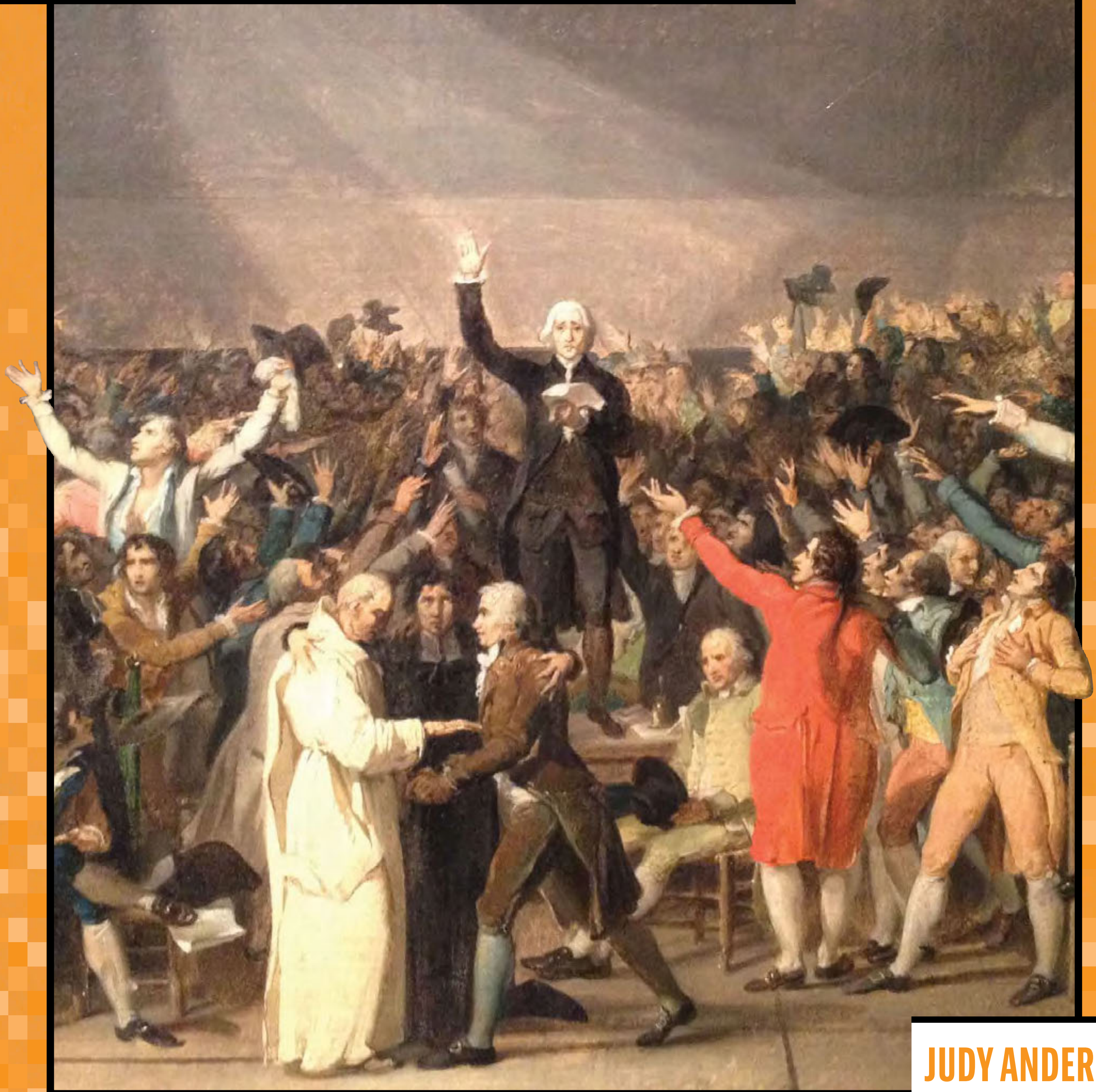
REVOLUTIONS

LIBERATING FRANCE

3RD EDITION



JUDY ANDERSON
ALLAN KERR

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Suite 105
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Australia

Phone 03 9417 3422
Email admin@htav.asn.au
Web www.htav.asn.au
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- tips for writing a high-scoring response
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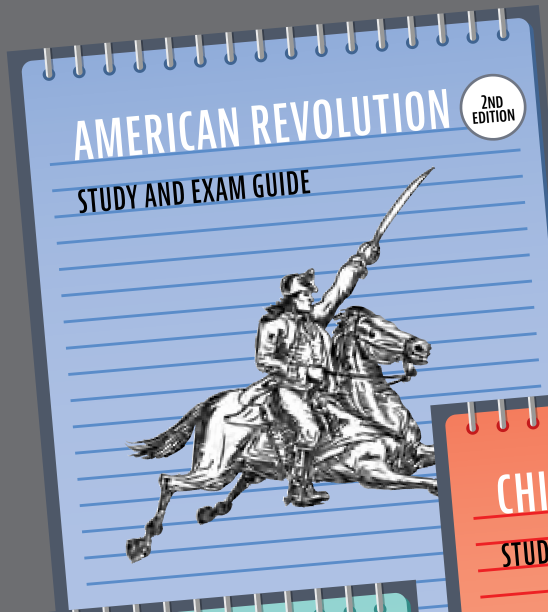
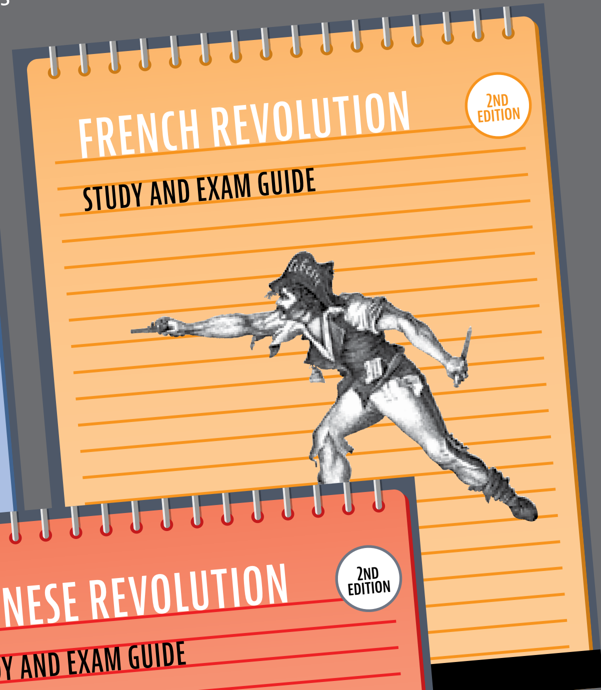
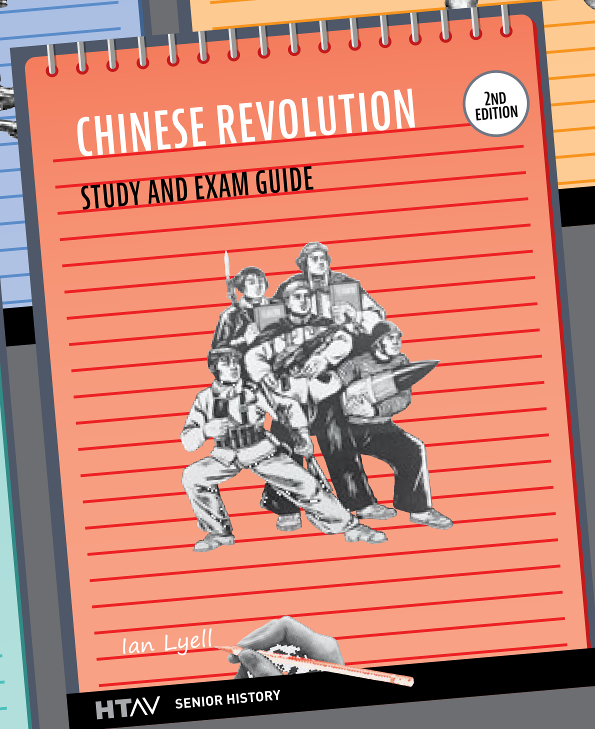
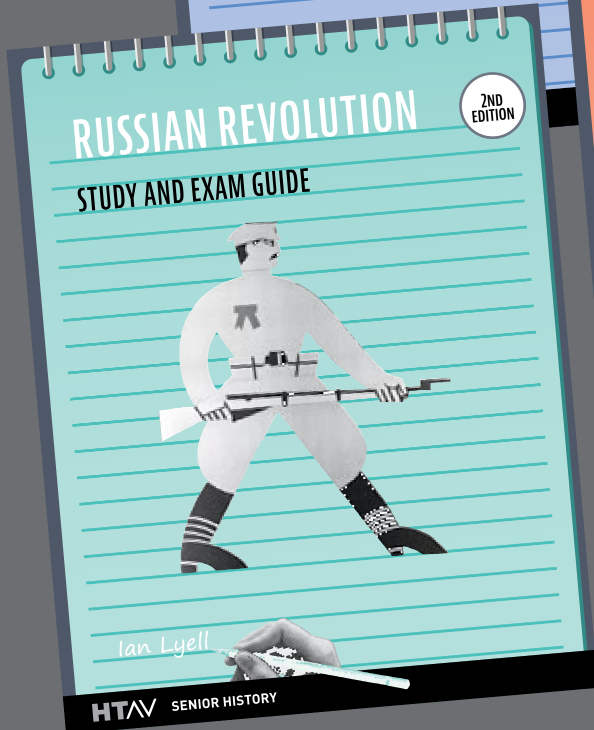
- sample exam with sample responses









REVISION TOOLS

- revision checklists
- timelines
- quizzes

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- tables and diagrams summarising key information
- key quotes (primary sources and historical interpretations)
- key individuals, movements and ideas
- content mapped to the VCE Study Design

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LIBERATING FRANCE 3RD EDITION

JUDY ANDERSON
ALLAN KERR

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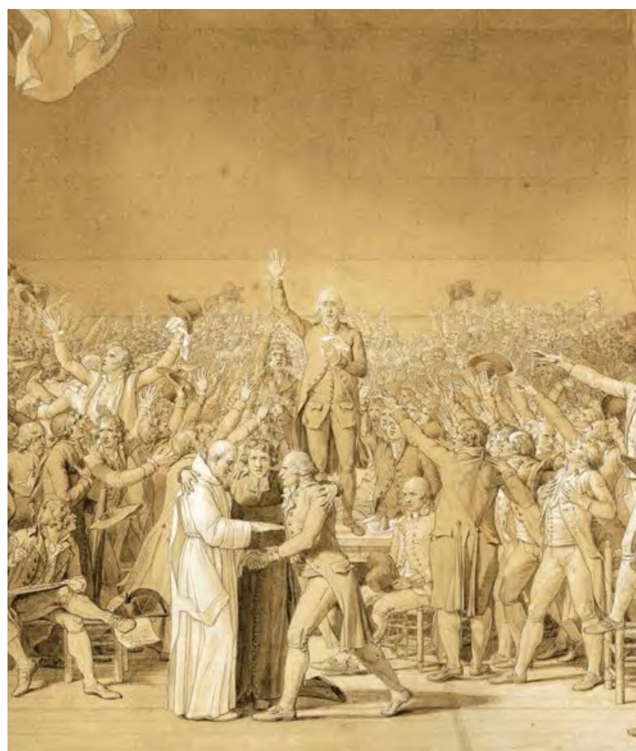

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JUDY ANDERSON

Judy Anderson has taught History throughout her career, including Revolutions for over twenty years. She has been involved in VCAA course reviews, and has presented and written for HTAV and other organisations. Having retired from the position of Head of History and Classical Studies at a Melbourne secondary school, she now runs a tutorial practice.

Judy pursued postgraduate studies at the University of Melbourne where she investigated the French practice of slavery in the Caribbean during the revolutionary period. This led her to many enjoyable hours in French archives and to academic publication in Nantes, a centre of the eighteenth-century slave trade. During this time, she presented at academic conferences in Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart and Auckland, and has been involved in the organising committees of a George Rudé Seminar and the 2019 symposium in honour of Peter McPhee at the University of Melbourne.

Judy has been passionately interested in history since her own school days when she studied 'Eighteenth-Century History' in Year 12. Having enlarged her historical understandings through teaching a wide range of units, she believes that the study of history plays a crucial role in informing us and in creating depth of understanding as we face the challenges of our own time.

Judy's acknowledgements: *'It has been very exciting to see this third edition of* Liberating France *come together. My sincerest thanks must go to the publisher, Georgina Argus, who has been unbelievably patient and supportive, and has checked my wishes through every step of the process. In addition, I must thank Sally Bond for her wonderful efforts with the layout and in sourcing all the images I most wanted. The physical appearance is very appealing and, we hope, approachable for students.*

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ALLAN KERR

Allan Kerr is the Leader of Learning for Humanities at Carey Baptist Grammar School. He co-authored the *VCE Revolutions Teacher Pack* (HTAV, 2010) and has written HTAV Sample Exams (Revolutions) for many years, alongside presenting at HTAV and HTAA conferences. He has also written for the Jacaranda *Humanities Alive* series. Allan has been an examiner for both the VCAA and the International Baccalaureate. Having taught VCE Revolutions for over twenty-five years, he delights in the fact that he is still learning new things every year, and loves sharing that knowledge with his daughter Lucy and son William.

REVOLUTIONS—AN INTRODUCTION

A study of revolutions is important because it allows us to look at how critical moments in history alter the function of nations and their societies, and the lives of generations of people. They allow us to examine issues of power—who has it and who doesn't—and to explore what happens when there is a radical shift in power.

STUDYING REVOLUTIONS

The study of Revolutions is based on the understanding that revolutions 'represent a great rupture in time and are a major turning point in the collapse and destruction of an existing political order that results in extensive change to society'.[1] Often revolutions involve a transfer of power from the oppressor to the oppressed, from the privileged to the less privileged. In some instances, a revolution is a response to hierarchical authority and its inequalities, while in others a revolution can be a response to colonial oppression.

Typically, revolutions are driven by strong ideological beliefs about how society should operate. Central to these beliefs are ideas about equality and control, and how a government should balance these. It is important to note that while revolutions are primarily political events, there are also significant economic, social and cultural factors that need to be considered. In the context of Revolutions, these are examined through the lens of key historical thinking concepts.

1 VCAA, VCE History Study Design 2022–2026.

WHAT IS A REVOLUTION?

The term 'revolution' is used widely and often loosely. For example, consider how advertisers frequently refer to products as 'revolutionary' to generate a sense of something being special or beneficial or even necessary. Understanding what a revolution is—and what it is not—is crucial in a study of Revolutions. This is no easy feat, as sometimes the term 'revolution' is used by different people to mean different things. This is evident when we consider the differences between a revolution and other forms of conflict such as a rebellion, a revolt or a coup, and the ways in which these terms are sometimes randomly assigned to different events.

THE CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

The causes of revolution are often complex and overlapping. It can be useful to consider the long-term and short-term **causes**, and the **triggers**, of revolution. If you consider the metaphor of a revolution as a fire, the descriptions on the right outline the role of each of these.

The path towards revolution is never a smooth one. Rarely do you see revolutionary tension steadily rise; rather, it ebbs and flows as those in power attempt to put an end to discontent (through a combination of repression and reform). This results in periods of escalation and de-escalation of revolutionary beliefs and action. Identifying a series of crisis points in the lead up to revolution can help you more clearly see this process.

Of course, one of the challenges in a study of revolutions is to evaluate the various factors that cause revolution. How are these factors related? Are some factors more significant than others? To what extent? Does this change over time? Why?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

Seizing power is only one of the hurdles a revolutionary party or movement faces. All too often, the threat of further revolution or counter-revolution drives the new government's decisions and actions. Revolutionary ideals may be compromised. Arguably, the consequences of revolution can be unintended—this study asks you to identify the intended and unintended effects of revolution and evaluate how these affected different groups of people at the time. You should compare the perspectives of people within and between groups, and evaluate the positive and negative consequences of living in the 'new society'.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Ultimately, the concepts of cause and consequence are used not only to understand the dynamics of a revolution but also to analyse the extent to which revolution resulted in change. The rhetoric of revolutionary leaders, parties and movements is often utopian—they promise a better life with greater freedom, less hierarchical control and more equality—but do they deliver? Sometimes the new regime ends up every bit as (or even more) repressive than the regime it replaced.

In comparing the political, economic and social dimensions of life in the 'old' and 'new' societies, this course of study invites an appraisal of the changes and continuities a revolution brought to society. What changes were evident? Were they positive or negative? What stayed the same (continued)? Why? Did life change for all groups in society or just for some? How do we know?

LONG-TERM CAUSES

The sources of fuel needed to stage a revolution are long-held political, economic, social and cultural structures, often based on issues of equality and control. These act to interrupt the status quo—much like chopping down a tree interrupts the ecology of a forest system.

SHORT-TERM CAUSES

Unresolved and growing over time, these structures generate grievances and resentments that metaphorically become the fuel for the revolutionary fire.

TRIGGERS

The spark that ignites a revolution can be planned or unplanned; it can be an **event** or the actions (or inaction) of an **individual** or a group. Regardless, the trigger often galvanises revolutionary **movements** into action. Sometimes that action involves a mass movement, while at others it offers an opportunity that smaller groups can utilise to seize power.

SIGNIFICANCE

As you examine the causes and consequences of revolution, and the resulting changes and continuities, Revolutions also asks you to evaluate the relative significance of these. Were some movements, ideas, individuals and events more significant than others? Why/why not? When assessing significance, consider the following:

Scale	How many people did it affect?
Duration	How long did it last?
Profundity (how profound something is)	What intensity of change did it produce? Deep impact or surface-level change?

PERSPECTIVES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Significance is a relative term. We must always ask—significant to whom? In answering this question, consideration must be given to:

- the **perspectives** and experiences of different groups of people at the time. Were certain movements, ideas, individuals and events observed as more significant by certain groups? Why/why not?
- the **interpretations** of others (often historians) after the time. Have views of significance changed? Why/why not?

Ultimately, the complexities and moral dilemmas found in the study of Revolutions makes for rewarding analysis and evaluation. As a student of Revolutions, it is your job to grapple with these concepts and construct your own evidence-based historical arguments.

written by Catherine Hart

SECTION A

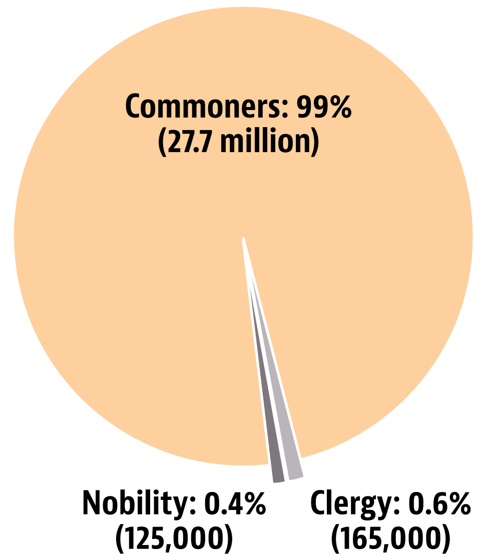
CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

- What were the significant causes of revolution?
- How did the actions of popular movements and particular individuals contribute to triggering a revolution?
- To what extent did social tensions and ideological conflicts contribute to the outbreak of revolution?[1]

[1] Extract from the VCE History Revolutions Study Design (2022–2026) © VCAA, reproduced by permission.

ESTIMATED POPULATION OF FRANCE IN 1789

28 MILLION



AND 1 MILLION SLAVES IN OVERSEAS COLONIES

'Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains. Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they.'

ROUSSEAU, *THE SOCIAL CONTRACT*, 1762

'It's not a revolt, Sire; it's a revolution.'

Duke of La Rochefoucauld to Louis XVI on the day the Bastille fell

'A global empire in competition with Britain.'

DARIUS VON GÜTTNER

'Ignorance and disregard for the rights of man are the sole causes of public misfortunes and of the corruption of governments.'

Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1789

THE PRICE OF A FOUR-POUND LOAF OF BREAD IN FEBRUARY 1789 WAS ALMOST DOUBLE WHAT IT HAD BEEN IN 1787. BY APRIL 1789, A PARISIAN WORKER COULD SPEND UP TO 88 PER CENT OF HIS WAGE ON BREAD.

54 MILLION LIVRES

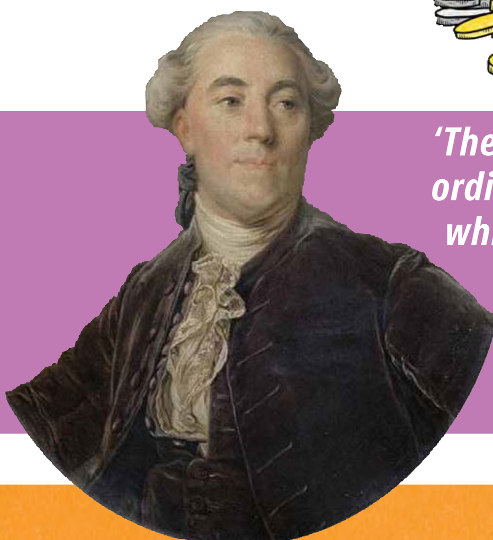
FRANCE'S DEFICIT AT THE OPENING OF THE ESTATES-GENERAL IN 1789

'What is the Third Estate? Everything.

What had it been before in the political order? Nothing.

What does it demand? To become something therein.'

PAMPHLET BY ABBÉ SIEYÈS, *WHAT IS THE THIRD ESTATE?*, 1789



'The king can always maintain the balance between ordinary expenses and revenue. The reduction of expenses, which is always the wish of the public, belongs to the King. When circumstances require, only he has the power to increase taxes. But the most dangerous is to borrow.'

Jacques Necker, *Compte rendu au roi*, 1781

TIMELINE

PRE-1774

1748	*The Spirit of the Laws* by Montesquieu published (about the separation of powers)
1751	*Encyclopédie* first published (a compilation of all useful knowledge)
1762	*The Social Contract* by Rousseau published (about the equality of man in nature and popular sovereignty)
1763	*Treatise on Toleration* published by Voltaire (about religious toleration)

1774–4 AUGUST 1789

August 1788 King calls Estates-General; elections of deputies and writing of *cahiers de doléances*; the Crown is bankrupt

7 June 1788 'Day of Tiles

19 November 1787 King holds royal session with Parlement of Paris

22 February–25 May 1787 Assembly of Notables

19 April 1775–3 September 1783 American War of Independence; Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776

10 May 1774 Accession of Louis XVI (crowned 1775)

1774 KEY EVENT	**10 MAY 1774** Accession of Louis XVI (crowned 1775)
1775 KEY EVENT	**19 APRIL 1775–3 SEPTEMBER 1783** American War of Independence; Declaration of Independence adopted on 4 July 1776
1776	**22 OCTOBER 1776** Necker appointed Director of Royal Treasury (later Director-General of Finances)
1778	**1778** France offers financial aid to American rebels in their war against Britain
1781	**19 MAY 1781** Necker resigns after presenting financial report to the king, which hides deficit
KEY EVENT 1787	**22 FEBRUARY–25 MAY 1787** Assembly of Notables meets to approve Calonne's universal taxation proposal; Assembly dismissed after refusing to endorse reforms; beginning of Aristocratic Revolt
	8 APRIL 1787 Calonne dismissed, replaced by Loménie de Brienne on 30 April
	AUGUST 1787 Paris and Bordeaux *parlements* exiled after refusing Loménie de Brienne's reform proposals
KEY EVENT	**19 NOVEMBER 1787** King holds royal session with Parlement of Paris to assert his royal authority
1788	**3 MAY 1788** Parlement of Paris proclaims that new taxes need approval of Estates-General
KEY EVENT	**7 JUNE 1788** 'Day of Tiles' occurs in Grenoble; riots break out in support of local *parlement*
KEY EVENT	**8 AUGUST 1788** King calls Estates-General for 1 May 1789; elections of deputies and writing of *cahiers de doléances* from each estate take place
KEY EVENT	**16 AUGUST 1788** Treasury payments suspended; the Crown is bankrupt

25 September 1788 Parlement of Paris decrees that Estates-General must meet according to the rules of 1614

January–May 1789 *Cahiers* drawn up, elections held, pamphlets circulated and political clubs form ahead of Estates-General

January 1789 Sieyès publishes *What Is the Third Estate?*

March 1789 Peasant disturbances begin

26–29 April 1789 Réveillon Riots

5 May 1789 Estates-General begins; king makes no decision on voting rights; Third Estate refuses to verify their election in separate chamber

17 June 1789 Declaration of National Assembly

20 June 1789 Tennis Court Oath

14 July 1789 Storming of the Bastille

20 July–6 August 1789 'The Great Fear'

4 August 1789 'Night of Patriotic Delirium'

1788 (continued)

26 AUGUST 1788
Necker recalled after Loménie de Brienne's resignation (24 August); *parlements* are restored

KEY EVENT
25 SEPTEMBER 1788
Parlement of Paris decrees that Estates-General must meet according to the rules of 1614

27 DECEMBER 1788
King agrees to double Third Estate (commoners) numbers in Estates-General

SUMMER 1788/1789
Harvest crisis

1789

KEY EVENT
JANUARY–MAY 1789
Cahiers are drawn up, elections held, pamphlets circulated and political clubs form ahead of Estates-General

KEY EVENT
JANUARY 1789
Sieyès publishes *What Is the Third Estate?*

KEY EVENT
MARCH 1789
Peasant disturbances begin

KEY EVENT
26–29 APRIL 1789
Réveillon Riots: violent crowds protest rumoured wage reductions

KEY EVENT
5 MAY 1789
Estates-General begins; king makes no decision on voting rights; Third Estate refuses to verify their election in separate chamber

KEY EVENT
17 JUNE 1789
Third Estate declares themselves the National Assembly

KEY EVENT
20 JUNE 1789
Tennis Court Oath; deputies swear to stay together until a constitution is established

23 JUNE 1789
At Royal Session, the king declares National Assembly unconstitutional and commands three estates to meet separately but introduces reforms; National Assembly deputies ignore him

25 JUNE 1789
Second Estate (nobility) begins to join National Assembly

1789 (continued)

27 JUNE 1789
King gives in and orders estates to unite; troops are called to Paris

11 JULY 1789
King dismisses Necker, sparking revolt in Paris

KEY EVENT
14 JULY 1789
Storming of the Bastille

15–16 JULY 1789
King orders troops to leave Paris and recalls Necker

16 JULY 1789
King's brother, Comte d'Artois, flees Paris. Over next months, 200,000 nobles follow him, creating a counter-revolutionary group called émigrés

17 JULY 1789
Lafayette escorts the king (who wears the revolutionary cockade) to town hall in Paris, where he formally acknowledges the crowd from balcony; a shift in power has now taken place; symbolic birth of constitutional monarchy

KEY EVENT
20 JULY–6 AUGUST 1789
'The Great Fear' occurs, a rural revolt across France caused by fears of backlash from nobles; this sparks attacks on castles

4 AUGUST 1789
'Night of Patriotic Delirium': mass renunciation of noble and clerical privileges leads to August Decrees

THE OLD REGIME: FRANCE BEFORE THE REVOLUTION (PRE-1789)

‘Louis inherited a power too contested to remain an absolute monarch … but was too weak to lead his kingdom towards something else.’

— François Furet

Source 1.01 ‘We must hope that this game will be over soon’, 1789.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What is an absolute divine-right monarchy? What powers did Louis XVI have?
- What were the three estates, and what proportion of French society comprised each estate?
- What was the role of the Church?
- What were the privileges of the clergy and nobility and how did they affect society?
- What groups comprised the Third Estate and what were their major grievances?
- What were the key taxes of the ancien régime?
- How did the political, economic and social structure of the ancien régime bring about the outbreak of the revolution?

CHAPTER 1

The French Revolution was a turning point in the history of Europe and the world. For the first time, a population rose up to remake their country and exercise *sovereignty* over it.

The French society before 1789—or the *ancien régime*, as the revolutionaries referred to it later—was a social, economic and political system based on *privilege* and strict hierarchy of the three distinct social groups known as estates. The First Estate was the members of the clergy of the Catholic Church, the Second Estate was the *nobility*, and the Third Estate was made up of everyone else—the commoners.

When the revolution of 1789 began, France was ruled by a royal family line known as the Bourbon dynasty, with Louis XVI inheriting the throne in 1774. King Louis XVI was an *absolute monarch* who ruled by *divine right*, which meant his authority was subject to God alone. As an absolute monarch the king had the power to choose his own ministers, conduct the business of governing his kingdom and was not restricted by a written *constitution*.

Louis XVI ruled over a powerful and wealthy empire made up of France plus islands in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. At the beginning of his reign, France enjoyed a strong international position as a leading European nation that projected wealth, political influence and cultural sophistication. The Catholic Church held spiritual authority over the people as the only recognised religion in France, and it had accumulated great wealth over the centuries.

In the eighteenth century (the 1700s), the kingdom of Louis XVI experienced a range of long-term problems with its institutions, social structures, and administrative and financial practices. Tensions and grievances about these structures and practices had simmered for decades, erupting into dissent from time to time, and this fed into the crises of the late 1780s. These grievances were worsened by the chaos, inefficiency and poor judgement that marked the regime of Louis XVI.

sovereignty the right of a people, or a government acting on its behalf, to make decisions, form laws and exercise power within its own borders

ancien régime 'old regime'; the way France was run prior to 1789

privilege special rights and advantages that are granted to some people but not all

nobility the privileged class in society

absolute monarch a monarch who holds absolute authority over all aspects of society, and is not restricted by written laws or constitutions. Absolute monarchs are usually born into their position, and often rule by divine right

divine right the political doctrine that monarchs receive the right to rule directly from God and not from the people, and that they are accountable only to God

constitution a document that lays out the responsibilities and powers of each part of a government, and the way in which they relate to each other

The coat of arms of the House of Bourbon. The House of Bourbon was a royal family that produced five kings of France, including Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI, before the end of the French Revolution in 1792.

THE KING AND HIS AUTHORITY

J.-B. Bossuet: 'The king in his palace is the image of God in his heaven, who sets the whole of nature in motion.'

XVI the Roman numerals after a monarch's name are known as regnal numbers. They are used to differentiate that monarch from others who had the same name and held the same office

dauphin heir to the throne

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see pp. 274–275)

Source 1.02 *Louis XVI of France*, unfinished portrait by Joseph-Siffred Duplessis, c. 1785.

Louis ***XVI*** came to the throne in May 1774 after the death of his grandfather, Louis XV (who reigned 1715–1774). His father, who had been the heir to the throne or ***dauphin***, had died in 1765. Louis XVI was nineteen years old when he became king, and his queen, Marie Antoinette, was eighteen. Neither of them were prepared for the heavy responsibilities that awaited them.

Young Louis XVI inherited a form of government known as an absolute divine-right monarchy. For centuries, the idea that a king's authority came from God supported the notion of the unlimited authority of monarchy. In other words, God had chosen the person who would become king, and the people should not question or limit his decisions. As absolute ruler, Louis XVI made laws, governed his kingdom by appointing ministers, directed foreign policy and commanded the armed forces. Justice was administered by courts in his name. The king was not accountable to his subjects and the only limits placed on his authority were the tradition and the laws of the Church.

DIVINE RIGHT

Holding power by God's authority alone

Source 1.03 *Archduchess Maria Antonia of Austria, the later Queen Marie Antoinette of France*, by Joseph Ducreux, 1769. This miniature portrait of Marie Antoinette at the age of thirteen was sent to the dauphin to show him what his future bride looked like.

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 273)

DID YOU KNOW?

Archduchess Maria Antonia of Austria was fourteen when she married Louis XVI. She travelled to the French border in a cavalcade of fifty-seven carriages. At the border her new French ladies-in-waiting stripped off all her clothes and jewellery and dressed her in French clothing. Her Austrian ladies-in-waiting were dismissed—and even her dog was sent back to Vienna. Then she was married, by proxy, with her brother Ferdinand standing in for Louis XVI during the ceremony. She became Marie Antoinette, Dauphine of France. (See p. 273 for more on Marie Antoinette.)

Source 1.04 *Louis XVI in Coronation Robes*, by Joseph-Siffred Duplessis, 1777. This is an idealised image of Louis XVI, presenting him as an able ruler. Every aspect of the painting is symbolic:

- A royal mantle is a symbol of authority.
- The gold lilies (or fleur-de-lis) represent the Bourbon dynasty.
- The sceptre is a symbol of sovereignty.
- The fur trimming on the cloak refers to his role as a supreme judge.

The artist Callet created an engraving based on this portrait, adding in the scales of justice, and the fasces, the rods and axe of the ***magistrates*** of ancient Rome. Copies of Callet's engraving would have adorned many official buildings. For many French people, in a time before photography, this was the only image of Louis XVI they would see.

magistrates lawyers, or officials of the law

DID YOU KNOW?
Louis XVI is said to have had a huge appetite. His 'usual' breakfast included a chicken, a slice of ham, four chops and six eggs, all washed down with a bottle and a half of champagne.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 1.04 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline Louis XVI's responsibilities as an absolute monarch.
2. Explain how this portrait illustrates Bossuet's statement that the king is 'the image of God in his heaven'.
3. Consider the role of the painter Joseph-Siffred Duplessis. What challenges might an artist face when they were commissioned to paint a royal portrait?

POSITION OF KING IN OLD REGIME POWER RELATIONS

The king as the sovereign of France held legislative, executive and judicial power. In theory his authority was unlimited, but in practice there were several limits to the monarch's royal authority—and these could create difficulties for an insecure and timid king. For example, he could not change the order of succession that, regulated by ancient tradition, restricted the throne to men alone. The king could not change the traditional privileges of ***pays d'état***, the provinces that retained their own provincial estates and customs. Independent bodies such as the Assembly of the Clergy had rights and privileges guaranteed by law, and the king could not interfere with these.

pays d'état provinces at border areas acquired through conquest, inheritance or marriage. They had their own *parlements*, rights and privileges and were exempt from some taxes

The king also consulted the council of ministers on matters of government and law. The council consisted of royal ministers appointed by the king, including those of the Navy, Army, Police, Justice and Finance.

Among the traditional, powerful institutions were the highest law courts, called ***parlements***. There were thirteen of these powerful courts of appeal, the most prominent being the Parlement of Paris. The role of the *parlements* was to register the king's legislation—also known as his 'laws', 'edicts' or 'decrees'—and publish them, thus, disseminating them among the king's subjects and making them binding.

parlements law courts responsible for registering, administering or remonstrating (objecting to aspects of) laws passed by the king

right of remonstrance the *parlement*'s right to refuse to issue a decree

lit de justice literally, a 'bed of justice', used to describe a king's visit to *parlement* to demand it comply with his will

LIMITS TO THE KING'S AUTHORITY

- He could not alter the line of succession.
- He could not change the privileges of some provinces.
- He could not change the rights of individual estates.

The *parlements* also claimed the ***right of remonstrance***, the power to object to the registration of a royal decree. Often the objections were simply a matter of pointing out an error in the law but in the second half of the eighteenth century they became a political tool in the hands of the judges. If the king wished to reject the remonstrance, he could force its registration by visiting the *parlement* in person in a ceremony of law making called a ***lit de justice***.

If the *parlement* still refused to issue a decree, the king could close the *parlement* and exile its members to a different city. (The role and powers of the *parlements* is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.)

THE PERSONAL QUALITIES OF THE ABSOLUTE MONARCH

Enlightenment the flowering of thought in eighteenth-century Europe—particularly in politics, science and philosophy—which advocated a rational approach rather than tradition and religion

When Louis XVI inherited the throne in 1774, the people's acceptance of his absolute power was still intact. Although the monarchy was experiencing pressures and strains, historian Peter McPhee argues that there was no notion of revolution on the horizon.[1] New ideas—especially ideas put forward by thinkers of the ***Enlightenment***—suggested that reform of the kingdom's financial practices could improve prosperity and happiness for all.

However, because the regime was an absolute monarchy, the only person who could initiate such changes was the king himself. This proved to be a fatal flaw in the system. Meeting the needs and expectations of the French people relied on the power, authority, energy and confidence of the ruler—and Louis XVI, quite simply, was not up to the task.

By all accounts, Louis XVI was well-intentioned, sincere and aware of the need to make changes. According to historian Timothy Tackett, Louis XVI was trained in the duties and obligations of kingship, and was deeply religious. Louis XVI accepted his divine right to rule. The king wrote:

> I know I owe it to God for having chosen me to reign. ... My people should know that my first care and desire will be to relieve and improve their condition. ... The charity of a prince must be modelled on the charity of God.[2]

However, Louis XVI lacked self-confidence and frequently found decision-making unbearable. He would be torn by his own uncertainty and the pressure from his advisors, which made his judgement appear weak and his commitment to reform unreliable.

QUALITIES OF KING LOUIS XVI

- Well-intentioned and sincere.
- Deeply religious.
- Lacking in self-confidence.
- Uncertain; struggled to make decisions.
- Appeared weak.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What is a divine-right monarchy?
2. How many *parlements* were there in France?
3. How could legal institutions reduce or limit the absolute power of the monarchy?
4. Identify two aspects of Louis XVI's personality that made him both suitable and unsuitable for the role of absolute monarch. Explain your reasoning.

THE INEQUALITY OF FRENCH SOCIETY

William Doyle: 'Privilege was the hallmark of a country without uniform laws or institutions.'

Eighteenth-century French society was ***corporate*** in nature. Each person had an assigned place in some part of the whole body of the kingdom, belonging to an estate or order, to a ***guild*** or a ***parish***, to a military regiment or to a local ***seigneur***.

This organisation was based on the medieval idea of the people as the body of the state. The king was the head, but the limbs and body of the state were made up of different groups of people, each performing vital functions—as warriors, as growers of food, as those who prayed for the souls of the deceased.

Members of every group or body were entitled to privileges of some kind. This was based on either:

- birth or a ***venal position*** (as with the nobility of the sword and robe)
- spiritual authority (the Church)
- tradition (the guilds).

corporate in eighteenth-century France, institutions such as the Church, army, *parlements* and guilds were regarded as 'corporations', as were social groups such as the estates and subgroups within them—the nobles of the sword or robe, or the upper or lower clergy

guild association of craftsmen

parish a church district

seigneur lord

venal position an office or position, usually in the legal system, sold by the state to raise money

peasant derived from the French word *païsant*, meaning someone from the 'pays' (countryside)

subsistence farming farm work that produced enough to support a peasant's family and obligations to their lord, without any leftover for trade

surplus more than what is needed; an amount left over

RURAL LIFE

Eighteenth-century France was also a rural society. In 1789, France had about twenty-eight million people and over 80 per cent of them were ***peasants*** who drew a living from ***subsistence farming***. Farm ***surpluses*** were tiny, perhaps just some vegetables or some butter or eggs that could be sold at the market or traded for goods the farm could not produce. Local economies were vulnerable to crop disease and bad weather, so whole regions could be at starvation level while other regions were prosperous.

At any time, there were about 3–5 million people so poor they were reduced to begging. Most peasants earned just enough for their own needs and to pay the dues they owed to the lord, the Church and the king. Bad weather or crop failure meant the peasants went hungry. Arthur Young, a British landholder who travelled through France in 1789, described the situation:

Arthur Young on Paris between the years 1787–1789

> All the country girls and women are without shoes or stockings; and the ploughmen at their work have neither sabots [clogs] nor [stockings to their feet]. This is a poverty which strikes at the root of national prosperity. … It reminds me of the misery of Ireland …
>
> Walking, which in London is so pleasant and clean that ladies do it every day, is here a toil and a fatigue to a man and an impossibility to a well-dressed lady. Paris is an ineligible residence for persons who cannot afford to keep a coach, a convenience which is as dear as at London.

Source 1.06 Arthur Young, *Arthur Young's Travels in France during the Years 1787, 1788, 1789*, ed. Matilda Betham-Edwards (London: George Bell and Sons, 1909), *https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/young-arthur-youngs-travels-in-france-during-the-years-1787-1788-1789#Young_0455_385*

Source 1.05 *Old man giving alms [donations]*, by Jean-Jacques de Boissieu, 1780.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 1.05 and 1.06 and your own knowledge, outline the factors that made the living conditions in pre-revolutionary Paris a 'breeding ground' for revolution.

TOWN-DWELLERS

France was dotted with small market towns, and only one in forty people lived in Paris. Approximately 90 per cent of French towns had fewer than 10,000 people, with only nine cities having more than 50,000 people. Town-dwellers made up 5–8 per cent of the population.

However, the population expanded rapidly during the eighteenth century. Paris grew by more than 100,000 people, while the trading towns of Bordeaux and Nantes doubled in size.[3] ***Merchants*** were the best educated, richest and most active of the king's subjects, and they lived well. Skilled craftsmen were organised into guilds—in Paris in 1776, a third of the male workforce belonged to a guild.

merchant a person who engages in buying, selling, importing and exporting goods for profit associations

However, the most prominent feature of the cities and towns was the poverty of the unskilled workers. Over the century, prices had risen three times faster than wages, which resulted in a miserable underclass of labourers, porters, dockers, waiters and dealers.

DID YOU KNOW?
Louis-Sébastien Mercier wrote, 'In the Faubourg of Saint-Marcel live the poorest, most restless common people of Paris. ... One whole family lives in one single room. The walls are bare. ... The inhabitants move every three months because they owe their rent and are thrown out.'

In 1777, Jean-Marie Roland, Inspector of Manufactures in Picardy, wrote that 'Workmen today need twice as much money for their subsistence, yet they earn no more than fifty years ago when living was half as cheap'.[4] In 1772, a magistrate in Rennes wrote that 'Misery has thrown into the towns people who overburden them with their uselessness, and who find nothing to do, because there is not enough for the people who live there'.[5]

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Church dominated France socially and economically. The Church owned the largest and most expensive buildings in any town, and the local economy relied heavily on the purchases and investments of the Church.

For example, in the town of Angers, the Church owned 75 per cent of the town's property. There were thirty-four parishes to serve the spiritual needs of the people. Most of the town's lawyers worked for the Church, as did many of the artisans and craftspeople: carpenters, builders, glaziers, lace-makers, embroiderers and dressmakers.

Many of the ***bourgeoisie*** resented the power and wealth of the Church, particularly the 'upper clergy' who came from noble families.

bourgeois originally meant a town-dweller, from *bourg*, meaning a small market town

bourgeoisie collective noun for a group of town-dwellers

THE THREE ESTATES

William Doyle: 'This division originated in the medieval organization of society: those who prayed, those who fought, and those who worked.'

A key part of the social structure of eighteenth-century France were the three main social groupings, or 'estates'. These were the:

- First Estate (clergy)
- Second Estate (nobility)
- Third Estate (commoners).

Source 1.07 An image from a manuscript dating from the 1200s showing the three main groups in medieval society—those who prayed, those who fought, and those who tilled the fields.

The First Estate was made up of the clergy of the Catholic Church. This estate included all of the ordained officials of the Church: cardinals, archbishops, bishops and priests. **The Second Estate** was made up of nobles, including people who were born noble or had been able to acquire nobility though ***ennoblement***.
The Third Estate contained people of common birth.

ennoblement noble status could be awarded to an individual by decision of the king or by appointment to a specific office

The social structure of pre-revolutionary France was rigid: birth determined status, opportunity and privilege. This view of society was then challenged by thinkers and philosophers of the Enlightenment. During the eighteenth century, the dissatisfaction of the Third Estate grew from its status as the largest taxpayer in the kingdom without any political voice. The demands for reform began to undermine the foundations of the ancien régime.

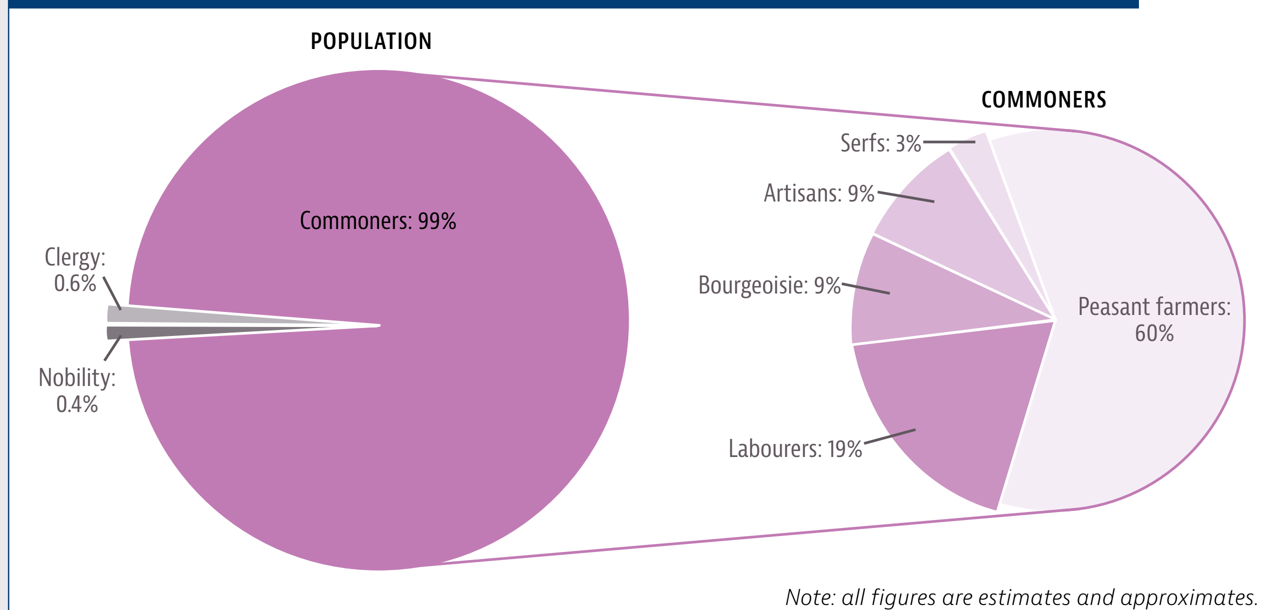
THE FRENCH POPULATION

There are varied estimations of the population in France in the eighteenth century. Before the revolution, population details were recorded in parish registries and documents of ennoblement were in private hands. A common estimation is that that the population of France in 1789 was around twenty-eight million.

Source 1.08 Estimations of the numbers in each estate can differ considerably. For our purposes, estimations of the size of each estate have been taken from Peter McPhee's *The French Revolution 1789–1799* (2002), William Doyle's *Oxford History of the Revolution* (1989), and Dylan Rees, *France in Revolution* (2016).

POPULATION OF EACH ESTATE		
	Estimated number of people	Percentage of population
First Estate	165,000	0.6%
Second Estate	125,000	0.4%
Third Estate	27.7 million	99%
TOTAL	**28 MILLION**	

COMPOSITION OF THE FRENCH POPULATION IN 1789 (estimated at twenty-eight million)



Note: all figures are estimates and approximates.

THE FIRST ESTATE: CLERGY

Bishop Talleyrand, a nobleman, was to become a keen revolutionary, leading reform of the Church.

Catholicism was the only religion recognised by the ***Crown***, and the only religion officially allowed to hold services. By the era of Louis XVI, all of the upper clergy who held the powerful positions in the Church came from the nobility. This created a rift between upper and lower clergy.

Crown one of the key symbols of the monarchy used to refer to the king and his government

tithe a compulsory tax of about one-tenth (or 10 per cent) of income, paid to the Church in cash or grain, farm stock, etc.

don gratuit voluntary gift to the monarch

curé priest

The Church:

- owned about 10 per cent of the land in France
- rented land to peasants in return for a proportion of the crop
- gained money from renting out church-owned properties
- gained money from the ***tithe*** (usually about 10 per cent of produce).

The Church did not pay tax to the state because of its role in poor relief, health care and education—it paid only a voluntary gift to the monarch (called a ***don gratuit***). The ***curé*** (priest) was the authority for the whole community on royal edicts, and mediated between peasants and nobles on issues of importance. He also baptised, confirmed, married and buried the people of the parish, educated the children and looked after the poor. He was usually poor himself, and lived in much the same conditions as the rest of the local community.

THE SECOND ESTATE: NOBILITY

In theory, the social system of France was based on interlocking obligations. The nobles' role was to provide military protection in times of war, but by the eighteenth century, the king had a permanent army and the nobles no longer maintained fighting forces of their own.

There were two kinds of nobility:

nobility of the sword (noblesse d'épée) those who had been born noble

nobility of the robe (noblesse de robe) those who had been made noble or who had purchased nobility

- The ***nobility of the sword (noblesse d'épée)*** were those who had been born noble and had a hereditary title (passed down through generations).
- The ***nobility of the robe (noblesse de robe)*** were those who had been made noble for some service to the king or who had purchased nobility by buying themselves a venal office or position of responsibility.

It was highly desirable to be noble, because wealth, power and privilege came with a noble title. Together, the groups of nobles made up less than 1 per cent of the population and controlled about 33 per cent of the land.

Charles Gravier, Count of Vergennes, a French statesman and diplomat. He was France's foreign minister during the American War of Independence.

Noblemen had both honorific and 'useful' privileges. Useful privileges were those that brought a material benefit, such as tax exemption. Honorific privileges of a nobleman meant he could:

- take precedence over others on public occasions
- carry a sword and display a coat of arms
- have an enclosed pew at the front of the church

- be sprinkled with holy water in a special blessing
- have the Church draped in black when he died
- be tried in special courts
- be executed by the sword if found guilty of a capital offence
- have special hunting and shooting rights
- keep doves
- be exempt from military service unless commissioned as an officer
- be excused from the ***corvée***, conscription into the militia or having to billet troops in his house.

