Supplementary Resources

Books

Andress, David. *The French Revolution and the People.* (Hambledon and London: London, 2004) 301 pages.

Doyle, William. *The Oxford History of the French Revolution.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 466 pages.

Hunt, Lynn. *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History.* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1996) 150 pages.

Mason, Laura and Tracy Rizzo. *The French Revolution: A Document Collection.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999) 357 pages.

Tackett, Timothy. *Becoming a Revolutionary: The Deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture (1789-1790)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 355 pages.

Walzer, Michael. *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) 257 pages.

World Wide Web

Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html> The library has an online collection of contemporary prints and political cartoons from the French Revolution.

The Choices Program. <http://www.choices.edu/resources/supplemental_frenchrev.php> Choices has digital resources, including maps and images, for use with this curriculum.

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The French Revolution

The French Revolution traces the history of France during the reign of Louis XVI to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. The unit focuses on the social, political, and economic conditions that led to the end of the Old Regime and helps students consider why the attempt to establish democratic institutions failed.

The French Revolution is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

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TEACHER RESOURCE BOOK

TEACHER RESOURCE BOOK

The French Revolution

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TEACHER RESOURCE BOOK

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The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program is a program of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies and the Office of Continuing Education at Brown University.

The Choices Program develops curricula on current and historical international issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

Michael Kennedy
Director, Watson Institute for International Studies

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The French Revolution is part of a continuing series on public policy issues. New units are published each academic year, and all units are updated regularly.

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The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program is a program of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. Choices was established to help citizens think constructively about foreign policy issues, to improve participatory citizenship skills, and to encourage public judgement on policy issues.

The Watson Institute for International Studies was established at Brown University in 1986 to serve as a forum for students, faculty, visiting scholars, and policy practitioners who are committed to analyzing contemporary global problems and developing initiatives to address them.

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The Choices Approach to Historical Turning Points

Choices curricula are designed to make complex international issues understandable and meaningful for students. Using a student-centered approach, Choices units develop critical thinking and an understanding of the significance of history in our lives today—essential ingredients of responsible citizenship.

Teachers say the collaboration and interaction in Choices units are highly motivating for students. Studies consistently demonstrate that students of all abilities learn best when they are actively engaged with the material. Cooperative learning invites students to take pride in their own contributions and in the group product, enhancing students' confidence as learners. Research demonstrates that students using the Choices approach learn the factual information presented as well as or better than those using a lecture-discussion format. Choices units offer students with diverse abilities and learning styles the opportunity to contribute, collaborate, and achieve.

Choices units on historical turning points include student readings, a framework of policy options, primary sources, suggested lesson plans, and resources for structuring cooperative learning, role plays, and simulations. Students are challenged to:

- understand historical context
- recreate historical debate
- analyze and evaluate multiple perspectives at a turning point in history
- analyze primary sources that provide a grounded understanding of the moment
- understand the internal logic of a viewpoint
- identify the conflicting values represented by different points of view
- develop and articulate original viewpoints
- recognize relationships between history and current issues
- communicate in written and oral presentations
- collaborate with peers

Choices curricula offer teachers a flexible resource for covering course material while actively engaging students and developing skills in critical thinking, persuasive writing, and informed citizenship. The instructional activities that are central to Choices units can be valuable components in any teacher's repertoire of effective teaching strategies.

Historical Understanding

Each Choices curriculum resource provides students with extensive information about an historical issue. By providing students only the information available at the time, Choices units help students to understand that historical events often involved competing and highly contested views. The Choices approach emphasizes that historical outcomes were hardly inevitable. This approach helps students to develop a more sophisticated understanding of history.

Each Choices unit presents the range of options that were considered at a turning point in history. Students understand and analyze these options through a role-play activity. In each unit the setting is the same as it was during the actual event. Students may be role-playing a meeting of the National Security Council, a town gathering, or a Senate debate. Student groups defend their assigned policy options and, in turn, are challenged with questions from their classmates playing the role of "decision makers" at the time. The ensuing debate demands analysis and evaluation of the conflicting values, interests, and priorities reflected in the options.

The final reading in a Choices historical unit presents the outcome of the debate and reviews subsequent events. The final lesson encourages students to make connections between past and present.

Note To Teachers

The profound effects of the French Revolution stretch across borders and time. In France, it transformed the relationship between the people and the government. It ended an absolute monarchy, and challenged the power of the church and hereditary nobles. Over the next century, these ideas would begin to take root in other parts of Europe and across the world as well. The Revolution also raised profound questions that remain relevant in today's world. Why did the effort to establish a democratic system fail? Why did the new republican government resort to violence and repression?

The French Revolution traces the history of France during this epoch. Students explore France's political and social organization, its competition for empire, its financial crises, and the efforts to reshape French society. A central activity helps students recreate the debate in France in 1789 and 1790. The reading concludes with an examination of the failed effort to create a republic and the Terror.

Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan: The Teacher Resource Book accompanying *The French Revolution* contains a day-by-day lesson plan and student activities. The unit opens with students exploring the concept of social class and French society during the reign of Louis XVI. A second lesson explores the cause and effect relationships leading to the taking of the Bastille. The third and fourth days feature a simulation in which students assume the roles of members of the National Constituent Assembly in 1789 and 1790 as it debated the future of France. On the fifth day, students identify and illustrate critical events during the Revolution. Alternatively, students use primary sources to consider the arguments and issues around the trial of Louis XVI. You may also find the "Alternative Three-Day Lesson Plan" useful.

• **Alternative Study Guides:** Each section of reading has two distinct study guides. The standard study guide helps students harvest the information in the readings in preparation for analysis and synthesis in class. It also lists key terms that students will encounter in the reading. The advanced study guide requires students to tackle analysis and synthesis prior to class activities.

• **Vocabulary and Concepts:** The reading addresses subjects that are complex. To help your students get the most out of the text, you may want to review with them "Key Terms" on page TRB-45 before they begin.

The "French Revolution Issues Toolbox" on TRB-46 provides additional information on the concept of the political spectrum.

• **Assessment:** A documents-based exercise (TRB 41-44) is provided to help teachers assess students' comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant sources. The assessment is modeled closely on one used by the International Baccalaureate Program. The assessment could also be used as a lesson.

• **Additional Resources**: More resources, including powerpoint maps and original documents, are available for free at <http://www.choices.edu/resources/supplemental_frenchrev.php>.

The lesson plans offered here are provided as a guide. Many teachers choose to devote additional time to certain activities. We hope that these suggestions help you tailor the unit to fit the needs of your classroom.

Integrating this Unit into Your Curriculum

Resources produced by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program can be integrated into a variety of social studies courses. Below are a few ideas about where *The French Revolution* might fit into your curriculum.

World History: Studying the French Revolution helps students gain a broader understanding of one of the revolutions that altered the course of history. Besides offering an overview of French history, the unit focuses on the economic, political, and social conditions that led to revolution in 1789.

France's revolution was marked by violence, uncertainty, and ultimately the rise of Napoleon. Its outcome has had a profound and lasting impact that reverberates to this day.

Ethics and Law: The ethical and legal issues of the French Revolution continue to be salient today. For example, the trial of Louis XVI raises important questions about the connection between justice and politics. Was his trial political expediency or a search for justice? Was the outcome just? What responsibilities do rulers have for systems of government? How should one treat one's political enemies?

The Terror also raises important questions. Was it inevitable or even justifiable as some historians have argued? Did the threat of counter-revolution make it unavoidable? How should political leaders resolve "ends-means" dilemmas?

Political Science/Government: Why do transitions of government vary from case to case? Students explore how France's historical traditions of governance and the legacies of imperialism affected its transition.

Additionally, students will examine the role leadership plays in national stewardship. France's leaders—kings, politicians, and intellectuals—had profound effects on their country. Why are some leaders more successful than others? What is the relationship between leadership and the citizenry?

Reading Strategies and Suggestions

This unit covers a range of issues over a long period of time. Your students may find the readings complex. It might also be difficult for them to synthesize such a large amount of information. The following are suggestions to help your students better understand the readings.

Pre-reading strategies: Help students to prepare for the reading.

1. Be sure that students understand the purpose for their reading the text. Will you have a debate later and they need to know the information to formulate arguments? Will they create a class podcast?

2. Use the questions in the text to introduce students to the topic. Ask them to scan the reading for major headings, images, and questions so they can gain familiarity with the structure and organization of the text.

3. Preview the vocabulary and key concepts listed on each study guide and in the back of the TRB with students. The study guide asks students to identify key terms from the reading that they do not know. Establish a system to help students find definitions for these key terms.

4. Since studies show that most students are visual learners, use a visual introduction, such as photographs or a short film clip to orient your students.

5. You might create a Know/Want to Know/Learned (K-W-L) worksheet for students to record what they already know about the French Revolution and what they want to know. As they read they can fill out the "learned" section of the worksheet. Alternatively, brainstorm their current knowledge and then create visual maps in which students link the concepts and ideas they have about the topic.

Split up readings into smaller chunks: Assign students readings over a longer period of time or divide readings among groups of students.

Graphic organizers: You may also wish to use graphic organizers to help your students better understand the information that they read. These organizers are located on TRB-8, TRB-16, and TRB-29. Students can complete them in class in groups or as part of their homework, or you can use them as reading checks or quizzes.

French Society Under the Old Regime

Objectives:

Students will: Explore the social and political dynamics of France prior to 1789 during the reign of Louis XVI.

Understand the concept of social class.

Develop fact-gathering and dramatic presentation skills.

Work cooperatively in groups to create and present a dramatic fictional representation of French society in the eighteenth century.

Required Reading:

Students should have read the Introduction and Part I in the student text (pages 1-11) and completed "Study Guide—Part I" (TRB 5-6) or "Advanced Study Guide—Part I" (TRB-7).

Note:

A graphic organizer on TRB-8 may help students organize information for this activity.

Teachers may want to make more resources (internet, documents) available to students, or design their own materials in addition to the handouts provided here, for students to use.

This activity could also be easily adapted into a video project for students.

Handouts:

"TV France" (TRB-9)

"Character Worksheet" (TRB-10) for characters

"Reporter Worksheet" (TRB-11) for reporters

In the Classroom:

1. Focus Question—Write the question "What is social class?" on the board. Give students a few minutes to brainstorm and record their answers.

2. Forming Groups—Divide the class into groups of 7-8 students. Tell students that they are going to create a television newscast that will report on life in France during the eighteenth century. One member of each group will assume the role of the television reporter. Tell the other students that each will research a social group in French society and then create a character to be interviewed.

3. Preparing the Presentation—Designate different locations of your classroom for each group. Tell students to follow directions on the handouts. Emphasize the importance of using historical information to create the fictional characters.

4. Sharing Conclusions—Have each group make their presentation to the class.

Ask students to consider what information they thought was important or interesting. What issues and topics were expressed most often in the interviews?

Which social classes were most optimistic and least optimistic about the future? What reasons can students suggest for this?

Do the interviews suggest that one of the social classes was more important or influential than the others? Ask students to make an argument for and against each of the social classes as "most important." How important or influential were the Enlightenment writers? Again, ask students to make an argument for and against their importance.

Does social class affect political point of view? What role do students think that social class might have had in the politics of France before the revolution?

Homework:

Students should read Part II in the student text (pages 12-22) and complete "Study Guide—Part II" (TRB 13-14) or "Advanced Study Guide—Part II" (TRB-15).

Name:____

Study Guide—Introduction and Part I

Vocabulary: Be sure that you understand these key terms from the Introduction and Part I of your reading. Circle ones that you do not know.

economic conditions
dictatorship
human rights
politics
democratic republic
social class
absolute monarchy
hierarchies
monarchy
nobility
bourgeoisie
peasants
clergy
agriculture
poverty
mortality rates
low productivity
unskilled workers
commerce
trade
social status
elite
administrative
parliament
literate

Questions:

1. What is an absolute monarchy?

2. What were the three main social classes in France?

3. List three characteristics of the lives of peasants.
   a.
   b.
   c.

4. What was a “public office”?

Name:____

5. Why did the bourgeoisie invest in education?

6. List three functions of the Catholic Church in French society.
   a.

   b.

   c.

7. What were the *parlements*?

8. What were the goals of the Enlightenment?

9. Fill in the chart below with information from your reading about French Enlightenment philosophers.

Philosopher's name	Year of birth and death	Famous work	Important Ideas

Name:____

Advanced Study Guide—Introduction and Part I

1. What was life like for peasants in eighteenth century France?

2. France was changing during the reign of Louis XVI. What role did the bourgeoisie play in this change?

3. How did France's political structure complicate the task of governing?

4. What general political principles did Montesquieu, Diderot, Rousseau, and Voltaire have in common?

Name:______________________________

French Society During the Reign of Louis XVI

Instructions: Use your reading to fill in boxes below. List characteristics, or facts about each group, as well as the group's role in French politics or economy.

King Louis XVI

Characteristics:

Role in French politics and economy:

Estates General

Characteristics:

Role in French politics and economy:

Peasants

Characteristics:

Role in French politics and economy:

Enlightenment Philosophers

Characteristics:

Role in French politics and economy:

Nobility

Characteristics:

Role in French politics and economy:

Catholic Church

Characteristics:

Role in French politics and economy:

Clergy

Characteristics:

Role in French politics and economy:

Bourgeoisie

Characteristics:

Role in French politics and economy:

Name:____

TV France

Instructions: You and your group members are going to create a television report about life in France before the French Revolution. Each group member should assume one of the following roles:

Role	Student Name
1. Television Reporter	
2. Peasant	
3. Servant	
4. Member of the Bourgeoisie	
5. Member of the Nobility	
6. Member of the Clergy	
7. Enlightenment Writer	

For the characters:

Use the handout and your reading to gather information to help create your character. You may also wish to consult other sources for additional information. You will need to be able to answer the following three questions:

1. Who are you?
2. What is life like for you?
3. What are your hopes and plans for the future?

For the television reporter:

While your classmates research and prepare their characters, you should review each of the categories listed above. Before you interview each character, be prepared to give an important fact in a single sentence about the character's social class. For example, before you interview the peasant, you could say, "In France, there were approximately twenty-two million peasants out of a total population of twenty-six million." Use the handout to record an important fact about each category.

Name:_______________________________________

Character Worksheet

Instructions: Use Part I of the reading and this worksheet to collect information to help you create your character. As you fill out the worksheet, try to take yourself back to that time period and imagine what daily life would be like. The questions below will help you prepare for your interview with the TV reporter. While the dialogue is only limited by your imagination, it should communicate as many historically accurate details as possible of what your character might experience during this period. Your performance should be dramatic, energetic, and brief. Props and costumes can also enhance your performance. It will be helpful to review or rehearse the interviews before your group presents to the whole class.

1. What is your social class?

2. What is your name, age, and gender?

3. Where do you live?

4. Is your life easy, difficult, or something else?

5. What is your most basic daily concern?

6. What do you do every day?

7. What do you think about people of other social classes?

8. Are you optimistic about the future?

Name:____

Reporter Worksheet

Instructions: Use Part I of the reading and this worksheet to collect an important fact about the characters you will interview. The characters are from the different social classes and groups within France. Use the important fact before or after each character has answered the three questions. Remember that is your job to try to keep each interview interesting and brief. It will be helpful to review or rehearse each interview before your group presents to the whole class.

Character	Important Fact
1. Peasant	
2. Servant	
3. Member of the Bourgeoisie	
4. Member of the Nobility	
5. Member of the Clergy	
6. Enlightenment Writer	

The Three Questions

1. Who are you?

2. What is life like for you?

3. What are your hopes and plans for the future?

The Fall of the Bastille

Objectives:

Students will: Identify the relationship of key events and people to the fall of the Bastille.

Assess the importance of cause-and-effect relationships.

Collaborate with classmates to develop a group presentation.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part II in the student text (pages 12-22) and completed "Study Guide—Part II" (TRB 13-14) or "Advanced Study Guide—Part II" (TRB-15).

Handouts:

"The Fall of the Bastille" (TRB-17)

Note: Scissors, markers, and glue will be helpful for completing this activity.

In the Classroom:

1. Focus Question: Write the question "Why did the Bastille fall?" on the board. Ask students to recall their reading. What was the Bastille? Why was this event significant?

2. Making Connections—Divide the class into groups of three or four. Hand out a poster board or large sheet of flip-chart paper to each group and ask them to write "The Fall of the Bastille" on it. Explain that they are going to create a historical web in which they will map the many causes of the fall of the Bastille as well as the connections among the causes.

Tell students to cut out the events on "The Fall of the Bastille." Have students arrange the events on the poster board and draw lines connecting the events that have a cause-and-effect relationship. Remind students that relationships don't have to be only linear or in a single direction. Students should be prepared to explain their charts to their classmates.

3. Presenting Their Work—Ask each group to present its "web diagram" to the class. Students should be prepared to explain the relationship between the items that they have connected.

Which events or conditions in France do students believe are most important in explaining why Parisians stormed the Bastille? How important is the role of King Louis XVI? Challenge students to rank the three most important causes of the storming of the Bastille. What arguments can they give to support their ranking?

Homework:

Students should read "The National Constituent Assembly and the Future of France" and the "Options in Brief" in the student text (page 23-26).

Name:____

Study Guide—Part II

Vocabulary: Be sure that you understand these key terms from Part II of your reading. Circle ones that you do not know.

price controls
free market
great powers
representative government
alliance
public opinion
revenues
expenditures
financiers
bankruptcy
customs duties
arsenal

Questions:

1. List two reasons why the government wanted to reform agriculture.
   a.

   b.

2. Why did France choose to support the American rebellion against Great Britain in 1776?

3. List two consequences of France's support of the American colonies.
   a.

   b.

4. Why was Saint-Domingue important to France?

5. What caused France's financial crises?

Name:____

6. Why did the king call the Assembly of Notables?

7. Fill in the chart below about the Estates General.

Estate	Representing which social group(s)?	Representing how many in France's population ?	Number of members	Number of votes
First	Clergy			
Second				
Third				

8. What did the "lists of grievances" call for?

9. What was the Tennis Court Oath?

10. List three reasons why crowds stormed the Bastille on July 14, 1789.

a.

b.

c.

Name:____

Advanced Study Guide—Part II

1. What were the sources of France's financial troubles?

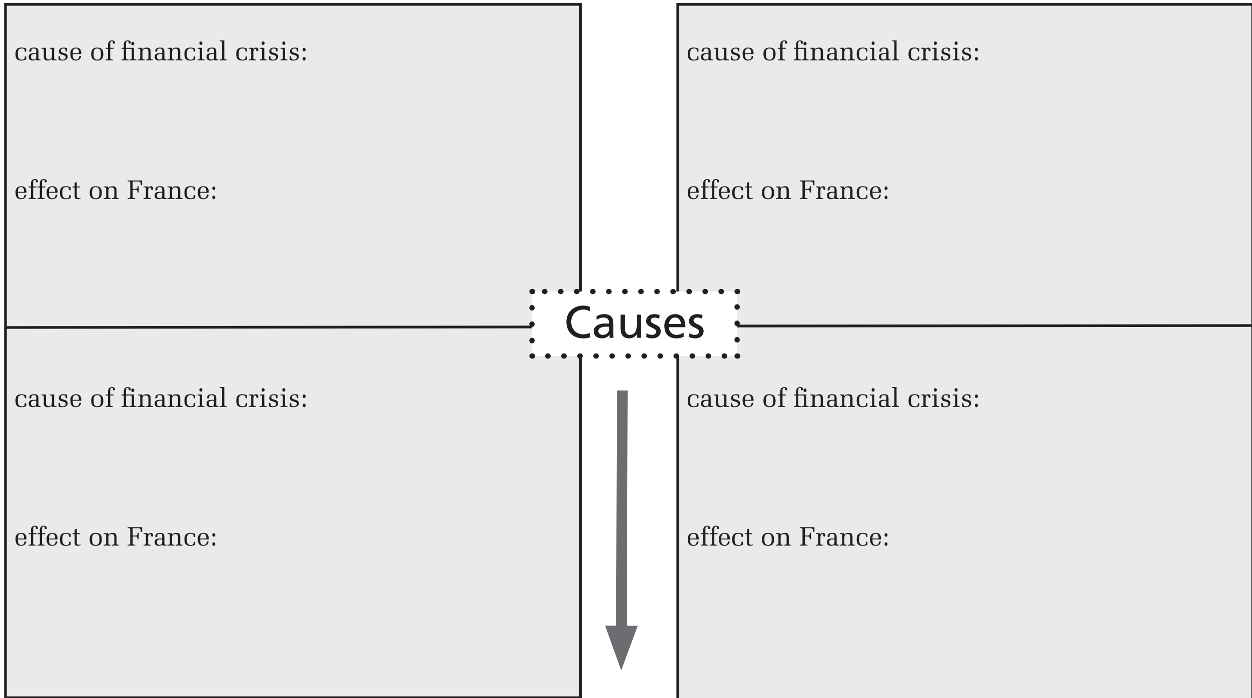
2. What negative and positive effects did France's international policies have on the economic situation in France?

3. The Estates General had difficulty making progress towards resolving France's financial problems. Is this surprising? Explain.

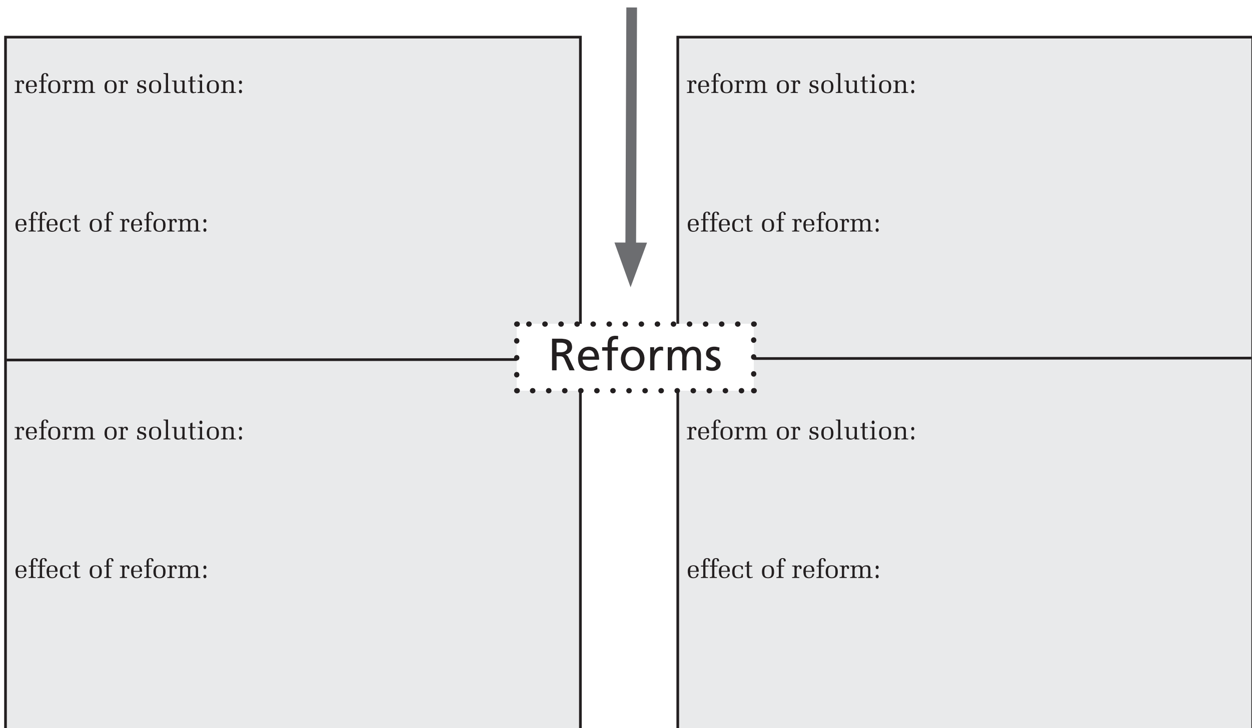
4. Describe the contrasting moods in France in the weeks after the fall of the Bastille.

Name:______________________________

Instructions: Financial crises plagued France during the reign of Louis XVI. Use your reading to fill in the boxes below. List four causes of the crises and four reforms the government made to solve the problems. Then explain the effects of each cause and each reform.



France's Financial Crises during the Reign of Louis XVI



Name:____

The Fall of the Bastille

The American Revolution	**Calling of Estates General by the king**
Hunger and the high price of bread	**Foreign mercenaries in Paris**
Competition for empire with Great Britain	**Distrust of the nobility and clergy**
Growing role of public opinion	**Financial crises for government**
The Enlightenment	**Riots in Paris**
The Flour War	**Economic reforms proposed by Calonne**
Coronation of Louis XVI	**Government takes loans and raises taxes**
Poor harvests and famine	**Calling of Assembly of Notables by the king**
The Tennis Court Oath	**Ineffective and resented system of taxation**

Role-Playing the Three Options: Organization and Preparation

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze the issues that framed the 1789-1790 debate over the new constitution and the future of France.

Identify the core assumptions underlying the options.

Integrate the arguments and beliefs of the options into a persuasive, coherent presentation.

Work cooperatively within groups to organize effective presentations.

Required Reading:

Students should have read "The National Constituent Assembly and the Future of France" and the "Options in Brief" in the student text (page 23-26).

Handouts:

"Presenting Your Option" (TRB-19) for option groups

"October Days: Women's March to Versailles" (TRB-20) and "Citizen Profiles" (TRB-21) for remaining students

"Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen" (student text pages 51-52)

In the Classroom:

1. Planning for Group Work—In order to save time in the classroom, form student groups before beginning Day Three. During the class period, students will be preparing for the Day Four simulation. Remind them to incorporate the reading into their presentations and questions.

2. Introducing the Role Play—Inform students that this simulation begins at Versailles where delegates debated the content of the new constitution and tried to govern France.

3a. Option Groups—Form three groups of four to five students each. Assign an option to each group. Explain that the option groups should follow the instructions in "Presenting Your Option." Note that the option groups should begin by assigning each member a role (students may double up). Ask students to identify the perspective that their option group represents.

3b. The March to Versailles—Distribute "October Days: Women's March to Versailles" and "Citizen Profiles" to the remaining students and assign each student a role.

Note: The march took the assembly by surprise in 1789. Simulating this surprise in the role play can help students understand the concerns of ordinary people and the role of public protest during the French Revolution.

While the option groups are preparing their presentations, these students should develop their presentation and questions for the other groups. Remind these students that they are expected to turn in their questions at the end of the simulation. Note that the citizens are fictional characters.

Suggestions:

See our short video for teachers "Tips for a Successful Role Play" <www.choices.edu/pd/roleplay.php>

Props and/or costumes can enliven the role play.

Ask the option groups to design a poster illustrating the best case for their options.

Homework:

Students should complete preparations for the simulation.

Name:____

Presenting Your Option

The Setting: It is late in the summer of 1789. The National Constituent Assembly is meeting at Versailles and debating what should be in the new constitution and the future of France.

Your Assignment: Your group has a variety of individuals who share a common vision for France. Your assignment is to persuade the other members of the assembly that your option should become the basis for action. Your group will be called upon to present a persuasive three-to-five minute summary of your option to these individuals. You will be judged by how well you present your option. This worksheet will help you prepare. Your teacher will moderate discussion.

