

French Revolution, Part I:

That time when things started really good...



The United States has its revolution in 1776. They write the Constitution in 1789. Something very important happens in 1789 across the ocean in Europe. What happens? The French Revolution.

Why do you think people say the French Revolution is more important than American Revolution?

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The French Revolution was very surprising. France was one of the richest, most powerful countries in the world. France also had invented the Absolute Monarchy. If they loved the king so much, why did they want to have a Revolution? The answer = New Ideas + Difficult Times

When I say new ideas, what do you think of?

When I say difficult times, what do you think of?

Rewrite

The French Revolution happened before the American Revolution.

The French Revolution is surprising because the French invented democracy.

New Ideas = Enlightenment. Many people didn't believe in Absolute Monarchy anymore. They wanted representation. They wanted democracy like in the new USA.



They wanted:

Life, liberty, and property for ALL (John Locke)

Social contract with the government (Rousseau)

Less church power (Voltaire)

Constitution and Democracy (Like in the new USA)



Too bad. Read the last page again. It's important.

Rewrite

1. People had new ideas; they wanted absolute monarchs.
2. John Locke gave people the idea of the social contract.
3. Voltaire supported freedom of speech.
4. Life, liberty, and property came from Thomas Hobbes.

What ideas do you think the French people got from USA?

The difficult times = famine and debt. Famine means when you run out of food because the farms don't produce enough. Debt means when you owe money. France spent a lot of money on wars. They also gave a lot of money to the USA to help fight England. The farms had many bad years in a row. People were starving.



Complete

1. What is famine?
2. What is debt?
3. What are two reasons the French people were angry at their government?

The king of France was Louis XVI. He was not a strong king. He liked to go by himself and fix clocks. His wife, Marie Antoinette, cheated on him all the time. Common people in France hated Marie Antoinette. There was a rumor that she said: “If the people don’t have bread to eat, why don’t they eat cake?” This is rude because cake is much more expensive than bread.

If people don’t respect the king, what do you think will happen?

“Let them eat cake”



Complete

What are 2 reasons people didn't respect Louis XVI?

Louis XVI wanted to help the people, who were very angry. So, he decided to get some extra money from taxes. There was a problem. The only people who paid taxes were the common people. He had to call the Estates General together to ask for more taxes.



France divided people in three classes, like we have rich, middle, and lower class. They had three estates:

First estate = the clergy = the church

Second estate = the noble = the rich people

Third estate = the people = the common people

1



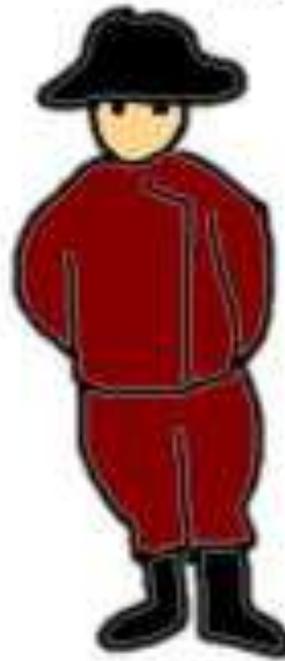
CLERGY

2



NOBILITY

3



EVERYONE
ELSE

Here is a graph that shows who pays taxes versus who owns all the land.

The Three Estates in Pre-Revolutionary France



Source: Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History*, Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2003 (adapted)

Complete

1st Estate = _____

2nd Estate = _____

3rd Estate = _____

1. Who paid all the taxes in France?
2. Who is the majority in France?
3. Who paid NO taxes in France?

France had a parliament like England. It was called the Estates General. There were representatives from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Estate. They got together to solve the problem of the bad economy. But they didn't get along very well.

Do you think it's fair that all the estates get equal representation?

King Louis XVI got angry at the 3rd Estate people; the common people. He was afraid of them, also. So, he locked them out of the parliament. They went next door to a tennis court. They declared the start of a Revolution. This is called the “Tennis Court Oath.” The Oath says that France is no longer an Absolute Monarchy.



