

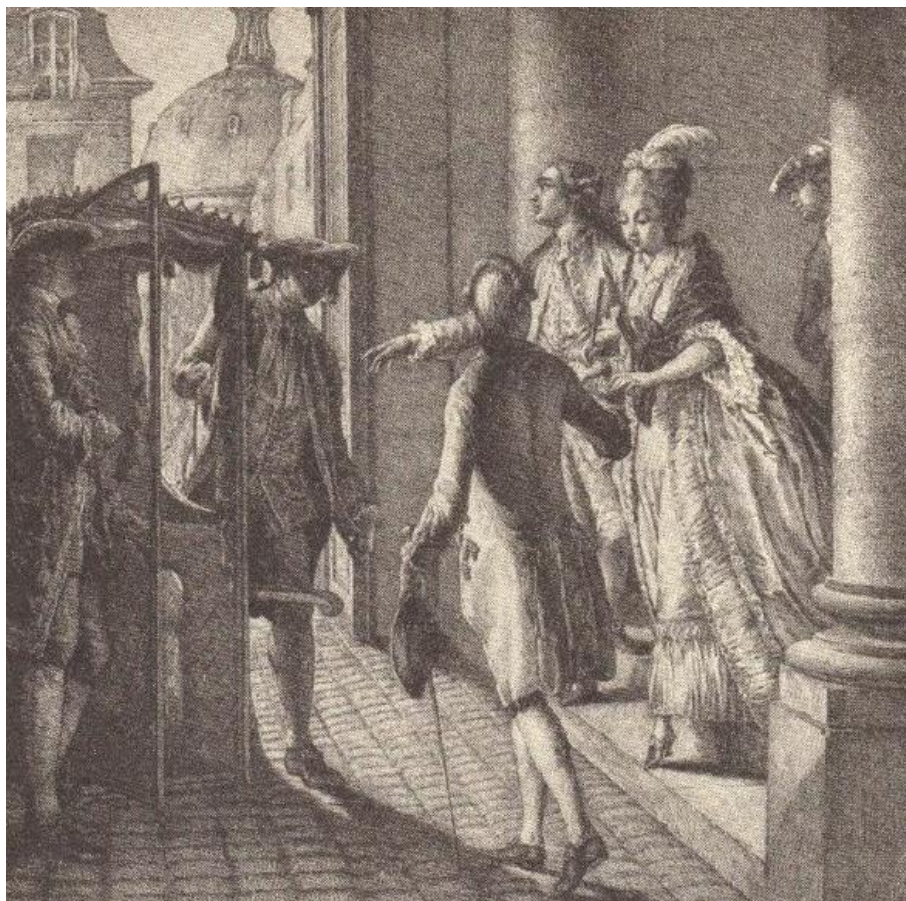
# The French Revolution

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## Student Workbook

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

## The Old Regime

The Old Regime was the socio-political system which existed in most of Europe during the eighteenth century. Under the Old Regime, countries were ruled by absolutism, in which the monarch had absolute control over the government. People were divided into two classes—the privileged and the unprivileged. Unprivileged people paid all of the taxes and were generally treated badly. Privileged people, in exchange for their support of the monarchy and Old Regime, paid no taxes and were generally treated well.

**Imagine that you live in a society where some people pay all of the taxes, and some people are exempt from taxation. How would you enjoy living in such a society?**

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## Society under the Old Regime

In France prior to 1789, people were divided into three estates.

The First Estate included high-ranking members of the Catholic Church. The First Estate was a privileged class. Its population was around 130,000. Because of this group's role in religion, members of the First Estate

were subject to Church, rather than civil, law. The First Estate collected the tithe (Church dues) while owning 20% of the land. The First Estate controlled censorship of the press and education. The Church kept all official records of births, deaths, and marriages.

The Second Estate consisted of the nobility, a population of approximately 110,000. (The term *nobility* refers to those holding regal titles such as lords, dukes, barons, etc.) The Second Estate was a privileged class. This group earned money through the collection of feudal dues, and owned 20% of the land. Additionally, this group monopolized military and state appointments.

The Third Estate was comprised of everyone else—from peasants living in the countryside, to city workers, to artisans, to wealthy merchants (the bourgeoisie) living in the cities—a population of circa 25,000,000. The Third Estate was an unprivileged class. The Third Estate paid all taxes—the tithe (Church tax), *octrot* (tax on goods brought into cities), *corvée* (forced road work), *capitation* (poll tax), *vingtième* (income tax), *gabelle* (salt tax), and *taille* (land tax), as well as feudal dues for use of the local manor's winepress, oven, etc.

**Which estate paid all of the taxes in France?**

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Use the above information to complete the following table graph.

Estate	Population	Privileges	Exemptions	Burdens
First				
Second				
Third				

## Analyzing Political Cartoons



Examine this contemporary political cartoon. What does it say about conditions in France under the Old Regime?

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## The Divine Right of Kings

Under the Old Regime, the monarch ruled under a concept known as *divine right*. The basic premise of divine right was that God put the world in motion, and placed certain people in positions of power. The power held by a monarch was therefore given by God. Since questioning God was a sin, questioning a monarch was a sin. Those who criticized the monarchy were considered to have committed blasphemy.

**Do you believe that a supreme being places people in positions of power? Explain your answer, giving at least one example.**

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## The Job of the French Monarch

The French monarch appointed the *Intendants*, commonly called the “petty tyrants,” who governed France’s thirty districts. The monarch appointed people to collect taxes and carry out laws. The monarch controlled justice making all of the country’s laws and by appointing judges. At any time, the monarch could imprison anyone for any reason whatsoever by completing *letters de cachet* (blank arrest warrants). The monarch levied all taxes and

got to decide how to spend this tax revenue. The monarch controlled the military, and made decisions regarding war and peace.

**Compare France in the early 1700s with this country today. Who makes our laws? Who appoints our judges? Who controls our military? Who is responsible for declaring war?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Economic Conditions under the Old Regime

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century French economy was based primarily on agriculture. France’s peasant farmers bore the burden of taxation. When poor harvests came along, peasants had trouble paying their regular taxes, and certainly could not afford to have their taxes raised.

The bourgeoisie often managed to gather wealth. Sometimes, members of the bourgeois class were even wealthier than members of the aristocracy (the nobles). But because the bourgeoisie were what is sometimes derogatorily referred to as “new money” and did not hold titles, they were lumped together with everyone else in the Third Estate, and paid taxes. The wealthy bourgeoisie felt that it was unfair that they paid taxes while nobles did not.

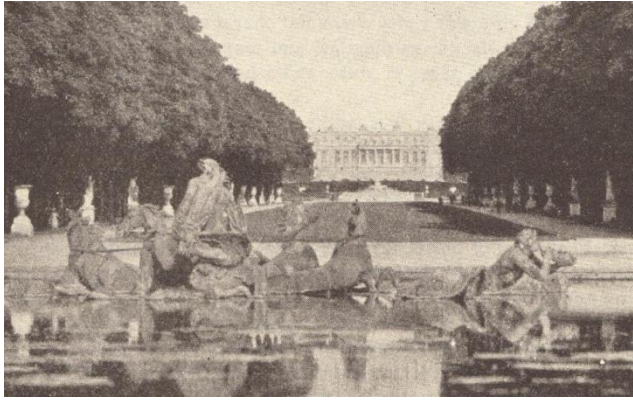
**Imagine that you are a bourgeois merchant living in Paris circa 1780. Make an argument for (a) why you should be exempt from taxation like the nobles, or (b) why the nobles should pay the same taxes that you pay.**

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*Versailles, the home of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, located outside of Paris.*

## France Is Bankrupt

At the time of the French Revolution in 1789, Louis XVI was married to Marie Antoinette, an Austrian princess. The king and queen lived at Versailles, an extravagant and expensive palace outside of Paris. At Versailles, while most of the French people lived in poverty, the king and queen lived a life of luxury.

During the years leading up to the French Revolution, the government of France

depleted most of its funds. Most of this money was spent fighting wars, including supporting the Thirteen Colonies during the American Revolution. The French government resorted to deficit spending—that is, spending more money than the government earned from tax revenues.

**Define the term *deficit spending* in your own words.**

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## The Philosophy of the French Revolution: The European Enlightenment

During the Renaissance, scientists discovered laws that govern the natural world. Intellectuals, known as *philosophes* in France, began asking if natural laws might also apply to human beings—particularly to human institutions such as governments.

*Philosophes* were secular in their thinking. They used reason and logic, rather than faith, religion, and superstition, to answer important questions. Reason and logic were used to determine how governments are formed. Philosophes tried to figure out what rational, logical principles work to tie people to their governments. Questioning the divine right of kings was tantamount to these

inquiries. Among the leading *philosophes* were thinkers such as Voltaire and Montesquieu.