Organizing Your Group: Each member of your group will take a specific role. Before preparing your section of the presentation, work together to address the questions below. The **group organizer** is responsible for organizing the presentation of your group's option to the undecided citizens. The **political expert** is responsible for explaining why your option is most appropriate in light of the current domestic and international political climates. The **economic expert** is responsible for explaining why your option makes the most sense for the country economically. The **social expert** is responsible for explaining why your group's option offers the best route in terms of social issues. **The legal expert** is responsible for explaining how your option believes the new Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen should be interpreted.

The "Evaluation Form" you will receive is designed for you to record your impressions of the options.

Consider the following questions as you prepare your presentation:

1. What will be the impact of your option on the people of France?

2. What is your option's long-term vision for France?

3. What are your option's short-term strategies for France?

4. On what values is your option based?

5. How does your option interpret article 1 and article 3 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen? (see pages 51-52 in the reading). Be sure to address who can participate in the political process. All men? Women?

Name:______________________________

October Days: Women's March to Versailles

The Setting: It is October 5, 1789. Angered by the high price of bread in the city market in Paris, a large crowd of women take to the street in protest. They decide to march twelve miles to Versailles to confront the king and the new government and demand that they provide bread to the people. You are part of this group that is going to interrupt the National Constituent Assembly.

The crowd has been joined by men and has gathered weapons, including guns, pikes, and even cannons and has walked to Versailles. More than seven thousand make this march. The marchers force their way into the assembly, accost the deputies, and force them to hear their concerns. They also force their way into the living quarters of the king and the queen, but are unable to reach them.

Your Role: As an angry and hungry citizen, you will listen to the presentations of each option. The presentations by the option groups will introduce you to three distinct options for France's future. You are expected to evaluate each of the options and complete an evaluation form at the conclusion of the debate.

Your group will also make a very short presentation of its concerns to the assembly. You will also ask questions of each group. Your teacher will moderate discussion.

Your Assignment: While the three option groups are organizing their presentations, your group should prepare a brief presentation (one minute) and questions for each of the option groups. Each member of your group should participate in the presentation. Use the questions below to help prepare your presentation.

The group's presentation should state why the group has marched to Versailles. The questions should reflect the values, concerns, and interests of your character. Your teacher will collect these questions.

Your questions should be challenging and critical. For example, a good question for Option 1 from Marie Charbonneau might be:

How will preserving the privileges of the clergy and nobility help us feed our families?

The three option groups will present their positions. After their presentations are completed, your teacher will call on you and the other citizens to make your presentation and ask questions. The "Evaluation Form" you will receive is designed for you to record your impressions of the options.

Questions:

1. What is your name and what do you do?

2. Why have you marched to Versailles?

3. What tactics will you use to convince the National Constituent Assembly of your point of view? For example, will you make an emotional appeal? Will you be aggressive or threatening?

Name:____

Citizen Profiles

Marie Charbonneau: You are a thirty-nine-year-old woman who works as spinner. You have three young children and are always worried about having enough food to feed them. The price of bread and food always seems to be out of reach. You mistrust the wealthy nobles and clergy in the assembly and worry that they are plotting to overturn the events of the revolution. You believe that the king has a good heart and would help you and others like you if he knew of your plight.

Jacques Bailly: You are a nineteen-year-old-man who works as a servant for a wealthy Paris merchant. Your mother died when you were five and you grew up in an orphanage run by the Catholic Church. There you received an elementary education. You believe all the French people are citizens and deserve to be treated equally. Your master beat you when he discovered that you had participated in storming the Bastille. You find the crowds exciting, but are afraid your master may throw you out if he discovers what you are doing. You are not sure what you will do if that happens.

Bernadine Tissaud: You are a twenty-four-year-old woman who works in the main market of the city. You are hungry and have not been able to afford to buy bread, which is in short supply. You are married and gave birth to two children, both of whom died before they reached a year. You have heard that there are foreign mercenaries at Versailles and that Marie Antoinette and other nobles are plotting to starve the people of Paris.

François Dansard: You are a forty-four-year-old man who works as a carpenter. You are married and have four children. Your brother and his wife live together with you in the same small crowded apartment. You have lived through times of shortages before and have suspected that wealthy merchants and nobles hoard grain to drive up prices. You also suspect that traitors are hoping to end the revolution and turn back the clock. You are angry and believe that the king and the assembly must return to Paris so that they will know how the people are suffering.

Céleste Roux: You are a twenty-nine-year-old washerwoman. You work ten hours a day washing clothes on the banks of the River Seine for very little money. Today you went to the central market, but could find no bread to buy. You are hungry and tired, but you are also furious. If this is really a revolution, shouldn't there be real change? You think that the new government must help the people solve a most basic problem: hunger. You believe that grain is being hoarded by merchants as a way of increasing prices.

Martine Louis: You are a sixteen-year-old girl who is able to earn a few pennies by sweeping the streets clean in front of wealthy people who wear shoes. You are desperately poor and hungry and have even considered becoming a prostitute so that you can earn money to feed yourself. You have heard others saying that there is a plot to starve the poor.

Louis Saint-Amand: You are a thirty-four-year-old man who came to Paris to find work. You were married once, but your wife died of typhus. You have no skills, but occasionally can find work doing manual labor. When prices are high, you often go hungry. You hope that the king can help you.

Pierre Lebrun: You are a thirty-eight-year-old journalist who writes for a new radical newspaper. You are convinced the grain shortages are a plot by the nobility to weaken the revolution and the people. You believe that the people must march to Versailles and make their demands known. You think that if the king and the assembly can be forced to return to Paris, the people will be better able to monitor their progress toward remaking France.

Role-Playing the Three Options: Debate and Discussion

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze the issues that framed the 1789-1790 debate in France.

Sharpen rhetorical skills through debate and discussion.

Consider the importance of popular demonstrations in revolutionary France.

Cooperate with classmates in staging a persuasive presentation.

Handouts:

"Evaluation Form" (TRB-23)

In the Classroom:

1. Setting the Stage—Organize the room so that the three option groups face a row of desks reserved for the citizen marchers. (Arrange the three groups from left to right along the political spectrum.) In 1789, the members of the assembly were completely taken by surprise by the marchers. Simulating this surprise in the role play may heighten students' understanding of the role of popular protest during the French Revolution.

2. Managing the Simulation—Explain that the simulation will begin with three-to-five minute presentations by each option group. Encourage all to speak clearly and convincingly. Distribute the "Evaluation Form" to all participants.

3. Guiding Discussion—Following the presentations, invite the marchers to give their brief presentation and ask cross-examination questions. Make sure that each marcher has an opportunity to ask at least one question. If time permits, encourage members of the option groups to challenge the positions of the other groups. During cross-examination, allow any member of the option group to respond. (As an alternative approach, permit cross-examination following the presentation of each option.)

4. Debriefing the Simulation—Have students complete the "Evaluation Form." Ask students to consider the differences among the options. How did the concerns of the citizen marchers differ from the concerns presented in the options? In what ways were the marchers different from the members of the assembly?

Tell students that after the march the king and queen returned to Paris. Several days later the assembly chose to reconvene in Paris as well. What reasons can students give for this? Why is it interesting and important that the members of the assembly were surprised by the march?

Homework:

Students should read Part III (pages 36-50) and complete the "Study Guide—Part III" (TRB 26-27) or the "Advanced Study Guide—Part III" (TRB-28).

Name:____

Evaluation Form

Instructions: Answer the questions below following the simulation.

1. According to each option, what should the future of France be?

   Option 1:

   Option 2:

   Option 3:

2. According to each option, what are the most important concerns in France?

   Option 1:

   Option 2:

   Option 3:

3. What are the concerns of the participants in the March to Versailles?

Illustrating the French Revolution

Objective:

Students will: Review and consider significant events of the French Revolution.

Identify and then graphically represent significant episodes of the French Revolution.

Assess the historical significance and legacy of events.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part III of the student text (pages 36-50) and completed the "Study Guide—Part III" (TRB 26-27) or the "Advanced Study Guide—Part III" (TRB-28).

Handouts:

"Planning Your Graphic Short Story" (TRB 30-31)

In the Classroom:

1. Considering the Course of the Revolution—Have students consider the previous day's role play. Call on students to recap the main arguments of each of the options. What were the major points of disagreement? What were the concerns of citizens who marched to Versailles? What did the delegates eventually decide upon? How did the people of France view the future in late 1789? What sort of government and society did they think they would have?

Now ask students to recount the events of the later years of the Revolution. What significant changes occurred after 1789? What were the challenges facing the revolutionary government? How did things turn out differently than the assembly delegates in 1789 expected?

2. Illustrating the Revolution—Tell students that they will be creating graphic short stories (like a graphic novel, but much shorter) about a specific aspect or theme of the Revolution. Have students brainstorm key events and themes. Some possible suggestions include:

- The trial of the king
- The role of women in the Revolution
- The Terror
- The role of the *sans culottes* in the Revolution
- The de-Christianization movement
- The role of the Church in French society
- The life of peasants before and after the Revolution
- The affect of the ideas of the Enlightenment on the Revolution
- The affects of the Revolution on France's colonial possessions
- The results of the Revolution (domestic or international)
- The legacy of the Revolution (domestic or international)

Tell students that they can choose to create these stories individually or with a partner. Try to have each student or pair explore a different theme. Distribute "Planning Your Graphic Short Story." Tell students to read the instructions carefully and plan their graphic stories before they begin to draw. Remind students to incorporate what they know about the French Revolution and the information from the readings in their stories. They should be sure to limit their stories to no more than six frames. Students might find it useful to have a pencil and a good eraser for this activity, as well as a black ballpoint pen or marker to trace their pencil lines when they are finished.