Tennis Court Oath

Complete

1. Why did the 3rd Estate have to leave the Estates General?
2. What did the Tennis Court Oath say?

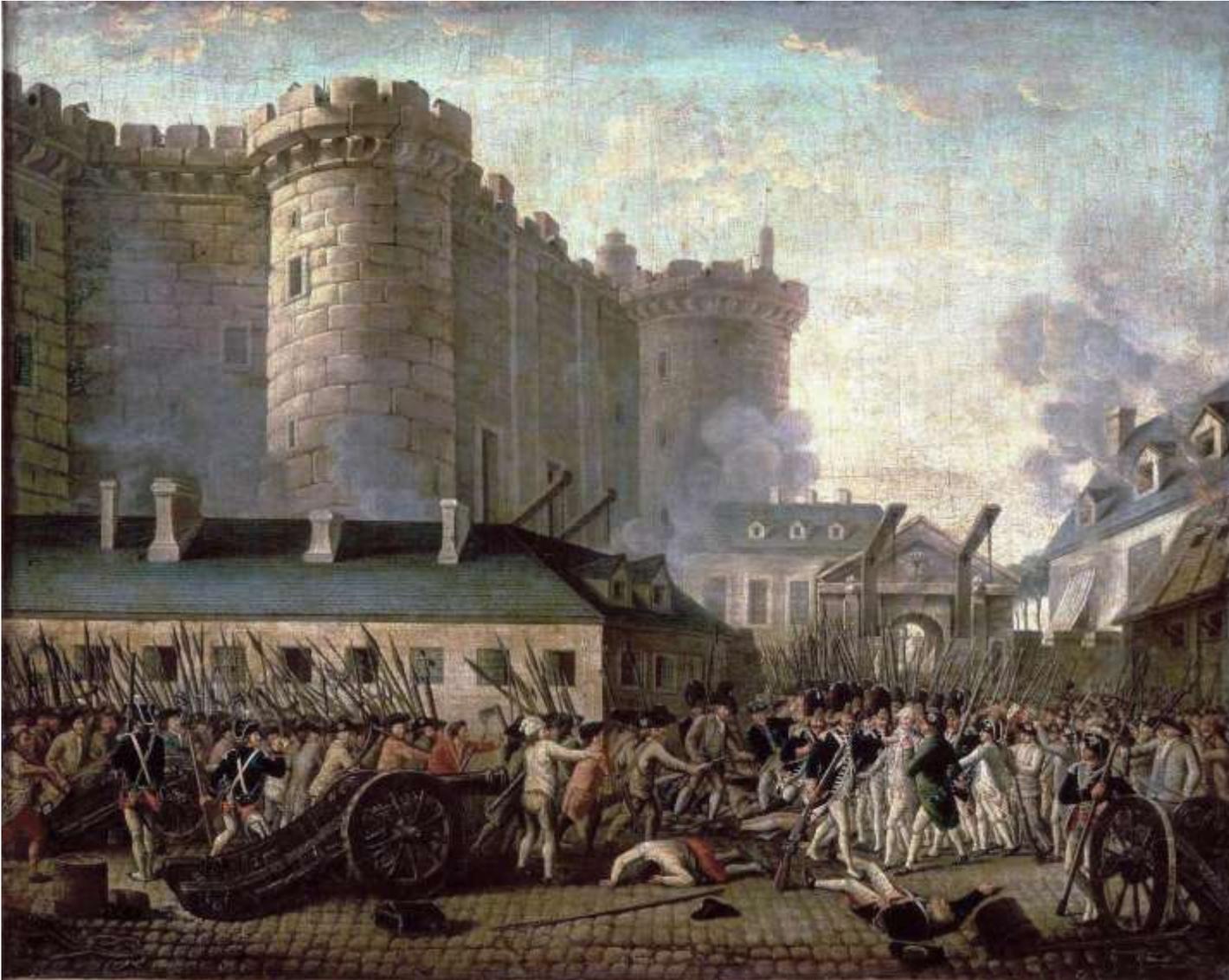
The common people formed a new government called the General Assembly. They wanted to make a Republic with a Constitution and voting. But they still had a problem. Louis XVI was still alive. He lived in Versailles. He didn't recognize them. So, they forced him to come to Paris and salute them.



The women went and demanded that Louis XVI come to Paris.

The General Assembly got support from the poor people in Paris. In Paris, the poor people took over the city. They invaded the prison called the Bastille on July 14th, 1789. They took all the weapons from the prison. They vowed to defend the General Assembly. They hated the king.

Bastille Day



Rewrite

1. The 3rd Estate formed a new government called the Commonwealth.
2. The General Assembly allowed Louis XVI to stay in Versailles.
3. The General Assembly wanted to restore the monarchy.
4. Poor people in Paris took over a prison called Le Carcelle to get weapons.

Do you think Louis XVI is going to live or die?

The General Assembly made a lot of changes. Some were good, like they tried to make a fair Constitution. Some were a little crazy, like they changed the names of all of the days of the week. They made 10 days in a week, which made the church angry. They argued a lot and that made people nervous.

One good thing they did was the Declaration of the Rights of Man. This document is like the Declaration of Independence in the USA. But it does more. It says that everyone has natural rights: rich people and poor people are the same. It gives a plan to enforce these rights.

Complete

1. What is one good thing that the General Assembly does?
2. What is one crazy thing that the General Assembly does?

But things get bad. The problem starts when all of the rich nobles leave France. They are French people... But they become scared of the poor people and the General Assembly. So, they go to other countries in Europe. Then, they tell the other countries to attack France and save King Louis XVI. They say that the king is kidnapped.

Why do you think the nobles left France? What do you think they were afraid of?

Rewrite

1. The nobles stay in France.
2. Other European countries make peace with France.

The European countries attack France. The poor people make an army and fight back. But they get nervous. They don't know who to trust. And... there is this new invention called the guillotine. The guillotine is supposed to be a great invention--to kill people as fast as possible without pain.

Rewrite

1. Rich people are nervous when other countries attack France.
2. The guillotine is designed to hurt people really badly.

King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette try to escape. They hear about how many people are being sent to the guillotine. They are caught. Then, the poor people cut off their heads. People cheer and celebrate. Now, there is no king. France is a Republic. But it isn't going to last very long.

What do you think will happen next?

Complete

1. What happens to King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette?