

# The French Revolution

Overview: The French Revolution became the most momentous upheaval of the revolutionary age.

- ▶ It replaced the “Old Regime” with a “modern society”
- ▶ It profoundly influenced future revolutions.

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Chronology and periodization are very important for this unit.

UNIT 5.1		UNIT 5.2
The “Age of Montesquieu” (Constitutional Monarchy) 1789-1792	The “Age of Rousseau” (The Republic) 1792-1799	The “Age of Voltaire” (Napoleon’s Empire/ Enlightened Despot) 1799-1815
<b>Nat’l Assembly: 1789-1791</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tennis Court Oath</li> <li>• Storming of the Bastille</li> <li>• Great Fear and abolition of feudalism</li> <li>• Civil Constitution of the Clergy</li> <li>• <i>Declaration of the Rights of Man</i></li> </ul>	<b>Nat’l Convention: 1792-1795</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of the Republic</li> <li>• Execution of Louis XVI</li> <li>• Committee of Public Safety</li> <li>• Reign of Terror</li> <li>• Thermidorian Reaction</li> </ul>	<b>Consulate: 1799-1804</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code Napoleon</li> <li>• Concordat of 1801</li> <li>• War of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coalition</li> </ul>
<b>Legislative Assembly: 1791-92</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jacobins vs. Girondins</li> <li>• War of the First Coalition</li> <li>• Paris Commune</li> <li>• September Massacres</li> </ul>	<b>The Directory: 1795-99</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruling bourgeoisie vs. aristocracy and sans-culottes</li> <li>• Coup d’etat Brumaire</li> </ul>	<b>Napoleonic Empire: 1804-15</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confederation of the Rhine</li> <li>• Continental System</li> <li>• Treaty of Tilsit</li> <li>• Peninsular War</li> <li>• Russian Campaign</li> <li>• Waterloo</li> </ul>

- I. **Louis XV** (r. 1715-1774)
- A. The nobility gained influence during his reign
  - B. His ministers and mistresses exercised undue influence on him, controlling affairs of state and undermining the prestige of the monarchy
    - **Madame de Pompadour**: most famous mistress of 18<sup>th</sup> c. who influenced Louis XV in making important gov’t decisions and giving advice on appointments and foreign policy.

- C. The high court of Paris—the **Parlement**—was restored with the power to approve or disapprove the king’s decrees.
1. Once members the middle-class under Louis XIV, these judges had worked their way up to the **“nobility of the robe”** (by purchasing their titles).
  2. Louis sought to raise taxes to pay for the War of Austrian Succession and the Seven Years’ War but the *Parlement* of Paris refused
    - Thus, French kings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century suffered a similar struggle with taxation that James I and Charles I suffered in England over a century earlier.
  3. Judicial opposition in Paris and the provinces stated that the king could not levy taxes without the consent of the *Parlement* of Paris, which acted as the representative of the nation.
    - Received major support from educated public opinion.
  4. 1768, **Louis XV** appointed **René de Maupeou** as chancellor and ordered him to subdue judicial opposition.
    - a. *Parlement* of Paris was abolished and its members exiled to isolated areas in the provinces.
    - b. A new and docile *parlement* of royal officials was created.
    - c. Privileged groups were taxed once again.
    - d. *Philosophes* and educated public highly critical of the new *parlement* and royal authority.
  5. **Louis XVI** (r. 1774-1792) dismissed Maupeou and repudiated Maupeou’s laws.
    - a. Old *Parlement* of Paris reinstated.
    - b. Although the public hoped for reforms leading to more representative government, it was ultimately disappointed by the stalemate between the monarchy and its judicial opponents.

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## II. Overview—France in 1789

- A. France was in many ways the most advanced country of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
1. Population of nearly 25 million made it the largest country in the world.
  2. Wealthiest country in Europe (but not per capita).
  3. Productive economy: French exports larger than Britain’s to the European continent.

4. French culture dominated the continent.
  - a. French was the language of official diplomacy and also spoken in most European courts.
  - b. France was the center of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment.
  - c. French science led the world.
  - d. Most powerful military in Europe.

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B. The **Three Estates** were a remnant of medieval France and did not reflect the modern French nation

1. The clergy (**First Estate**)

- a. Less than 1% of population but the Catholic Church in France (**Gallican Church**) owned 20% of the land.
- b. Clergy and the Church were exempt from taxes.
- c. Much of church's income was drained away from local parishes by political appointees and high-ranking aristocrats.
- d. However, conditions of the church and the position of the clergy have been much exaggerated as a cause of the French Revolution.
  - Though the French church levied a tithe on all agricultural products, England did as well.
  - Bishops both in England and France often played a part in gov't affairs.
  - The clergy and monastic orders had greatly declined by 1789 in the wake of the Enlightenment

2. Nobility (**Second Estate**)

- a. 2-4% of total population; exempt from taxation.
- b. Owned about 25% of the land
- c. Experienced a great resurgence since the death of Louis XIV in 1715.
- d. Enjoyed certain manorial rights that dated back to medieval times that allowed them to tax peasants for their own profit.

3. The **Third Estate** consisted of a few rich merchants or professionals, the middle class, urban artisans, unskilled workers and the mass of peasants.

- a. Bore the vast majority of tax burden.
  - Taille: land tax
  - Tithe: church tax equivalent to 10% of annual income.
  - Income tax
  - Poll tax
  - Salt tax

- b. Peasants also had to honor feudal obligations such as taxes and fees.
  - Peasants owned about 40% of land in France; occupied nearly all of France.
  - The Second Estate taxed the peasantry for its own profit.
    - The **corvée** obligated peasants to work for nobles several days a year.
  - Nobles enjoyed "hunting rights," or the privilege of keeping game preserves, and hunting on the peasant's land.
  - Yet, the relation of lord and peasant was not the same as with serfdom in eastern Europe.
- c. The **Bourgeoisie** demanded that political and social power be congruent with their emerging economic power.
  - Resented the First and Second Estates who held all political and social power.
  - Wanted reduction of privileges for nobility and tax relief for themselves.
  - Hated the **Lettre de cachet**: Gov't could imprison anyone without charges or trial.

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### III. Causes of the **French Revolution**

#### A. **Long-Term Causes – Breakdown of the old order—*ancien regime***

1. The French Revolution was partly influenced by the American Revolution
  - a. Many French soldiers had served in America during the American Revolution.
  - b. The French bourgeoisie and lower nobility were intrigued by American ideals of liberty.
  - c. Massive French aid to the Americans resulted in an increase in the already huge French debt
2. Increased criticism of the French gov't was spurred by rising expectations of the Enlightenment.
  - a. Political theories of Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu and other philosophers were popular
  - b. *Laissez faire* economic ideas of French **physiocrats** (such as **Quesnay**) and **Adam Smith** were popular among the middle class
    - Middle class resented gov't interference in their economic activities.
  - c. Criticism mounted of gov't inefficiency, corruption, and privileges of the aristocracy.
    - The legal system was chaotic, with no uniform or codified laws.

- d. Divine right theory invoked by the Crown did not fit in during the age of "enlightened despots".
  - No representative assembly existed in France
- 3. The Three Estates did not reflect the realities of wealth and ability in French society.
- 4. Historical interpretations of class conflict leading to the French Revolution
  - a. Traditional view:
    - Bourgeoisie was united by economic position and class interest and frustrated by feudal laws
    - Eventually, rose up to lead the Third Estate in the Revolution which resulted in abolition of feudal privileges and established a capitalist order based on individualism and a market economy.
  - b. Recent research has challenged the traditional view.
    - Revisionist historians have questioned the existence of a growing social conflict between the bourgeoisie and feudal nobility.
    - Bourgeoisie and nobility were not monolithic but were plagued by internal rivalries.
    - Both groups formed two parallel social ladders, increasingly linked at the top by wealth, marriage, and Enlightenment culture.
      - Nobility continued to accept the wealthiest members of middle class into its ranks (as the "nobility of the robe")
      - Many nobles shared liberal ideas with the middle class.
      - Until the revolution, the middle class was supported by judicial opposition led by *Parlement* of Paris.

B. **Immediate Cause: Financial Mismanagement**

- 1. During the reign of Louis XVI, France was nearly bankrupt.
  - a. By the 1780s half of France's annual budget went for payment of interest on the mounting debt.
    - Colonial wars with England.
    - French participation in the American Revolution
    - Yet, debt was only 50% of Britain's and less than 1/5 as heavy per capita; also less than Dutch Republic; about the same as sum left by Louis XIV.

- b. Major issue: Gov't could not declare bankruptcy as it had done in the past
  - Aristocratic and bourgeois creditors did not allow their loans to be repudiated by the monarchy.
- c. France had no central bank, no paper currency, and no means of creating credit.
  - Only way for gov't to get revenue was to increase taxes
2. Gov't was dependent on the poorest classes in society for revenue despite its having been taxed to its limit.
  - Inefficiency and corruption of tax system hurt revenues.
3. Businessmen and merchants attacked France's state-controlled mercantilist economy for its restrictive features.
4. Inflation between 1730 and 1780s resulted in dramatic price increases while wages did not keep up.
  - Prices of consumer goods rose 65% while wages rose only 22%.
5. Privileged classes refused to pay increased taxes.
  - **Jacques Necker**, Louis XVI's director of finances tried to raise taxes but was dismissed.
6. Louis XVI summoned an **Assembly of Notables** (1787) hoping they would either approve the king's new tax program or consent to remove their tax exemptions.
  - a. Nobles refused tax increases and demanded that control over all gov't spending be given to the provincial assemblies (that nobles controlled).
  - b. Louis refused. Nobles demanded that sweeping tax changes required approval of Estates General.
  - c. The king then dismissed the nobles and established new taxes by decree.
7. The *Parlements* controlled by the nobility, blocked tax increases as well as new taxes in order to force the king to share power with the Second Estate.
  - a. Asserted some "fundamental laws" against which no king could violate such as national consent to taxation and freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment.
  - b. King tried to exile judges but protests swept the country and investors refused to advance more loans to the state.