Tax exemption was a privilege of nobility—a remnant of the era when the nobles provided the defence of the kingdom and its monarch. Nobles paid neither the ***taille*** placed on common people nor the tax on 'common' land. They were not subject to the *corvée*, which was for the upkeep of roads. However, they did pay smaller taxes like the ***capitation*** and the ***vingtième***.

Nobility was also desirable because of social status. Nobles owned a quarter to a third of all land and had feudal rights over much of the rest. Most of the valuable venal offices belonged to the nobility; these offices were either inherited or awarded by the king. Also, as the higher positions in the Church went to the nobility, a significant portion of the Church's ***revenues*** went into noble pockets. The nobility also invested in trade, industry, mining and metallurgy, although they could not be directly involved. Thus, as the bourgeoisie became wealthier, the nobility became richer too.

corvée compulsory unpaid labour for the feudal lord, usually spent on the roads

taille the major tax on all French subjects, based on how much land they held

capitation a tax per person, as counted by a census

vingtième an income tax of about 5 per cent on goods produced, levied by the government when extra income was needed (usually in wartime)

revenue the total amount of income received

As historian William Doyle puts it:

> Nobility was a club which every wealthy man felt entitled, indeed obliged, to join. Not all nobles were rich, but sooner or later, all the rich ended up noble.[6]

Being a member of the nobility also meant influence and power. Technically, only people of noble birth could meet the king. All his ministers were noble, all the members of the administration were noble, and all those who held important offices in the kingdom were noble—as were senior officers in the army and navy and most junior officers. Most of the great ***financiers*** had become noble, along with the upper ***judiciary***. In the Church, all the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, abbots and canons were nobles.

financiers tax agents who paid for the right to collect tax for the king

judiciary the branch of a government responsible for laws and the legal system

Source 1.09 *The Presentation of the Assembly of the Nobles of Both Kinds*, engraving, 1770.

DISCUSSION

Why would having court-appointed nobles in almost every government post cause resentment to members of the Third Estate, particularly the successful bourgeoisie?

THE THIRD ESTATE: COMMONERS

Louis-Sébastien Mercier, 1783: 'The distance which separates the rich from other citizens is growing daily and poverty becomes more insupportable at the sight of the astonishing progress of luxury which tires the view of the poor. Hatred grows more bitter and the state is divided into two classes: the greedy and insensitive and the murmuring malcontents [complainers].'

BOURGEOISIE

The wealthiest group within the Third Estate was the bourgeoisie. Bourgeoisie was a term used to identify those living in towns who made their money through professions other than agriculture. The bourgeoisie was very diverse and comprised financiers, bankers, industrialists and manufacturers (who were often wealthier than the landowning nobility) and lawyers, accountants, master-craftsmen and shop-owners. In total, the bourgeoisie made up about 8 per cent of the population. Yet, they controlled about 33 per cent of the land and owned 39,000 of the 50,000 venal offices.

Merchants were often the wealthiest, best educated and most active of the king's subjects. The wealthiest merchants 'lived nobly' on the proceeds of investments or revenues from land. Some merchants went on to become nobles. This could be done by:

- purchasing a venal office—more than 3700 offices had titles attached
- inheriting a title—titles became hereditary if held in a family for more than two generations.

Source 1.10 *Portrait of Dominique-René Deurbroucq*, by Pierre-Bernard Morlot, 1753.

Source 1.11 (far right) *Portrait of Marguerite-Urbane Deurbroucq*, by Pierre-Bernard Morlot, 1753.

Deurbroucq was a maritime merchant. Hailing from Nantes, he was highly likely to have imported slaves into French islands in the Caribbean. His wife is dressed in textiles created by the luxury fashion trade in France prior to revolution. Notice her maid servant holds a large bowl of sugar—a luxury foodstuff her husband imported from Saint-Domingue at great profit. Many slave traders and French plantation owners brought their slaves to France to act as servants and as ladies' maids and wet nurses (servants who fed babies). Slaves had to be registered in France, and masters had to pay a high fee.

However, as historian George Rudé points out, bourgeoisie who were engaged in manufacturing were becoming increasingly frustrated.

George Rudé

> The cause of the conflict had its roots deep in the old regime: while colonial trade, land values and luxury spending had enormously increased ... capital investment and expansion of manufacture were everywhere impeded by restrictions imposed by privileged corporations, feudal landowners and government ... [affecting] the freedom to hire labour, the freedom to produce and the freedom to buy and sell.

Source 1.12 George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 33.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 1.12, identify the factors that Rudé observes as barriers to increasing the prosperity of the Third Estate.

URBAN WORKERS AND THE URBAN POPULATION

Urban workers were those who made their living working in the cities and towns as servants, labourers or industrial workers. They made up about 6 per cent of the population. Textile manufacturing was the largest industry: wool in Amiens, Abbeville and Sedan; cotton in Rouen and Elbeuf; silk in Nîmes and Lyons. Most of the spinning and weaving was done in peasant households around the town centres, with the towns serving as marketplaces.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

In 1786 France signed a free trade agreement with Britain. It was hoped that a reduction of tariffs on French wines and silks exported to Britain would benefit France.

However, the French did not negotiate well: the agreement favoured Britain, and France was flooded with cheap machine-made cottons. This meant French workers lost their incomes, and people were still angry about it in 1789.

Source 1.13 *The Priest's Maid*, by Jean Jacques Lequeu, c. late-1700s.

EXCLUSION FROM THE GUILD SYSTEM

Most urban workers were poor and unskilled. It was difficult to become a skilled craftsman: gaining skills required training under a master, but most trades recruited from their own family or from families they knew.

It took about five years for an apprentice to become a ***journeyman*** and enter a guild. Guilds had exclusive privileges and rights, just like other corporations in French society.

journeymen a craftsman who had finished his apprenticeship and was paid a daily wage

DOMESTIC SERVANTS

Domestic servants were probably the largest single occupational group in towns and cities. They made up 5–7 per cent of the urban population. They received food, board and wages and seemed well-off compared with the general population, but they:

- were not allowed to have romantic relationships or get married
- worked whatever hours were demanded by the family
- lived almost totally within the household at the beck and call of their employers.

PROSTITUTION

For poor women, prostitution was often the only available source of income, although it often led to disease or death. In the 1760s, it was estimated that there were 25,000 prostitutes in Paris alone.

Prostitution was often the next step after a household servant became pregnant and lost her job. Another consequence of poverty was abandoned children: by the 1780s, there were an estimated 40,000 children abandoned each year.

Source 1.14 *Conduite des filles de joie à la Salpêtrière*, by Étienne Jeaurat, 1757. This painting depicts prostitutes being escorted to Salpêtrière hospital (a prison).

ECONOMIC SUFFERING, 1788–1789

The severe winter of 1788–1789 came after a poor harvest and led to great economic hardship. The price of a two-kilogram loaf of bread rose to twelve sous on 8 November 1788 and was 14.5 sous by 1 February 1789.[7]

Source 1.15 Arthur Young, cited in Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution and Napoleon* (London: Routledge, 2002), 21.

Arthur Young, July 1789

> Everything conspires to render the present period in France critical. The want of bread is terrible: accounts arrive every minute from the provinces of riots and disturbances, and calling in the military. The prices reported are the same as I found at Abbeville and Amiens—5 *sous* a pound (500 grams) for white bread and 3½ to 4 for the common sort, eaten by the poor: these rates are beyond their faculties, and occasion great misery.

Source 1.16 In William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 14.

Parish priest in Normandy, 1774

> Day labourers, journeymen and all those whose occupation does not provide for much more than food and clothing are the ones who make beggars. As young men they work and when by their work they have got decent clothing and something to pay their wedding costs, they marry, raise a first child, have much trouble raising two and if a third comes along their work is no longer enough for food, and the expense. At such time, they do not hesitate to take up a beggar's staff and take to the road.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 1.15 and 1.16 and your own knowledge, explain how urban workers' living conditions and the poor harvests of 1788–1789 became a catalyst for riot and rebellion.

Crop failure brought additional misery to peasants and urban workers. Without grain, peasants had nothing to sell and nothing to use to make bread. For urban workers, crop failures meant they had to pay higher prices for food, as well as having to compete for employment against unskilled peasants who moved into towns in search of work. In the cities, angry women led bread riots, and called on the king to control prices so that poor people could eat.

PEASANTS

There were about twenty-four million peasants in France before the revolution. They made up about 85 per cent of the population but held only 32 per cent of the land. Peasants also paid most of the tax, including taxes paid to the king, the Church and to their lord.

For most peasants, life was a continual battle to make a living from farming. In bad seasons, the battle was lost. Good seasons would yield a small surplus. Bad harvests meant shortages of food for the peasants and their animals. The very worst years meant starvation.

Most peasants did not own land or owned an amount too small to support a family. They usually worked land that belonged to someone else—their seigneur, the Church or another local landowner.

An estimated 75 per cent of the rented land in France was leased to peasants. This meant that the owner provided the seed grain and the peasant provided labour and tools. The peasant then handed over a proportion of the crop. There was also some communal land, where peasants could graze animals or gather wood.

A common feature of peasant life was the lack of food. It has been estimated that around 250,000 people were vagrants, moving from one community to another in search of food. Even peasants working the land had to find extra sources of income, which included:

- hiring themselves out for seasonal labour
- setting up a cottage industry (a small business run from the home, such as textiles)
- sending family members to places where work might be available.

ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT

In theory, the king was the 'father' of his people. It was his duty to see that people were neither overtaxed nor exploited by their landlords. With this 'duty' in mind:

- the grain trade was regulated
- stocks of grain were kept to distribute after bad harvests
- the king could order that stored grain be distributed to the poor.

Yet, in reality, the peasants' needs were always less important than the perceived needs of the state.

Source 1.17 An eighteenth-century peasant.

Source 1.18 *The Baker's Cart*, by Jean Michelin, 1656.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What was the role of the Church in French society during the eighteenth century?
2. What percentage of the French population were members of the clergy?
3. How did the Church gain money?
4. Why was the Church exempt from paying tax?
5. What percentage of the French population were members of the nobility?
6. List the types of nobility that existed in the ancien régime.
7. Explain the difference between the *noblesse d'épée* and *noblesse de robe*.
8. Name three honorific privileges that members of the nobility enjoyed.
9. Why were nobles exempt from paying most taxes?
10. Who were the wealthiest members of the Third Estate?
11. What is subsistence farming?
12. What occurred in 1788–1789 that led to economic hardship for members of the Third Estate?
13. What percentage of France's population prior to the revolution were peasants?

THE KING'S ADMINISTRATION

Turgot, 1776: 'The cause of evil, Sire, comes from the fact that your nation has no constitution. ... Your majesty is obliged to decide everything by himself ... forced to legislate on everything, usually by particular decrees; whereas you could govern like God by general laws ... if your kingdom had a regular form of government and known relationships.'

The kingdom of France had been built up over time by a process of conquest, marriage and treaty.

In 1766, France was divided into thirty-six areas that were administered separately (called ***généralités***). Each *généralité* was governed by an official appointed by the king, called an ***intendant***.

généralité the administrative divisions of France under the old regime

intendant a public official appointed by the king to govern a *généralité*

The provinces near the borders, which had generally been acquired by war or inheritance, were called the *pays d'état* and were treated differently for tax purposes than other provinces. Each time a new province was added, it kept its own language, customs and laws. (The *pays d'état* are the orange areas of the map in Source 1.19.)

To add to the confusion, the kingdom did not share a common law or a common system of taxation.

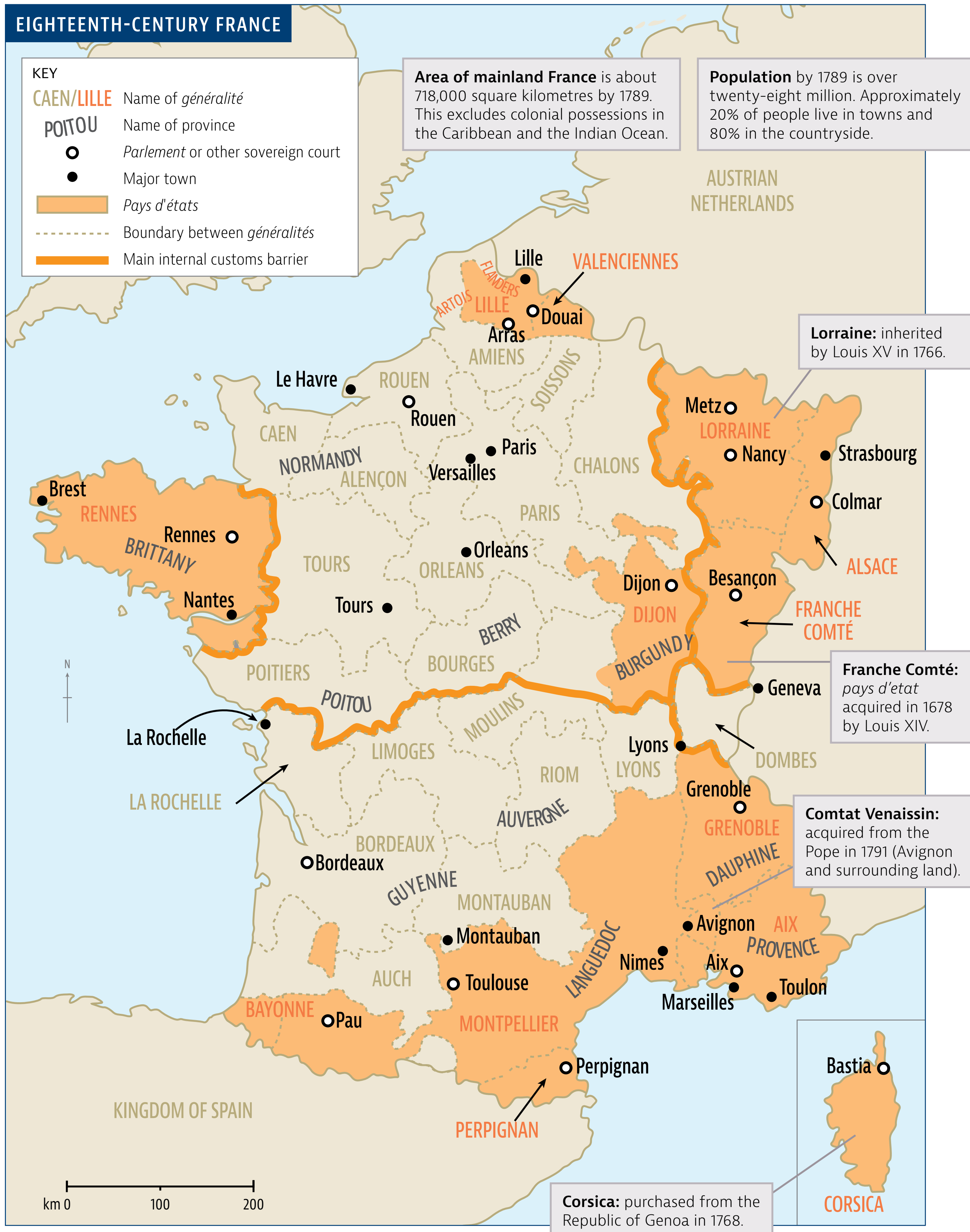
- Southern provinces were governed by written laws first set out by the ancient Romans.
- Northern areas were governed by tradition (known as common law).
- In some regions, local laws took precedence over French law, especially relating to marriage, inheritance and property.
- There were also ***seigneurial*** laws relating to ***feudal*** rights.
- There was no uniformity of tax—northern and central France paid higher taxes than the south.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1789, Paris was the second largest city in Europe, with a population of about 650,000 people.

seigneurial or feudal system system where the lord (or seigneur) provided land and military protection to peasants; in return, the peasants farmed his landholdings and paid rent in cash, produce or service

Source 1.19



THE KING'S GOVERNMENT: INEFFICIENT AND HIERARCHICAL

DIVINE RIGHT MONARCHY

- The monarch's absolute authority is reinforced by religious belief that his power comes directly from God.

ABSOLUTE MONARCHY

- The monarch rules personally without being accountable to any elected or representative body.

LOUIS XVI

- Well educated and interested in sciences including engineering.
- Religious and devout.
- Convinced of the divine right of kings and the royal traditions.
- Not opposed to reform but chronically indecisive.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

- Born in Austria—a traditional enemy of France.
- Perceived as extravagant.
- Conservative and determined to keep power of monarchy intact.
- Became very unpopular.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

- Ministers of Police, Justice, Navy, Army and Finance.
- Directly responsible to the king.
- Appointed by the king, forming his council.

INTENDANTS

- Administered the *généralités*: supervised taxation, religion, law and order, public works, communications, commerce and industry.

ADMINISTRATION

- Traditional and inefficient, preventing growth of trade.
- A patchwork of different taxation, legal and customary **jurisdictions** contained:
  - 39 provinces with governors
  - 36 *généralités* with intendants
  - internal **customs barriers**, restricting trade between regions
  - different taxes, as well as different weights and measures
  - many dialects of French language spoken
  - the language of administration, which was either French or Latin.

jurisdictions territories or areas over which the legal power of a court or institution extends

customs barriers obstacles put in place by governments to limit free trade between regions or countries

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What was the role of the intendants?
2. What was different about the areas known as *pays d'états*?
3. Name three factors that contributed to the government being inefficient or chaotic.
4. Name three factors that made the French peasants vulnerable to hardship or injustice.
5. State two ways in which a citizen of Toulouse in the south of France would be taxed or governed differently to a citizen of Paris.

FINANCE

TAXATION

- There was great inequality due to geographical location and social rank.
- The privileged estates paid little or no tax.
- The tax burden was spread unevenly across the Third Estate, and varied by region, feudal custom and seigneurial custom.
- Taxes were collected through venal offices—these were positions that people bought from the king.
- A syndicate called the Farmers-General collected indirect taxes, paid a lump sum to the government and kept the rest.
- There was no central treasury, so the Crown never received the full amount collected in its name.
- The taxation system was inefficient and open to corruption.

ECONOMY

- Agriculture still used traditional methods and subsistence farming.
- Peasants were required to pay dues in grain or other crops, so were unable to diversify.
- Internal customs barriers prevented the emergence of a national market.
- Manufacturing relied on skilled professions run within the traditional guild system.
- Most production came from small workshops with masters and journeymen living and working together.
- **Outworkers** were still used in spinning and weaving.
- Overseas trade was booming in the 1780s.
- The city of Marseilles had a near monopoly on trade with Turkey, Greece, Syria and Egypt.
- The cities of Bordeaux, Nantes, Le Havre and La Rochelle had a booming Atlantic trade: slaves were bought in Africa, taken to West Indies, and sold for colonial products (sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton and indigo), which were then imported back to France.
- Cross-Atlantic merchants gained great wealth.

JUSTICE

JUDGES

- The king was the 'fountain of justice', supreme judge of the kingdom and the final court of appeal.
- Some members of the legal profession purchased their office and usually a title to go with it, becoming *noblesse de robe*.

LEGISLATION

- Laws were laid down by the king in edicts.
- The Estates-General was the only consultative body that had the power to 'consent' to new taxes levied by the king, but had not met since 1614.
- The Assembly of Notables had not been called since 1626.

PARLEMENTS

The *parlements* were law courts, which also had the duty of issuing and administering laws passed by the king. The most important was the Parlement of Paris. There were 2300 magistrates (all *noblesse de robe*). No law could be enforced unless it was registered by the *parlements*. The *parlements* had the duty to scrutinise a law (called the right of remonstrance). Any law that was found to be defective was sent back to the king for review. However, the king could force his decrees to become law by having a *lit de justice*.

DIFFERING JURISDICTIONS

- Different crimes were subject to *parlements*, **ecclesiastical** courts or military courts.
- Written law in south, common law in north.
- ***Lettres de cachet*** issued by king.
- Perception of corruption and abuse of privilege in *parlements*.

outworkers people working from home (usually women)

ecclesiastical relating to the Church

lettre de cachet a royal order committing a noble to prison or exile indefinitely, without trial

THE TAXATION SYSTEM

Peter McPhee: 'It was the rural population above all which underwrote the costs of the three pillars of authority and privilege in France ... [Church, nobility and monarchy, which] exacted on average one-quarter to one-third of peasant produce, through taxes, seigneurial dues and the tithe.'

One of the greatest inequities of old regime France was the way taxes were structured. Members of the First and Second Estates were exempt from most taxes, which meant the tax burden fell on the Third Estate and overwhelmingly on the people who could least afford it—the peasants. The inequity of taxes was the commoners' biggest grievance before the revolution.

Source 1.20 'In times past, the most useful were crushed under stones.' The text on the stone that crushes the lower figure reads, '*Taille, Impôts et Corvées*'. The word '*impôts*' means taxes in general.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 1.20 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline which groups in society are represented by the three individuals.
2. What does the stone represent?
3. Whose point of view is expressed in this image?

TAX COLLECTION METHODS

Taxes owed to the king were collected by agents called financiers. Financiers were wealthy and ambitious bourgeoisie who had paid the Crown so they could have administrative, legal and professional positions. The positions brought them ongoing income and were often accompanied by noble status (*noblesse de robe*) and, therefore, privilege. After three generations of a family holding the position of financier, the nobility could become hereditary. Such positions were considered good investments, financially and socially. As purchased positions, they were regarded as property, which meant that an incompetent person could not be dismissed. This was a major cause of inefficiency in the king's administration of government.

The financiers made their living by handling public funds. There were 200–300 agents in France and they made substantial profits from the office. Indirect taxes were collected by a syndicate called the Farmers-General (also known as 'tax farmers'), which leased the monopoly under a six-year contract with the king. The profits from tax offices were spectacular; the officials lived luxuriously and generally bought the title that came with the office. Ordinary people regarded financiers as leeches, and they were widely hated.

direct taxes taxes imposed on individuals and collected by royal officials

EXAMPLES OF DIRECT TAXES		
TAX	**WHAT WAS IT?**	**WHO PAID IT?**
VINGTIÈME	A tax of about a twentieth (5%) on goods produced. It was levied by the government when extra income was needed (usually in wartime).	Everyone. It was one of the few direct taxes that the nobility had to pay.
CAPITATION	A tax per person, as counted by a census.	Everyone.
TAILLE	Land tax. The major tax on all French subjects.	Everyone, except for: » the Church (which owned 10% of the land) » nobles (who owned 33% of the land) » most towns. That left the Third Estate: wealthy landowners and the peasantry.
TITHE	Peasants paid about 10% of their harvest. The tithe was meant to pay for the local clergy. Often paid in grain and stored in tithe barns. (This meant the peasants had to plant grain, even if their land was better suited to growing other crops.)	The Third Estate paid. First Estate and Second Estate were exempt from paying tithes.
DON GRATUIT	A voluntary annual gift to the king.	Paid by the Church to the king. Usually less than 5% of the Church's income.
CORVÉE ROYALE	Labour tax. The corvée took workers away from the fields for 6–30 days per year so they could do unpaid labour fixing the roads.	Peasants.

indirect taxes taxes imposed on goods and collected by 'tax farmers'

EXAMPLES OF INDIRECT TAXES	
TAX	**WHAT WAS IT?**
GABELLE	Salt tax. This tax was hated, as salt was vital for preserving food.
FEUDAL DUES	Dues peasants paid to rent their farms. Peasants often had to pay 3–25% of their produce to the local lord.
BANALITÉS	Taxes paid by peasants to use the seigneur's mill, oven and wine press.
OTHER SEIGNEURIAL RIGHTS	Lords had hunting and grazing rights.

As there was no central treasury, there was no specific accounting of the money that was collected. The tax agents paid a sum set by the Crown and were free to keep the rest for themselves. In a bad year they had to draw on their reserves of funds to pay the Crown, but in a normal year they kept a surplus. They often lent money to the Crown, on which the Crown then paid interest.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 What was the name of the land tax and who paid it?
2 What was the tithe and how much did peasants typically pay?
3 Why was the salt tax so hated?
4 Why couldn't an incompetent financier be dismissed?
5 Why was taxation a major grievance of the Third Estate prior to the revolution? Refer to specific taxes listed in the tables to provide evidence for your answer.

THE ECONOMY OF THE 1780S

Georges Lefebvre: 'France remained a nation of agriculture and of handicrafts. The development of capitalism and of economic freedom met strong resistance on French soil.'

By the 1780s, the French economy was being held back by:

- old-fashioned farming practices
- medieval production methods for manufactured goods
- transportation difficulties.