3. Sharing Student Work—Call on students to share their stories. What key events did students decide to illustrate? Are there any similarities among the stories? Are there significant differences or divergent opinions? What sorts of methods did students use to get their messages across? Do students think that there are benefits to representing this kind of information in this format, as opposed to other mediums such as print text or video? Are there any drawbacks?

4. Evaluating the Revolution—Have students consider the legacy of the French Revolution. What was the result of the Revolution in France? How did the Revolution affect the rest of the world? What key issues did

the events and people of the French Revolution raise? How do the issues that were raised more than two hundred years ago still affect us today?

Suggestion:

With more advanced classes, you may want students to incorporate the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen into their graphic short stories. Have students consider the rights enshrined in that document. Were these rights respected in the later years of the Revolution? What about in the centuries that followed, both in France and abroad? Have students relate the Declaration to the themes of their stories. Challenge them to incorporate quotes from the document into their stories, to illustrate how certain rights were protected or violated in the events of the Revolution and beyond.

As a culmination to this activity, you may want to have students put the stories together in a class publication. Students can organize their graphic short stories into an illustrated history of the French Revolution, and perhaps write an introduction that highlights the key lessons and legacies of the Revolution.

Name:____

Study Guide: Part III

Vocabulary: Be sure that you understand these key terms from Part III of your reading. Circle ones that you do not know.

coalition
unicameral
civil rights
abolition
anarchy
radicals
émigré
decree
political prisoners
universal suffrage
draft
egalitarian
royalists

Questions:

1. What was an "active citizen"?

2. List three ways that the National Constituent Assembly reformed the Catholic Church.
   a.
   b.
   c.

3. What is a counter-revolutionary?

4. How did the "Flight to Varennes" change the French people's attitude towards the king?

5. What were the reasons for the "September Massacres"?

Name:____

6. Why did the Convention establish the Committee for Public Safety?

7. Briefly explain the purpose of the following laws.
   a. Law of the Maximum:

   b. Law of Suspects:

8. What was the purpose of the Terror?

9. Explain the term "Thermidorian Reaction."

10. How did Napoleon Bonaparte come to power?

Name:_______________________________________

Advanced Study Guide: Part III

1. What were the two most significant reforms of the National Constituent Assembly? Explain.

2. Why was the "Flight to Varennes" a turning point in the French Revolution?

3. How did the *sans culottes* influence French politics?

4. Why did the Terror end?

5. What were the most significant long-term effects of the French Revolution?

Name:____

French Governments 1789-1799

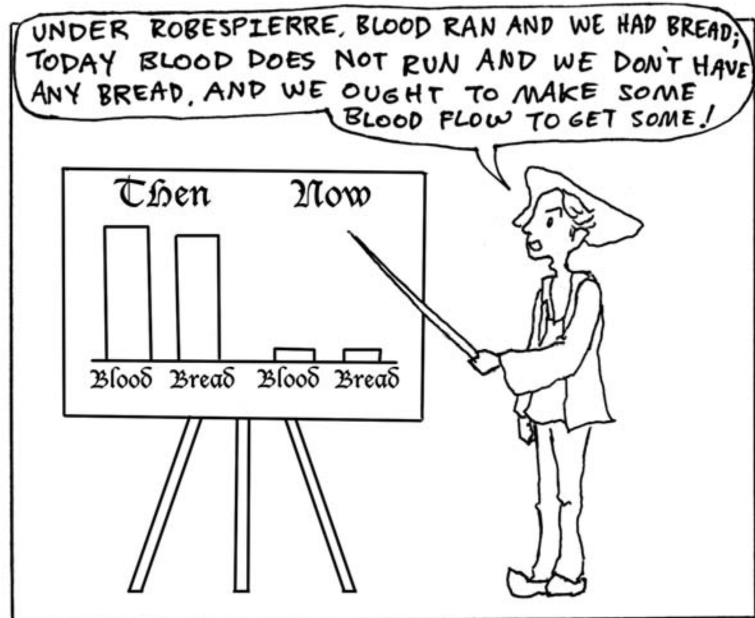
Instructions: Use your reading to help you fill in the chart.

Government name	Dates	Major domestic decisions/ policies/issues	International issues faced	Reason for end
National Constituent Assembly				
Legislative Assembly				
The Convention				
The Directory				
Napoleon (First Consul and Emperor)				

Name:____________________

Planning Your Graphic Short Story

Instructions: In this activity, you will take on the role of a graphic novelist and write a short story about the French Revolution. You should choose a theme and create three to six frames to tell your story. Before you begin, you should think about what information you will convey. Graphic novelists use different methods to get information across, including images, captions, and word balloons. (See the example to the right.)



sans culottes meeting, 1795

What information will you convey through images? Through captions? Through word balloons? Will each of your frames be the same size? If you are not good at drawing, what are other creative ways you could get your message across?

Before you begin drawing, think about the Questions to Consider listed below, and jot down some notes about what you will include in each frame. Be sure to make your story historically accurate and informative.

Questions to Consider

What message will you try to convey through your story?

Will you take a specific perspective or point of view?

What key events will you include?

Will you need to provide historical or background information to get your message across?

Who are the key actors?

Will you set your story in a specific location or locations?

Name:____

Planning Each Frame

Frame 1:

Frame 2:

Frame 3:

(Frame 4:)

(Frame 5:)

(Frame 6:)

The Trial of Louis XVI

Objectives:

Students will: Identify and consider the issues raised by the trial of Louis XVI.

Assess and analyze primary source documents.

Consider the tensions surrounding law, justice, revolutionary politics, and the trial of Louis XVI.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part III (pages 36-50).

Handouts:

Document 1: "Excerpts of the Report from the Committee on Legislation to the National Convention, November 7, 1792" (TRB 33-34)

Document 2: "Excerpts from the Speech of Charles Morisson to the National Convention, November 13, 1792" (TRB 35-36)

Document 3: "Excerpts from the Speech of Louis Saint-Just, November 13, 1792" (TRB 37-38)

Document 4: "Excerpts from the Testimony of Louis XVI, December 11, 1792 (TRB 39-40)

Note:

The directions ask students to mark difficult words or phrases, sentences that refer to events described in their reading, and 3-5 of the most important sentences in each document. Providing students different colored pencils would make this task easier.

In the Classroom:

1. Focus Question—Write the question, "Was it an injustice to kill the king?" on the board or overhead. Teachers might also ask students to consider the following: As the king had been the source of all law (prior to the Revolution), was it even possible for him to break the law? The Constitution of 1791 said the "king was sacred and inviolable." What is the meaning of "sacred and inviolable"?

2. Document Analysis—Divide the class into four groups. Give each group copies of one of the documents. Each student should have his or her own copy. Ask students to read and follow the directions. Tell students to read and mark up the documents individually and then answer the questions as a group.

3. Group Responses—After the groups have completed the questions, break the class into new groups that have a representative of each document group. Have students share their findings within the new group and consider the focus question. (This could also be done as a "fish bowl" activity with a single group in the center of the classroom.)

4. Making Connections—Reconvene the class. Ask students which of these documents make legal arguments about how to treat the king? Which of these documents make political arguments about how to treat the king? How concerned with "justice" were the authors of these documents? Are there differing ideas of "justice" among the documents?

Have students consider Saint-Just's statement, "...I can see no middle course: this man must reign or die.... No man can reign innocently." What are the implications of what Saint-Just says?

Remind students that although the Convention was nearly unanimous about the king's guilt, it was divided on his sentence. Was it necessary and justifiable to kill the king for any reason (legal, political, or symbolic)? Or was it an unnecessary act that solved none of the problems of the new republic and opened the door to the use of violence during the Terror?

Ask students to think beyond the trial of Louis XVI. What role should "justice" play in dealing with political opponents or enemies? How would students define "justice" in this case? Can students think of any contemporary or historical situations where these questions are also relevant?

Document 1: Excerpts of the Report from the Committee on Legislation to the Convention, November 7, 1792

Instructions: In November 1792, a committee prepared a report and presented its recommendations to the Convention about what to do with Louis XVI. Read the excerpts below and then answer the questions that follow. As you read, use different colors to mark 1) words or phrases that you don't understand; 2) 3-5 sentences that you think are most important; and 3) any sentence that refers to events described in your reading. Answer the questions that follow with your group. Be prepared to share your answers with your classmates. Use additional paper as needed to record your answers.

Louis XVI has been charged with crimes committed while he reigned under the Constitution: shall he be subject to judgment for them? By whom should he be judged? Shall he be brought before an ordinary tribunal, like any other citizen accused of treason? Will you delegate the right to judge him to a tribunal formed by the electoral assemblies of the eighty-three departments? Is it not more natural that this Convention itself should judge him? Is it either necessary or proper to submit the decision for ratification by all the members of the Republic, gather in communal or primary assemblies? These are the questions which your Legislative Committee has debated long and well....

Here is the plan of law which the committee has asked me to present to you.

The National Convention enacts the following:

Article 1. Louis XVI can be judged.

Article 2. He will be judged by the National Convention.

Article 3. Three commissioners chosen from the assembly and appointed by a roll-call vote, requiring an absolute plurality of all votes, will be charged to gather together all evidence, documents and proofs relative to the crimes with which Louis XVI is charged, and to present this material to the assembly.