- c. On July 5, 1788, king reluctantly summoned for a spring session of Estates General.
    - King asked that all parties study the tax situation and make proposals on the organization of the Estates General under modern conditions.
    - Ironically, by forcing the summoning of the Estates General, the nobility unwittingly initiated the Revolution.
- C. Estates General-- May, 1789**
1. Feudal assembly that represented the Three Estates
    - Had only met twice: 1302 (its inception) & 1614.
  2. 1788-89 excitement swept over France on the eve of its very first election.
  3. "**Cahiers de doléances**": Each estate was instructed to compile a list of suggestions and grievances and present them to the king.
  4. Common agreement among the Three Estates:
    - a. France should have a constitutional monarchy
    - b. Individual liberties must be guaranteed by law
    - c. Position of parish clergy had to be improved
    - d. Abolition of internal trade barriers
  5. The main issue dividing the three estates was how the Estates General should vote
    - a. Each Estate expected to elect its own representatives.
    - b. Louis XVI doubled number of representatives in Third Estate as a gesture to its size.
      - Almost all male commoners 25 years or older had the right to vote.
      - Most representatives were well-educated and prosperous members of the middle class (lawyers and gov't officials).
      - There were no delegates from the ranks of the peasantry and artisans.
    - c. **Parlement of Paris** ruled that voting in the Estates General would follow the tradition of each Estate voting separately.
      - First and Second Estates would thus control the Estates General as both had similar interests to protect, despite increased size of Third Estate.
      - The **Abbé Sieyès** was the most influential writer in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate: wrote, **What is the Third Estate?**
        - Claimed the Third Estate should have the power in France.
        - Stated nobility should be abolished.

- Believed the Third Estate represented the vast majority of French society
  - Brought the ideas of **Rousseau's Social Contract** to the forefront.
- d. The election took place during the worst depression in 18<sup>th</sup> century France.
- Grain shortages, poor harvests, and inflated bread prices.
- e. May 5, 1789: the Estates General met and the Third Estate was furious that the voting method was by Estate and not per capita.
- Each estate was ordered to meet and vote separately.
  - The Third Estate refused and insisted that the entire Estates General vote together.
  - A 6-week deadlock followed until the Third Estate asserted its power in June, aided by some parish priests who defected from the First Estate.

#### IV. The French Revolution and the "Age of Montesquieu"

##### A. National Assembly, 1789-1791

1. June 17, the Third Estate declared itself the true National Assembly of France.
  - a. When locked out of their meeting place by Louis XVI they met instead in an indoor tennis court.
  - b. **Tennis Court Oath:** The Third Estate swore to remain together until it had given France a constitution.
  - c. Third Estate thus assumed sovereign power on behalf of the nation.
    - In response, Louis XVI brought an army of 18,000 troops to Versailles
  - d. Defections from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Estates caused Louis XVI to recognize the National Assembly on June 27, after he dissolved the Estates General.
  - e. National Assembly dominated by the **bourgeoisie**
  - f. Point of no return: the king was now allied with the nobles while the Third Estate now feared the nobles more than ever.
2. Storming of the **Bastille** – July 14, 1789
  - a. "Parisian" revolution began in response to food shortages, soaring bread prices, 25% unemployment, and fear of military repression.
    - The king's dismissal of his liberal finance minister created fear of subjugation by aristocratic landowners and grain speculators

- Workers and tradesmen began to arm themselves in response to the king's summoning of troops to Versailles.
  - b. On July 14, an angry mob stormed the Bastille in search of gunpowder and weapons.
    - The heads of the prison's governor and the mayor were put on pikes and paraded through the streets.
    - Citizens appointed marquis de Lafayette commander of the city's armed forces.
    - Paris was lost to the king.
  - c. The storming of the Bastille inadvertently saved the National Assembly.
    - The king had been prepared to use force to put down the new government
3. The "**Great Fear**" of 1789
- a. Spirit of rebellion spread to the French countryside, sparking a wave of violence.
  - b. Peasants attacked manor houses in an effort to destroy the legal records of their feudal obligations.
  - c. Middle class landowners were also attacked.
  - d. Recent enclosures were undone, old common lands were reoccupied, and forests were seized.
  - e. Taxes went unpaid.
  - f. Middle class responded by forming a National Guard Militia to protect property rights.
4. August 4, National Assembly voted to abolish feudalism in France and declared equality of taxation to all classes.
- a. Constituted one of the two great social changes of the Revolution (the other was the abolition of guilds)
  - b. This was an attempt to stop further violence.
  - c. Amounted to a peaceful social revolution
  - d. Ended serfdom (where it existed), exclusive hunting rights for nobles, fees for justice, village monopolies, the *corvée*, and other dues.
  - e. Peasantry thus achieved a great and unprecedented victory.
    - Henceforth, they would work to consolidate their gains.
    - As the Great Fear ended, peasants became a force for order and stability.

5. **Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen**  
issued August 26, 1789
  - a. Became the constitutional blueprint for France.
    - Influenced by American constitutional ideas
    - Guaranteed due process of law; a citizen was innocent until proven guilty.
    - Sovereignty of the people.
  - b. Enlightenment philosophy: classical liberalism
    - "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights."
    - Natural rights are "liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression." (Locke)
    - Law is expression of the "General Will" (Rousseau)
  - c. Freedom of expression and religion.
  - d. Liberty defined as freedom to do anything not injurious to others, as determined only by law.
  - e. Taxes could be raised only with common consent.
  - f. All public servants accountable for conduct in office.
  - g. Separation of powers through separate branches.
  - h. Confiscation of property from private persons had to be done with fair compensation.
  - i. **"Citizen"** applied to all French people, regardless of class.
6. The unity of the National Assembly began to unravel when dealing with the issue of the monarch's power.
  - This occurred shortly after the adoption of *Declaration of Rights of Man*.
7. Rights of Women
  - a. Women gained increased rights to divorce, to inherit property, and to get child support from the fathers of their illegitimate children.
  - b. Drawback of *Declaration of Rights*: Women did not share in equal rights.
    - Women could not vote or hold office while the existing system gave males the advantage in family law, property rights, and education.
    - At this point in history, there were very few that believed in gender equality.
    - Among the leaders of the revolution, only Condorcet argued for gender equality.
  - c. **Olympe de Gouges**: *The Rights of Woman*, 1791
    - Following official Declaration in each of its 17 articles, she applied them to women explicitly in each case.