**Why did Enlightenment thinkers question the divine right of kings?**

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## Long- and Short-Term Causes

Things very seldom happen in a vacuum. Historically, events or changes occur due to a combination of short-term and long-term causes.

Long-term causes are also known as underlying causes. Long-term causes can stem back many years.

Short-term causes are also known as immediate causes. Short-term causes occur close to the most when change or action takes place.

Long-term causes of the French Revolution include everything previously discussed, such as the bankruptcy of the French government and the unfairness of life under the Old Regime. The Assembly of Notables voted down taxation for the nobility in 1787, leaving the question of increasing tax revenues unanswered. Additionally, the system of mercantilism angered many

members of the bourgeoisie because of its restrictions on trade. Revolutionaries were influenced by the success of England's Glorious Revolution (1688-1689) and the American Revolution (1775-1783).

Short-term causes of the French Revolution include a number of events which occurred during the time immediately before the revolution. The year 1789 featured the worst famine in memory. Hungry, impoverished peasants were unable to pay their taxes. As plans were made for a meeting of the Estates-General, these peasants feared that nobles were seeking greater privileges. Attacks on nobles occurred throughout France throughout the year.

**Illustrate your understanding of the difference between long- and short-term causes. Select an event from recent history, or from your own life. Describe this event and both its long- and short-term causes.**

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## The Estates-General

France's Louis XVI was left with no choice but to call for a meeting of the Estates-General in order to find a solution to the country's financial crisis. The Estates-General was a political body made up of representatives from the three estates, and this group had

not met since 1614. The king's convening of the Estates-General set in motion a series of events which ultimately led to abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a completely new socio-political system for France.

During the winter of 1788-1789, members of the three estates elected representatives for the Estates-General. People wrote *cahiers*, traditional lists of grievances. These *cahiers* asked for nothing out of the ordinary—just requests for moderate changes.

**Define *cahiers*.** \_\_\_\_\_

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## May 5, 1789

The Estates-General met on May 5, 1789. Voting was conducted by estate, with each estate casting a single vote. This meant that the First Estate and the Second Estate could operate as a bloc to stop the Third Estate from having its way.

Representatives from the Third Estate demanded that voting be conducted based on population. Since the population of the Third Estate was so large, voting by population would give the Third Estate a tremendous advantage.

The Estates-General could not reach an agreement on voting. Deadlock resulted.

**With which group do you agree—with the First Estate and Second Estate, which supported voting by estate, or with the Third Estate, which supported voting by population? Explain your answer.**

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*The Tennis Court Oath by Jacques Louis David.*

## The Tennis Court Oath

The Third Estate reacted to the deadlock by declaring itself to be the National Assembly. Louis XVI responded to this by locking the Third Estate out of the meeting. The Third Estate relocated to a nearby indoor tennis court. In this tennis court, members of the Third Estate vowed that they would stay together and create a written constitution for France.



On June 23, 1789, Louis XVI relented to the demands of the Third Estate. The king ordered the three estates to meet together as the National Assembly. The National Assembly would vote, by population, on a constitution for France.

### Primary Source: The Tennis Court Oath

*“The National Assembly, considering that it has been summoned to establish the constitution of the kingdom, to effect the regeneration of the public order, and to maintain the true principles of monarchy; that nothing can prevent it from continuing its deliberations in whatever place it may be forced to establish itself; and, finally, that wheresoever its members are assembled, there is the National Assembly;*

*“Decrees that all members of this Assembly shall immediately take a solemn oath not to separate, and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the kingdom is established and consolidated upon firm foundations; and that, the said oath taken, all members and each one of them individually shall ratify this steadfast resolution by signature.”*

**Does the text of this document call for the overthrow of the French monarch? Explain your answer using quotes from the text.**

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## Analyzing Political Cartoons



*A contemporary political cartoon, showing the Third Estate welcoming the nobles and the clergy to the ranks of the National Assembly, June 30, 1789.*

**Based on your knowledge of how the National Assembly was formed, do you believe that the above political cartoon is an accurate portrayal of its first official meeting on June 30, 1789? Explain your answer.**

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*Marie Antoinette and her children.*

# Halfway-Point Quiz

1. What was the Old Regime?
2. How does an absolute monarchy operate?
3. Describe the size, privileges, exemptions, and burdens of the three estates.
4. What is deficit spending?
5. Describe the type of thinking used by the *philosophes*.

6. What were the underlying (long-term) causes of the French Revolution?

7. What were the immediate (short-term) causes of the French Revolution?

8. Explain the debate over voting which occurred in the Estates-General.

9. What was the Tennis Court Oath?

10. At this point in the French Revolution, do you believe that it was possible for France to establish a constitutional monarchy? Why or why not?

# Four Phases (Periods) of the French Revolution

The French Revolution lasted from 1789 until 1799. This ten-year period saw many changes in France. The French Revolution is divided into four phases, each named for the governmental body which ruled the country at the time.

National Assembly (1789-1791)

Legislative Assembly (1791-1792)

Convention (1792-1795)

Directory (1795-1799)

**Although people tend to think of revolutions as violent eruptions that do not last very long, the historical reality is that revolutions can take several years before they are complete. Why do you think that the French Revolution lasted for a decade?**

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## Storming of the Bastille

Despite acquiescing to the demands of the Third Estate, Louis XVI did not actually want a written constitution. The king planned to use his troops to control the National Assembly. When news of the king's plan to use military force against the National Assembly reached Paris on July 14, 1789, people stormed the

Bastille, a prison which served as a symbol of royal power used as an arsenal. Weapons seized from the Bastille were used by the people of Paris to riot against the government.

Today, July 14 is celebrated as Bastille Day, the official start of the French Revolution.

**Why did Parisians storm the Bastille?**

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STORMING THE BASTILLE



## Uprising in Paris and Beyond

Following the storming of the Bastille, Parisians organized their own government, which they called the Commune. Very quickly, small groups—factions—competed to control the city of Paris.

The Paris uprising soon spread throughout France. Nobles everywhere were attacked. Records of feudal dues and tax bills were destroyed. Many nobles decided to leave the country; those who fled abroad became known as *émigrés*.

**Nobles who fled France became known as what?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Attack on Versailles

The Parisian Commune feared that Louis XVI would invite foreign troops into France to put down the rebellion. Louis XVI's wife, Marie Antoinette, was the sister of the Austrian emperor. Even without Austria's family connection, Austria and other European powers feared that, if successful, the revolution in France might spread to their own lands.

Demanding bread, a group of women attacked Versailles on October 5, 1789.

Despite the popular myth, Marie Antoinette did not say, "Let them eat cake." All the same, neither Marie Antoinette nor Louis XVI understood the depth of dissatisfaction felt by the majority of the French people.

The mob that attacked Versailles forced the royal family to relocate to Paris along with the National Assembly. The royal family would spend the next several years in the Tuileries Palace as virtual prisoners.



*Tuileries Palace in Paris, France.*

**Why were the French people distrustful of the monarchy?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Why was the phrase "let them eat cake" ascribed to Marie Antoinette? What would such a phrase have meant, being said to starving peasants?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Changes under the National Assembly

The National Assembly enacted a great number of changes, including:

- Abolishment of guilds and labor unions
- Abolition of special privileges
- Constitution of 1791
- *Declaration of the Rights of Man*
- Equality before the law for men
- Reforms in local government
- Taxes levied based on the ability to pay

Imagine that you are a peasant living in France in 1790. How might you react to the abolition of special privileges for nobles and the clergy? How might your reaction change if you were a noble? \_\_\_\_\_

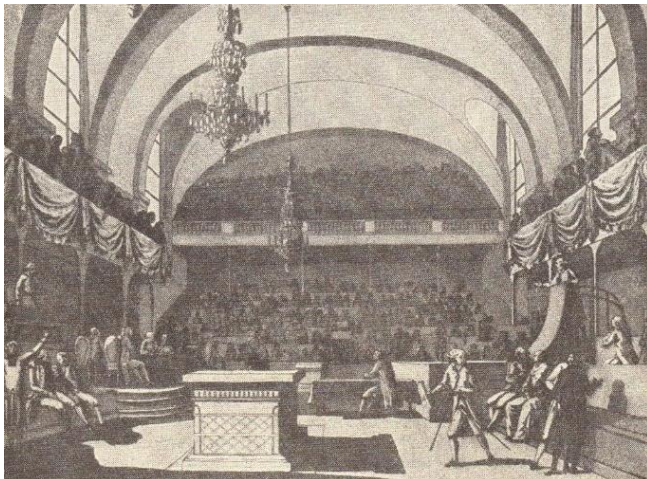
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*Hall of the National Assembly in Paris.*



*Declaration of the Rights of Man.*

## Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

The National Assembly crafted a groundbreaking document entitled “The Rights of Man and of the Citizen” (August, 1789). It was suggested and written by the Marquis de Lafayette. This document granted, among other things:

- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of the press
- Guaranteed property rights
- “Liberty, equality, fraternity!”
- Right of the people to create laws
- Right to a fair trial

**How does this document compare to the Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution?** \_\_\_\_\_

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became easier to obtain, but only in order to weaken the Church's control over marriage.