While England had begun reforming agricultural practices as early as 1730, France in the 1780s was still operating on the old feudal pattern—rotating crops around three fields and paying feudal or seigneurial taxes to the local lord. At the same time the French population had grown from twenty million at the end of the seventeenth century to twenty-eight million by 1789—an increase of more than 25 per cent. The population explosion during the eighteenth century coupled with limited food production often led to insufficient food supply.

CUSTOMS BARRIERS

France was riddled with internal customs barriers or places where traders had to pay a tax to bring their goods across a barrier (e.g., a regional border, a river crossing or a town gate). Because of the customs barriers, markets tended to be local and regional, rather than national. The collection of taxes at these barriers meant that the cost of transporting goods from one area to another increased, as customs and excise duties had to be paid each time the trader crossed the custom barrier. Historian William Doyle explains that a trader from Franche-Comté in eastern France, near Switzerland, who wanted to sell goods in southern France and ship them down the Saône and Rhône rivers, 'paid duty at thirty-six separate customs barriers on the way, some public and some private'.[8] To complicate matters further, there was no common system of weights and measures in use, which added to the general inefficiency and confusion in trade.

FARMING

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1790, the National Assembly concluded that one in ten French people could be classified as poor. Historians believe the figure was closer to one in five, maybe even one in three.

The rural population was predominantly poor and their livelihood was extremely vulnerable to weather. In times of good crops, the population increased as more babies survived. However, crop failures because of disease or poor weather meant disaster. Most peasant families grew only enough for themselves, with little or no surplus to sell. This meant that in bad seasons they had nothing to fall back on. The poorest peasants were the day labourers: they owned nothing and had only a few crops and chickens behind their rented cottages to tide them over if the harvest failed.

MANUFACTURING

By 1770, Britain had established its first steam-powered textile factory, which meant that every part of cotton production could take place in the same location. By contrast, French textiles were made by peasants doing the spinning and weaving in the winter months, with the finishing done in small craft workshops in the towns. The results were exquisite, but when the 1786 free trade agreement with Britain was signed, these medieval-style systems could not compete with cheaper factory-made imports.

The French manufacturing sector was dominated by guilds, associations of craftsmen, and merchants, which kept up ***monopolies*** granted by the Crown or town councils centuries before. The guilds limited the number of individual producers and limited the opportunities for profit. This reduced the potential for economic growth in the regions and towns.

monopolies domination of a commercial market in a particular region by one supplier

THE PROFITABLE OVERSEAS TRADE

France's greatest wealth-producing territories were the West Indies islands, particularly Saint-Domingue (now Haiti). Coffee, sugar and tropical produce were shipped to France and distributed throughout Europe. The slave trade was very profitable and supported other trades, such as shipping. As a result, seaports in France flourished and overseas trade grew by 500 per cent over the eighteenth century. Merchants in Bordeaux and other cities grew wealthy from the shipping trade, with docks, warehouses, offices, housing and inns thriving. Merchants, shipping agents, lawyers and bankers profited from Europe's appetite for coffee and sugar. Demand from the colonies for other agricultural goods led to specialisation, such as wine in the hinterland of Bordeaux, and wheat on the plains outside Paris.

Source 1.21 *The Port of Bordeaux*, by Pierre Lacour, 1804.

LOSS OF FRENCH COLONIES IN THE SEVEN YEARS WAR, 1756–1763

By the middle of the eighteenth century France and Britain were rival colonial powers, with colonies and trading companies spread around the world, including India, Africa and China.

France claimed the Isle de France (Mauritius) and the Isle de Bourbon (La Réunion) in the Indian Ocean, and had trading interests in Madagascar. France also had a direct influence in Vietnam. There were also French settlements in America (New Orleans), Canada (Quebec, Cape Breton Island) and the West Indies (eastern part of Saint-Domingue, Guadeloupe, Martinique). The islands in the West Indies were known as the Antilles, and considered to be the jewels of the French Empire.

However, when France was defeated by Britain in the Seven Years War (1756–1763), many of these possessions were lost.

As well as losing most of its colonial empire, the French faced the cost of rebuilding its navy, which had been damaged by the British.

The British victory and the financial burden of the Seven Years War weakened the French monarchy and were long-term factors that led to the outbreak of revolution. Then, when American colonists started fighting Great Britain during the American War of Independence (1775–1783), the French saw an opportunity to support the Americans and avenge their defeat in the Seven Years War. However, France's involvement in the American War of Independence would have serious outcomes (as you will read in Chapter 3).

TENSIONS AND GRIEVANCES ON THE EVE OF REVOLUTION

By the late eighteenth century, the social, political and economic conditions had led to widespread anger and resentment of privilege among the people of France.

impoverished made poor

Feudal traditions meant that people inherited wealth and power, and taxes, laws and privileges prevented most commoners from building wealth and improving their circumstances. Outdated agricultural, manufacturing and trading practices meant that many people in the towns and countryside were *impoverished* and sometimes hungry. These long-term tensions and grievances made the people receptive to new ideas about justice and power.

LONG-TERM TENSIONS AND GRIEVANCES IN OLD REGIME FRANCE

THE FIRST ESTATE: THE CHURCH

There was a clear social divide in the Church:

- Nobility were the upper clergy—the cardinals, bishops, abbots and canons.
- Commoners were almost all the priests, curés, and most people in monastic orders.

Members of the upper clergy were criticised by lower clergy and members of the Third Estate for:

- a perceived lack of spiritual engagement with their *parishioners*
- leaving for extended periods of time to live at Versailles or noble family estates
- acquiring several parishes just for the income (called a stipend), then employing a lower clergyman to look after the parishioners for a fraction of the stipend.

THE SECOND ESTATE: THE NOBILITY

Members of the nobility of the sword, whose ancestors had earned their titles and privileges on the battlefields of the Middle Ages, resented the new nobles—bourgeoisie who had purchased their nobility.

- The new nobility was often far wealthier than the nobles of the sword.
- Around 60 per cent of the nobles of the sword lived in poverty.

In the absence of regular sessions of the Estates-General, the nobles could not participate in any form of government.

THE THIRD ESTATE: COMMONERS

The Third Estate bore the burden of supporting the kingdom, but they:

- had no control over how tax money was spent
- had no representation in any elected body.

BOURGEOISIE

- The successful upper bourgeoisie wanted to join the nobility so that they could have access to government positions that were restricted to nobles, and to other privileges.

PEASANTS

- The peasants paid the bulk of the tax in France. Sometimes this was 50–60 per cent of the gross value of their produce in direct taxation to the Crown.
- The land did not produce enough income and many peasants worked as roaming labour for hire.

URBAN WORKERS

- The removal of custom duties (e.g. free trade agreement with Britain) allowed foreign produce to flood the market, while the guilds restricted access to skilled jobs.

The grinding poverty of the poorest peasants and urban workers was a long-term grievance that contributed to the outbreak of revolution.

The distance between the lives of the wealthy nobles of the tax-exempt Second Estate and the majority of French people in the Third Estate bred bitterness and anger.

parishioners members of a parish

CHAPTER 1 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The king of France ruled by divine right, subject to God alone.
- The king's power as the sovereign was absolute and limited only by tradition. He exercised undivided legislative, executive, judicial and financial authority in his kingdom.
- In the course of the eighteenth century, some institutions, such as the *parlements*, attempted to hold the king's power in check.
- Louis XVI was indecisive, which made him appear weak. His Austrian-born wife, Marie Antoinette, developed a reputation for extravagant spending and was often slandered in political pamphlets.
- France was a society in which political, social and economic distinctions were based on the membership of a legally defined social group known as an estate or order.
- The division into estates originated in the Middle Ages. There were three estates, with membership of the first two granting their members extensive political, social and economic privileges.
- The First Estate (about 0.6 per cent of the population) was comprised of the clergy of the Catholic Church
- The Second Estate (about 0.4 per cent of the population) was comprised of the nobility.
- The Third Estate (about 99 per cent of the population) was comprised of everyone who did not belong to the First or Second Estates, also known as the commoners: bourgeoisie, urban workers and peasants.
- The French economy was based predominantly on agriculture and was localised. Poor harvests led to periods of limited food supply, which often resulted in significant sections of the population going hungry.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Explain the ideas, beliefs and attitudes that underpinned France's absolute, divine-right monarchy. How did this system affect people's lives?
2. Analyse the ways in which Louis XVI contributed to his subjects' dissatisfaction and unrest prior to 1789.
3. Outline three advantages and three disadvantages of being a member of each of France's three estates.
4. Name three factors that contributed to the government being inefficient or chaotic.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

In many ways, the peasantry were trapped by the structure of the ancien régime. Outline the factors that prevented them from breaking out of their cycle of poverty.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 1.01 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Identify the individuals and the estate to which each belongs.
2. Identify two features of the image that suggest criticism of social relationships in France under the ancien régime.
3. Consider the relative percentage of the population that each group comprised. How do the percentages compare?
4. Compare Source 1.01 to Source 1.20. Identify similarities and differences in the way in which each individual is shown.
5. Evaluate how social divisions contributed to a revolutionary situation by the 1780s. Use evidence from this chapter to support your response.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT: IDEAS FOR REFORM OF SOCIETY (PRE-1789)

'If this is the best of possible worlds, what then are the others?'

—Voltaire, *Candide* (1759)

The Age of Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that peaked in France between 1730 and 1780. The movement was led by a group of intellectuals and social critics called *philosophes*, who applied reason and logic to their thinking, based on observed evidence. The new ideas of reason, progress and tolerance were avidly discussed in France before the revolution. The *philosophes* distrusted organised religion and especially feudal institutions and the benefits of privilege. They optimistically believed in natural law and the natural goodness of man in nature.

While no *philosophe* called for revolution, they did advocate reform and their ideas achieved wide acceptance, providing French people with new foundations on which to build a post-revolutionary society.

philosophes a group of *philosophers* (writers and thinkers) of the eighteenth century that criticised many aspects of the ancien régime. They debated ideas based on reason rather than tradition and upheld individual liberties: freedom of speech and religion and equality before the law

Source 2.01 ***A Supper of Philosophes*, by Jean Huber, 1772.** Voltaire is at the centre, arm raised. Among those depicted are Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat Condorcet, Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond d'Alembert and Jean-François de la Harpe.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What was the Enlightenment?
- Who were the *philosophes*?
- What were their ideas?
- What audience did these critical thinkers and writers reach?
- Did these new ideas directly contribute to the outbreak of revolution in France?

CHAPTER 2

THE ENLIGHTENMENT: A CHALLENGE TO ABSOLUTISM

In pre-revolutionary France, with its lively ***salons***, coffee houses and literary societies—and with its wide range of reading matter and opportunities for debate—there were many opportunities to criticise the failures of the government.

It is hard to evaluate how ideas contributed to the French Revolution. First, how do you identify which ideas and beliefs influenced public opinion? Then, how did those ideas lead to the growth of political ideologies that challenged existing political, economic and social structures? It is also important to know how ideas were transmitted. How did the ideas spread? Which individuals and groups were aware of these ideas? How were they influenced by them?

Ideas themselves do not create revolutions—but revolutions depend on ideas to offer a vision of an alternative state.

The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that is generally associated with eighteenth-century France, but it had emerged internationally out of the scientific revolution across seventeenth-century Europe.

The intellectual foundations for the eighteenth-century critical thinkers called *philosophes* came from people such as:

- English physical scientists such as Sir Isaac Newton—who published *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* in 1686
- political thinkers such as John Locke—who in 1690 developed theories about a social contract between the ruler and the ruled.

The *philosophes* worked across Europe, from the Italian peninsula to Edinburgh, from England to the American colonies. The *philosophes* of the Enlightenment were thinkers and writers. They included:

- Denis Diderot
- Jean le Rond d'Alembert—who worked with Diderot to produce the *Encyclopédie*
- Baron de Montesquieu
- François-Marie d'Arouet, better known as Voltaire
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Enlightenment writings emphasised the use of reason in human affairs and logic based on the observation of nature (a logic referred to as 'empiricism'), and challenged the accepted 'truths' of earlier generations.

The *philosophes* wanted to create a world where reason prevailed and people of every group could enjoy civil rights, personal liberty and freedom of religion. They were:

- educated men who were critical of government, religion and social structures such as privilege
- preoccupied with ideas of reform of the ancien régime according to rational principles
- often nobles—the friends of kings, and familiar with the courts of Europe.

The *philosophes* did not necessarily want to destroy the old regime, but to reform it according to reason and natural laws.

salons social and intellectual gatherings in private houses

Montesquieu.

THE *PHILOSOPHES*

MONTESQUIEU, 1689–1755

Montesquieu: 'To be truly great, one must stand with the people and not above them.'

Montesquieu—or Charles de Secondat, Baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu (meaning Charles II, Baron of Brède and Montesquieu), to give his full name—was born a noble. He had inherited a seat in the Bordeaux *parlement*, and in 1728 was elected to the French Academy. Montesquieu was a nobleman who shared many of the beliefs of the aristocracy; however, his concepts of political life ranged far beyond the interests of his own estate. He is most famous for his ***critique*** of ***absolutism*** and for promoting the separation of powers in government.

critique detailed evaluation; review

absolutism system in which all power is vested in a monarch or dictator; absolute monarchy

despotism the exercise of absolute power, especially in a cruel and oppressive way

In France during the ancien régime, the king was the chief legislator, the chief executive officer and the chief judge. This left the door open for corruption and ***despotism***.

Montesquieu's most famous work is *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748). In it he articulated two beliefs:

1. Absolute government only suited large empires with hot climates, while democracy was only workable in small city-states.
2. Despotism emerged from systems of absolute government.

DID YOU KNOW?
The Spirit of the Laws was not well received in France. The Church banned the book, along with many other of Montesquieu's works. In 1751, *The Spirit of the Laws* was added to the Church's 'Index of Prohibited Books'.

Montesquieu's answer to this second argument was that power should be divided between the monarch and other bodies in the state, such as the *parlements* and the provincial estates of France. He admired Britain's constitution, which limited the powers of the monarch, and believed that the most effective form of government was one where there was a separation of powers between:

- the legislative—the lawmakers
- the executive—those who implemented the laws
- the judiciary—those who judged when the law was broken.

Montesquieu argued that separation of powers was necessary, as it would establish a mode of government where 'no man need be afraid of another'.

Source 2.02 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 11, Chapter 6 (1848), trans. Thomas Nugent (1752) (Kitchener: Bartoche Books, 2001).

Montesquieu on the separation of powers

The political liberty of the subject [of a state] is a tranquillity of mind arising from the opinion each person has of his safety. In order to have this liberty, it is requisite the government be so constituted as one man need not be afraid of another.

When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty; because apprehensions may arise, lest the same monarch or senate should enact ***tyrannical*** laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner.

tyrannical laws made at the personal will of a single ruler, but not governed by any controls

Thus ...

KEY IDEA

[Liberty] is based on a separation of the three powers found in every state—the legislative power, the executive power and the judicial power. The first is in the hands of the parliament, the second is in the hands of the monarch and the third is in the hands of the magistrates. ... In this way, the balance of the constitution is preserved. ... Liberty depends upon each of the three powers being kept entirely separate.

Montesquieu was arguing for the end of absolutism, rather than abolition of monarchy. His writings were praised by Enlightenment thinkers in Europe and Britain, and he influenced American political thinking—especially the construction of the 1787 American Constitution, where the first three articles are devoted to the separation of powers in government.

MONTESQUIEU'S IDEAS — KEY IDEAS

- Separation of powers
- Slavery is not justifiable on any grounds

MONTESQUIEU AND THE PRACTICE OF SLAVERY

The colonists of North America regarded Montesquieu as a champion of liberty, ignoring what he had written in *The Spirit of the Laws* about slavery, where he argued that the institution of slavery corrupted the master of the slaves.

Montesquieu on slavery

> The state of slavery is in its own nature bad. It is neither useful to the master nor to the slave; not to the slave, because he can do nothing through a motive of virtue; nor to the master, because by having an unlimited authority over his slaves he insensibly accustoms himself to the want of all moral virtues, and thence becomes fierce, hasty, severe, choleric, voluptuous, and cruel. ... Where it is of the utmost importance that human nature should not be debased or dispirited, there ought to be no slavery.

Source 2.03 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book 15, Chapter 1 (1848), trans. Thomas Nugent (1752) (Kitchener: Bartoche Books, 2001), 262.

SUMMING UP MONTESQUIEU

Montesquieu's arguments about the need to separate the three functions of government to avoid despotism challenged the practice of absolute divine-right monarchy. In a divine-right monarchy, the powers of making the law, administering the law and judging the law all resided in a single person: the king.

The idea of separation of powers—and Montesquieu's admiration for the system of constitutional monarchy of England—influenced the men who were to determine France's first formal written constitution in 1791.

KEY IDEAS

Give a real-life example of each of the following concepts:

- absolute monarchy
- democracy
- separation of powers
- aristocracy
- despotism.

VOLTAIRE, 1694–1778

Voltaire, 1764: 'The individual who persecutes a man, his brother, because he is not of the same opinion, is a monster.'

'Voltaire' was the pen-name adopted by François-Marie d'Arouet in 1717 after being imprisoned in the Bastille for offending the court with his play *Œdipe* (*Oedipus*).

Voltaire was from a comfortable bourgeois background. He was a royal historian, and personal assistant to Louis XV—a very privileged position. Until the age of forty, Voltaire was largely known as an entertaining writer of dramas, tragedies and essays; his pieces were favourites in the salons of the aristocracy and the royal court.

Voltaire was the most famous name of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the champion of reason over superstition, renowned for his caustic wit, and criticisms of social institutions, especially the Catholic Church. He was said to have had 'a thin, skull-like smile that sneered at everything sacred: religion, love, patriotism, censorship'.[1] He argued for freedom of speech and religious toleration. Voltaire's idea of the separation of Church and state had major influence, and had profound consequences for the government after the revolution.

Voltaire.

ON RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

In his later years, Voltaire took up the cause of freedom of religion and religious toleration. He deplored the power of the Catholic Church over people's lives, with its bigotry, intolerance and superstition. Voltaire argued that these should be replaced by 'natural religion' (deism) and 'natural morality' arising from the exercise of man's reason.

Voltaire established what were to become the 'crucial weapons of the intellectual critic over the next two hundred years: investigation, exposure, dispassionate argument, ridicule, and the oxygen of publicity'.[2]

Voltaire demonstrated these beliefs through his involvement in the case of Jean Calas. In 1762 Calas, a Protestant, was executed on the decision of the Parlement of Toulouse, allegedly for murdering his son. Voltaire's anger over the intolerance and bigotry of the verdict extended to the government itself, which controlled its people by such displays. He also conducted a public campaign to rehabilitate the reputation of Calas, portraying him as a martyr to the corruption and tyranny of the Church and state.

In 1763, Voltaire published his *Treatise on Toleration*.

Source 2.04 Voltaire, *Treatise on Toleration* (1763), cited in Mark Fielding and Margot Morecombe, *The Spirit of Change: France in Revolution* (Australia: McGraw Hill, 2001), 42.

Voltaire, *Treatise on Toleration* (1763)

KEY IDEA

Tolerance has never brought civil war; intolerance has covered the earth with carnage. ... What, is each citizen to be permitted to believe and to think that which his reason rightly or wrongly dictates? He should indeed, provided he does not disturb the public order, ... and if you say that it is a crime not to believe in the dominant religion, you accuse then yourself the first Christians, your ancestors, and you justify those whom you accuse of having martyred them.

Voltaire had explored the notion of religious tolerance in an earlier work, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733). His sketch of the English doing business, taken from the Sixth Letter, is particularly famous.

Source 2.05 Voltaire, 'Sixth Letter Concerning the English Nation' (printed 1735), cited in Richard Holmes, 'Voltaire's Grin,' *The New York Review of Books*, 42 no. 19 (1995): 51.

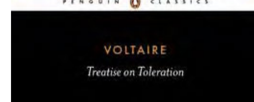
Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733)

Go into the London Exchange. ... There you will find representatives of every nation quietly assembled to promote human welfare. There the Jew, the Mahometan [Muslim] and the Christian deal with each other as though they were all of the same religion. ... There the Presbyterian trusts the Anabaptist, and the Anglican accepts the Quaker's bond. ... If there were only one religion in England, there would be a risk of despotism; if there were only two, they would cut each other's throats; as it is, there are at least thirty, and they live happily and at peace.

LIMITS ON TOLERATION

However, Voltaire did not totally endorse tolerance in his writings, and neither practised it himself entirely. The *Treatise on Toleration* contains a vital qualification of the universal principle in Chapter 18, entitled 'The One Case in Which Intolerance Is a Human Right'. Here Voltaire posed the question that has since challenged all liberal thinkers: How can society tolerate those groups that are themselves intolerant, thereby threatening the principle itself?

Voltaire's answer was succinct: society cannot tolerate them. For the individual, tolerance is a right and an absolute duty. Yet, for society and its legislators, tolerance must have a limit. Where intolerance becomes criminal, the laws of the liberal state cannot tolerate it.



Voltaire wrote the *Treatise on Toleration* to publicise the miscarriage of justice against Jean Calas. In it he told the story of the case and sharply attacked fanaticism. The continued relevance of Voltaire's work is apparent from its numerous modern reprints, such as this 2017 Penguin edition. The publishers state that the *Treatise* is 'one of the most important essays on religious tolerance and freedom of thought ... as fresh and urgent today as it was when it was first published in 1763'.

More specifically, Voltaire noted that 'if men are to deserve tolerance, they must begin by not being fanatics'.[3] For Voltaire, fanaticism was essentially expressed by the two great curses of civilisation: religious persecution and racial persecution.[4]

ATTITUDES TOWARDS JEWS AND AFRICANS

However, Voltaire himself was not above reproach. His writings often exhibit prejudice against Jews: over thirty of the entries in his 1764 *Philosophical Dictionary* contain anti-Semitic statements, while the entry on Toleration itself refers to the Jews as 'the most intolerant and cruel of all the peoples of Antiquity'.[5] Elsewhere he wrote, '[Jews are] born with raging fanaticism in their hearts, just as … the Germans are born with blonde hair'.[6] Voltaire's views about people of colour were just as uncharitable.

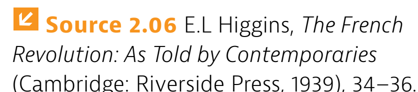
There were several hundred thousand slaves on islands in the French colonies, and perhaps about 800 of them could be found on the French mainland at any one time throughout the eighteenth century. In his 1734 *Metaphysical Treatise*, Voltaire likened Africans to animals and suggested that 'abominable matings' with monkeys had created the 'monstrous species' described by the ancients. He scolded Christians for believing that Africans were made in God's image and declared that slavery—which he condemned elsewhere for its effects on the masters—to be the condition that 'nature had reserved for Blacks'.[7]

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Compare Voltaire's perspectives on Jewish and African people with current mainstream views. Discuss the extent to which historical figures can or should be judged by today's values.

ON SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

In the 1764 *Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire set down his ideas about civil and ecclesiastical law alongside articles critical of the Catholic Church, Judaism, Islam and other institutions. This article, although short, is one to note carefully, as these ideas were adapted by the revolutionaries into the 1790 Civil Constitution of the Clergy—with significant consequences.



Source 2.06 E.L Higgins, *The French Revolution: As Told by Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1939), 34–36.

Voltaire, 'On Civil and Ecclesiastical Law', 1764 KEY SOURCE

> No ecclesiastical law should have any force except it have the express *sanction* of the government. By this means Athens and Rome were freed from religious quarrels.
>
> Magistrates alone should have power to allow or prohibit work on feast days, because it is not the business of priests to forbid men to cultivate their fields.
>
> Everything which concerns marriages should depend solely on the magistrates, and priests should limit themselves to the august function of blessing them.
>
> Lending at interest should be purely a concern of the civil law, since it alone has charge of commerce.
>
> All ecclesiastics [priests and other church officers] should be subject in all cases to the government, because they are subjects of the state.
>
> No priest should ever have the power to take from a citizen the least *prerogative* under the pretext that the citizen is a sinner, because the priest is a sinner and out to pray for sinners instead of judging them.
>
> Magistrates, laborers, and priests should bear the expenses of the state equally, because they belong to the state equally.

sanction permission

prerogative an exclusive right or privilege

secular worldly things that are not regarded as religious, spiritual or sacred

Voltaire sought to restrict the power the Church had over the lives of the people by separating what was religious from what was ***secular***, and putting the civil law above the laws of the Church.[8]

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 What aspects of King Louis XVI's system of absolute monarchy did Montesquieu criticise?
2 Outline one of the 'crucial weapons' with which Voltaire tried to arm his readers in the latter part of the eighteenth century.
3 What practices in the ancien régime was Voltaire targeting when he suggested alterations to the legal system (Source 2.06)?

ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Today, Voltaire is considered a passionate supporter of freedom of speech. He was troubled throughout his life by interference from authorities: his works were often banned or burned, and he had royal orders (called *lettres de cachet*) issued against him.

Some people claim that Voltaire said, 'I disapprove of what you say but will defend to the death your right to say it'. This sentence has a fine ring to it, but there is no evidence that Voltaire said it—and he certainly never wrote it.

KEY IDEAS **VOLTAIRE'S IDEAS**

- Religious tolerance
- Power of reason, critical thinking
- Freedom of speech

SUMMING UP VOLTAIRE

Voltaire's ideas on freedom of speech and the triumph of reason over superstition were to become the great calls of his age. His demand for tolerance was carried forward in legislation but, in their efforts to separate Church from state, the revolutionaries unwittingly created a great division that threatened their revolutionary project.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, 1712–1778

Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762): 'Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains. Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they.'

While Voltaire emphasised the importance of reason, Rousseau emphasised emotion and the goodness of nature. Rousseau's works celebrated equality and popular sovereignty—and he was the writer whose works had the greatest influence on the course of the French Revolution.[9] For Rousseau, power resides with the people, and government is a social contract.

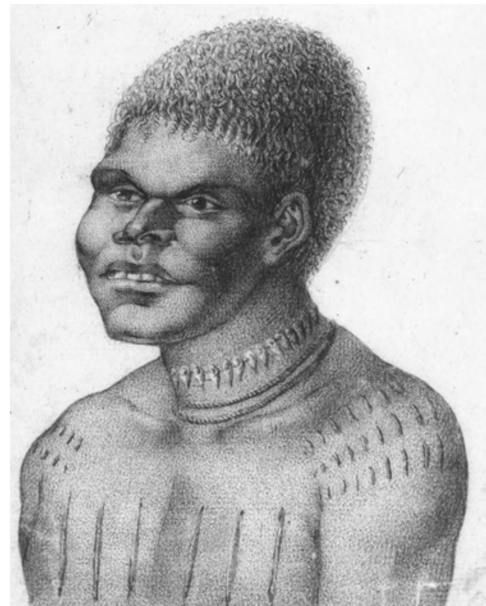
DID YOU KNOW?

In *Émile* (1762), Rousseau wrote that 'The noblest work in education is to make a reasoning man. ... If children understood how to reason, they would not need to be educated.'

THE NOBLE SAVAGE

Rousseau argued that modern society was artificial and corrupt, and could not make people happy. For Rousseau, civilisation was the source of the evil: as a society became more structured and legalistic, the more it lost touch with essential values that contributed to happiness.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, by Allan Ramsay, 1766.



Source 2.07 *Portrait of Bara Ourou, an Aborigine from Van Diemen's Land*, by Nicholas-Martin Petit.
Petit was an artist with Nicolas Baudin's 1800–1803 French expedition to Australia. François Péron, a naturalist, described Bara Ourou as 'possessed of a well-formed head, broad and brawny shoulders, a large chest and strongly muscular buttocks. ... Bara Ourou ... was the handsomest man in the band.'[10]

In a natural state, Rousseau argued, a man was spontaneous, honest and free. This led to the idea of the 'noble savage'—man living at liberty in his world and in harmony with his environment, untouched by the corrupting influences of civilisation. Rousseau believed that only such a man could be truly happy. Systems of laws, property ownership and 'civilised society' necessarily led to his corruption—and, thus, to debasement and misery.

Rousseau wrote that civilised people are wearers of masks and reality is always replaced by appearance. In modern societies, Rousseau believed that 'Man no longer dares to appear what he is. Cultured individuals appear superficially polite and charming, but underneath they are full of fear, suspicion, hatred, treachery and cynicism.'[11]

ORIGINS OF INEQUALITY IN SOCIETY

Rousseau developed his ideas further in *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755). He wrote that every variety of injustice found in human society is an artificial result of the control exercised by defective political and intellectual influences over the healthy, natural impulses of otherwise 'noble savages'.

Source 2.08 *Poedua, Daughter of Orea, Chief of Ulaietea, Society Islands*, by John Webber, 1785.

Rousseau's concept of the 'noble savage' was supported by comments from French explorer Bougainville in 1768, when he stated that the simplicity of the newly explored Tahiti was similar to the Garden of Eden. The native Tahitian was born equal under 'natural law', enjoyed '***inalienable*** popular sovereignty' and shared property in common.

inalienable not removable, cannot be taken away

For Rousseau, there was nothing inevitable or natural about human-made institutions of property and social inequality. Rousseau viewed property as one of the 'chains' that imprisoned the 'civilised' person. He believed firmly that property was the root cause of all social ills.

THE GENERAL WILL

KEY IDEA

Rousseau argued that by ***legitimising and sanctifying property rights***, the rich are able to seize most of the land and make the majority poor. This meant that social relations become that of a master and slaves. Therefore, society needed to be governed by reason, representation and morally incorruptible leaders, who could help the general population discover and achieve their true and 'general will'.

legitimising and sanctifying property rights regarding ownership of property as legally and morally right and holy

Just what was the 'general will'?

If individuals at an assembly were to vote out of self-interest, that would result in 'the Will of All'. Rousseau saw the general will as something pure, noble, patriotic and altruistic. However, if differing opinions did arise, Rousseau believed they would cancel each other out. It was—quite literally—democracy: the expressed views of the people became the laws by which the society was governed.

In Rousseau's state of nature, humans had no understanding of property or 'rights'. But then a few cunning individuals would suggest that everyone join a 'social contract' to ensure the rule of law, guaranteeing universal security. The 'social contract' then was corrupted by the powerful, who used the laws to restrict the freedom of the majority—and entrench their own superiority.

KEY SOURCE

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT (1762): IDEAS OF REFORM AND REVOLUTION

Rousseau's most influential work in terms of ideas of reform and revolution was *The Social Contract*. It begins with this statement: 'Man is born free, and yet everywhere he is in chains.' To Rousseau, this meant that man was oppressed by laws imposed on him by government. Rousseau repeated his belief that the original state of man is one of liberty and equality.

DID YOU KNOW?
Robespierre is said to have slept with a copy of Rousseau's *The Social Contract* beside his bed.

To protect this freedom and equality, men join together under a social contract and appoint governments to protect them. Thus, sovereignty or power resides in the people who have appointed the government to act on their behalf. In other words—rule by the people, for the people.

GOVERNMENTS CREATE A SOCIETY OF LIBERTY AND EQUALITY

The main purpose of government must be to create a society in which every individual has real liberty and equality that cannot be taken away—that is inalienable. In forming a social contract every citizen gives up their individual rights so that all might enjoy civil liberty. But as citizens would voluntarily obey the laws out of a sense of obligation, they have not given up their sovereign powers to the government.

ratified an official agreement

However, Rousseau warned, 'A law not ***ratified*** by the people in person is no law at all'. He wanted a system where there were public votes on all issues of importance, not the English system of electing deputies to speak for the people, because, 'As soon as they are elected, [society] is enslaved'.[12]

LAW FOR THE COMMON GOOD IS THE GENERAL WILL

Rousseau believed that once the people were assembled, the vote of the majority would determine the law. For him, the sole function of legislation is to achieve the common good: 'The greatest good of all, which should be the aim of all legislation, may … be reduced to two main objects: liberty and equality.'[13]

Rousseau believed that when these two objects were achieved, the laws were serving man, rather than oppressing him.

CITIZENS SHOULD OVERTHROW GOVERNMENT IF IT FAILS

Under the social contract, each citizen accepts the wishes of the majority—the general will—and the government implements this general will. If the government fails to implement the wishes of the citizens who have appointed it, the citizens can use their authority to overthrow it and appoint a new government.

But what of the minority who do not vote for a law? Rousseau did not see this as a difficulty, as the minority needed to 'have it proved to them that they estimated the general will wrongly. Once it is declared, they are, as citizens, participants in it, and as subjects they must obey it.'[14]

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Explain Rousseau's concept of a social contract.
2. How could the social contract be corrupted by the powerful?
3. Under what conditions can citizens overthrow the government under Rousseaus' social contract?
4. What is the 'general will'?

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT MAY BE LEGITIMATELY BROKEN

The social contract itself is neither fixed, nor is it unable to be changed. Rousseau stated that 'there is … no basic law which cannot be repealed, not excluding the social contract itself; for if all the citizens assembled [wish] to break the contract, it is impossible to doubt that it would be very legitimately broken.'[15] This is the key justification for citizens to take revolutionary action.

CIVIL RELIGION IS NECESSARY

In the last section of *The Social Contract*, 'On Civil Religion', Rousseau argued that the social contract between citizens needed some kind of minimal religious sanction.

This mild form of deism would become the official state religion. It would encourage individuals to believe that a violation of state laws would be sinful as well as illegal. (See Chapter 13 to find out how Robespierre followed these ideas in creating the Cult of the Supreme Being in 1794.)

SUMMING UP ROUSSEAU

Rousseau's ideas circulated widely from the 1780s, and after 1789 they were claimed as the most important source of inspiration for the revolutionaries. His image of man born free but enchained by bad government became a powerful call to action for the political men of the early revolution, while his idea of power being with the people inspired the popular movements of the later revolution. Leaders such as Robespierre drew heavily on Rousseau's concept of the general will and the virtue of the people, as well as religion based on reason rather than superstition. Yet, it was Rousseau's explanation of the relationship between the people and the government as a social contract—which the people could (or even should) break if the government failed to fulfil the general will—that provided the justification for revolutionary action.

ROUSSEAU'S IDEAS — KEY IDEAS

- General will
- Social contract
- Moral simplicity
- Popular sovereignty

A 'DREAM OF PROGRESS': THE *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*

A commentator on the *Encyclopédie*: '[It was the] great affair of its time, the goal to which everything preceding it was tending, the origin of everything that has followed it, and consequently the true centre for any history of ideas in the eighteenth century.'

When the *Encyclopédie* first appeared in 1751, it was the greatest publishing enterprise to date. Its aim was to organise all useful human knowledge. It comprised seventeen volumes of text and eleven volumes of engravings, and was published between 1751 and 1780. The volumes were printed by illegal presses operating in defiance of the authorities and, more specifically, against the orders of the Church.

DID YOU KNOW?
King Louis XVI had a set of the *Encyclopédie*, but it was second-hand.

The preface of the *Encyclopédie*, stating its aim

> In truth, the aim of an encyclopaedia is to collect all the knowledge scattered over the face of the earth, to present its general outlines and structure to the men with whom we live, and to transmit this knowledge to those who will come after us, so that the work of the past centuries may be useful to the following centuries, that our children, by becoming more educated, may at the same time become more virtuous and happier, and that we may not die without having deserved well of the human race.

Source 2.09 Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond D'Alembert, *The Encyclopédie*, cited in Marshall Davidson, *The World in 1776* (New York: Heritage, 1975), 126.

The *Encyclopédie* sought to give information on a broad range of subjects, from handicrafts to philosophy, and statecraft to theology. It set out to guide opinion on social inequities, religious bigotry, political injustice and corruption, as well as backward economic practices: 'In its entirety it held a mighty dream of social progress and advancement.'[16]

Source 2.10 The entire set of *Encyclopédie* on display, showing the aim of the work—to assemble all the knowledge known to mankind 'scattered over the face of the earth'.

DID YOU KNOW?
Diderot sold his library to his patron Catherine the Great of Russia, who included it in her daughter's dowry.

physiocratic the economic theory that 'natural order' governed society; that land was the basis of wealth and taxation; and that free trade was the most beneficial system

Portrait of Denis Diderot, by Pierre-Michel Alix, 1793.

Portrait of Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, by Maurice Quentin de La Tour, 1753.

Denis Diderot edited the *Encyclopédie* and the contributors were all leading enlightened thinkers of the age:

- Jean d'Alembert—subeditor and mathematician
- Turgot—a ***physiocratic*** economist (see Chapter 3)
- Voltaire—writer who argued for religious and social tolerance
- Rousseau—writer who explored the idea of the natural goodness and equality of man in nature, the general will and the social contract
- Baron d'Holbach—writer on atheism
- Montesquieu—political thinker who argued for the separation of powers
- Antoine Lavoisier—chemist
- Comte de Buffon—naturalist who envisaged all of God's creatures as part of a Great Chain of Being
- Marquis de Condorcet—writer who argued for the rights and education of people of all races and—something rare for the times—both sexes.

American historian Frank Kafker

Despite their reputation, [the Encyclopedists] were not a close-knit group of radicals intent on subverting the Old Regime in France. Instead they were a disparate group of men of letters, physicians, scientists, craftsmen and scholars, ... even the small minority who were persecuted for writing articles belittling what they viewed as unreasonable customs—thus weakening the might of the Catholic Church and undermining that of the monarchy—did not envision that their ideas would encourage a revolution.

Source 2.11 Frank A. Kafker and Serena L.Kafker, *The Encyclopedists as Individuals: A Biographical Dictionary of the Authors of the* Encyclopédie (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1988).

SUMMARY OF KEY IDEAS

Which Enlightenment ideas played a major role in challenging the social and political order of the ancien régime in France? Copy this table and fill it in based on your reading of Chapters 1–2. Organising the information in this way will help you to understand why and how the revolution happened. Headings and prompts have been supplied for you.

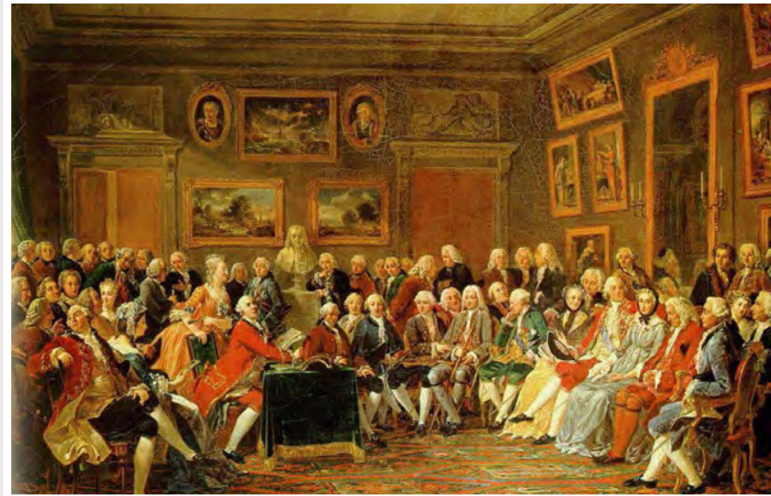
ANCIEN RÉGIME IDEA: Give a brief explanation of ancien régime practice. (List 2–3 points after reading Chapter 1)	**WHO WROTE ABOUT THIS? WHAT DID THEY WRITE OR SAY?** Supply two points of evidence. (Provide quotations from sources or explanatory text in Chapter 2)	**ENLIGHTENMENT CRITIQUE:** Explain **in your own words** the argument or idea expressed in the sources you listed. (List 1–2 arguments or ideas from Chapter 2)
Privilege	Rousseau, *Origin of Inequality* (1755): see p. 35 Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762): see p. 36	Claims to liberty and equality
Absolute authority	Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762): see p. 32	Claims to popular sovereignty and the Social Contract
No separation of powers	Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748): see p. 30	Claims to separation of powers in government
The Church	Voltaire, *Treatise on Toleration* (1763): see p. 32 Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733): see p. 32	Claims to religious toleration Anti-clericalism Freedom of religion
No separation of Church and state	Voltaire, *On Civil and Ecclesiastical Law* (1763): see p. 33	Separation of Church and state Claims for alternative religions

HISTORIANS ASSESS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *PHILOSOPHES*

The significance of the French Enlightenment thinkers or *philosophes* in the late eighteenth century has been widely debated. Did their work prompt the outburst of revolutionary energy of 1788 and 1789? How many French people had read these works, and to what extent were they empowered by the ideas?

Audience and readership of the *philosophes*

It is not known how many French people read widely, but around a third of people were literate and there was a variety of reading matter available, from 'cheap popular literature such as almanacks and traditional tales of wonder ... to expensive journals'.[17] Although these journals were too expensive for most people, there were also subscription rooms, literary societies and academies with their own libraries. There were also salons, where fashionable people gathered to talk over the latest scandals and fashions—or perhaps talk about art, theatre and literature. Historian Doyle sees the reading classes as made up of 'nobles, clerics and bourgeoisie ... magistrates, lawyers, administrators and army officers'.[18] Historians R.R. Palmer and George Rudé express similar views.



Source 2.12 *Reading of Voltaire's L'Orphelin de la Chine in the salon of Madame Geoffrin*, by Anicet Charles Gabriel Lemonnier, 1812.

R.R. Palmer

The reading public had greatly expanded. The educated middle class, commercial and professional, was much larger than ever before. Country gentlemen were putting off their rustic habits and even noblemen wished to keep informed. Newspapers and magazines multiplied, and people who could not read them at home could read them in coffee-houses or reading rooms organised for that purpose. There was great demand also for dictionaries, encyclopaedias and surveys of all fields of knowledge. The new readers wanted matters made interesting and clear. They appreciated wit and lightness of touch.

Source 2.13 R.R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 291.

George Rudé

The ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau and many others were widely disseminated and were absorbed by an eager reading public, both aristocratic and plebeian [common]. It had become fashionable, even among the clergy, to be sceptical and irreligious. ... Such terms as 'citizen', 'nation', 'social contract', 'general will' and 'the rights of man'—soon to be followed by 'Third Estate'—were entering into a common political vocabulary.

Source 2.14 George Rudé, *The French Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 7.

BOURGEOIS CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Historian Albert Soboul makes no specific reference to readers, but points to the Enlightenment's effect on the bourgeoisie, saying it 'undermined the ideological foundations of the established order and strengthened the bourgeoisie's consciousness of itself as a class'.[19]

CONTINUED ...

THE AMERICAN SPIRIT

Simon Schama looks at two examples of enlightened nobles, Bishop Talleyrand and Marquis de Lafayette. According to Schama, Talleyrand had 'a library of works by the most sceptical Enlightenment philosophers',[20] while Lafayette's service in the American War of Independence filled him with ideas about 'liberty, equality and the pursuit of happiness' that were based on Enlightenment philosophy. French men who fought in the American War of Independence brought the 'spirit of America' back with them—and these ideas made them the 'first revolutionaries' in the struggle to limit the powers of Louis XVI.

POLITICAL PORNOGRAPHY

Historian Robert Darnton has a different view. He studied lists of books sold illegally through Swiss booksellers in the 1770s and 1780s. Darnton found that readers bought Rousseau's books and cheap versions of the *Encyclopédie*, but they preferred to read works of scandal and pornography, particularly those concerned with recognised public figures. Marie Antoinette was one public figure prominently represented.

The reading public loved to read about priests who had affairs with their parishioners or were dishonest with church funds; nuns who engaged in sexual activity; and scandals to do with marriage or birth. Darnton suggests that such literature may have undermined the aura of royalty and the faith of the public in the institutions of the ancien régime.

INTELLECTUAL INSTITUTIONS

German sociologist Jürgen Habermas points to the growth of institutions outside the privileged world of the nobility. ***Freemasonry*** grew rapidly after 1760, and by the 1780s there were some 600 masonic lodges. These lodges created 'spaces' for explaining and debating ideas, which led to the growth of ideas that challenged earlier 'truths'. Habermas claims the world of freemasonry was masculine, bourgeois, literate, and often wealthy and freethinking.[21] As such, it promoted the growth of intellectual ideas among the increasing number of people engaged in trade and commerce.

Freemasonry a secular organisation devoted to the understanding of the world by reason rather than religion

PUBLIC OPINION

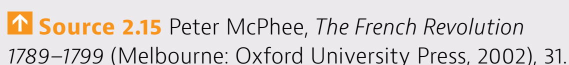
In 1993, Sarah Maza published *Private Lives and Public Affairs*, in which she re-examines the nature of popular interest in court trials before the French Revolution. Maza concludes that the writing and reading of sensational courtroom literature contributed to the birth of public opinion and of a new public sphere.

The most sensational trials of the 1770s concerned conflicts between powerful men and humble, oppressed members of the Third Estate. Maza suggests that these trials provided emotive examples of the way tyrants used their power to oppress the weak. In the 1780s, the emphasis shifted to family and matrimonial disputes, which again seemed to have a symbolic dimension, as it was personalising relationships between the ruler and the ruled.

A CRISIS OF AUTHORITY

Peter McPhee

> The real significance of the Enlightenment, then, is as a symptom of a crisis of authority and as part of a wider political discourse. Well before 1789, the language of 'citizen', 'nation', 'social contract' and 'general will' was articulated across French society, clashing with an older discourse of 'orders', 'estates' and 'corporations'.



Source 2.15 Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution 1789–1799* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 31.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Using Sources 2.12–2.15 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline the ideas of the Enlightenment.
2. Explain how these ideas challenged the established order.
3. Evaluate how historians approach the impact of the Enlightenment on the development of the revolutionary situation in France.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that took place in France, roughly between 1730 and 1780. New ideas about individual liberty, freedom of speech, religious tolerance, free trade, and scientific reasoning based on observation were to replace religious superstition. Different models of government were debated and published. These ideas challenged the previous organisation of France, and suggested new models for society.
- The French *philosophes* were intellectuals, writers and social critics who applied reason and logic to their thinking, based on observed evidence.
  - » Montesquieu argued for separation of powers in government to guard against despotism and corruption.
  - » Voltaire argued for religious tolerance, and freedom of speech and press; he criticised the institution of the Church.
  - » Rousseau viewed man as existing in a state of nobleness in nature. The creation of structured formal society corrupted man, and government enslaved him in chains. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau argued that man could make a contract with government to rule according to the general will of society. If the government failed to do so, society could break the contract, dismiss the government and appoint a new one.
- The *Encyclopédists* Diderot and d'Alembert aimed to collect *all* useful knowledge known to man at the time and to communicate this knowledge, thus, increasing virtue and happiness.
- Enlightenment ideas were spread and widely discussed throughout the upper and middle ranks of society: noblemen, country gentlemen, professional and commercial bourgeoisie. Their wives gathered in fashionable 'salons', literary societies and academies.
- The *philosophes* criticised many aspects of old regime society, but they were suggesting reform rather than revolt. Although not revolutionary themselves, their ideas provided inspiration for the revolutionaries who built the new society.
- The ideas the *philosophes* had about representation, liberty and equality were to gain new impetus with the arrival of the 'American spirit' to France during the 1780s.

KEY IDEAS

Look back at the diagram of the king's government (pp. 20–21). Make a new diagram based on Montesquieu's idea of how government power *should* have been exercised in France.

ESSAY

Write an essay of 600–800 words on the topic below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- Why were members of the First Estate and Second Estate considered of higher status than those of the Third Estate under the ancien régime? How was this system challenged by Enlightenment ideas?

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write a 250–350-word extended response to the topic below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence, and a clear conclusion.

- Explain how Enlightenment ideas were a long-term cause of the French Revolution.

EXTENSION

Watch Episode 1 of the documentary *Heroes of the Enlightenment* (Renegade Pictures and BBC Worldwide, 2011). As you view the episode, note down the key ideas and political influence of:

- Voltaire
- Denis Diderot
- Marquis de Condorcet
- Thomas Jefferson.

Additional resources: **www.htavshop.com.au/beyond-the-book**

WAR AND GROWING DEBT
(1774–1785)

When Louis XVI took the throne in 1774, long-term tensions about the authority of the king as absolute monarch continued to simmer, as did grievances about the inequality created by privilege. Louis XVI inherited a kingdom that was already in debt, and he did not grasp the opportunity for financial reform offered by Turgot, his first controller-general of finances. Louis XVI neither took Turgot's advice to avoid foreign wars and avoid borrowing more money.

France's involvement in the American War of Independence against Britain had two major effects on France. First, it generated more debt. Second, it allowed Enlightenment ideas of representation, equality and individual liberties to reassert themselves—and provide the regime with the political challenges of the next two decades. Later, Director-General of Finances Jacques Necker was able to finance the American 'adventure' through loans, but created a furore in 1781 when he published an account of France's finances: *Compte rendu au roi* (Report to the King). Necker was trying to boost the credit rating of the Crown, but his strategy fed the flames of public opinion instead.

'The consequences of French involvement in the [American] revolutionary war were, in fact, profoundly subversive and irreversible.'

—Simon Schama

Source 3.01 ***The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis*, by John Trumbull, c. 1819–1820.**

CHAPTER 3

KEY EVENTS

1774
Turgot appointed controller-general of royal finances (or finance minister)

April 1775–September 1783
American War of Independence

22 October 1776
Necker appointed director of royal treasury

1778
France offers financial aid to American rebels in their war against Britain

19 May 1781
Necker resigns after presenting *Compte rendu au roi* (Report to the King), which conceals the war deficit

KEY QUESTIONS

- How did French involvement in the American Revolution affect conditions in France?
- How did the growth of public opinion affect the demand for revolution?
- Why were both Turgot and Necker unable to introduce *fiscal* reform?

fiscal taxation and its collection; government revenue

livre a unit of French currency

INITIAL CHALLENGES: GROWING NATIONAL DEBT AND THE NEED FOR REFORM

Turgot, 1774: 'I confine myself, Sire, to call to your recollection three ideas: No national bankruptcy. No increase of taxes. No new loans.'