- Also asserted the right of women to divorce under certain conditions, to control property in marriage, and equal access to higher education and civilian careers and public employment.
  - d. **Mary Wollstonecraft** in England published ***Vindication of the Rights of Woman*** in 1792.
    - Ideas similar to de Gouges
  - e. Madame de Stael
    - Ran a salon and wrote widely read books.
    - Deplored subordination of women to men that the Revolution had done so little to change.
8. **Women's march to Versailles** (Oct. 1789)
- a. Women pushed the revolution forward in October when shortages of bread persisted.
  - b. Incited by **Jean-Paul Marat**, 7,000 women (along with the Paris national guard) marched 12 miles from Paris to Versailles demanding the king redress their economic problems.
    - Unemployment resulting from reduced demand for garments devastated women in the putting-out system.
    - Women invaded royal apartments, slaughtered bodyguards while searching for Queen Marie Antoinette.
    - King and Queen forced to move to Paris to live at the **Tueries**, the royal residence in Paris
    - Louis XVI met with a group of women in the palace and signed decrees guaranteeing bread in Paris at reasonable prices.
  - c. National Assembly also moved to Paris and was intimidated by the Parisians.
    - King's power reduced to temporary veto in lawmaking process.
    - King and Assembly made sure bread was available to the masses.
    - The more conservative revolutionaries began to drop out of the Assembly due to disillusionment by mob violence.
9. Creation of the constitution
- a. **The Civil Constitution of the Clergy** (1790)
    - In essence, secularized religion
    - Created a national church with 83 bishops and dioceses.
    - Biggest mistake made by the National Assembly; represented its first significant failure

- Convents and monasteries abolished.
    - Church property was confiscated to pay off the national debt.
    - Significantly undermined religious orders and schools
  - Archbishoprics abolished.
  - All clergymen would be paid by the state and elected by all citizens.
  - Protestants, Jews, and agnostics could legally take part in the elections based on citizenship and property qualifications.
  - Clergy forbidden to accept the authority of the pope.
  - Clergy forced to take a loyalty oath to the new gov't (since the pope had condemned the Revolution).
  - Result: deeply divided France over the issue of religion.
    - Pope condemned the act as an attempt to subjugate the church.
    - Half of French priests refused to accept it—**"refractory clergy"**
      - They had the support of the king, former aristocrats, peasants, and the urban working-class.
    - The backlash later led to increased papal influence on the French church during Napoleon's rule and beyond.
- b. France became a **constitutional monarchy** with a unicameral Legislative Assembly
- Middle class controlled the gov't through an indirect method of voting and property qualifications.
  - Half of males over 25 years eligible to vote
  - Nobility was abolished
- c. The National Assembly divided France into **83 departments** governed by elected officials.
- Replaced the old provincial boundary lines
- d. New system of law courts gave France a uniform administrative structure: 83 dioceses, departments and judicial districts.
- e. Weakness: Local communities enforced national legislation at their discretion; proved ruinous when war came.

10. Economic reform—favored the middle rather than the lowest classes.
  - a. **Metric system** replaced sloppy system of weights and measures.
  - b. Le Chapelier Law (1791) outlawed strikes, workers coalitions and assemblies
    - Monopolies also were prohibited
  - c. Internal tariffs abolished.
  - d. Assignats became new paper currency.
    - Former church property was used to guarantee value of *assignats*.
  - e. Church land sold to pay off national debt
    - Much of it purchased by peasants.
  
11. **Flight to Varennes:** Louis XVI tried to escape France in June, 1791 to avoid having to approve the Constitution of 1791 and to raise a counter-revolutionary army with émigré noblemen and seek help from foreign powers.
  - a. He was captured and the King and Queen became prisoners of the Parisian mobs.
  - b. King forced to accept a constitutional monarchy.
  
12. International Reaction
  - a. **Edmund Burke** (1729-1797): ***Reflections on the Revolution in France*** (1790)
    - One of the great intellectual defenses of European conservatism.
    - Defended inherited privileges, especially those of English monarchy and aristocracy.
    - Predicted anarchy and dictatorship in France.
    - Advised England to go slow in adapting its own liberties.
    - Denounced political philosophy based on abstract principles of right and wrong.
    - Believed nations should be shaped by national circumstance, national history, and national character.
    - Eventually, Burke came to urge war as an ideological struggle against French barbarism.
  - b. **Thomas Paine:** *Rights of Man* (1791)
    - Responded to Burke's argument by defending Enlightenment principles and France's revolution.
    - Saw triumph of liberty over despotism.
    - Kings and nobles of Europe, some of which initially welcomed the Revolution, began to feel threatened.