**Name two women who fought for the rights of women during the French Revolution.**

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## Declaration of the Rights of Woman

Notably absent from the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" were guarantees of equality for women, despite the prominent role women had played in starting the revolution. Journalist Olympe de Gouges argued in her "Declaration of the Rights of Woman" that women were equal citizens and should benefit from governmental reforms, as well.

Along with Olympe de Gouges, Madame Jeanne Roland served as a leader in the women's rights movement during the French Revolution. Madame Roland's husband was a government official, and through him, she was able to influence the fledgling government.

Overall, women did gain some rights during the French Revolution. However, these rights were designed for purposes other than liberating women. For example, women could inherit property—but only because doing so weakened feudalism by reducing wealth among the upper classes. Divorces

## The End of Special Privileges

The National Assembly worked to destroy the special privileges enjoyed by the First Estate and Second Estate.

Church lands were seized, divided, and sold to peasants. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy required that Church officials be elected by the people, with salaries paid by the government. Two-thirds of Church officials fled the country rather than swear allegiance to this law.

All feudal dues and tithes were eradicated. The special privileges of the First and Second Estates were abolished, creating legal equality between all male French citizens.

**Describe the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.**

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## Reforms in Local Government

France's thirty provinces had been ruled by *Intendants*, "petty tyrants" appointed by the king. Under the National Assembly, these provinces were replaced with 83 new departments. Each department was ruled by an elected governor.

New courts, with judges elected by the people, were established.

France was divided into how many new departments? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Constitution of 1791

The Constitution of 1791 established a new government for France, the Legislative Assembly. This new government contained both democratic and undemocratic features.

Under the new constitution, France became a limited monarchy (also known as a constitutional monarchy). The king became merely the head of state. All laws were to be created by the Legislative Assembly. Feudalism was completely abolished.

Voting was limited to taxpayers. Offices in the new government were reserved for those who owned property.

Name both a democratic feature and an undemocratic feature of the Constitution of 1791. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Problems under the Legislative Assembly

The royal family was not pleased with being reduced to mere figureheads. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette sought help from Austria. In June, 1791, the royal family was caught trying to escape to Austria.

Nobles who fled the revolution lived abroad as *émigrés*. These *émigrés* hoped that, with foreign help, the Old Regime could be restored in France.

The royal houses of Europe watched the revolutionary events in France with great trepidation and fear. If unchecked, the revolution could spread to their lands.

Church officials wanted Church lands, privileges, and rights restored. The clergy was supported in this by some devout Catholic peasants.

Political parties supporting these divergent interests began to emerge in France. The leading political parties were the Girondists and Jacobins.





*Halting the royal family at Varennes.*

Austrian and Prussian troops invaded France in an attempt to quash the revolution and restore the Old Regime. In the uproar, the Commune took control of Paris. The Commune was led by Danton, a member of the Jacobin political party.

Voters began elected representatives for a new convention. This new convention would write a republican constitution for France. A republic is a government in which the people elect representatives who will create laws and rule on their behalf. Meanwhile, thousands of nobles were executed under the suspicion that they were conspirators in the foreign invasion.

**What were the leading political parties in revolutionary France?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Convention (1792-1795)

On September 22, 1792, the Convention met for the first time. The Convention established the First French Republic.

From the start, the Convention faced domestic opposition and strife. The Girondists were moderates who represented the rich middle class of the provinces. The Jacobins, led by Marat, Danton, and Robespierre, represented workers. Partisanship between these parties ran high.

The Convention faced opposition from abroad. Austria, England, Holland, Prussia, Sardinia, and Spain formed a Coalition to invade France and restore the Old Regime.

**Name the three principal leaders of the Jacobin political party.** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Abolishment of the Monarchy

The Convention abolished the monarchy. Still, abolishment of the monarchy was not enough. French revolutionaries knew that as long as the royal family lived, the monarchy could be restored.

The royal couple was put on trial for treason, and convictions were a foregone conclusion. Louis XVI was guillotined on January 21, 1793. Marie Antoinette was guillotined on October 16, 1793.

The couple's daughter, Marie-Thérèse, was permitted to go to Vienna in 1795. (Marie-Thérèse could never become queen of France due to Salic law, which did not allow females to succeed to the throne.)

