

# The French

# Revolution



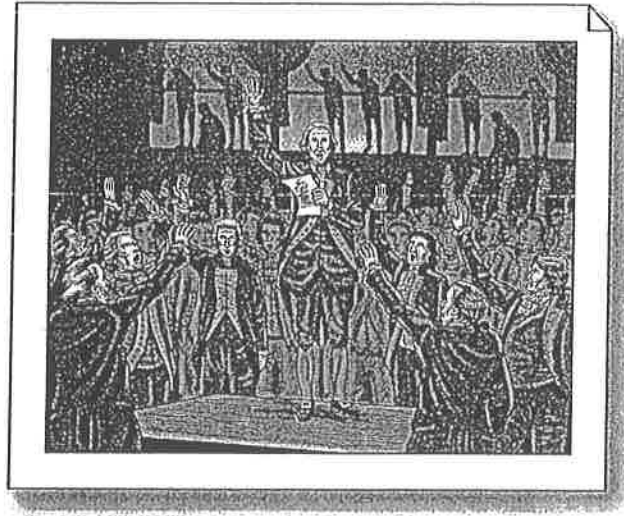
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Global 10/Period: \_\_\_\_\_

# The French Revolution Begins

In 1789, the French were divided into three social groups called Estates. The First Estate was made up of Church leaders, and the Second Estate was made up of nobles. The Third Estate included everybody else, and more than 95 percent of the French people belonged to it. Like in other European countries, a king who had absolute power ruled the country. France also had a group of representatives called the Estates-General. That group was made up of representatives from each Estate.



France was having serious money trouble. The government had huge war debts to pay. Prices of goods were rising, and many people were out of work. Because of a bad harvest, there was very little food. In 1789, the country's economy was about to fall apart. King Louis XVI called the Estates-General to meet and come up with a solution.

At the meeting, representatives from the Third Estate said the best solution would be to change the government. Although the poorest people made up the Third Estate, it was the only one that had to pay taxes. The representatives thought France could start a constitutional government like the one the United States had just started. The new government would make the First and Second Estates pay taxes too. This would raise money for the country.

The First and Second Estates did not like this idea. By tradition, each Estate got one vote. So, the Third Estate was outvoted two to one by the other Estates. Third Estate representatives argued that, to be fair, each member should get a vote instead of each Estate. In the current government, the largest group of people had nearly no say in the government. King Louis said no to the proposed change.

Set on making changes, the Third Estate voted to rename itself the National Assembly on June 17, 1789. This action was the symbolic end of absolute monarchy and the beginning of representative government. Members of the National Assembly planned to write a constitution. But when they arrived at the meeting hall three days later, the doors were locked. Determined to meet, the delegates moved to a nearby tennis court. They swore to keep meeting until they had written a constitution. This famous pledge is called the Tennis Court Oath.

The king had to give in. He told the other two Estates to join with the Third Estate in the National Assembly. At the same time, however, King Louis was getting troops ready. He would tell the troops to force the National Assembly to stop meeting. The French Revolution had begun.

# CREATING A NEW FRANCE

## TEXT SUMMARY

In 1789, a terrible famine occurred in France. Starving peasants attacked the homes of nobles. Revolutionary groups took over Paris and demanded an end to the monarchy. Finally, the nobles agreed to give up their special privileges.

The National Assembly began making reforms. They agreed to abolish feudalism. In 1791, the assembly finished writing a new constitution that used Enlightenment ideas. Under this constitution, people had natural rights and the government had to protect those rights.

## GRAPHIC SUMMARY:

### *The French Declaration of Rights*

#### DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND THE CITIZEN

- Written in 1789
- Uses American Declaration of Independence as model
- States that all men have natural rights
- Declares the job of government to protect the natural rights of the people
- Guarantees all male citizens equality under the law
- States that people are free to practice any religion they choose
- Promises to tax people according to how much they can afford

The constitution created a limited monarchy. The assembly also reformed French laws and supported trade. When it took control of the French Catholic Church and sold its lands to pay back the government debt, the Pope, clergy, and many peasants rejected the revolution. Other groups, however, wanted more changes. Violent disagreements soon caused the downfall of the assembly.

News about the French Revolution spread across Europe. While many Europeans supported the revolution, rulers and nobles were afraid that revolutionary ideas would spread to their own countries. After the French king and his family made an unsuccessful attempt to flee, the king of Prussia promised that he would fight to save the French monarchy. In 1792, France declared war on Austria, Prussia, Britain, and several other European states. The fighting lasted for over 20 years.

The French Declaration of Rights, like the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution, used ideas of the Enlightenment.

## THE BIG IDEA

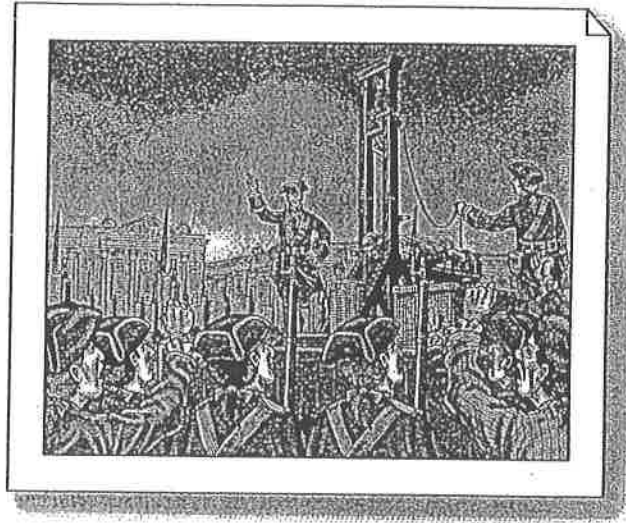
The National Assembly instituted political and social reforms in the early stages of the revolution.



# Execution of a King

In 1792, as the French Revolution continued, a group met in Paris at the National Convention. At this meeting, revolutionary leaders decided that France would no longer be ruled by a king. France was now a republic.

For some people, it was not enough to take away the king's power. Many blamed the country's problems on the king. The National Convention put King Louis XVI on trial as a traitor to France. They found him guilty of treason, or betraying his country, and sentenced him to death.



On January 21, 1793, Louis walked calmly to the guillotine. The guillotine was a machine that chopped a person's head off with a huge blade. It was on a platform in a public square. A large audience watched and cheered as Louis climbed to the top of the platform. He was put under the blade of the guillotine. With one stroke, it cut off his head. One of the guards picked up the king's severed head and showed it to the crowd. The audience cheered and shouted, "Long live the republic!"

Not everyone was happy about the king's death. People in some areas of France did not accept the National Convention's authority. They had been loyal to the king. Also, other countries were angry that French revolutionaries had killed the king. A group of countries, including Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Britain, and the Dutch Republic, joined together. They got ready to invade France. Their goal was to stop the French Revolution.

To protect the revolution, the National Convention started the Committee of Public Safety. Its job was to defend France from foreign threats and from threats at home. The way that the Committee of Public Safety dealt with the crisis became known as the Reign of Terror. The Committee arrested, imprisoned, and killed anyone it thought might be against the revolution. In one year, more than 30,000 people were killed. Of these, about 16,000 people were beheaded by the guillotine. Others died in prison or were killed when their towns were raided.

The Committee faced the international threat by raising a huge army. With over one million soldiers, France's army was the largest in European history. It pushed back the invaders and defeated most of its foreign enemies.

Maximilien Robespierre led the Committee. He was very powerful, and some leaders thought he went too far. In 1794, the National Convention voted to execute Robespierre. He was beheaded. A more moderate set of leaders took over the Committee, and the Reign of Terror ended.



### ACT ONE

#### Europe on the Eve of Revolution-1700s

- The Enlightenment
  - France is at heart
  - Challenge traditional attitudes—nobility, economy, govt
    - New ideas reject divine right
  - France vs Britian
    - Britain-Limited monarchy
    - France-Absolute monarchy
      - High taxes
      - Peasants=ANGRY
- Conditions around Europe
  - Serfdom over but nobility still has more rights
    - Inequality
  - Wars—religious, territorial, trade
- The American Revolution
  - Colonies challenge a powerful “Mother Country” and WIN!
    - Use Enlightenment ideas
- “Old Regime”—society in France until 1789
  - Outdated, miserable
  - Estates General-org. of reps from 3 estates meet to discuss political matters
    - First Estate-Clergy
      - Exempt from taxes
      - Owned 20% of the land
    - Second Estate-Nobles, wealthy landowners
      - Exempt from taxes
      - Owned 30% of the land
    - Third Estate-Everyone else
      - 98% of the population
      - Consisted of 3 groups
        1. Bourgeoisie-well-educated merchants, artisans
        2. City workers-low wages, often hungry
        3. Peasants-80% of pop.; taxes were a burden



## ACT THREE

### The Beginning of Violence

- Paris – Bread prices ↑; riots begin
  - Fear-Will Louis call out militia?
  - Response-Poor form own militia
    - Need weapons
- July 14, 1789-Mobs storm the Bastille (prison) to get weapons
  - Citizens take control of prison
  - SIGNIFICANCE
    - Louis seen as “against the people” because he called out the militia
    - Became revolutionary symbol
      - Date became national holiday similar to US’s Fourth of July
- Great Fear-French countryside, Summer 1789
  - Peasants afraid of royal attack
  - Burn castles; refuse to pay taxes
- August 27, 1789-Nat’l Assembly meets to accept the Declaration of the Rights of the Man and Citizen
  - Enlightenment document
  - “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”
  - Abolished special rights and privileges for clergy and nobles
  - Govt will protect the rights of its citizens (not women)
  - Document=Death of Old Regime
- 1790-Nat’l Assmebly vs The Church
  - Assembly takes over Church lands→sold to eliminate debt
  - Clergy to elected by property owners and paste as state officials
- June 1791-Louis & family tries to escape
  - Recognized and brought back to Paris

## ACT FOUR

### The End of the Monarchy, The Terror and Foreign Invasions

- Sept. 1791-Constitution created
  - Limited constitutional monarchy
    - Legislative Assembly-power to create laws & prevent war
    - King-power to enforce laws
- Late 1791-Political factions split France

Radicals	Moderates	Conservatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sat on the left side of the hall; were called left-wing and said to be on the left</li> <li>• opposed the king and the idea of a monarchy</li> <li>• wanted sweeping changes in government and proposed that common people have full power in a republic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sat in the center of the hall and were called centrists</li> <li>• wanted some changes in government, but not as many as the radicals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sat on the right side of the hall; were called right-wing and said to be on the right</li> <li>• upheld the idea of a limited monarchy</li> <li>• wanted few changes in government</li> </ul>