## B. Legislative Assembly, 1791-1792

1. A completely new group of legislators replaced the National Assembly in the new government.
  - a. Members of the National Assembly had agreed that no one in that group would take part in the new gov't.
  - b. New gov't reflected emergence of political factions in the revolution competing for power—most important were republican groups.
  - c. Members were younger and less cautious than members of the National Assembly.
  - d. **Jacobins**, named after their political club, came to dominate the Legislative Assembly
    - The **Girondins**, a group of Jacobins, became the left or advanced party of the Revolution in the Legislative Assembly and led the country into war.
    - Passionately committed to liberal revolution.
  - e. Domestic problems
    - Nation became sharply polarized.
    - Economic and political chaos mounted.
2. War was the main issue during the period of the Legislative Assembly
  - a. **Declaration of Pillnitz** issued by Prussia and Austria in August, 1791.
    - **Émigrés**, French nobles who fled France beginning in 1789, influenced Prussia and Austria to declare the restoration of the French monarchy as their goal.
      - Preached a kind of holy war.
    - The Austrian Emperor, Leopold, would be willing to take military steps to restore order to France if all other powers joined him.
      - He did not expect to receive unanimous agreement among all the Great Powers
    - The Declaration was really a bluff intended to slow down the revolution and rid himself of French émigrés.
    - Leopold misjudged French revolutionary sentiment and Republican sentiment in France gained strength in response to the Declaration

- b. Legislative Assembly declared war on Austria in April, 1792.
    - Fueled by ideological fervor and anti-Austrian sentiment.
    - Girondins became the party of international revolution.
      - Claimed the Revolution could never be secure in France until it spread to the world.
  - c. **War of the First Coalition**
    - French revolutionary forces were soundly defeated by the Austrian military.
    - Only the conflict between eastern monarchs over the division of Poland saved France from defeat.
    - Intensified existing unrest and dissatisfaction of unpropertied classes.
  - d. Jacobins blamed their defeat on Louis XVI, believing him to be part of a conspiracy with Prussia and Austria.
  - e. July 25, 1792: Brunswick Manifesto issued by Prussia and Austria and threatened to destroy Paris if the royal family was harmed.
    - In response to Brunswick Manifesto, Jacobin-incited mobs seized power in Paris.
    - Revolutionary sentiment was stoked by Robespierre, Danton, and the journalist, Marat
    - August 10, 1792: Tulleries (the king's palace in Paris) was stormed and the King was taken prisoner, after fleeing to the Legislative Assembly.
      - **Swiss Guards** were defeated and many were murdered by the Parisian mob.
    - Marked the beginning of the "Second Revolution"
3. **Paris Commune**
- a. Revolutionary municipal gov't set up in Paris, which effectively usurped the power of the Legislative Assembly.
  - b. Led by **Georges-Jacques Danton**
  - c. At the urging of radicals, the Legislative Assembly suspended the Constitution of 1791.
  - d. Ordered new elections based on universal male suffrage to summon a new national convention to give France a republican form of gov't.

4. **September Massacres:** (led by Paris Commune)
  - a. Rumors spread that imprisoned counter-revolutionary aristocrats and priests were plotting with foreign invaders.
  - b. Mobs slaughtered over a thousand priests, bourgeoisie, and aristocrats who opposed their program; many were in prison.
  - c. Most of the revolution's remaining foreign supporters were shocked by the violence.
  
- V. The "Age of Rousseau": 1792-1799
  - A. **The National Convention, 1792-1795**
    1. France was proclaimed a republic on Sept. 21, 1792
      - a. Abolished the monarchy; installed republicanism.
      - b. Based on the ideas of **Equality, Liberty, Fraternity**
      - c. A majority of the members of National Convention were Jacobins and republicans, largely well-educated middle class.
  
    2. Two factions emerged among the Jacobins:
      - a. **The Mountain:** radical republicans; urban class
        - Its leaders, **Danton** and **Robespierre**, sat on the uppermost left-hand benches of the assembly hall.
      - b. **Girondins:** more moderate than the Mountain and predominantly rural
  
    3. The **sans-culottes** became very influential on the National Convention
      - a. Predominantly from the working-class; extremely radical.
      - b. Were a separate faction from those of the National Convention and had an economic agenda.
      - c. Their violence and influence kept the revolution moving forward
        - Responsible for storming Bastille, marching to Versailles, driving the king from Tuleries, and the September Massacres.
        - They feared the National Convention might be too moderate.
      - d. Favored direct democracy in their neighborhood clubs and assemblies, together with a mass rising if necessary against the Convention itself.