The dauphin, Louis-Charles (also known as Louis XVII), remained in France. As next in line to the French throne, this young boy represented the threat of restoration of the monarchy. Executing a child would have been considered distasteful, so he was beaten and mistreated while in custody. Born in 1785, he died in 1795.

**Why was Marie-Thérèse allowed to leave France, while Louis-Charles was left to die in government custody?** \_\_\_\_\_

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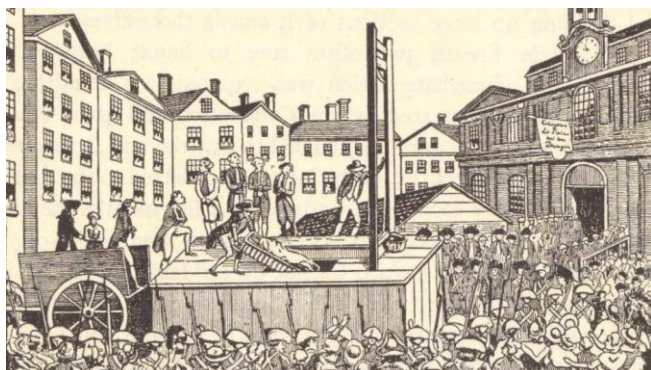
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*Guillotine in the square of the Hotel de Ville.*

## Jean-Paul Marat

The three most memorable Jacobins were Georges Danton, Maximilien Robespierre, and Jean-Paul Marat.

Because of a debilitating illness, Marat was eventually forced to work from home. He was assassinated in his bathtub while taking a medicinal bath in July, 1793. His assassin was Charlotte Corday, a Girondist sympathizer.



*Death of Marat by Jacques-Louis David.*

**Who assassinated Jean-Paul Marat?**

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## Growing Coalition against the French

The Convention drafted Frenchmen into the army to defeat the foreign Coalition. These troops were led by General Carnot. The people supported military operations because they did not want the country to return to the Old Regime.

French patriotism ran high as the country fought off foreign invasion. Rouget de Lisle wrote the “Marseillaise,” which would become the French national anthem. This song inspired troops as they were led into battle.

After two long years of fighting, the Coalition was defeated. When the dust settled, France had gained, rather than lost, territory.

**Who wrote the “Marseillaise”?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Reign of Terror (Sept. 5, 1793-July 27, 1794)

Despite military successes, the Convention continued to face problems domestically. Georges Danton and his Jacobin party came to dominate French politics.

The Committee of Public Safety was headed by Danton (and later Robespierre). Those people accused of treason were tried by the Committee’s Revolutionary Tribunal. This period became known as the Reign of Terror, and it lasted from September 5, 1793, until July 27, 1794.

During the Reign of Terror, approximately 15,000 people were put to death on the guillotine. The guillotine came to be called the “national razor.” Those who died on the guillotine included innovative thinkers such as Olympe de Gouges and Madame Jeanne Roland.



*The Committee of Public Safety.*

**How many people met death on the guillotine during the Reign of Terror?**

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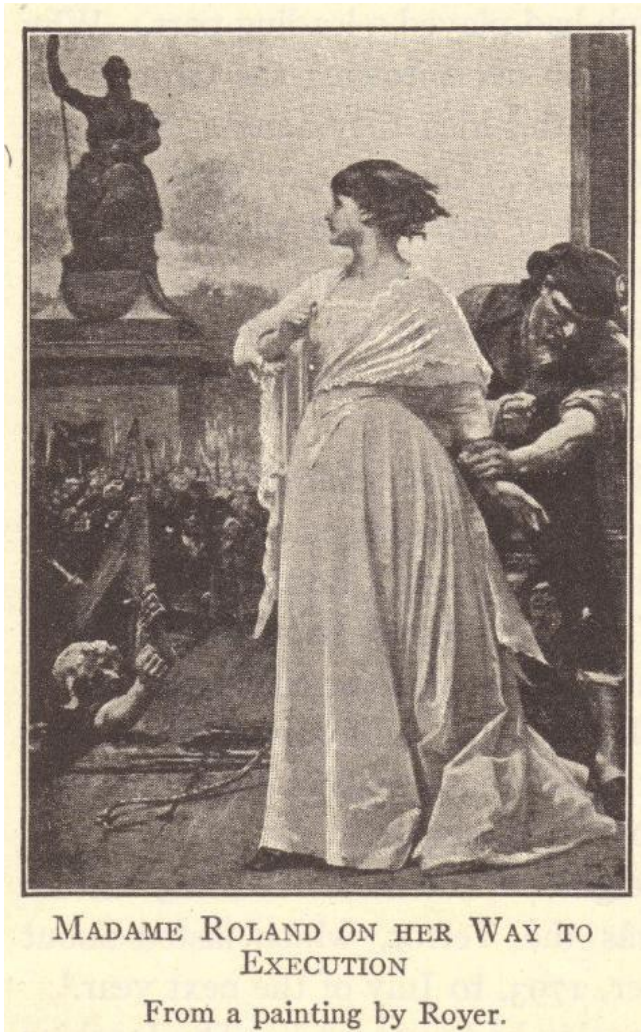
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## End of the Reign of Terror

