



The French Revolution Wrap Up

Using Primary and Secondary Sources 2012

The French Revolution 1789-99

- The French Revolution was one of the most important revolutions on history
- The French Revolution changed the social and political fabric of Europe and the world forever.
- The French Revolution was a liberal revolution that expanded the rights of man and the power of the people
- The French Revolution was a popular revolution that was also an exercise in terror as it quickly grew and consumed itself during the Reign of Terror!
- The French Revolution ended with the dictatorship of Napoleon in 1799.

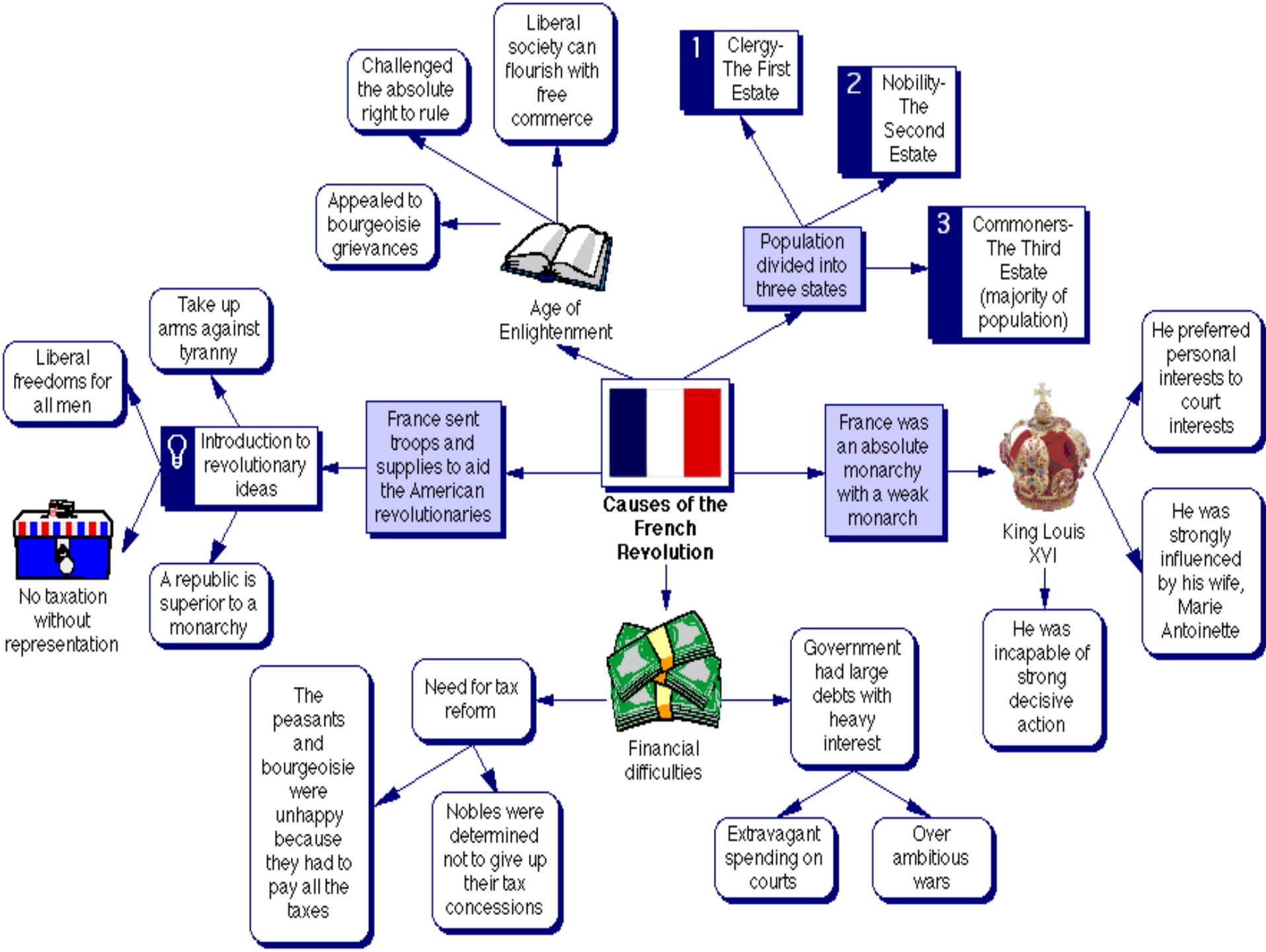


Causes of the French Revolution

Conditions in pre-revolutionary France

- **Overpopulation**: 27 million French living mostly in rural areas causes food shortages and Extreme poverty in the countryside
- **Exorbitant overspending** by the French Kings Louis XIV and XV bankrupted France
- French society was broken up into 3 Estates or classes, with feudal privileges and obligations enriching the top 20% of the population at the expense of the lower 80%
- **Famine, starvation, 50% unemployment** in Paris lead to revolutionary discontent.
- **Age of Enlightenment**: people believed in reason and the ability of citizens to govern themselves as in Ancient Athens.
- **American Revolution** acted as an inspiration and a guide; Americans like Thomas Jefferson encouraged the revolutionary feeling! The expense of supporting the Americans drains the treasury of the French government.





The Ancien Regime: The Estates

- **Each Estate had 1 vote in the Estates General: The First Two Estates could always outvote the Third!**
- **First Estate**
 - Clergy; 130,000, exempt from the taille (tax); owned 10% of the land
- **Second Estate**
 - Nobles; 350,000; exempt from the taille; owned 30% of the land
- **Third Estate**
 - **Commoners**; most of French society, 80% of estate were peasants
 - Owned about 40% of land, but paid all the taxes and had feudal obligations to the nobility
 - **Bourgeoisie**; tradesmen, artisans, merchants, wage earners; members of the middle class. Paid taxes and had to fulfill obligations to the nobility
- Garraty said that the Aristocracy wanted to curb the power of the king and regain powers lost under previous monarchs, to undo the centralization of power that occurred during the Age of Absolutism.
- They refused on technicalities to pay more in taxes and urged the call for a meeting of the Estates-General, where they could outvote the Third, ensuring that no changes would ever occur *and that the king's position would be permanently weakened, while they would be empowered.*
- **pg.764 "Thus the very aristocrats who benefited most from the old regime were the first to undermine it. They took advantage of the plight of their king to reassert their own authority and to reverse the whole trend of modern French history in the direction of centralized monarchy."**
- **What started as a revolt by the aristocracy quickly leads to an anti-aristocratic revolution! Very Ironic outcome!**

The Opening of the Revolution 1789

- Louis XVI called the Estates General to meet in order to ask for new taxes. The sole reason for the Estates General to meet was to solve the fiscal crisis.
- Estates General opened in Versailles on May 5, 1789
- Problem with voting: traditionally it was one vote per estate; 3rd estate wanted one man, one vote
- Louis XVI locked them out of Versailles; the Third Estate moved to a nearby indoor tennis court. They renamed themselves the National Assembly and swore the Tennis Court Oath, which was that they would not leave before they had a new constitution for France!
- Louis prepared to use force against them; leads to storming of the Bastille!
- Paris erupted in open revolt which saved the National Assembly and precipitated revolution in France.
- The Great Fear erupted in the summer of 1789, as the French commoners created militias to defend against foreign troops they feared were coming to put the King back into power.



Storming of the Bastille

July 14, 1789

- Bastille is French Royal Prison in Paris
- Housed weapons and cells for prisoners: Citizens of every class and profession, if for any reason deemed obnoxious to the royal court, were arrested by secret warrants called **lettres-de-cachet** and imprisoned indefinitely in the Bastille without accusation or trial.
- A mob of over 8,000 attacked the Bastille and captured it. Only 7 prisoners were in the prison, but the crowd was outraged anyway. Revolts broke out all over France! The Bastille was torn down by the people, stone by stone.
- **July 14th is celebrated as Bastille Day** every year in France and is considered the beginning of the French Revolution!
- The Storming of the Bastille is the symbolic start of the French Revolution. It shows that this is a **people's revolution!**



National Assembly and Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen



- On August 4, 1789 the National Assembly voted to abolish the relics of Feudalism and aristocratic privilege.
- **Declaration of the Rights of Man & Citizen**– passed on August 26th 1789, inspired by the Declaration of Independence and borrowing similar language; represents the liberation of all mankind!
- **Rights of Man** -to liberty, property, security and resistance to *oppression*”, to freedom and equal rights for all, access to public office based on talent, and an end to exemptions from taxation and feudal privilege. **Declaration of Independence for all people everywhere; exportable revolution!**

Changes in French Society



- End of aristocratic privilege and tax exemption; end of feudal obligations; *“Decrees Abolishing the Feudal System” August 1789*
- End of nobility as a class, end of manorial privilege
- Elimination of guilds and trade organizations that monopolized or impeded economic progress
- **Secularization—Civil Constitution of the Clergy—churches are closed**, priests become state employees, power of the church is sharply curtailed; Church land is seized and the church now will pay taxes (11% of French go to church today!)
- Rise in the status of the common man and an upheaval of the social order, the elimination of classes and the establishment of a new egalitarianism in France.
- Equality to all, including blacks and mulattoes. Slavery outlawed!
- Society becomes more equal, but less tolerant as extremes come to the surface! Factions are persecuted and eliminated, in an echo of Rousseau

Constitutional Monarchy

The Constitution of 1791



- King refused to accept the National Assembly's decrees and plotted to stop the National Assembly
- Bread riots in Paris lead to outrage and demands to bring the king to Paris. Most French ate 2 lbs of bread daily; high prices and shortages led to starvation.
- Oct. 5, 1789: Louis XVI was escorted by a mob of women from Versailles to Paris and held as prisoner.
- Constitution of 1791- limited monarchy, legislative assembly makes laws; King is head of state only.
- King refused to acknowledge the constitution; was seen by many as disloyal!
- Only the wealthy could actually vote!
- Destroys the old society, but does not go far enough! Leads to radicalization as extreme elements now try to purify society to meet the revolutionary enlightenment ideals!!

Interpretations from Garraty

- Duke of Brunswick, commander of Austro-Prussian forces issues manifesto saying Paris will be destroyed if Louis XVI is harmed; makes the king look like a traitor and dooms him. (p.768)
- Garraty says the King had to be sacrificed to bring on democratic reforms and complete the revolution—it was the price paid for democracy.
- French government issued revolutionary decrees assuring foreign people that France will support their efforts to overthrow their monarchies and establish democracies---exporting of revolution to the continent and beyond (p.769)
- Levee en mass—mass conscription of national armies and the complete militarization of society; war becomes a national effort! (p.769)
- Reign of Terror was a purification of the revolution and an attempt at the elimination of factions, as Rousseau had said must happen.
- *“Yet the most revealing measures enacted by the republicans were not so much political and economic as social and cultural. Believing in human dignity, equality and fraternity, the republicans tried to make these beliefs a part of of the fabric of French life”.* (p.771)
- The Directory was not as much of a failure as it seemed! Napoleon propagandized *against it in order to overthrow it. It really wasn't that corrupt, not that bad.*

The Paris Commune

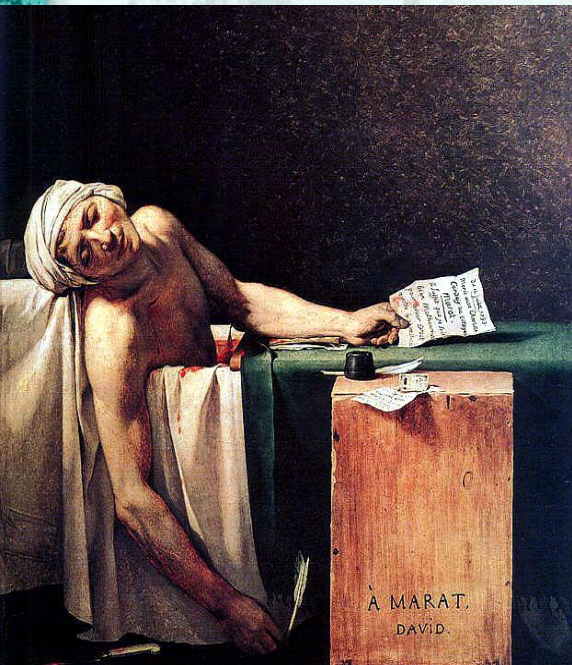
- France declared War with Austria in 1792 in the French Revolutionary Wars—went badly for the French!
- Spring 1792-Paris Commune attacked Royal Palace and National Assembly
- Forced a National Convention to be called and the monarchy suspended
- Sans-culottes—members of the commune; some were actually well-off! Most radical members of the commune; demanded a republic and an end to monarchy.
- Revolution enters radical phase as the revolution consolidates its victories and purifies itself in order to protect the revolution from counter-revolution.
- Jacobin Club—network of political groups in France—Girondins represent rural radicals, Mountains represent radicals in Paris—Parisian radicals win out and take control of the revolution.



The Radicalization of Revolution



- **Georges Danton**, Minister of Justice under Paris Commune—hunted down enemies of the revolution, aides to the king, royalists; arrested and massacred thousands! Was Guillotined in 1794!
- **Jean-Paul Marat**—trained as a doctor, had lived in the sewers of Paris as a failure (and picking up a skin condition in the process) he was a political propagandist, published **“Friend of the People”**; called for mob violence; advocated the poor take from the rich by force, radicalized the Jacobins; antagonized the masses! Published lists of the disloyal to be targeted for execution. Was an engine for revolutionary violence prior to the Reign of Terror. Assassinated in his bathtub by Girondist sympathizer Charlotte Corday
- **Louis XVI executed** January 21st 1793; end of monarchy!



Maximilien Robespierre



Hulton Deutsch

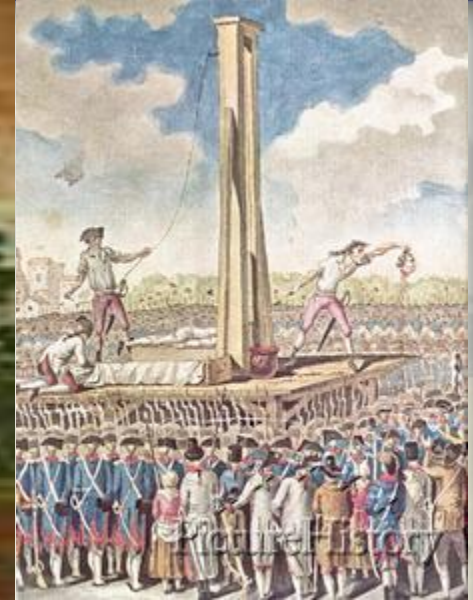
- Lawyer, intellectual, radical, influential speaker, enlightenment philosophe
- Morally upright, dedicated to the ideals of the Enlightenment and the goals of the *French Revolution*, his nickname was “The Incorruptable”—conscience of the revolution!
- Was elected to the Estates-General in 1789 and then elected leader of the Jacobins in 1790
- Follower of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the social contract, especially of the idea of the general will and the need to force people to be free in order to avoid factions and the splintering of revolutionary society.
- 1793 elected to the Committee of Public Safety—quickly took charge and radicalized the revolution, eliminating factions and all opposition to the revolution, fueling the Reign of Terror
- Robespierre was trying to purify the revolution, to create a society of virtue that would uplift and provide an inspirational example, much as Rousseau had directed should occur.

Republic of Virtue under Robespierre

- Robespierre and his allies tried to create a “*Republic of Virtue*”
 - Democratic republic comprised of good citizens
 - *Titles “citizen” and “citizeness” replaced the traditional honorifics as a sign of egalitarianism*
 - Liberty, Fraternity, Equality—the slogan for the new French Republic
 - New republic tried to stamp out the old order and reshape France with new revolutionary values; dechristianization, purge of the aristocracy, elimination of royalist sympathizers and the old levers of power.
 - All who opposed were executed! No tolerance for dissent is allowed! Factions were not tolerated!



Execution of Louis XVI



- Robespierre said the king must die so that the revolution might live. Louis was sacrificed for the revolution!

Reign of Terror 1793-94: *The Revolution Consumes Itself!*

- The Committee of Public Safety took control as an emergency government.
- Rooted out internal enemies of the revolution; 40,000 people were executed, 16,000 of whom died by beheading from the guillotine
- Peasants and persons who opposed the sans-culottes were killed in public executions
- Revolutionary Armies were set up to bring all of France under control; city of Lyon was made an example through the execution of 1,880 citizens!
- Robespierre is arrested and executed along with 80 of his followers in 1794.
- Execution of Robespierre and more moderate leadership ends the Reign of Terror.



THE DEATH OF ROBESPIERRE
LA MORT DE ROBESPIERRE

The Guillotine: Instrument of Terror

- Designed by Dr Joseph Guillotine, a man described as kindly and who wanted to make execution more humane, the guillotine quickly became a symbol of tyranny during the French Revolution.

- The Guillotine was to be a humane form of execution for the condemned; it became a symbol of the French Revolution!

- Total weight of a Guillotine was about 580 kilos (1278lb)

- The blade weighed over 40 kilos (88.2lb)

- Height of side posts was just over 4m (14ft)

- The blade drop was 2.3m (88 inches)

- Power at impact was 400 kilos (888lb) per square inch.



World of the Reign of Terror

- Informants, political charges, turns citizens against each other and political factions against each other!
- Brief trials and immediate executions; no appeals allowed. Firing Squads and the guillotine are the execution tools; fear grips the land!
- Fear gripped France as people feared for their safety and the hysteria reached a fever pitch.
- With the execution of Robespierre, the French knew the reign of terror was over.
- The Convention and the Directory (1795) stabilized France.



The Directory & Rise of Napoleon

- National Convention reduced the power of the Committee of Public Safety
- Constitution of 1795 established a bicameral legislature and 5 Directors who were elected to rule with the legislature in order to provide stability and greater public input.
- Corruption weakened the Directory; radicals and royalists plotted against it. The Directory depended on the military to stay in power.
- 1799 a coup *d'état* put the military commander Napoleon Bonaparte into power, ending the French Revolution.
- Napoleon carried many of the ideals of the French Revolution forward and modernized France. His enlightened rule though was an affront to the self-determination the French people wanted for themselves



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Results of the French Revolution

- **Spread of enlightenment ideas and the empowerment of man** throughout Europe and later, the world!
- **Destruction of the old feudal order**, the Ancien Regime and the creation of a modern society with universal suffrage and an enlightened body politic—The **Modern Nation-State!**
- Excesses of revolution left the French with the opposite of what they wanted in Napoleon. It would take almost a century to produce the model democracy that the revolutionaries dreamed of. **France is living with the 5th Republic today.**
- **The French Revolution was the most influential revolution in history** and the echoes still reverberate today in the continuing expansion of democracy and individual rights across the globe.
- **The Enlightenment ideals** of the French Revolution are today celebrated in the United Nations and the desire to enlarge, preserve and protect human rights around the globe. **The French Revolution was truly an international phenomena!**