An image of *sans culottes*

4. Revolutionary army victories
    - a. Prussians were stopped at the indecisive Battle of Valmy on Sept. 20, 1792.
      - Great moral victory for the National Convention
    - b. Battle of Jemappes: first major victory for France resulted in the occupation of the entire Austrian Netherlands by November 1792.
    - c. In February 1793, National Convention declared war on Britain, Holland and Spain, in addition to its war with Austria and Prussia—**First Coalition**
  5. Louis XVI convicted of treason and executed in January 1793.
    - a. Those who voted for regicide now had to preserve the gov't for they would lose their lives if royalists returned to power.
    - b. Republic's military fortunes were in a state of crisis by spring of 1793
  6. May 1793: The "Mountain" ("Jacobins") supported by the **sans-culottes** ousted the Girondins
    - a. The Mountain believed the Girondins would ally with conservatives and royalists to retain power.
    - b. **Enragés**—radical working class leaders of Paris—seized & arrested 31 Girondist members of National Convention and left the Mountain in control.
      - Even more radical than the *sans-culottes*
    - c. The revolutionary government had finally lost the confidence of much of France.
    - d. Many Girondins fled Paris and worked against the Revolution.
      - Marat was stabbed by **Charlotte Corday**, a supporter of the Girondist faction, in 1793.
      - See **Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825)** famous neoclassical painting "The Death of Marat"
  7. Jacobins closed women's political clubs by 1793-94
- B. Committee of Public Safety (1793-94)**
1. By the summer of 1793, the **Committee of Public Safety** became an emergency gov't to deal with internal and external challenges to the revolution.
  2. Led by **Maximilien Robespierre**
    - a. Influenced heavily by the ideas of Rousseau and fanatically supported revolutionary idealism

- b. **Louis Saint-Just** also was a major leader alongside Robespierre
    3. Committee closely collaborated with *sans-culottes*.
    4. **Law of Maximum**: a planned economy to respond to food shortages and related economic problems.
      - a. Would enable France to urge total war against its external enemies.
      - b. Gov't decreed maximum allowable prices, fixed in paper *assignats*, for key products.
      - c. Price of bread fixed at levels poor could afford.
      - d. Rationing introduced to make sure bread was shared fairly.
      - e. Gov't nationalized many small workshops and requisitioned raw materials and grain from peasants.
      - f. Arms and munitions produced for war effort.
      - g. In effect, it was an early version of socialism.
  5. Slavery abolished in the French colonies (Santo Domingo and Haiti)
  6. Military victory
    - a. **Lazare Carnot** reorganized the French army.
      - Lévee en masse: the entire nation conscripted into service as war was defined as a national mission.
      - Size of army grew to 1 million men; unprecedented in history of European warfare.
    - b. By July 1794, Austrian Netherlands and the Rhineland were once again controlled by France.
    - c. The First Coalition was falling apart.
    - d. The planned economy made mobilization effective.
    - e. Nationalism became a strong force uniting French people.
    - f. Victories led to relaxation of emergency controls but the Reign of Terror extended.
  7. **Reign of Terror** (1793-94)
    - a. Most notorious event of the French Revolution.
    - b. **Law of Suspects**: Alleged enemies of the revolution were brought before Revolutionary Tribunals that were created to hear cases of treason
      - Instituted as an alternative to the lynch law of the September massacres.
    - c. Louis XVI convicted of treason and executed on January 21, 1793.
    - d. Queen Marie Antoinette executed later in the year.

- e. About 40,000 people throughout France executed or died in prison; many by the **guillotine**.
  - f. Executions became a spectator sport.
  - g. The terror became a political weapon; not directed at any class in particular.
    - 8% were nobles
    - 14% bourgeoisie (mainly from rebellious southern cities)
    - 6% clergy
    - 70% peasant and laboring classes.
    - Most deaths occurred in places in open revolt against the Convention, such as the **Vendée** in western France.
    - Another 300,000 imprisoned
  - h. Eventually, no one could feel safe from Robespierre's reign of terror as leading Jacobins who opposed Robespierre were eventually executed
    - Girondists executed in September of 1793 (including **Charlotte Corday** who assassinated Marat)
    - **Jacques Hébert**, radical social democrat who led the "angry men"—**Hébertistes** were his followers.
      - Hébertistes were a party of extreme terror
      - Most of its leaders were executed in March 1794.
      - Had been responsible for deaths of 2,000 people at Nantes where they were loaded on barges and deliberately drowned.
      - Paris Commune was thus destroyed.
    - **Danton** and his followers were executed in April, 1794
8. "Republic of Virtue" emerged as new political culture under Robespierre to inculcate revolutionary virtue
- a. **Cult of the Supreme Being** introduced in June, 1794
    - Deistic natural religion, in which the Republic was declared to recognize the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.
    - Notre Dame Cathedral was converted into the **"Temple of Reason"**
  - b. Catholics were now firmly against Convention.

## 9. Thermidorian Reaction, 1794

- a. Opposition to Robespierre mounted in July, 1794
  - Some followers of the Enlightenment who were influenced by the ideas of Voltaire, helped bring about Robespierre's downfall.
  - July 27, 1794, Robespierre was denounced in the Convention, arrested, and executed the next day, along with his close associates.
  - After death of Danton, many in the National Assembly feared they might be next.
  - Working-class radicals no longer supported him after deaths of Hébert and other left-wing radicals.
- b. **Thermidorian Reaction (1794): ended reign of terror.**
  - Constituted a significant swing to the right (conservatism).
  - Respectable bourgeois middle-class lawyers and professionals who had led liberal Revolution of 1789 reasserted their authority.
  - Reduced powers of the Committee of Public Safety and closed the Jacobin club.
  - Girondins readmitted.