Article 4. The commissioners will conclude their report with a bill listing all the crimes with which Louis XVI has been charged.

Article 5. The report of the commissioners, the evidence on which it is based, and their bill will be printed and distributed.

Article 6. Eight days after the distribution of the report, discussion of the bill of indictment will open. This bill will be accepted or rejected by a roll-call vote, and will require an absolute majority.

Article 7. If this bill is accepted, it will be communicated to Louis XVI and any defenders he may see fit to choose.

Article 8. Similarly a copy of the report of the commissioners and all the documentary evidence will be given to Louis XVI.

Article 11. The National Convention shall fix a date for the appearance before it of Louis XVI.

Article 12. Louis XVI, either himself or through counsel, shall present a written defense, signed by his own hand.

Article 13. Louis XVI and his counsel may also furnish, should they wish, a verbal defense which will be duly recorded by the secretaries of the Assembly and presented for the signature of Louis XVI.

Article 14. After Louis XVI has presented a defense, or after the time accorded him to provide such a defense has expired, the National Convention will pass judgement by a roll-call vote.

Name:____

Questions

1. Briefly summarize the purpose of the report from the Committee on Legislation.

2. The first paragraph contains mostly questions. Why do you think this is?

3. What rights does the recommended plan of law give to Louis XVI?

4. List the three most important sentences from this report. Explain your reasoning.

Document 2: Excerpts from the Speech of Charles Morisson to the Convention, November 13, 1792

Instructions: Charles Morisson was a lawyer from the Vendée. He was the first—and one of the only deputies—to speak in defense of the king. Read the excerpt below and then answer the questions that follow. As you read, use different colors to mark 1) words or phrases that you don't understand; 2) 3-5 sentences that you think are most important; and 3) any sentence that refers to events described in your reading. Answer the questions that follow with your group. Be prepared to share your answers with your classmates. Use additional paper as needed to record your answers.

Citizens, since we have before us a question of the gravest importance, a question which touches the essence of polity as well as the principles of justice, any decision we make ought to follow only after the fullest discussion….

Citizens, like you I am overcome with the greatest indignation when I consider the many crimes, the atrocities, with which Louis XVI is stained…. Yet I must deny my impulse…and heed instead the voice of Reason, consult the spirit and the disposition of our law, seek only the interest of my fellow citizens, for that alone must be the single goal of all our deliberations.

...Can Louis XVI be judged? Is it in the interests of the Republic that he be judged? Do we not have the right to take, with respect to him, measures for the general safety? Finally, what ought these measures to be?

…In order to judge him according to our institutions, there must be a statute which can be applied to him….

But here we are religiously ruled by law; coolly, as impassive judges, we consult our penal code. Well, that penal code has no provision which may be applied to Louis XVI, since when he committed his crimes, there was a written law which carried an express exception in his favor; I refer to the Constitution. …I find within it these articles:

"The person of the king is inviolable and sacred." "If the king put himself at the head of an army, and directs the forces of it against the nation, or if he does not oppose, by a formal act, any enterprise undertaken in his name, he shall be held to have abdicated."

What! you will reply, Louis XVI constantly violated the Constitution; by all possible means he sought to destroy it and with it the liberty which should have followed from it. And now you wish to permit him to take advantage of that same Constitution which he himself never sincerely adopted!

Yes, citizens, yes. That is what I propose. The Constitution was the law of my country without the consent of the king; it was law by the will of the sovereign, the people, who swore to maintain it until such time as, by the exercise of their sovereign powers, they might make laws in greater harmony with their love of liberty and equality.

...Now Louis XVI can only fall under the sword of the law. The law says nothing concerning him. Consequently, we cannot judge him. But is it really so much in the interest of the French Republic that he be judged? Citizens, permit me to remind you at this moment of the love, the enthusiasm, of the Frenchman for liberty, the energy of a free people, the constantly replenished means of this rich and fertile land. Without doubt whatever becomes of Louis XVI, he can never again enslave us.

And if the yoke of despotism were still to be feared, do you really believe that the death of Louis XVI could keep it from us? Does he not have a son, brothers, kinsmen who should succeed to his claims and who would inherit his means to threaten our liberty? In the place of one head cut off others will appear, and our position will be unchanged

...But do we not have the right to take, with respect to him, measures for the general safety? Louis

Name:____

XVI is certainly our enemy; we have surprised him in the midst of the blackest treason. He was armed against us, we attacked, and we conquered. We broke the spell of his strength, we took him captive; now he is in our hands and entirely in our power.

Citizens, this is the moment for consulting the code of nations, the rights of war, and we will find that we may unquestionably regard Louis XVI as the prize of victory, keep him forever prisoner, exile him, or ask for ransom if his partisans should wish to have him once again.

These are our rights, citizens. Now let us consider which is the path we should follow. We could keep him prisoner here, but we must consider the disadvantages of this measure. Louis XVI in captivity could continue to attract followers. There are men who, incapable of rising to the height of the Revolution, are sufficiently weak and ignorant to have a fondness for the monarchy and kings.

...It is in this course of action, Citizens, that we will avoid a monstrous and interminable trial, perhaps with untoward results. It is in this course of action that we can be sure of finding the general approbation which we will have earned by having fulfilled our obligations. Finally, it is in taking this course that we shall be truly great, truly worthy representatives of a people who desire always to be free and generous.

Questions

1. Briefly summarize the purpose of the speech by Charles Morisson.

2. What does Morisson quote from the Constitution? Why does he do this?

3. What argument does Morisson make about Louis XVI and the law?

4. What does Morisson propose the Convention do with the king?

5. List the three most important sentences from this speech. Explain your reasoning.

Document 3: Excerpts from the Speech of Louis Saint-Just, November 13, 1792

Instructions: Louis Saint-Just spoke against the king. It was Saint-Just's first speech. He would become a member of the Committee for Public Safety and an advocate for the Terror. Read the excerpts below and then answer the questions that follow. As you read, use different colors to mark 1) words or phrases that you don't understand; 2) 3-5 sentences that you think are most important; and 3) any sentence that refers to events described in your reading. Answer the questions that follow with your group. Be prepared to share your answers with your classmates. Use additional paper as needed.

I shall undertake, citizens, to prove that the king can be judged, that the opinion of Morisson which would respect inviolability and that of the committee [Committee on Legislation] which would have him judged as a citizen are equally false, and that the king ought to be judged according to principles foreign to both.

...The single aim of the committee was to persuade you that the king should be judged as an ordinary citizen. And I say that the king should be judged as an enemy; that we must not so much judge him as combat him....

....Some day men will be astonished that in the eighteenth century humanity was less advanced than in the time of Caesar. Then, a tyrant was slain in the midst of the Senate, with no formality but thirty dagger blows, with no law but the liberty of Rome. And today, respectfully, we conduct a trial for a man who was the assassin of a people, taken *in flagrante*, his hand soaked with blood, his hand plunged in crime.

...All these reasons should lead you to judge Louis, not as a citizen, but as a rebel. By what right, moreover, would he require us to judge him in civil law, on account of our obligation toward him, when it is clear that he himself betrayed the only obligation that he had undertaken towards us, that of our protection? Is this not the last act of a tyrant, to demand to be judged in conformity with the laws that he destroyed? ...For myself, I can see no middle course: this man must reign or die.

…[L]et us respect the king no longer. He oppressed a free nation; he declared himself its enemy; he abused its laws; he must die to assure the tranquility of the people, since to assure his own, he intended that the people be crushed. Did he not review the troops before combat? Did he not take flight rather than halt their fire? What steps did he take to quell the fury of the soldiers? The suggestion is made that you judge him as a citizen, whereas you recognize that he was not a citizen, and that, far from protecting the people, he had them sacrificed to himself. I will say more: a Constitution accepted by a king did not bind citizens; they had, even before his crime, the right to proscribe him and to send him into exile. To judge a king as a citizen, that will astound a dispassionate posterity.

...To judge is to apply the law; law supposes a common share in justice; and what justice can be common to humanity and kings? What has Louis in common with the French people that they should treat him well after he betrayed them? A man of great spirit might say, in another age, that a king should be accused, not for the crimes of his administration, but for the crime of having been king, as that is an usurpation which nothing on earth can justify. With whatever illusions, whatever conventions, monarchy cloaks itself, it remains an eternal crime against which every man has the right to rise and to arm himself. Monarchy is an outrage which even the blindness of an entire people cannot justify; that people, by the example it gave, is guilty before nature, and all men hold from nature the secret mission to destroy such domination wherever it may be found. No man can reign innocently. The folly is all too evident. Every king is a rebel and a usurper. Do kings themselves treat otherwise those who seek to usurp their authority?

...Those are the considerations which a great and republican people ought not to forget when judging a king.

Name:___________________________

...Citizens, the tribunal which ought to judge Louis is not a judiciary tribunal: it is a council; it is the people; it is you.... Louis is an alien among us; he was not a citizen before his crime; he had no suffrage, he could not bear arms. Since his crime, he is still less a citizen, and by what abuse of justice would you make him a citizen to condemn him?

…All that I have said, then, is proof that Louis should be judged as an enemy alien. I might add that it is not necessary that the sentence of death be sanctioned by the people.

….Louis waged war against the people: he was conquered. He is a barbarian, an alien, a prisoner of war; you have seen his perfidious schemes; you have seen his army; the traitor was not king of the French, he was king of a band of conspirators. He raised secret troops, he had private magistrates, he regarded the citizens as slaves.... He is the murderer of the Bastille, of Nancy, of the Champ-de-Mars, of the Tournai, of the Tuileries; what enemy, what alien has done us more harm? Wisdom and discretion speak with one voice: let him be judged promptly. He is a kind of hostage, preserved by villains. They seek to move us to pity; soon they will buy our tears; they will do anything to touch us, to corrupt us. People! If the king is ever absolved, remember that we are no longer worthy of your confidence and that you may accuse us of perfidy.

Questions

1. Briefly summarize the purpose of the speech by Louis Saint-Just.

2. Why does Saint-Just refer to Caesar in the third paragraph?

3. What does Saint-Just propose the Convention do with the king?

4. List the three most important sentences from this speech. Explain your reasoning.

Document 4: Excerpts from the Testimony of Louis XVI, December 11, 1792

Instructions: During the trial, the president of the Convention, Bertrand Barère, interrogated Louis XVI. Barère is reading from the indictment of the king and asking for his response to the charges. Read the excerpts below and then answer the questions that follow. As you read, use different colors to mark 1) words or phrases that you don't understand; 2) 3-5 sentences that you think are most important; and 3) any sentence that refers to events described in your reading. Answer the questions that follow with your group. Be prepared to share your answers with your classmates. Use additional paper as needed to record your answers.

President Barère: Louis, the French Nation accuses you of having committed a multitude of crimes to establish your tyranny, in destroying her freedom. You have, on the 20th of June, 1789, attacked the sovereignty of the people, by suspending the assemblies of their representatives, and driving them with violence from the places of their sittings. This is proved in the Proces Verbal set up at the Tennis-Court of Versailles by the members of the Constituent Assembly. On the 23d of June you wanted to dictate laws to the nation—you surrounded their representatives with troops—you presented to them two royal declarations, subversive of all liberty, and ordered them to separate. Your own declarations, and the minutes of the Assembly prove these attempts. What have you to answer?

Louis XVI: No laws were then existing to prevent me from it.

Barère: You ordered an army to march against the citizens of Paris. Your [mercenaries] have spilt the blood of several of them, and you would not remove this army until the taking of the Bastille, and a general insurrection announced to you that the people were victorious. The speeches you made on the 9th, 12th, and 14th of July, to the diverse deputations of the Constituent Assembly, showed what were your intentions; and the massacres of the Tuileries rise in evidence against you. What have you to answer?

Louis XVI: I was master at that time to order the troops to march; but I never had an intention of spilling blood.

Barère: After these events....you have persisted in your projects against national liberty; you have long eluded the execution of the decree...respecting the abolition of personal servitude, the feudal government and tithes. You have long refused acknowledging the rights of man.... You have permitted, in orgies held before your eyes, the national cockade to be trampled under foot, the white cockade to be hoisted, and the nation to be blasphemed. At last, you have rendered necessary a fresh insurrection; occasioned the death of several citizens, and not changed your language till after your guards had been defeated, when you renewed your perfidious promises.... What have you to answer?

Louis XVI: I have made the observations which I thought just on the two first heads. As to the cockade, it is false: it did not happen before me.

Barère: You have taken an oath, at the Federation of the 14th of July, which you did not keep. You soon tried to corrupt the public opinion, with the assistance of Talon, who acted in Paris, and Mirabeau, who was to have excited counterrevolutionary movements in the provinces. What have you to answer?

Louis XVI: I do not recollect what happened at that time, but the whole is anterior to my acceptance of the Constitution.

Barère: You have lavished millions of money to effect this corruption, and you would even use popularity as a means of enslaving the people....

Louis XVI: I felt no greater pleasure than that of relieving the needy.—This proves no design.

Barère: On the 18th a great number of the nobles and military came into your apartments in the

Name:____

castle of the Tuileries, to favour that escape; you wanted to quit Paris on the 10th of April to go to St. Cloud. What have you to answer?

Louis XVI: The accusation is absurd.

Barère: But the resistance of the citizens made you sensible that distrust was great; you endeavoured to discard it by communicating to the Constituent Assembly a letter which you addressed to the agents of the nation near foreign powers, to announce to them, that you had freely accepted the Constitutional Articles, which had been presented to you; and notwithstanding on the 21st you took flight with a false passport; you left behind a protest against these self-same Constitutional Articles. You ordered the ministers to sign none of the acts issued by the National Assembly; and you forbid the minister of justice to deliver up the seals of states. The public money was lavished to insure the success of this treachery, and the public force was to protect it....—What have you to answer?

Louis XVI: I have no knowledge whatever of the memorial of the 23d of February. As to what related to my journey to Varennes, I appeal to what I said to the Commissaries of the Constituent Assembly, at that period.

Questions

1. Briefly summarize the accusations made against the king.

2. Explain what the king means when he says: "No laws were then existing to prevent me from it."

3. Which of the charges here against the king do you believe are the most serious? Explain.

4. Which of the king's answers are most convincing?

5. List the three most important sentences from this document. Explain your reasoning.

Name:____

Assessment Using Documents

Instructions: These questions relate to the French Revolution. Answer all of the questions that follow on separate pieces of paper.

1. a. Explain King Louis XVI's remarks about privilege in Document 1.

   b. What does Saint-Just say in Document 4 about Louis XVI?

2. How do Document 2 and Document 3 support the conclusions made in Document 5?

3. Assess the value and limitations of Document 6, Document 7 and Document 8 for historians studying the causes of the French Revolution. Be sure to refer to the origin and purpose of each document.

4. Using these sources and your knowledge, explain why and how the French Revolution occurred.

Name:____

Documents

Document 1: From Paul H. Beik, *The French Revolution Seen from the Right: Social Theories in Motion*, The American Philosophical Society, 1956, p. 37. Beik was a professor of history in the United States.

"I will never consent to the plundering of my clergy and my nobles. Fine actions had earned them their privileges; the King of France must conserve those privileges for them." —King Louis XVI, letter of August 26, 1789

Document 2: From David Andress, *The French Revolution and the People*, Hambledon and London, 2004, p. xviii. Andress is a professor of history at the University of Portsmouth in England.

"It is worth remembering, however, that far worse poverty and structural oppression was endured by the peasants of many countries across Europe in this period.... It was not in the end the sheer weight of accumulated oppression that brought the French to revolution. The underlying irony of the position was that they were free enough to imagine more freedom, but oppressed enough to be willing to risk revolt, when the edifice of the state seemed to totter."

Document 3: From Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution,* Princeton University Press, 1947, p. 185. Lefebvre was a French Marxist historian.

"The first act of the Revolution, in 1788, consisted in a triumph of the aristocracy, but having paralyzed the royal power which upheld its social preeminence, the aristocracy opened the way to the bourgeois revolution, then to popular revolution in the cities, and finally to the revolution of the peasants—and found itself buried under the ruins of the Old Regime."

Document 4: From Michael Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI,* Columbia University Press, 1992, pp. 123-124 . Walzer is an American political philosopher and professor.

"For myself, I can see no middle course: this man must reign or die.... No man can reign innocently." —Louis Saint-Just, speech to the National Assembly of November 13, 1792.

Name:____

Document 5: From Jacques Godechot, *The Taking of the Bastille, July 14, 1789*, Faber and Faber, 1970, p. 209. Godechot was a French historian.

"The revolutionary movement...was the result of demographic and economic upheavals, or the rise of the bourgeoisie and the spread of 'philosophic' ideas.... [T]hus the Parisian rising of July 14, resulting from the provincial insurrectional movements which had begun the previous January, provoked in its turn a great national revolutionary impulse which irrevocably overthrew the Old Regime and gave France a new aspect. The Fourteenth of July is indeed one of the great days that made France."

Document 6: From William Doyle, *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 36. Doyle is an English professor of history.

"The convocation of a national representative assembly meant the end of absolute monarchy. It had finally succumbed to institutional and cultural paralysis. Its plans for reform fell with it. Nobody knew what the Estates General would do, or even how it would be made up or chosen. There was a complete vacuum of power. The French Revolution was the process by which this vacuum was filled."

Document 7: From Sylvia Neely, *A Concise History of The French Revolution*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2008, p. 1. Neely is an American professor of history.

"The French Revolution began because of a financial crisis. The debts of the French government far exceeded its ability to pay them."

Name:____

Document 8: The title of this French print from 1789 is "Three heads under the same cap." [The cap is a "liberty cap."] The writing on stone tablet reads, "As the foster father of all of the estates, I said that all would have to be like this in order for everything to turn out right for our great King and my country."

Library of Congress. Division of Prints and Photographs. LC-DIG-ppmsca-07713.

Key Terms

Introduction and Part I:

economic conditions
dictatorship
human rights
politics
democratic republic
social class
absolute monarchy
hierarchies
monarchy
nobility
bourgeoisie
clergy
peasants
agriculture
poverty
mortality rates
low productivity
unskilled workers
commerce
trade
social status
elite
administrative
parliament
literate

Part II:

price controls
free market
great powers
representative government
alliance
public opinion
revenues
expenditures
financiers
bankruptcy
customs duties
arsenal

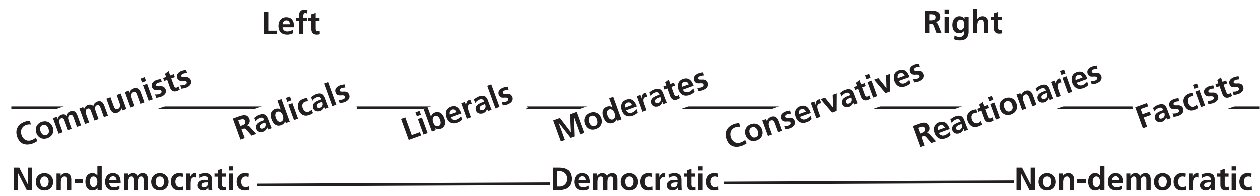
Part III:

coalition
unicameral
civil rights
abolition
anarchy
radicals
émigré
decree
political prisoners
universal suffrage
draft
egalitarian
royalists

The French Revolution Issues Toolbox

The Political Spectrum and the French Revolution

The contemporary political spectrum is a concept used to show how different political perspectives relate to one another. Political scientists frequently illustrate that relationship by locating the various labels for these perspectives on a line extending from left to right. The center segment of the line is made up of individuals and groups who are strong supporters of democratic principles. As one moves outward toward the ends of the spectrum, one encounters individuals and groups who believe democracy is not an effective form of government and, in practice even if not in theory, they see powerful individuals as the most effective controls in a society.* Traditionally, the spectrum is outlined in the following way:



The origins of the two most basic terms, **left** and **right**, can be traced back to the National Constituent Assembly in the period right after the French Revolution, where the more liberal thinkers gathered on the left side of the chamber and the more conservative ones sat on the right.

There is no simple explanation for what is a liberal or a conservative. Some historians consider Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (written in 1790) as one source of modern conservative thought. Burke argued that France's careless destruction of its institutions (monarchy, church, etc.) would not lead to liberty, but rather bloodshed and rule by the uneducated masses. He predicted that it would end with a military dictatorship. Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* written in 1791 was the famous reply to Burke. Paine argued that Burke held too much reverence for the past. Paine wrote, "...[N]othing of reform in the political world ought to be held improbable. It is an age of Revolutions, in which everything may be looked for."

*Communists and fascists are twentieth century terms that were not in use at the time of the French Revolution.

Making Choices Work in Your Classroom

This section of the Teacher Resource Book offers suggestions for teachers as they adapt Choices curricula on historical turning points to their classrooms. They are drawn from the experiences of teachers who have used Choices curricula successfully in their classrooms and from educational research on student-centered instruction.

Managing the Choices Simulation

A central activity of every Choices unit is the role-play simulation in which students advocate different options and question each other. Just as thoughtful preparation is necessary to set the stage for cooperative group learning, careful planning for the presentations can increase the effectiveness of the simulation. Time is the essential ingredient to keep in mind. A minimum of 45 to 50 minutes is necessary for the presentations. Teachers who have been able to schedule a double period or extend the length of class to one hour report that the extra time is beneficial. When necessary, the role play simulation can be run over two days, but this disrupts momentum. The best strategy for managing the role play is to establish and enforce strict time limits, such as five minutes for each option presentation, ten minutes for questions and challenges, and the final five minutes of class for wrapping up. It is crucial to make students aware of strict time limits as they prepare their presentations. Our short video for teachers "Tips for a Successful Role Play" <www.choices.edu/pd/roleplay.php> also offers many helpful suggestions.

Adjusting for Students of Differing Abilities

Teachers of students at all levels—from middle school to AP—have used Choices materials successfully. Many teachers make adjustments to the materials for their students. Here are some suggestions:

• Go over vocabulary and concepts with visual tools such as concept maps and word pictures.

• Require students to answer guiding questions in the text as checks for understanding.

• Shorten reading assignments; cut and paste sections.

• Combine reading with political cartoon analysis, map analysis, or movie-watching.

• Read some sections of the readings out loud.

• Ask students to create graphic organizers for sections of the reading, or fill in ones you have partially completed.

• Supplement with different types of readings, such as from trade books or text books.

• Ask student groups to create a bumper sticker, PowerPoint presentation, or collage representing their option.

• Do only some activities and readings from the unit rather than all of them.

Adjusting for Large and Small Classes

Choices units are designed for an average class of twenty-five students. In larger classes, additional roles, such as those of newspaper reporter or member of a special interest group, can be assigned to increase student participation in the simulation. With larger option groups, additional tasks might be to create a poster, political cartoon, or public service announcement that represents the viewpoint of an option. In smaller classes, the teacher can serve as the moderator of the debate, and administrators, parents, or faculty can be invited to play the roles of congressional leaders. Another option is to combine two small classes.

Assessing Student Achievement

Grading Group Assignments: Students and teachers both know that group grades can be motivating for students, while at the same time they can create controversy. Telling students in advance that the group will receive one grade often motivates group members to hold each other accountable. This can foster group cohesion and lead to better group

results. It is also important to give individual grades for group work assignments in order to recognize an individual's contribution to the group. The "Assessment Guide for Oral Presentations" on the following page is designed to help teachers evaluate group presentations.

Requiring Self-Evaluation: Having students complete self-evaluations is an effective way to encourage them to think about their own learning. Self-evaluations can take many forms and are useful in a variety of circumstances. They are particularly helpful in getting students to think constructively about group collaboration. In developing a self-evaluation tool for students, teachers need to pose clear and direct questions to students. Two key benefits of student self-evaluation are that it involves students in the assessment process, and that it provides teachers with valuable insights into the contributions of individual students and the dynamics of different groups. These insights can help teachers to organize groups for future cooperative assignments.

Testing: Research demonstrates that students using the Choices approach learn the factual information presented as well as or better than from lecture-discussion format. Students using Choices curricula demonstrate a greater ability to think critically, analyze multiple perspectives, and articulate original viewpoints. Teachers should hold students accountable for learning historical information and concepts presented in Choices units. A variety of types of testing questions and assessment devices can require students to demonstrate critical thinking and historical understanding.

For Further Reading

Daniels, Harvey, and Marilyn Bizar. *Teaching the Best Practice Way: Methods That Matter, K-12.* Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

Holt, Tom. *Thinking Historically: Narrative, Imagination, and Understanding.* The College Board, 1990.

Assessment Guide for Oral Presentations

Group assignment: ______________________________

Group members: ______________________________

____

Group Assessment	*Excellent*	*Good*	*Average*	*Needs Improvement*	*Unsatisfactory*
1. The group made good use of its preparation time	5	4	3	2	1
2. The presentation reflected analysis of the issues under consideration	5	4	3	2	1
3. The presentation was coherent and persuasive	5	4	3	2	1
4. The group incorporated relevant sections of the reading into its presentation	5	4	3	2	1
5. The group's presenters spoke clearly, maintained eye contact, and made an effort to hold the attention of their audience	5	4	3	2	1
6. The presentation incorporated contributions from all the members of the group	5	4	3	2	1
Individual Assessment					
1. The student cooperated with other group members	5	4	3	2	1
2. The student was well-prepared to meet his or her responsibilities	5	4	3	2	1
3. The student made a significant contribution to the group's presentation	5	4	3	2	1

Alternative Three-Day Lesson Plan

Day 1

See Day Two of the Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan. (Students should have read Part II of the reading and completed "Study Guide—Part II" or "Advanced Study Guide—Part II" before beginning the unit. To gain an introduction to the topic, students should also read the Introduction.)

Homework: Students should read the "National Constituent Assembly and the Future of France."

Day 2

Assign each student one of the three options, and allow a few minutes for students to familiarize themselves with the mindsets of the options. Call on students to evaluate the benefits and trade-offs of their assigned options. How do the options differ? What are their assumptions about the future of France?

Homework: Students should read Part III of the reading.

Day 3

See Day Five of the Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan.

Our units are always up to date.

Are yours?

Our world is constantly changing.

So CHOICES continually reviews and updates our classroom units to keep pace with the changes in our world; and as new challenges and questions arise, we're developing new units to address them.

And while history may never change, our knowledge and understanding of it are constantly changing. So even our units addressing "moments" in history undergo a continual process of revision and reinterpretation.

If you've been using the same CHOICES units for two or more years, now is the time to visit our website - learn whether your units have been updated and see what new units have been added to our catalog.

CHOICES currently has units addressing the following:

U.S. Role in a Changing World ▪ Immigration ▪ Terrorism
Genocide ▪ Foreign Aid ▪ Trade ▪ Environment
Cuba ▪ Nuclear Weapons ▪ UN Reform ▪ French Revolution
Middle East ▪ Iraq ▪ Russia ▪ South Africa
India & Pakistan ▪ Brazil ▪ Iran ▪ Mexico
Colonialism in Africa ▪ Weimar Germany ▪ China
U.S. Constitutional Convention ▪ New England Slavery
War of 1812 ▪ Spanish American War
League of Nations ▪ FDR and Isolationism
Hiroshima ▪ Origins of the Cold War
Cuban Missile Crisis ▪ Vietnam War

And watch for new units coming soon:

Haiti and the Dominican Republic ▪ Human Rights

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The French Revolution

The French Revolution traces the history of France during the reign of Louis XVI to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. The unit focuses on the social, political, and economic conditions that led to the end of the Old Regime and helps students consider why the attempt to establish democratic institutions failed.

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