Members of the Girondist political party tried to end the Reign of Terror which had been initiated by the Jacobin political party. However, this opposition to the Committee of Public Safety caused many Girondists to be tried and executed for treason. Eventually, even Georges Danton wanted to end the executions. This resulted in Danton himself being tried and executed for treason.

Maximilien Robespierre became leader of the Committee of Public Safety. Robespierre continued the executions. The Convention

came to blame Robespierre for the Reign of Terror.

The end of the Reign of Terror came on July 27, 1794, and is known as the Thermidorean Reaction. The Convention sent Robespierre and other members of the Committee of Public Safety to the Guillotine. Maximilien Robespierre was guillotined on July 28, 1794.

**What two leaders of the Committee of Public Safety were guillotined?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Directory (1795-1799)

With the foreign invaders vanquished and the Reign of Terror at an end, the Convention was finally able to inaugurate its new constitution, formally known as Constitution of the Year III of the Republic (1795). This constitution created a new government for France, known as the Directory.

The Directory had both executive and legislative branches. The executive branch was comprised of five directors appointed by the Legislature. The Legislature had a lower house of 500 members who proposed laws, and an upper house of 250 members who voted on these laws. Initially, two-thirds of the Legislature would be filled by members of the Convention.



In establishing the Directory, the Girondists (a middle-class party) had defeated the Jacobins (a working- and peasant-class party). The Girondists' constitution stated that suffrage (the right to vote), as well as the right to hold office, were limited to property owners.

As the Convention gave way to the Directory, it left behind a number of parting reforms. The metric system was adopted. A comprehensive system of laws was drawn up. The final blow to feudalism came through the abolition of primogeniture, the system whereby the oldest son had been permitted to inherit all of his father's estate. Imprisonment for debt was ended. Slavery was abolished in France's colonies. A nationwide system of public education was established.

**Describe the government of the Directory.**

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The Directory suffered from corruption and poor administration. The people of France grew more impoverished and more frustrated with their government.

Despite, or perhaps because of, these struggles, the French developed a strong feeling of nationalism. The people of France were proud of their country and devoted to it. This national pride was fueled by military successes.

It would be a military leader—Napoleon Bonaparte, coming to power through a *coup d'état*—who would end the ten-year period (1789-1799) known as the French Revolution.

**How were the French able to increase their feelings of patriotism during the revolutionary period?**

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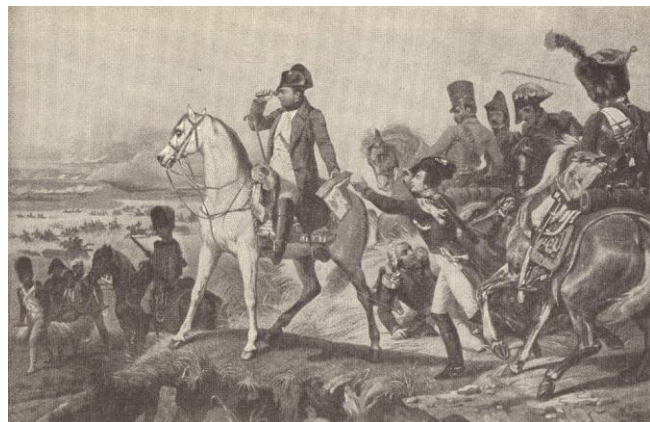
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*Napoleon in Egypt, 1798.*



*Napoleon at the Battle of Wagram, 1809.*

## End-of-Booklet Quiz

1. What Paris building was stormed on July 14, 1789?
2. What human rights were established in France by the Declaration of the Rights of Man?
3. How did Olympe de Gouges fight for women's rights?
4. What were *émigrés*, and why did French revolutionaries view them as a threat?
5. Name and describe the two political parties that competed for power in revolutionary France.