## C. The Directory: 1795-1799

1. New constitution written in 1795 which set up a republican form of gov't.
  - a. A new assembly chose a five-member executive to govern France: **the Directory**
  - b. Bicameral legislature
  - c. Executive was the Directory, made up of 5 directors.
  - d. Almost all adult males were able to vote but they only voted for "electors."
  - e. Office holding reserved to property owners.
2. Middle class controlled the government.
  - a. This became the Directory's major weakness as it's support came from a narrow band of French society.
  - b. All economic controls were removed which ended the influence of the *sans-culottes*.
    - More paper money was printed.
    - Allowed prices to rise sharply.
    - Middle class sought peace in order to gain more wealth and to establish a society where money and property determined prestige and power.

- c. Directory in 1795 disbanded women's workshops and urged women to tend to their homes
3. Challenges to the Directory
    - a. October, 1795, the aristocracy attempted a royalist uprising.
      - Reaction to a provision in the constitution stated that 2/3 of men elected to the legislature had to be ex-members of the National Convention of 1789-91.
      - Rebellion put down with the help of Napoleon Bonaparte who happened to be in Paris at the time.
      - Thus, the constitutional republic made itself dependent on military protection at the outset.
    - b. *Sans-culottes* repeatedly criticized the gov't and its economic policies but did not have the influence to force change
    - c. **Conspiracy of Equals** led by "**Gracchus**" **Babeuf** formed to overthrow the Directory and replace it with a dictatorial "democratic" gov't which would abolish private property and enforce equality.
      - Regarded as a precursor to modern communism.
      - Directory repressed the Conspiracy of Equals without difficulty and guillotined Babeuf
    - d. Growing inflation and mass public dissatisfaction mounted but ignored by the Directory.
      - Gov't was bankrupt, corrupt and unwilling to control inflation that severely hurt the impoverished masses of French peasants.
    - e. Elections in April 1797 resulted in victory for royalists right but the results were annulled by the Directory.
      - A dictatorship favorable to the revolution established—"Post Fructidorian Terror"
      - Idea of maintaining the republic as a free or constitutional gov't was abandoned.
4. Military successes during the Directory enabled it to remain in power until 1799.
    - a. First Coalition effectively defeated by 1797.
    - b. England was isolated; removed its army from the Continent.

- c. France defeated English armies in Egypt—**Battle of the Pyramids** (1798)
  - However, Napoleon later had his navy destroyed by England's Lord Horatio Nelson in the **Battle of the Nile** (1798)
5. End of the Directory
  - a. A conspiracy emerged to save the Revolution and prevent a royalist return to power.
  - b. Abbé Sieyès, the leader of the conspiracy, invited Napoleon to join conspirators and overthrow the Directory; he did so upon returning from Egypt with his forces.
  - c. **Coup d'État Brumaire**, November, 1799
    - Upon returning from Egypt with his forces, Napoleon drove legislators from the Legislative Assembly.
    - A new constitution established beginning the **Consulate Era.**
    - A **plebiscite** (general referendum) overwhelmingly approved: 3,011,007 to 1,562.

## French Social Classes in the Revolution & Empire: 1799-1815

Social Class	The "Age of Montesquieu" (Constitutional Monarchy) 1789-1792	The "Age of Rousseau" (Republic) 1792-1799	The "Age of Voltaire" (Napoleon) 1799-1815	Post-Napoleon
<b>Monarchy</b>	Power no longer <u>absolute</u> : Constitutional monarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>King and queen executed</li> <li>Republic had no monarch</li> </ul>	Napoleon became emperor with absolute power	<u>Constitutional monarchy</u> ; <u>Bourbons were restored</u>
<b>Clergy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Civil Constitution of the Clergy made Church a dep't of the gov't</u></li> <li>Clergy members required to take an oath to the gov't</li> <li>Church lands confiscated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revolutionary Calendar replaced the Christian calendar</li> <li>The Cult of the Supreme Being further undermined the Catholic Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Concordat of 1801 restored relations with the Catholic Church</u></li> <li>"Refractory clergy" reinstated while clergy loyal to the Revolution were removed</li> <li>Church was far weaker than in 1789</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Church never did regain the influence it had prior to 1789</u></li> </ul>
<b>Nobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political influence eclipsed by the bourgeoisie</li> <li><u>Feudalism (seigneurialism) abolished</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imprisoned or fled the country as <i>émigrés</i> between 1791-95</li> <li>Later influence undermined the Directory</li> <li>In rural areas, patriotic nobles remained most politically and economically powerful group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many <i>émigrés</i> returned to France</li> <li>Increased influence in Napoleon's imperial nobility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant influence politically (though not as much as before 1789)</li> <li><u>Feudalism abolished since 1789</u></li> <li><u>Nobles continued to dominate rural areas</u></li> </ul>
<b>Middle Class (Bourgeoisie)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took control of France in July, 1789</li> <li>Noble privileges abolished</li> <li><u>Declaration of the Rights of Man resulted in codification of political, social and civil rights</u></li> <li>Reforms in higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lost influence between 1792-95 as a result of the San culottes and the Reign of Terror</li> <li>Back in control during the Directory but under attack from the right and the left</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Constitution of 1799 did not guarantee human rights or liberty</u></li> <li>Political freedoms of bourgeoisie wiped away</li> <li>Some gained noble titles &amp; served in Napoleon's gov't</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Reduced influence until the Revolution of 1830</u></li> </ul>

Social Class	The "Age of Montesquieu" (Constitutional Monarchy) 1789-1792	The "Age of Rousseau" (Republic) 1792-1799	The "Age of Voltaire" (Napoleon) 1799-1815	Post-Napoleon
<b>Urban Working Class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saw increased influence in Paris (e.g. storming of the Bastille)</li> <li>• <u>Guilds dissolved providing more job opportunities for artisans.</u></li> <li>• <u>Le Chapelier Law (1791) outlawed strikes, workers coalitions and assemblies</u></li> <li>• Bread was more affordable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>San-culottes</i> enjoyed major influence from 1791-95</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ban on trade unions continued</li> <li>• Workers were restricted in their travel</li> <li>• Established reasonable prices for bread &amp; flour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Guilds remained illegal</u></li> <li>• Little influence until after 1830</li> <li>• Increased socialist influence during Revolution of 1848</li> </ul>
<b>Peasantry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Great Fear" resulted in some gains for the peasantry</li> <li>• Feudalism abolished</li> <li>• Wealthy peasants bought confiscated church lands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land gains remained but lords continued to hold the most political and economic power in rural areas</li> <li>• Heavily taxed by the Republic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Napoleon supported the ban on feudalism</li> <li>• Indirect taxation was as bad as during the Old Regime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wealthier peasants were only group to improve between 1799 and 1815</li> <li>• Rural poor gained little from the Revolution</li> </ul>
<b>Women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women influential in March on Versailles and in <i>san-culottes</i></li> <li>• Gained equal right to divorce and increased property inheritance rights</li> <li>• Child support from fathers of illegitimate kids</li> <li>• Workshops in cities employed more poor women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's political clubs closed by Jacobins by 1793-94</li> <li>• Reign of Terror also targeted certain women (e.g. Olympe de Gouges)</li> <li>• Directory in 1795 disbanded women's workshops and urged women to tend to their homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divorce laws rewritten to favor husbands</li> <li>• Gains in inheritance and property rights were removed</li> </ul>	<p>Women essentially gained little from the Revolution (although their actions did inspire future reformers)</p>

## Terms to Know

Louix XV  
Madame de Pomadour  
*Parlement*  
René de Maupeou  
Louis XVI  
Marie Antoinette  
First Estate  
Gallican Church  
Second Estate  
Third Estate  
bourgeoisie  
*corvée*  
*Lettre de cachet*  
*ancien regime* (Old Regime)  
Jacques Necker  
Assembly of Notables  
Estates General  
*cahiers de doléances*  
Abbé Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?*  
"Age of Montesquieu"  
National Assembly  
Tennis Court Oath  
storming of the Bastille  
"Great Fear"  
*Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*  
Olympe de Gouges, *The Rights of Woman*  
Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*  
Madame de Stael  
Women's march to Versailles  
Jean-Paul Marat  
Civil Constitution of the Clergy, 1790  
"refactory clergy"  
83 Departments  
*assignats*  
Flight to Varennes

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*  
Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*  
Legislative Assembly  
Jacobins  
Girondins  
Declaration of Pillnitz  
*Émigrés*  
War of the First Coalition  
Brunswick Manifesto  
storming of the Tuleries  
Paris Commune  
Georges-Jacques Danton  
September Massacres  
"Age of Rousseau"  
National Convention  
*Equality, Liberty, Fraternity*  
Mountain  
*sans-culottes*  
*Enragés*  
Committee of Public Safety  
Maximilien Robespierre  
Louis Saint-Just  
Law of Maximum  
Lazare Carnot  
*lèvee en masse*  
Reign of Terror  
Law of Suspects  
Vendée  
Jacques Hébert, Hébertistes  
Cult of the Supreme Being  
"Temple of Reason"  
Thermidorian Reaction  
The Directory  
Conspiracy of Equals  
Coup d'Etat Brumaire  
Consulate Era  
plebiscite

## **Essay Questions**

*Note: This sub-unit is a medium probability area for the AP exam. In the past 10 years, 6 questions have come wholly or in part from the material in this chapter. Below are some practice questions that will help you study the topics that have appeared on previous exams.*

1. Analyze the long-term and short-term causes of the French Revolution.
2. Analyze the impact of Enlightenment ideas on the French Revolution.
3. To what extent did the political, economic, social and religious goals of the National Assembly (1789-1791) become a permanent feature of the French Revolution by 1799?
4. To what extent did each of the following groups succeed in achieving their goals during the French Revolution (1789-1799)?
  - Monarchy
  - Clergy
  - Aristocracy
  - Bourgeoisie
  - Urban working class
  - Peasantry
  - Women
5. Compare and contrast the goals and actions of the leaders of the National Assembly (1789-91) with those of the National Convention (1792-1795)

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French Revolution facts for kids. Kids Encyclopedia Facts. The French Revolution was a revolution in France from 1789 to 1799. It led to the end of the monarchy, and to many wars. King Louis XVI was executed in 1793. The revolution ended when Napoleon Bonaparte took power in November 1799. In 1804, he became Emperor. Before 1789, France was ruled by the nobles and the Catholic Church. The ideas of the Enlightenment were beginning to make the ordinary people want more power. They could see that the The French Revolution was a period of far-reaching social and political upheaval in France and its colonies beginning in 1789. The Revolution overthrew the monarchy, established a republic, catalyzed violent periods of political turmoil, and finally culminated in a dictatorship under Napoleon who brought many of its principles to areas he conquered in Western Europe and beyond. Inspired by liberal and radical ideas, the Revolution profoundly altered the course of modern history, triggering the global