6. What was the Committee of Public Safety?

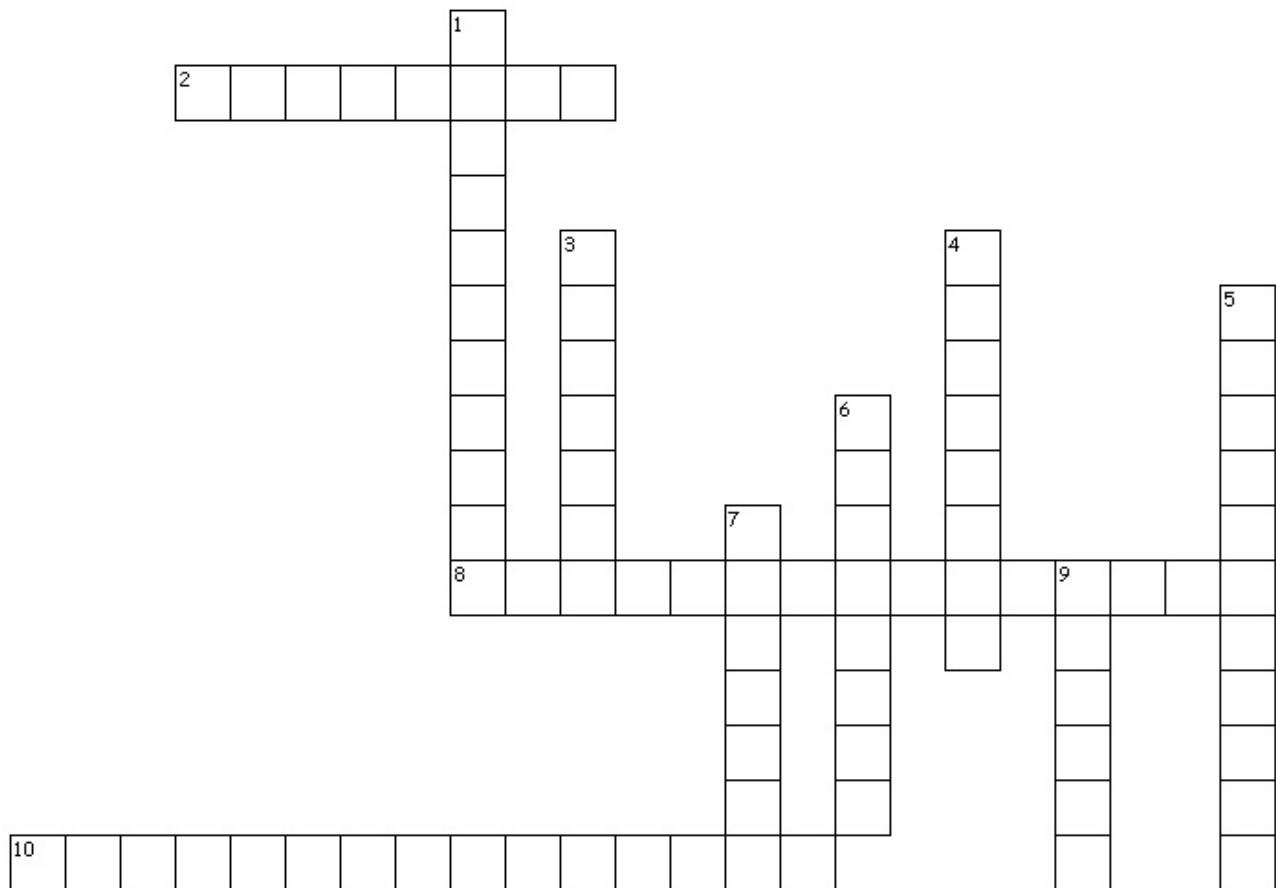
7. Describe the Reign of Terror and explain how it eventually came to an end.

8. Were the “excesses” of the French Revolution justified? Why or why not?

9. Looking back at the first half of 1789, could the French Revolution have been avoided? If so, how?

10. Describe the government established under the Directory.

## French Revolution Crossword Puzzle



### Across

2. Right to vote
8. Austrian-born wife of France's King Louis XVI
10. A government spending more money than it takes in

### Down

1. Devotion to and pride in one's country
3. Related to worldly, not religious, matters
4. Government in which people elect their officials
5. French term for the middle class
6. Infamous Paris structure attacked on July 14, 1789
7. Small group within a larger group
9. Person who fled France because of the French Revolution