The first challenges Louis XVI faced were the national debt and the need for reform. He was aware that—despite the splendour of the Court of Versailles—the nation was in considerable debt. Over the eighteenth century, the French monarchy had consistently spent more than its annual income—and the biggest cost was foreign wars. From 1740–1748, France had been engaged in the War of Austrian Succession; then the Seven Years War (1756–1763), where France was defeated by Britain, losing most of its empire and having its navy destroyed.

So the king faced two specific challenges. He had to:

- find ways to reform France's financial management
- avoid the temptation to commit France to another war.

Over the next fourteen years, Louis appointed four different finance ministers in a bid to reform management of finances. In 1778 he supported the American colonists in their war against France's old enemy: Britain. However, to provide financial assistance—as well as send equipment, ships and soldiers to America—it was necessary to take out further loans. The cost of Louis XVI's adventure in national pride was one billion *livres* in capital and interest on loans, along with the bankruptcy of the kingdom.

Portrait of Turgot, by Antoine Graincourt, 1782.

TURGOT: FIRST FINANCIAL REFORMER, 1774–1776

Thomas Carlyle (Scottish philosopher): 'Turgot came into the Council of the King with a whole peaceful revolution in his head.'

In 1774, Louis XVI appointed Jacques Turgot as his first controller-general of royal finances (or finance minister). Turgot had already had royal posts as an intendant in some of the poorest and most overtaxed parts of France, where he had tried to apply physiocratic and free-trade principles. Like the physiocrats, Turgot considered that capital was necessary for economic growth, and that the only way to accumulate capital was for people not to consume all they produced. Most capital, he believed, was accumulated by landowners who saved the surplus product after paying the cost of materials and labour.

Turgot's first action as controller-general was to give Louis XVI a memorandum about the debts he had discovered in the royal treasury. He included his proposals for reforming fiscal policy—the financial policies of a government—by cutting expenditure and introducing fairer taxation.

Source 3.02 Jean-Louis Soulavie, *Historical and Political Memoirs of the Reign of Lewis XVI from His Marriage to His Death*, vol. 3 (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1802), 423–438.

Turgot, 'Letter to the King on Finance', 24 August 1774

Sire,

I could have wished to have detailed the reflections that are suggested to me by the present posture of the finances, but time will not permit me. ... In the present moment, I confine myself, Sire, to call to your recollection three ideas:

No national bankruptcy.
No increase of taxes.
No new loans.

To obtain these three points there is but one method, that of reducing the expenditure below the receipt, and so much below it as to leave twenty millions [livres] every year for the redemption of former debts. Without this precaution, the first cannonball that is fired [in war] will force the state to a public bankruptcy.

protégés preferred candidates for appointments

Turgot had arrived in office with sweeping visions of a France transformed by economic and political liberty. In 1775 he wrote to the king: 'In ten years the nation would be unrecognizable ... in enlightenment, morals, zeal for your service and for the [homeland], France would surpass all the other people who exist and who ever have existed.'[1]

However, Turgot's reforms were widely attacked, and he was loathed by his political enemies. During his two years in office, Turgot had provoked:

- the nobles and *parlements*—by attempting to limit their privilege
- the financiers—by proposing free-trade legislation
- the rich bourgeoisie—by attempting to abolish the guilds
- all privileged landowners—by attempting to abolish the *corvée*.

Finally, Turgot lost the support of the court after attempting to reform the royal household. He had also alienated Marie Antoinette by opposing the granting of favours to her friends and their ***protégés***. Marie Antoinette played a considerable role in Turgot's downfall.

Turgot was dismissed on 12 May 1776, and died in 1781. All of his reforms had been either abandoned or forgotten by the time of his death.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What was the single method Turgot suggested be implemented for France to avoid bankruptcy without borrowing or raising taxes?
2. What did Turgot warn would trigger bankruptcy?

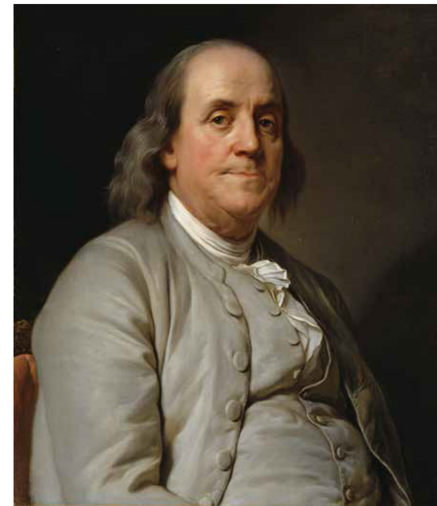
FRANCE'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1778–1783

KEY EVENT

Turgot in 1774: 'The first gunshot [of a new war] will drive the state into bankruptcy.'

Turgot's warning that any French involvement in a new war would force the state to a public bankruptcy was insightful. France's involvement in the American War of Independence in the years 1778–1783 was a cause of the French Revolution, as the cost of the war directly led to the bankruptcy of 1788. The 'American spirit' arrived in France with American diplomats, returning aristocratic officers and common foot soldiers, who brought with them the idea of liberty against despotism, which spread throughout intellectual life in the 1780s.

Benjamin Franklin, by Joseph-Siffred Duplessis, 1778.



FOREIGN POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

On 4 July 1776, the Second Continental Congress—which represented the thirteen British colonies in America—united in declaring independence from Great Britain, a process that had already begun with the battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775.

By October 1776, an American representative named Benjamin Franklin was on his way to France. Franklin was one of three men commissioned with securing French support for the war against Britain, in the form of money, arms, officers, ships and soldiers.

Franklin was presented to the court at Versailles, much to the delight of Parisian society. He was regarded as one of the greatest scientific minds of the age, and was already famous already for his kite experiment with lightening in 1752.

Comte de Ségur in his memoirs

> It would be difficult to express the enthusiasm and fervour with which they were welcomed in France ... these envoys of a people in insurrection [revolt] against their king. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the luxury of our capital, the elegance of our fashions, the magnificence of Versailles, the polished but haughty arrogance of our nobles ... with the utmost rustic dress, the simple if proud demeanour, the frank, direct speech, the plain, unpowdered hair and finally that flavour of antiquity.

Source 3.03 Cited in Leonard W. Cowie, *Documents and Debates: The French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), 22–23.

WHY DID FRANCE WISH TO AID THE AMERICAN REBELS?

It might seem strange that a divine-right monarch like Louis XVI would want to help British colonists rebel against their monarch, King George III. France and Britain had been locked in bitter rivalry for power and colonies throughout the eighteenth century, and Britain had inflicted a particularly humiliating defeat on France, especially in Northern America, during the Seven Years War (1756–1763).

The temptation to embark on a new venture against the British had two points in its favour. First, it would restore national pride. Second, it would secure favourable trading rights with the Americans.

Source 3.04 A satirical view of the 'Coiffure à la Belle Poule', c. 1780. A skirmish off the French coast between the French frigate *La Belle Poule* and the British *Arethusa* in June 1778 caused great excitement. *La Belle Poule* was victorious and the skirmish officially launched French military action in the American War. Fashionable ladies at court and in Paris responded with the Coiffure [hairstyle] à la Belle Poule.

However, Comte de Vergennes, France's foreign minister, was reluctant to officially support the Americans until it was clear the war was winnable, and this was despite France secretly aiding the rebel cause in America since 1775–1776.

After the Americans defeated the British in the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777, Vergennes was prepared to go ahead. In February 1778, representatives of France and America officially declared an alliance by signing the Treaty of Amity and Commerce and the Treaty of Alliance. The French aid guaranteed by these treaties—both naval and military—was crucial to the American victory over the British at Yorktown by 1781.

THE COST OF THE AMERICAN WAR TO FRANCE

However, restoring national pride would cost France dearly. Historian Simon Schama reports that in 1781, the year of the decisive victory at Yorktown, France spent 227 million livres on the American War—of which 147 million livres were for the navy.[2] This was nearly five times the amount normally allotted for the peacetime navy. In total, France spent over one billion livres on the war, and 91 per cent of the money came directly from loans. These loans were brokered by the banker in charge of France's financial affairs, a Swiss citizen named Jacques Necker.

THE 'AMERICAN SPIRIT'

Comte de Ségur on his departure for America in 1781: 'The freedom for which I am going to fight inspires me and I would like my own country to enjoy such a liberty as would fit in with our monarchy, our position and our customs.'

The American Revolution transmitted Enlightenment ideas in a new form. To many French thinkers, the American War of Independence seemed to be based on ideas of personal liberty and freedom from despotism. The introduction of written constitutions in the thirteen colonies enshrined in law that:

KEY IDEAS

- the people had 'inalienable rights'
- these rights should be written down in a bill of rights as part of a constitution
- government authority should be strictly limited through a separation of powers.

American politician, statesman, journalist, lawyer and soldier Alexander Hamilton, wrote:

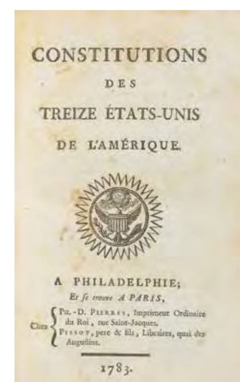
> the sacred rights of man are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written as with a sunbeam, by the hand of the Divinity itself and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.[3]

DID YOU KNOW?

France sent eighty-seven officers and 8000 troops—plus the French Navy—to help the Americans fight the War of Independence against Great Britain.

Where a government failed to protect these rights, then the people had the right to remove it and replace it with a new government that would protect their safety and happiness. To Hamilton, as to many other supporters of the American Revolution, the people's rights were inalienable and came from God.

For those French people who had read Rousseau and Montesquieu, America seemed to be a new enlightened world of liberty, equality and popular sovereignty—three words that would become the motto of the early French revolutionaries.


CONSTITUTIONS
DES
TREIZE ÉTATS-UNIS
DE L'AMÉRIQUE.

A PHILADELPHIE;
Et se trouve A PARIS,
Chez Ph.-D. Pierres, Imprimeur Ordinaire du Roi, rue Saint-Jacques.
Pissot, pere & fils, Libraires, quai des Augustins.

1783.

French translation of *The Constitutions of the Thirteen United States of America*, Paris, 1783.

In 1778, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld translated and published in France America's 1776 Declaration of Independence. It was widely sold and discussed in Paris. A total of 8000 French soldiers and sailors had served in the American War; those who returned home were often advocates of this new and exciting society across the Atlantic. Foremost among them was the Marquis de Lafayette. Brissot de Warville, the Comte de Ségur, Thomas Paine, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld and others were champions of this new 'American spirit'. To Madame Campan, they represented a new energy in France. She wrote:

> Our youth flew to the wars waged in the new world for liberty and against the rights of thrones. Liberty prevailed; they returned triumphant to France and brought with them the seeds of independence.[4]

These men, and the soldiers who served under them, saw in the American spirit and colonial society a personal liberty that was unachievable under the oppression of an absolute monarchy, a powerful Church and a privileged aristocracy. They were enthused by the new spirit of the common good.

As British writer Arthur Young wrote from France in 1788, 'The American Revolution [has] laid the foundation for another in France, if the government does not take care of itself'.[5]

DID YOU KNOW?

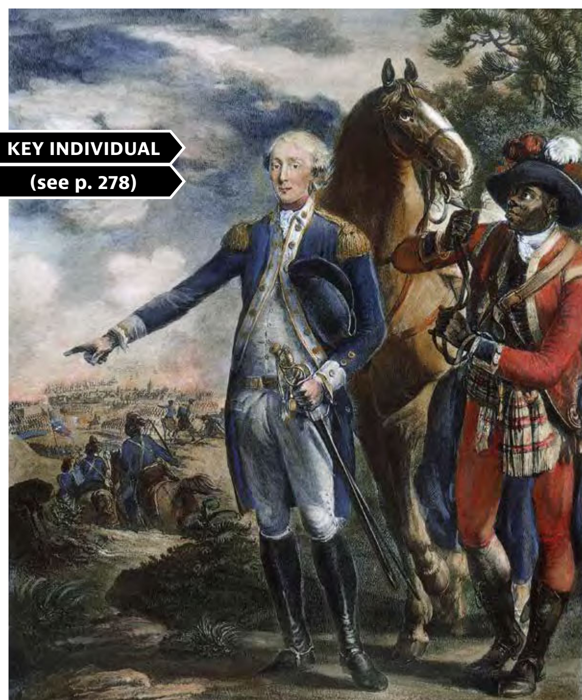
Lafayette was a young French nobleman, the first to volunteer to fight in the American War of Independence. He was twenty years old. He served with distinction and was granted the rank of major general. His courage and idealism earned him the nickname 'George Washington's godson'. Just after the United States entered World War I in July 1917, Colonel Charles E. Stanton visited Lafayette's grave in Paris, saluted, and declared, 'Lafayette, we are here'. Thus, the debt was repaid.

William Doyle on the American spirit in France

Between 1775 and 1787, the public was deluged with writings on all aspects of America and showed an insatiable appetite for more. Only the onset of France's own political crisis redirected its attention. By that time the principles and problems of American society and American politics had been thoroughly discussed and absorbed into the way the French public viewed its own affairs. America showed that new starts could be made, that it was possible to renounce a whole old order and setup a new and improved one, that piecemeal reform was not the only road to improvement. It offered the prospect, hitherto merely a matter of theoretical speculation, of a nation establishing itself on the principle that the people were the ultimate sovereign power. It stood as the first example of a people explicitly dedicating itself to the pursuit of political and religious liberty, political equality and elective representational government. And not least, perhaps, it filled men anxious to shine and dedicate themselves to great causes with the desire to promote the same aspirations at home. The crisis that unexpectedly occurred in 1787 was to provide them with ample opportunity.

Source 3.05 William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 94–95.

KEY INDIVIDUAL (see p. 278)



Source 3.06 Engraving by Noel Le Mire showing the Marquis de Lafayette during the American War of Independence. The Marquis played an important role in the American victory at the Siege of Yorktown in 1781, while his companion—an African American slave named James Armistead Lafayette—acted as a spy behind enemy lines.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 3.05 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline three key lessons for the French people that came out of America's revolution, as suggested by the source.
2. Explain how the French government undermined its own foundations when it agreed to assist the Americans.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Why did France want to help the American rebels?
2. In total, how much did France spend on the American War of Independence?
3. What percentage of this total did the French have to borrow?

NECKER: SECOND FINANCIAL REFORMER, 1776–1781

William Doyle: 'Necker's passport to power was his opulence as a banker.'

Jacques Necker.

KEY INDIVIDUAL (see p. 276)

probity honesty and decency in financial dealings

frugality careful, economical

The royal appointment of Jacques Necker to head the Crown's finances was unusual, as he was Swiss by birth, a commoner by estate and a Protestant. For these reasons, he was denied the title of 'controller-general' and instead appointed as 'director'. Historian Simon Schama claims that by 1776, Necker was viewed as a 'banking wizard' who had all 'the virtues of Protestant capitalism: ***probity***, ***frugality*** and rock-solid credit'.[6]

More importantly, Necker was a highly successful banker who had personal prestige in the international loan market—which was increasingly regarded as an alternative source of finance to the French bankers. Like Turgot before him, Necker was a reformer, but he won initial favour with Louis XVI's ministers by promising to finance the American venture without the dire consequences predicted by Turgot.

NECKER'S REFORMS

prudent showing care and thought for the future

Necker was a ***prudent*** but determined reformer. Like Turgot, he believed that the prosperity of the king's government depended on a freely developed economy—but he also believed that the first priority was the restoration of royal credit. To do this, Necker sought immediate savings in a reformed administration to maximise royal revenue.

Necker reorganised central accounting procedures and began restructuring taxation, thus, taking steps towards establishing a central treasury.

He commissioned a national survey of venal offices to discover how many there were, and how much the Crown was receiving from each of them. Once this survey was completed, venal officers would be replaced by salaried officials, who would be more accountable to the Crown. Overall, Necker was very busy. He:

- abolished 385 venal positions in taxation and finance
- abolished 506 venal positions in the royal household, saving the Crown about 2.5 million livres a year
- restructured management of the post and transport system
- restructured the sale of timber from estates owned by the king.

Necker also started the process of setting up provincial assemblies of landowners to offset the influence of the *parlements*.

All the savings made by these reforms were designed to balance the regular revenues and expenditures of the Crown. It was this 'balanced' budget that Necker would publish in 1781.

However, the American War was a huge drain on France's resources. Necker agreed with Turgot's policies of 'no national bankruptcy' and 'no increase in taxes', and had agreed to finance the war entirely by borrowing money. Between 1777 and May 1781 he borrowed 520 million livres at high interest rates. The interest on these loans was charged to ordinary expenditure.

Source 3.07 *The Salon of Suzanne Curchod, Madame Necker*, nineteenth-century engraving. Madame Necker's successful salons attracted *philosophes* and were said to have positively influenced the career of her husband, Jacques Necker.

A REVOLUTIONARY MOMENT: THE *COMPTE RENDU AU ROI*, 1781

In February 1781, Necker published the first public account of the financial situation of the French state. Produced with the consent of Louis XVI, the *Compte rendu au roi* (Report to the King) sold as rapidly as a popular novel, with 20,000 copies sold within a few weeks. It was then translated into Dutch, German, Danish, English and Italian. Thus, the seemingly prosperous state of the finances of France became a matter of public knowledge, as Necker had intended. It was his reputation as a financial genius that led, in part, to the acceptance of the *Compte rendu* as a true indication of France's financial state.

The *Compte rendu au roi* showed ordinary revenue exceeding expenditure by over ten million livres, even after three years of French involvement in the American War of Independence and with no increase in taxation. France's accounts appeared to have a healthy surplus.

However, the *Compte rendu au roi* did not include a record of the extraordinary (additional) accounts, which is where the cost of the war was recorded. If the *Compte rendu* had included the cost of the war, France's bankers would not have been so eager to lend to the Crown—because the war account was in deep deficit. As it was, Necker's reputation for financial management became even greater, and the Crown's apparent creditworthiness made securing further loans straightforward.

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Necker's actions were not intended to be revolutionary, but it was the first time that the kingdom's finances had been considered a matter of public interest. It created the suggestion that perhaps the king might be accountable to the nation for his management of 'public' money.

NECKER RESIGNS

In May 1781, just four months after the publication of the *Compte rendu au roi*, Jacques Necker resigned. Although his public reputation was high, Louis XVI rejected Necker's demands for a ministerial appointment and a seat on the council of ministers. The king's decision was made on the advice of ministers hostile to Necker's reforms.

Like Turgot before him, Necker had made many enemies during his reform processes, particularly among people holding venal offices, courtiers and royal ministers. There had been much criticism of his *Compte rendu au roi* from his enemies, who considered that Necker had overstepped the bounds of correct behaviour by making the royal accounts public at a time when government was still viewed as the 'king's secret'.[7]

Matters of government were between the king and God. The appeal to 'public opinion' was not yet compatible with serving the king, even if Necker's intention was to promote the government's agenda. Necker's enemies tried to discredit him. Necker believed publicity was the working condition of financial success—the essence of credit. Schama has claimed that 'For Necker, the preservation of secrecy was … the rescue of despotism'.[8]

Source 3.08 *Report to the King*, engraving, 1790. Necker explains the state of France's finances to the king.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. How did Necker's appointment appease both the people of France and the king's ministers?
2. What did Necker see as the greatest impediment to financial security? What was his solution to the problem?
3. In what way did Necker's 'solution' add to the existing problem?
4. Discuss how and why the publication of the *Compte rendu au roi* was a revolutionary moment.

CHAPTER 3 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- **Louis XVI inherited rising national debt.**
- **His first finance minister, Turgot, urged no national bankruptcy, no increase of taxes, and no new loans, but was ultimately dismissed.**
- **Loans raised to finance the American War of Independence brought increasing debt to Louis XVI's government—which would trigger bankruptcy by 1788.**
- **The victory of the American colonists over Great Britain would not have been achieved without French help. It was gratifying for the French to help defeat their old enemy, but it came at great cost.**
- **French fighters such as Lafayette and American diplomats such as Benjamin Franklin help spread Enlightenment ideas throughout France, called 'the American spirit'.**
- **The American War of Independence served as a working demonstration that a society founded on liberty and equality could succeed.**
- **Necker published *Compte rendu au roi* to boost confidence in France's finances, but resigned from his job for political reasons.**

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Could it be argued that Louis XVI's support of America in their war was not in France's interests? Explain your response.
2. Who was the Marquis de Lafayette?
3. Give two examples of the 'American spirit' brought back to France.
4. Why did Jacques Necker resign?

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write a 250–350-word extended response to the topic below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence, and a clear conclusion.

- Explain how failure to follow suggestions for financial reform was a short-term cause of the French Revolution.

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on the topic below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'France's involvement in the American War of Independence created the environment that led to revolution in France.' To what extent do you agree with this view?

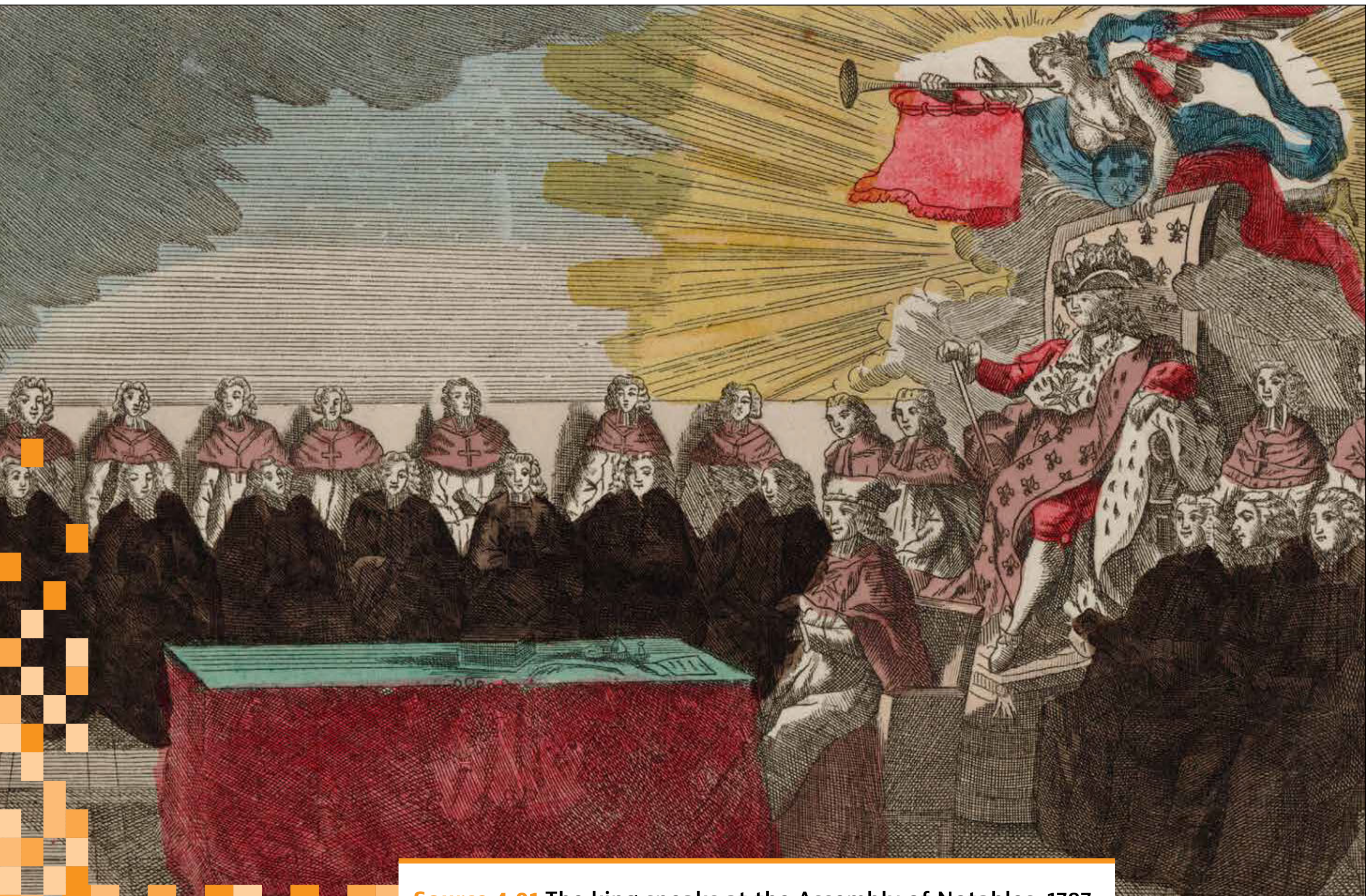
FISCAL CRISIS AND FAILURE TO REFORM (1786–1788)

Successive finance ministers—Necker, Calonne and Brienne—all tried to reform the French economy and taxation system. All three met with resistance from noble institutions such as the Assembly of Notables (1787) and Parlement of Paris (1787–1788). Economic suffering was a feature of life in the late 1780s, with failed harvests in the countryside and rising unemployment in the towns following the 1786 free-trade agreement with Britain.

However, much of the problem stemmed from Louis XVI's personal weaknesses, which prevented him from following sound advice and remaining strong against opposition from privileged groups. It was his inability to support his finance ministers and allow them to introduce the necessary fiscal and institutional reforms that led France to a state of bankruptcy by August 1788. The fiscal and political crises the regime suffered in the 1780s provided the short-term causes of the revolution that would break out in 1789.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What was the key argument used by the Assembly of Notables and the Parlement of Paris for refusing to register new taxation laws?
- Why were the king and his financial ministers unable to introduce the much-needed fiscal reforms?
- Was the revolution an inevitable outcome of the crises of the 1780s?



Source 4.01 The king speaks at the Assembly of Notables, 1787.

CHAPTER 4

'I shall easily show that it is impossible to tax further, ruinous to always be borrowing and not enough to confine ourselves to measures of economy. ... The only effective remedy must consist in reviving the entire State by recasting all that is unsound in its constitution.'

—Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, Controller-General, 1783–1787

KEY EVENTS

22 February–25 May 1787
Assembly of Notables meets to approve Calonne's universal taxation proposal; Assembly dismissed after refusing to endorse reform; beginning of Aristocratic Revolt

19 November 1787
Royal Session with Parlement of Paris; king attempts to force through new loans: 'It is legal because I will it'

7 June 1788
'Day of Tiles' in Grenoble (riots in support of local *parlement*)

8 August 1788
King calls for an Estates-General for May 1789

16 August 1788
Treasury payments suspended; the Crown is bankrupt

CALONNE: THIRD FINANCIAL REFORMER, 1783–1787

Alexandre de Calonne: '[The system of privilege] alone infects everything, harms everything and prevents any improvements.'

After Necker's departure from office in 1781, his successor Joly de Fleury was forced to increase taxation and raise another 252 million livres in loans. By the end of the American War of Independence in 1783, the war had cost France over one billion livres—and that is without counting debts from the earlier wars.[1] Then, between 1783 and 1787, Fleury's replacement, Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, could not find the way to reform finances and was convinced that lavish spending on 'useful splendour' was the only way to maintain good royal standing with lenders. There was also a drop in revenue when the *vingtième* (a tax of 1/20th on income)—which had been levied during the war and three years after—came to an end in 1786.

The French state had been overspending for some time. In 1775, state revenue (or income) had been 377 million livres, but expenditure was 411 million livres—which meant expenditure was thirty-four million livres more than revenue. Just to pay the money owing on the loans was taking about 37 per cent of revenue.[2]

By 1786, France was facing bankruptcy. The deficit was 112 million livres, almost a quarter of the total income. To make things worse, almost half the income for 1787 had been spent in advance, by taking out short-term loans in anticipation of tax revenue. Plus, there were huge debts from the American War of Independence to come over the next ten years. (See Source 4.13 on p. 66.)

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What were the main causes of France's debt?
2. What were the main flaws in the French taxation system?

Calonne had no alternative: he had to institute major tax reform. In correspondence with Necker in April 1787, he noted that:

> it is impossible to tax further, ruinous to be always borrowing and not enough to confine ourselves to measures of economy. ... Ordinary ways are unable to lead us to our goal. ... The only effective remedy, the only means of managing finally to put the finances truly in order, must consist in reviving the entire state by recasting all that is unsound in its constitution.[3]

Like finance ministers Turgot, Necker and Fleury before him, Calonne recognised that a taxation system that exempted the Church and the wealthy aristocracy was not sustainable. He believed that the heart of the problem was the system of privilege.

CALONNE'S PLANS FOR REFORM: A FAIRER TAXATION SYSTEM

Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, by Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, 1784.

On 20 August 1786, Calonne presented Louis XVI with his *Plan for the Improvement of the Finances*. The main features are outlined below.

1. THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW DIRECT TAX ON ALL LANDOWNERS, WITH NO EXEMPTIONS.

This tax would be based on the landowner's income, and would be paid in produce. This would shift the tax burden from the Third Estate to a more uniform system that would also tax the wealthy, whatever their birth. Calonne anticipated that this tax alone would bring in revenue of around thirty-five million livres.[4]

To offset this new tax:

- taxation privileges traditionally held by various estates and nobles would be abolished
- certain large properties owned by the Church would be sold for the benefit of the state
- the *vingtième* tax imposed in time of war would be abolished
- the *corvée* (forced labour on the roads) would be replaced with a direct tax
- stamp tax on all documents would be extended
- nobles would be excused from the capitation and stay exempt from the *taille*.

2. NEW PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES TO ASSESS AND COLLECT THE LAND TAX.

These assemblies were to be elected by landowners without distinction as to the three estates, in which the presiding officer might be a commoner.[5] The assembly was to work in cooperation with the intendants of the various provinces.

3. ABOLITION OF INTERNAL TAX BARRIERS AND REMOVAL OF CONTROLS OVER GRAIN TRADE.

Calonne wanted to stimulate trade within France by abolishing internal customs duties and fixed prices for grain.[6] This would allow France to create a national market and stimulate the whole economy. Removing the *corvée* and replacing it with a monetary tax would also encourage peasants to produce more.

However, while these reforms were being put in place, Calonne needed to borrow money until the new revenues began to flow in. He believed that the combination of the new tax, more efficient management and paying down debt would enable France to avoid looming financial disaster.

Meanwhile, Calonne's predecessor Necker had retired to his country property, where he published a justifications for his fiscal policy while in office—and attacked Calonne's policies. Calonne and Necker had a 'quarrel of letters', which was published and read by those following the 'public affair' of the nation's finances. The letter below is one of Calonne's replies to Necker.

Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, letter to Jacques Necker, 1787

> [The system of privilege] alone infects everything, harms everything and prevents any improvements ... a Kingdom whose provinces are foreign one to another; where multiple internal frontiers separate and divide the subjects of the same sovereign; where certain regions are totally freed from taxes, the full weight of which is borne by other regions; where the richest class is the least taxed; where privilege prevents all stability. ... Such a state is inevitably a very imperfect kingdom, full of corrupt practices and impossible to govern well. In effect, the result is that general administration is excessively complicated, public contributions unequally spread, trade hindered by countless restrictions, ... agriculture crushed by overwhelming burdens [and] the state's finances impoverished.

Source 4.02 Cited in Mark Fielding and Margot Morecombe, *The Spirit of Change: France in Revolution* (Australia: McGraw Hill, 2001), 18.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 4.02 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Explain what Calonne means when he says, 'certain regions are totally freed from taxes, the full weight of which is borne by other regions'.
2. How does Calonne convey the message that the system of privilege is unsustainable?
3. Find statistical support for the statement that agriculture was 'crushed by overwhelming burdens', and for the description of state finances as 'impoverished'. (See p. 66 for statistics.)

CALONNE PROPOSES AN ASSEMBLY OF NOTABLES

To borrow more money, Calonne had to convince bankers that his reforms would become law. To do this, he needed to demonstrate that the most powerful groups in France supported his reforms. Calonne knew the nobility and upper hierarchy of the Church would oppose his plan, as the system of privilege was to their financial advantage. Thus, Calonne proposed that Louis XVI summon an Assembly of Notables.

The last time the Notables had been summoned by the king was in 1626. Just like 1626, the members of the Assembly would be nominated by the king and would be made up of:

> the principal and most enlightened persons of the kingdom, to whom the king deigns to communicate his views and whom he invites to apprise [tell] him of their reflections. ... People of weight, worthy of the public's confidence and such that their approbation [support] would powerfully influence general opinion.[7]

Calonne thought that if the hand-picked nobility and princes of the Church lent their support, the display of unity and loyalty to the monarchy would reassure lenders that their money was safe and impress the Parlement of Paris.

The nobles and churchmen chosen by Calonne would be unlikely to challenge the king's authority, so the tax reforms should gain their support. However, this was a risky procedure, as historian Peter McPhee has pointed out, because the nobility already felt its position to be under threat from two sources: the monarchy itself, and the rising bourgeois class beneath it.

Source 4.03 Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution 1789–1799* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 35.

Peter McPhee on fiscal reform

> The entrenched hostility of most nobles towards fiscal and social reform was generated by two long-term factors: first, the long-term pressures of royal state-making, which reduced the nobility's autonomy; and, secondly, by the challenge from a wealthier, larger and more critical bourgeoisie and an openly disaffected peasantry towards aristocratic conceptions of property, hierarchy and social order.

On 29 December 1786, the list of Notables was announced. There were to be 144 nominated members: seven princes of the blood, fourteen bishops, thirty-six noblemen, twelve members of the Council of State and intendants, thirty-eight magistrates, twelve representatives of the *pays d'état*, and twenty-five mayors.[8] Among them were Lafayette (hero of the American War) and Loménie de Brienne (Marie Antoinette's favourite). Although over 90 per cent of the population belonged to the Third Estate, they were largely unrepresented, with fewer than thirty members drawn from the common people.[9]

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Discuss the viewpoints that underpinned the nobility's opposition to social and fiscal reform in 1786.

THE ASSEMBLY OF NOTABLES, 22 FEBRUARY–25 MAY 1787

The success of Calonne's plan depended on two things: the support of the king and the compliance of the Notables—and neither of these proved to be reliable. When the Notables met at Versailles in February, Louis XVI was distracted by the illness of his fourth child, Princess Sophie (who would die of tuberculosis later that year). Calonne was ill, too.

Likewise, the Notables did not arrive ready to approve whatever was suggested. Historian William Doyle has argued that 'in a controversial career Calonne had made many enemies and they were well represented in the Assembly. ... The first [chief] president of the Parlement of Paris was ... a personal enemy.'[10] Doyle goes on to suggest that 'if Calonne's proposals had come from anybody else there is little doubt that the Notables would have welcomed them'.[11]

DID YOU KNOW?

Archbishop of Toulouse Loménie de Brienne was said to be a churchman for practical reasons rather than spiritual reasons. When his name was put forward for the position of archbishop of Paris, Louis XVI asked, 'But isn't it necessary that the Archbishop of Paris should at least believe in God?'

The wider community was also suspicious about Calonne's motives. In his efforts to reassure creditors that France's finances were healthy, he had spent heavily on public works, including the beautification of royal residences. Also, there was the extravagant lifestyle of the court at Versailles—were the people being asked to pay for the entertainment of the rich? There were also questions to be answered about Calonne's management of the finances: how was it possible that the surplus of ten million livres under Necker had become an enormous debt by 1787? Was it because of Calonne's poor management?

Source 4.04 *The Palace of Versailles*, by Pierre Patel, c. 1668.

Calonne presented the Notables with persuasive arguments:

- The new land tax would simplify the taxation system.
- Landowners' liabilities would take into account fluctuations in the seasons and the personal wealth of the landowner.
- The local provincial assemblies, representing the landowners, would help assess and collect the taxes.
- Eradicating customs duties and the *corvée* and replacing them with a single tax on imports would help create a more efficient national economy.

THE ARISTOCRATIC REVOLT

KEY EVENT

Most of Calonne's proposals met with the approval of the Notables, subject to some changes. They accepted the idea of local assemblies, stating only that the nobility and clergy should be guaranteed a fixed proportion of seats and that the decisions of the assemblies should not be able to be overturned by the intendant. They agreed to the changes to the corvée, but then went further than Calonne, suggesting that the tax be applied to all as a public works tax, not just to those who had been previously liable. They also agreed to the elimination of internal customs charges.

However, there was widespread disapproval on giving up their taxation privileges:

- The bishops argued that they could not give up the Church's right to self-assessment of tax without first obtaining the assent of the Assembly of the Clergy.
- The magistrates said they had to consult their fellow magistrates in the courts.
- Some Notables wanted the new land tax to be assessed differently and paid as a monetary tax, rather than in produce.

Overall—and this was the biggest hurdle—the Notables were in favour of tax reform, but refused to approve the new tax unless they were fully informed about the nation's finances.

Lafayette wrote to George Washington:

> We were not the representatives of the Nation but ... we declared that altho' we had no right to impede, it was our right not to advise unless we thought the measures were proper and we could not think of new taxes unless we knew the returns of the economy.[12]

This demand to see the royal accounts put the Notables in conflict with Louis XVI. As an absolute monarch, the king's authority was not subject to the consent of his people. However, by demanding access to the full accounts, the Notables were effectively claiming to be the 'representatives of the nation'.

KEY DEVELOPMENT

In March, Leblanc de Castillon, from the Parlement of Aix, claimed that the Assembly lacked the power to approve new taxation: this right belonged to an advisory group called the Estates-General, which had representatives from all of the people.[13]

Louis XVI dismissed Calonne and appointed his rival, Loménie de Brienne, as finance minister. However, Brienne was unable to negotiate an agreement with the Assembly of Notables, and it was dissolved in May 1787.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Create a table or Venn diagram identifying the similarities and differences between Calonne's proposals and those of Turgot and Necker.
2. What conclusions can you draw about Calonne's proposals?
3. What did the success of Calonne's plan depend on?
4. Why did the Notables refuse to give approval for Calonne's plan, despite being in favour of tax reform?
5. Why were the Notables then in conflict with Louis XVI?

WHY DID THE NOTABLES CHALLENGE CALONNE'S PLAN? HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Albert Soboul

In Soboul's view, 'the Assembly of Notables, by definition a group of aristocrats, met ... and after criticizing the planned tax, demanded a statement of the Treasury's accounts'.[14] The quarrel between the king and the Notables paralysed the monarchy and led to revolution:

> The bourgeoisie ... now took over. Its aim was revolutionary: to destroy aristocratic privilege and to establish legal and civic equality in a society that would no longer be composed of orders and constituted bodies. But the bourgeoisie intended to stay within the law. Before long, however, it was carried forward by the pressure of the masses.[15]

George Rudé

According to Rudé, 'The Notables refused to endorse ministerial reforms because their own cherished fiscal immunities were threatened'.[16]

Simon Schama

Schama's interpretation is quite different. He has claimed that 'though they are usually dismissed as the tail-end of the old regime, with respect to political self-consciousness the Notables were the first revolutionaries'.[17] He based this assessment on these three points:

- The Assembly was 'marked by a conspicuous acceptance of principles like fiscal equality'.
- The 'social personality of the notables as landowners and agrarian businessmen gave them a strong sense of the redundancy of privilege'.
- The Notables 'matched Calonne's radicalism step by step and in many cases even advanced beyond him'.

In supporting his argument that the Notables were the revolutionaries, Schama states that it was as if Calonne 'had set out to drive an obstinate mule with a very heavy wagon, only to find that the mule was a racehorse and had galloped into the distance, leaving the rider in the ditch'.[18]

In Schama's view, the nobility and clergy of France were not only willing to bring an end to their own privileges, but were also more radical and egalitarian than Calonne could possibly have anticipated.

David Andress

David Andress has struck a balance between the views of Schama and Rudé. He has acknowledged that the Notables 'rejected both the methods of the past and the state's [monarchy's] solutions with almost one voice'.[19] While Calonne interpreted this as the continued resistance of 'privilege' to reform, Andress has claimed that 'much in the deliberations of the Notables suggested they, too, were finding new ways of thinking'.

Andress, like Schama, suggested that the Notables were assessing matters in the practical terms of landowners. The Notables spent much time raising the issue of excessive state expenditure, which in itself was a method of criticising the court and its excesses. This, Andress asserted, became a method of expressing a new phenomenon in political life: public opinion. By 1788 public opinion would explode in a way that would have been unthinkable under a securely entrenched absolute divine-right monarchy.[20]

Although the Notables' appeal to 'rights' and 'public opinion' against 'ministerial despotism' heightened the wider debate about citizenship and taxation, it finally exposed them in September 1788 when it became obvious that they had no intention of renouncing the privileges of the social order.[21]

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Assess the historians' different viewpoints of the motivations of the Notables. Considering the evidence and viewpoints given in this chapter and other sources, form your own opinion about the Notables' motivations in rejecting Calonne's proposals. Choose one of the following approaches:

1. The Notables were reactionaries who rejected reform to protect their fiscal self-interest.

Or

2. The Notables were keen to push for an Estates-General so they could challenge the king to fix abuses against the common people of France.

Or

3. In forcing the summoning of an Estates-General, the Notables were hoping to set up a power-sharing arrangement with the king for their own estates.

BRIENNE: FOURTH FINANCIAL REFORMER, 1787–1788

Louis XVI: 'If, in my courts, my will was subject to the majority vote the monarchy would be nothing more than an aristocracy of magistrates, as adverse to the rights and interests of the nation as to those of the sovereign.'

Étienne Charles de Loménie de Brienne.

Despite the objections of the Assembly of Notables, the government could not abandon Calonne's reforms because of the bankruptcy crisis. In July 1787 Brienne proposed a new plan that would retain the land tax, but modify Calonne's other reforms. With the Notables dissolved, Brienne took the tax decrees directly to the Parlement of Paris for registration.

PARLEMENTS AND POWERS OF REMONSTRANCE

The Parlement of Paris was the sovereign court of appeal: its role was to register royal edicts so that they became law. The magistrates of the Parlement of Paris were all members of the Second Estate, either by birth or because they had paid to acquire the office of magistrate. The Parlement of Paris, whose jurisdiction covered one-third of the country, was open to the rich men of banking, high finance and government service, most of whom were already nobles.[22]

The role of the Parlement of Paris was to scrutinise the king's edicts to determine whether they were consistent with France's existing laws. If difficulties appeared, the *parlementaires* had the right to point out any defects in the new legislation—which was called ***remonstrating***—and return it to the king for reconsideration. However, they did not have the power to reject the king's edicts—only to delay them. According to historian William Doyle, being able to delay legislation was a significant power:

remonstrating to reject, issue a request for correction, or reproach the king

> By deferring registration pending the king's reply, they were able to delay and obstruct government policy, and since the death of Louis XV, they had developed this technique into a major vehicle of opposition.[23]

Further, by publishing the remonstrance and revealing its defects, the *parlementaires* could rally public opposition against specific legislation. As a last resort, the *parlementaires* could even go on strike or all resign at once. However, in the end, the French king was an absolute monarch. In spite of any tactics the *parlement* might use, he could come to the court in person to force the registration of any legislation through with a *lit de justice* because, as the supreme source of justice, his presence cancelled the authority of the magistrates.

However, the *parlements* increasingly tried to convert the right of remonstrance into a right to veto (reject) royal legislation. This was based on the argument that the king held his throne, and his legitimacy as a monarch sprang from fundamental laws that were unchangeable. The function of the *parlements* was to 'maintain the citizens in the enjoyment of rights which the laws assure them'.[24] This claim placed the *parlements* as guardians of the rights of the people, defenders of both their liberty and their money. It also led the *parlements* to argue that they had a special right to scrutinise new taxes:

DID YOU KNOW?
Louis XVI was in favour of inoculation against smallpox but as the Parlement of Paris opposed it, the public was swayed by the latter.

> The ***infraction*** [breaking] of the sacred right of verification [of laws] simultaneously violates the rights of the Nation and the rights of legislation; it follows that the collection of a tax which has not been verified is a crime against the Constitution.[25]

infraction infringement, breaking a rule or custom

Rabaut Saint-Etienne—later a deputy to the Estates-General—said the nation saw the *parlements* 'as a barrier to despotism of which everyone was weary'.

However, Abbé Morellet had a different view of *parlement*: it had let the people 'be overwhelmed [with taxes] for over a century [permitting government] all its waste and its loans which it knew all about'.[26]

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Although France was an absolute monarchy, the *parlements* had significant power—especially the Parlement of Paris. What was the nature and extent of that power?

2 Explain how the *parlements* could be used to contribute to a revolutionary situation.

Source 4.05 *Lit de Justice Held in the Parlement at the Majority of Louis XV*, by Nicolas Lancret, 1723.

PARLEMENT OF PARIS AS CHAMPION OF THE PEOPLE

KEY IDEA **Parlement of Paris:** 'The constitutional principle of the French monarchy was that taxes should be consented to by those who had to bear them.'

Brienne's tax reforms were presented to the Parlement of Paris.

However, instead of accepting the tax bills, the *parlement* rejected them. It argued that only the nation, assembled through an Estates-General, had the right to determine the need for tax reform. Therefore, it was not a decision for the monarch to make on his own. Without the consent of the people, the *parlement* would not consent to registration of the edicts. As the *parlement* stated in the remonstrance, 'The constitutional principle of the French monarchy was that taxes should be consented to by those who had to bear them'.[27]

LIT DE JUSTICE, 6 AUGUST 1787 AND EXILE TO TROYES

On 6 August 1787, Louis XVI attempted to assert his absolute power through a *lit de justice* and, thus, force the legislation through. However, the *parlement* declared that such an action was invalid.

On 15 August 1787, Louis XVI exiled the Parlement of Paris to Troyes, a town 150 kilometres away. This move sparked popular uprisings against the monarchy. Many of the lower courts protested against the king's actions. These protests were supported by demonstrations in the streets and markets in support of the *parlement*. Minister Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes wrote that the voice of Paris was the voice of the nation.

Malesherbes

> The Parlement of Paris is, at the moment, but the echo of the public of Paris, and ... the public of Paris is that of the entire Nation. It is the *parlement* which speaks, because it is the only body that has the right to speak; but let there be no illusion that if any assembly of citizens had this right, it would make the same use of it. So we are dealing with the entire Nation; it is to the Nation that the king responds when he responds to the Parlement.

Source 4.06 Cited in William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 107.

Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, c. 1798.

What was at the heart of the dispute? The bankruptcy crisis and Calonne's decision to call on the Assembly of Notables showed that the monarchy's power was weak. This allowed the aristocracy in the Notables and the Parlement of Paris to attempt to gain some of the power they had lost since the time of Louis XIV.

The Parlement of Paris moved the struggle further along. The Notables had demanded that the monarchy be responsible to the people for the way it spent taxation revenue, but the *parlement* was demanding that its right to register laws and edicts be recognised as the power to veto royal tax legislation if it did not have the consent of the nation. It claimed this power as the people's representatives in policymaking. In this way, the *parlement* appeared as the people's champions against the 'despotism' of the king's ministers—and absolute power was confronted by popular power.

In mid-September, the magistrates and the king's minister reached a compromise:

- The *parlement* would be recalled.
- Brienne's tax plan would be modified.

The government withdrew the land tax and the stamp tax, but retained the *vingtièmes*. This seemed to be a win for the *parlement*. Certainly, the return of the magistrates to Paris was greeted as a triumph—although not by everybody.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Why was Brienne unable to register the tax reforms?
2. What was the fundamental issue in the dispute between Louis XVI and the Parlement of Paris? Who 'won' the dispute?
3. Do the actions of August–September 1787 match your understanding of how the *parlements* could contribute to a revolutionary situation? Explain your response.

ABSOLUTISM IN ACTION: THE ROYAL SESSION, 19 NOVEMBER 1787

People who had hoped for political reform were disappointed by the compromise. The provincial *parlements* that had supported Paris felt abandoned. Mirabeau and Lafayette, two peers who had supported the *parlements*, regretted the concessions to royal power. Abbé Morellet wrote bitterly about the compromise.

Source 4.07 Cited in D.M.G. Sutherland, *France 1789–1815 Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (London: Fontana, 1985), 30.

Abbé Morellet

On whom would you have the nation rely today? The *parlements*, which defended it so badly, have again deserted it. ... We need some bar to the repetition of abuses; we need an Estates-General or the equivalent. That is what people everywhere are saying.

Brienne was forced into a program of financial cutbacks and loans, which, once again, had to be authorised by the *parlement*. Brienne:

- proposed borrowing 420 million livres in the period 1788–1792 to pay off short-term debts due over the period
- promised in return to impose financial cutbacks on the military, the bureaucracy and the royal household.

Brienne made several concessions to the *parlement*. If *parlement* would register his loans, he would call an Estates-General by 1792. However, the compromise was doomed. Louis XVI's minister for justice, Chrétien-François de Lamoignon, antagonised the magistrates by using the royal sitting on 19 November to remind them of the king's absolute authority.

Source 4.08 Cited in Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution 1789–1799* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 36.

Lamoignon KEY IDEA

Sovereign power in his kingdom belongs to the King alone. ... He is accountable only to God for the exercise of supreme power. ... The link that unites the king and the nation is by nature indissoluble. ... The king is the sovereign ruler of the nation and is one with it. ... Legislative power resides in the person of the sovereign, depending on and sharing with no-one.

Louis XVI then ordered that the loans be immediately registered, with discussion occurring only after the registration. Historian William Doyle states that the Duc d'Orléans, head of the junior branch of the royal family and 'heir to a long tradition of obstructionism', astonished everyone by protesting that this action was illegal.[28]

Louis XVI replied, 'That is of no importance to me. ... It is legal because I will it.'[29]

This led to outright rebellion. Historian William Doyle writes that, 'no reply could have been more catastrophic. ... The king's words turned what seemed destined to be a government triumph into a disaster.'[30] The next day, after three-and-a-half hours of debate, the Parlement of Paris refused to register the loan. After that:

- Duc d'Orléans and two leading magistrates were exiled to the country by *lettres de cachet* (royal orders)
- the peers were refused the right to sit in the *parlement*.

It was, says William Doyle, 'open war'.[31] The provincial *parlements* supported the Paris magistrates; they refused to register the loans and condemned the use of *lettres de cachet* as illegal. In January 1788, Louis XVI stated the basis for his decision.

Louis XVI, January 1788

> When I come to personally hold my *Parlement*, it is because I wish to hear a discussion of the law that I have brought with me and to learn more about it before I decide on its registration. This is what I did on November 19 last. … If, in my courts, my will was subject to the majority vote the monarchy would be nothing more than an aristocracy of magistrates, as adverse to the rights and interests of the nation as to those of the sovereign. Indeed, it would be a strange constitution that diminished the will of the King to the point that it is worth no more than the opinion of one of his officers, and requires that legislators have as many opinions as there are different decisions arising from the various courts of law in the kingdom.

Source 4.09 Cited in M.J. Mavidal and M.E. Laurent, eds, *Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860,* première série (1787–1799), 2nd ed., 82 vols. (Paris: Dupont, 1879–1913): 1: 284.

Source 4.10 Exercise of the king's absolute power through at the Royal Session of 19 November 1787.

The split between the king and the Parlement of Paris widened. It was rumoured that the king's ministers intended to get rid of the *parlement* altogether, so the *parlement* went on the offensive. It:

- condemned the forcible registration of the loans in November 1787
- forbid tax collectors to apply the new taxes.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 4.07–4.09 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. How does Abbé Morellet justify the call for an Estates-General?
2. Identify how Lamoignon, and then Louis XVI, asserted the authority of the king. Explain, using examples, how their choice of language would antagonise the Parlement of Paris.

FUNDAMENTAL LAWS OF THE KINGDOM, 3 MAY 1788

On 3 May 1788 the Parlement of Paris issued a declaration on what it regarded as the 'fundamental laws of the realm', including:

- 'the right of the Nation freely to grant subsides' (taxes) through regular meetings of the Estates-General
- the right of the *parlements* to register new laws
- the freedom of all Frenchmen from ***arbitrary*** arrest.[32]

arbitrary using unlimited personal power; based on chance or whim rather than reason

On 4 May 1788, the *parlement* responded further to the king's accusations.

Declaration of the Parlement of Paris, 4 May 1788

> The heir to the throne is designated by the law; the nation has its rights; the ***Peerage*** likewise; the Magistracy is irremovable; each province has its customs, … each subject his natural judges, each citizen his property; if he is poor, at least he has his liberty. Yet we dare to ask: which of these rights, which of these laws can stand up against the claims by your ministers in Your Majesty's name?

Source 4.11 Cited in William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 81.

peerage literally 'group of peers'; peer was another name for a noble

Such a challenge to the king's authority could not be tolerated. An order was made for the arrest of the magistrates involved, but when troops went to the *parlement* it refused to hand over the magistrates or to close its session. For eleven hours there was a stand-off. Finally, with soldiers surrounding the Palais de Justice, the magistrates were arrested.

LIT DE JUSTICE, 8 MAY 1788: BRIENNE'S REFORM PROGRAM

On 8 May 1788, Louis XVI held another *lit de justice*, where Brienne tried to introduce a program of reforms. The most controversial reform was the move to replace all *parlements* with new plenary courts that would register all royal decrees.

This first reform was designed to suppress the growing opposition to the monarchy. Brienne also proposed:

- ending venal offices
- creating a new central treasury
- making sure laws were printed and accessible
- reforming the education system
- extending religious toleration to Protestants and Jews
- reforming the army to make it less expensive and more efficient.

This was the widest-ranging reform proposal made by any of Louis XVI's finance ministers.

However, the real message was clear. The Parlement of Paris and the provincial *parlements* were suspended. In the struggle between judicial power and the absolute monarchy, the monarchy had won—but only temporarily.

DAY OF TILES, JUNE 1788 **KEY EVENT**

Within a week the country was in uproar: the magistrates were hailed as defenders of the people's rights and there were protests and demonstrations demanding their recall. The provincial *parlements* refused to be dismissed and stood behind the Parlement of Paris. Demands for an Estates-General increased. In five provincial *parlements*, the magistrates were exiled through *lettres de cachet*. In many cities, the *parlements* were supported by craftsmen, wigmakers, lace-makers, domestic servants and other common people whose livelihoods would be threatened if the *parlements* were abolished.

On 10 June 1788, soldiers came to banish the magistrates from the Parlement of Grenoble. However, the inhabitants of Grenoble supported their *parlement* by standing on the roofs of their houses and throwing tiles down at the soldiers. Although one regiment of soldiers obeyed orders not to shoot, a second regiment opened fire, killing two people. The governor's house was looted, and the magistrates were led back to the court in triumph.

Simon Schama on the Day of Tiles

> [The Day of Tiles was] a three-fold revolution. It signified the breakdown of royal authority and the helplessness of military force in the face of sustained urban disorder. It warned the elite ... that there was an unpredictable price to be paid for their encouragement of riot and one that might very easily be turned against themselves. And most important of all, it delivered the initiative for further political action into the hands of a younger, more radical group.

Source 4.12 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), 277.

Among the more radical group Schama describes were lawyer Antoine-Pierre Barnave, and draper's son Jean-Joseph Mounier—two men would make their mark on the nation in 1789 as deputies to the Estates-General.

Jean-Joseph Mounier.

There were riots in Paris, Rennes, Pau and Dijon, partly fuelled by the high price of food following crop failures. The nobility of Brittany sent a delegation to Louis XVI asking him to condemn his ministers as criminals, but they were arrested as they approached Paris and thrown into the Bastille. Hostile pamphlets—over 500 of them between May and September alone—were published, attacking the ministers. Even the clergy joined in the protests, refusing to pay more than a small *don gratuit* to Louis as a signal of their disapproval.

On 5 July 1788, Brienne announced that Louis XVI would welcome submissions on the composition of an Estates-General. The 'aristocratic revolution' had succeeded.

DID YOU KNOW?

On 20 July 1789, when the self-proclaimed National Assembly was denied entry to its regular meeting hall and had to adjourn to a nearby indoor tennis court, it was Mounier who suggested that the assembled group take the Tennis Court Oath.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. How did the actions of the *parlements* in 1788 challenge the authority of the king?
2. Explain how these actions earned the approval of the French people.
3. How did Louis XVI respond and what did it indicate about his authority over the kingdom?

KEY DEVELOPMENT

BANKRUPTCY: 8–16 AUGUST 1788

Turgot, 1774: 'No Borrowing, No War, No Bankruptcy.'

Faced with an empty treasury and a sea of protests, on 8 August 1788 Louis XVI called for an Estates-General for 1 May 1789. This was an effort to restore public confidence in the government.

Meanwhile, there were only 400,000 livres left in the treasury. According to historian Simon Schama, that was 'enough money for the government to function for one afternoon'.[33] The government had already borrowed against anticipated future revenue, and on 13 July 1788 a massive hailstorm destroyed much of the grain harvest in the area around Paris. Similar events around the country meant that tax revenues from the peasants would be much lower in the year to come.

On 16 August, the government of Louis XVI suspended all payments to the bureaucracy and the army and called for foreign countries to repay any money they had borrowed from France. Brienne resigned on 24 August, suggesting that Necker be recalled, as he was the only man who could restore the confidence of the people.

Source 4.13 Adapted from Colin Jones, *The Longman Companion to the French Revolution* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990), 230.

About this table

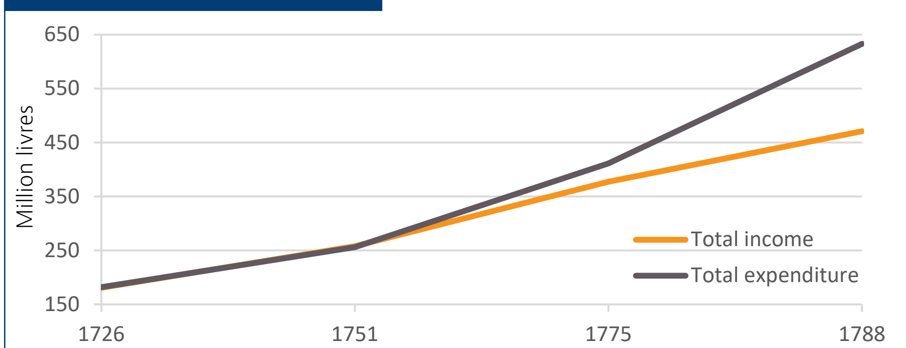
The French government had been overspending for decades, despite progressive increases in revenue.

Source 4.13 shows expenditure over roughly sixty years:

- 1726: The budget almost balanced, with expenditure only one million livres more than income.
- 1751: The budget is in black, with income greater than expenditure by two million livres.
- 1775: Trouble begins, as expenditure exceeds income by thirty-four million livres.
- 1788: Financial crisis, as expenditure exceeds revenue by 162 million livres (or 33%).

Government expenditure

	1726	1751	1775	1788
Total INCOME (in livres)	181 million	258.5 million	377.2 million	421.6 million
Expenditure:				
% of annual budget spent on War, Navy and Foreign Affairs	38%	50.1%	33%	27.4%
% of annual budget spent on the Court of Versailles	17%	10.1%	10.5%	6.6%
% of annual budget spent on servicing the debt	33%	21.8%	37.5%	41.2%
Total EXPENDITURE (in livres)	182 million	256 million	411 million	633 million



CHAPTER 4 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The reforms attempted by finance ministers Turgot, Necker, Calonne and Brienne had certain points in common. These include:
  1. the belief that the land and its produce was the key component of wealth for the nation—a physiocratic idea
  2. the idea of 'free trade'—that a market can flourish without government restrictions
  3. that land tax should be paid by all landowners, regardless of estate
  4. that provincial assemblies of landowners should be entrusted with estimating how much tax was owed and collecting it
  5. that internal customs barriers should be abolished to allow for the establishment of a national market
  6. that such changes of taxation policy required agreement from the nation as represented by the *parlements* or an Assembly of Notables
  7. the concession that such an agreement depended on reforming some of the antiquated practices of the monarchy.
- The failure of Louis XVI and his ministers to meet the concerns of the aristocratic institutions of the Parlement of Paris and the Assembly of Notables showed a fundamental weakness in the structure of the government.
- The government was inflexible and unable to react to the changing conditions of 1780s France.
- The monarchy was rigid and unchanging; this encouraged people to call for an Estates-General that could actually determine whether the changes to the taxation system were valid.
- The failure of Louis XVI and his ministers to reform the taxation system was a key cause of revolution breaking out in 1789.

REVIEW

If revenue were greater than expenditure, what could have been done? Identify the solutions offered by each of the finance ministers under Louis XVI, using a table like this one.

	TURGOT	NECKER	CALONNE	BRIENNE
Solutions:				

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write a 250–350-word extended response to the topic below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence, and a clear conclusion.

- Explain how the actions of France's finance ministers contributed to the outbreak of revolution. Use evidence from Chapters 3 and 4 to support your response.

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- Evaluate the significance of the revolt of the Notables as a cause of revolution in France.
- Some historians credit the Day of Tiles as the start of the French Revolution. To what extent do you agree?

Additional resources: **www.htavshop.com.au/beyond-the-book**

THE THIRD ESTATE FINDS ITS VOICE (1788–APRIL 1789)

Early 1789 was full of social disorder: the previous year's harvest failures led to food shortages, high prices and food riots. In January 1789, Abbé Sieyès published his influential pamphlet, *What Is the Third Estate?*, which was a comprehensive attack on the privileged orders. The public's expectations of reform were raised when they were encouraged to write down their grievances in the ***cahiers de doléances*** so they could be sent to Versailles to advise the king. Rural disturbances were gaining in momentum.

Meanwhile, the price of bread in Paris climbed to 88 per cent of the daily working wage. By April 1789, food riots were no longer just about having enough to eat: rioters began to include political demands. The price of bread shaped the course of the revolution, as it underpinned every important action of the popular movement until 1795.

cahiers de doléances books of grievances written by 60,000 villages, seigneurial estates, towns and cities; they were to be submitted for the king's consideration at the Estates-General

Source 5.01 ***Louis XVI Distributing Alms to the Poor of Versailles during the Winter of 1788*, by Louise Marie Jeanne Hersent, 1817.**

CHAPTER 5

‘Some 90% of the population [of France] lived at or below subsistence level—many were indigent and their number depended on the price of bread and flour.’

—Climate historian J. Neumann

KEY QUESTIONS

- To what extent could the economic suffering of the poor be considered a cause of the revolution?
- What role did the pamphlet war—especially Sieyès’s *What Is the Third Estate?*—play in shaping public opinion?
- What role did drawing up lists of grievances (*cahiers de doléances*) play in the development of a revolutionary situation by mid-1789?

KEY EVENTS

25 September 1788
Parlement of Paris decrees that Estates-General must meet according to rules of 1614

Summer 1788/1789
Harvest crisis

January–May 1789
Cahiers de doléances are drawn up, elections held, pamphlets circulated and political clubs form ahead of Estates-General

January 1789
Sieyès publishes *What Is the Third Estate?*

26–29 April 1789
Réveillon Riots: violent crowds protest rumoured wage reductions

THE HARVEST CRISIS OF 1788

KEY EVENT

Parisian citizens (Winter of 1788/1789): ‘Are they concerned with us? Are they thinking of lowering the price of bread? We haven’t eaten anything for two days.’

While unrest was unfolding in the towns in support of the *parlements* in their dispute with royal authority, France’s rural areas were experiencing turmoil of their own.

France in the 1780s was essentially a rural society that still followed medieval farming practices. When the harvest was collected, most of it was required to feed the peasants, pay the tithe and other feudal dues; most of what was left was put into winter storage or reserved for planting the following season. The small amount left over was sent to market.

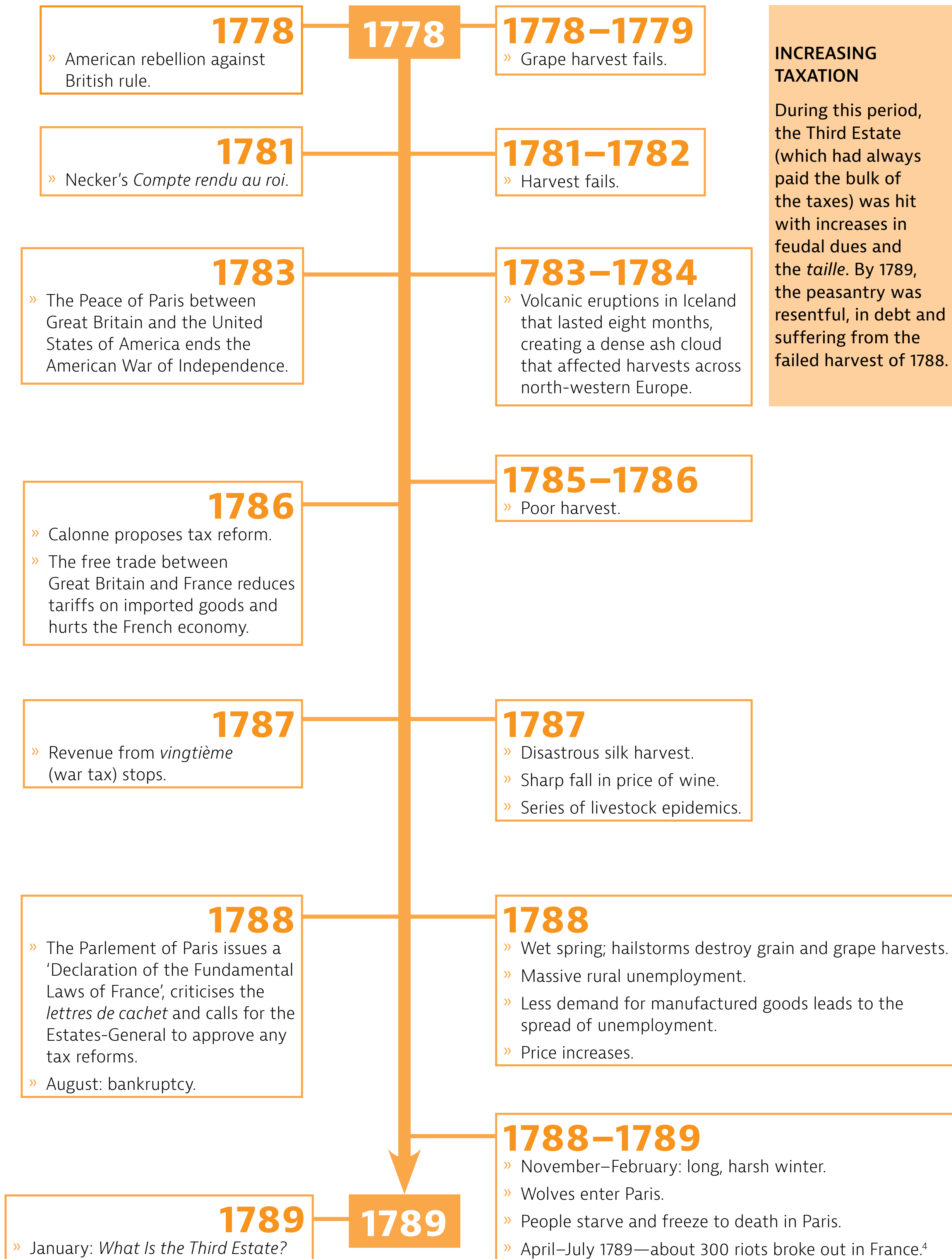
Meanwhile, the population was increasing. According to historian Peter McPhee, the French population rose from 24.5 million in the 1750s to twenty-eight million by the 1780s.[1] The traditional farming methods were unable to keep up with the increased demand for the their products. Bad weather, animal disease or poor harvests led to scarcity of food—and scarcity meant a rise in food prices. Food scarcity plus increased prices led to riots. According to McPhee:

> Twenty-two of the years between 1765 and 1789 were marked by food riots, either in urban neighbourhoods where women sought to impose the ***taxation populaire*** or in rural areas where peasants banded together to prevent scarce supplies being sent away to market.[2]

Climate historian J. Neumann states that the decade leading up to 1789 was plagued by a series of natural disasters, culminating in a harvest crisis in the summers of 1788 and 1789.[3]

indigent poor; needy

taxation populaire common people purchasing basic commodities would pay only what they considered to be a ‘fair price’



TIMELINE OF ECONOMIC CRISIS, 1780s
KEY DEVELOPMENTS
1778
1778
» American rebellion against British rule.
1778–1779
» Grape harvest fails.
1781
» Necker's Compte rendu au roi.
1781–1782
» Harvest fails.
1783
» The Peace of Paris between Great Britain and the United States of America ends the American War of Independence.
1783–1784
» Volcanic eruptions in Iceland that lasted eight months, creating a dense ash cloud that affected harvests across north-western Europe.
1785–1786
» Poor harvest.
1786
» Calonne proposes tax reform.
» The free trade between Great Britain and France reduces tariffs on imported goods and hurts the French economy.
1787
» Revenue from vingtième (war tax) stops.
1787
» Disastrous silk harvest.
» Sharp fall in price of wine.
» Series of livestock epidemics.
1788
» The Parlement of Paris issues a 'Declaration of the Fundamental Laws of France', criticises the lettres de cachet and calls for the Estates-General to approve any tax reforms.
» August: bankruptcy.
1788
» Wet spring; hailstorms destroy grain and grape harvests.
» Massive rural unemployment.
» Less demand for manufactured goods leads to the spread of unemployment.
» Price increases.
1788–1789
» November–February: long, harsh winter.
» Wolves enter Paris.
» People starve and freeze to death in Paris.
» April–July 1789—about 300 riots broke out in France.[4]
1789
1789
» January: What Is the Third Estate?
INCREASING TAXATION
During this period, the Third Estate (which had always paid the bulk of the taxes) was hit with increases in feudal dues and the taille. By 1789, the peasantry was resentful, in debt and suffering from the failed harvest of 1788.

In 1788, France experienced a poor grain harvest. In July, a hailstorm destroyed most of the crops and this led to famine.

Lord Dorset—who was British ambassador to France—sent a description of the hailstorm to the British Foreign Secretary Lord Carmarthen.

Lord Dorset on the hailstorm

The hailstones that fell were of a size and weight never heard of before in this country, some of them measuring 16 inches in circumference, and in some places, it is said they were even much larger. Not so far from St Germain two men were found dead upon the road, and a horse was so much bruised that it was determined to kill him ... to put an end to his misery.

It is impossible to give expression in detail to the damage that has been done. ... It is computed that from twelve to 1,500 villages have suffered more or less damage.

Source 5.02 O. Browning, ed., *Despatches from Paris, 1784–1790* (London: Offices of the Society, 1909–1910), 38.

The wheat crops sustained the greatest hailstorm damage. Then came the winter.

James Anderson on the winter of 1788–1789

Over vast regions of France, the storm was followed by drought,* and the little that was left of the harvest was mostly parched and useless. The winter brought on the coldest spell in many years. It was said that birds froze in their nests. Rivers froze, watermills stopped working, and the little grain that remained could not be made into flour. Transportation came to a standstill in the deep snow that covered the ground in many areas as regions boiled down tree bark to make gruel. Provence was described by Mirabeau, in January 1789, as having been visited by the Exterminating Angel. Thousands of people froze to death, and many more died of hunger.

[*Other sources make it clear that the drought preceded the hailstorm and that the crops destroyed by hail on 13 July 1788 were already of a poor quality.]

Source 5.03 James M. Anderson, *Daily Life during the French Revolution* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2007), 198.

Neumann has reported that the European winter of 1788–1789 was one of the harshest winters of the eighteenth century. It was 'so cold the wine froze in cellars and barrels shattered'. The winter was particularly long: there were eighty-six days in Paris below freezing compared to the normal average of forty-five days. The lowest temperature reached was –21°C.[5]

The bad weather created more unemployment. When rivers were frozen, water mills could not grind grain and barges could not transport the grain to the towns. As a result, bread prices soared: the price of a four-pound loaf of bread in February 1789 was almost double what it had been in 1787, and was equal to over half a labourer's weekly wage.[6]

According to Neumann, bread riots began as early as August 1788, when it became clear the harvest had failed. At first the riots were about people not having enough to eat. But in April–July 1789, amid preparations for the Estates-General and the drawing up of *cahiers de doléances*, the 300 bread riots in France were increasingly political.[7]

Thus, a series of natural disasters turned into an economic and political crisis for the ancien régime.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What was the population of France by the 1780s?
2. Identify three facts that illustrate the extent of the harvest crisis and food shortage that afflicted France during 1788.
3. Explain how the bad weather contributed to unemployment.

J. Neumann and J. Dettweiller on the drought

That the consequences of the drought of 1788 were able to destabilize public order in France is beyond all doubt ... but that it was able to make an important contribution to the outbreak of Revolution and destruction of the Old Regime was due to the great social and political inequalities of the country. Some 90 per cent of the population lived at or below subsistence level ... [while] the nobility and the Church enjoyed far-reaching privileges which were extended ... under Louis XVI's reign.

Source 5.04 J. Neumann and J. Dettweiller, 'Great Historical Events That Were Significantly Affected by the Weather: Part 9, the Year Leading to the Revolution of 1789 in France, (II),' *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 71, no. 1 (1990): 40.

KEY DEVELOPMENT

MOMENTUM FOR AN ESTATES-GENERAL

Abbé Sieyès: 'What is the Third Estate? Everything. What had it been before in the political order? Nothing. What does it demand? To become something therein.'[8]

KEY MOVEMENT

THE THIRD ESTATE DEMANDS CHANGE

Up to this point, the revolt against absolute government had been led by the nobility in the Assembly of Notables and the Parlement of Paris. As the nobles were seen to be fighting against new taxes, they were depicted in the popular press as defenders of the rights of the people.

However, on 25 September 1788 that all changed, when the Parlement of Paris declared that the Estates-General should be made up, as it was the last time it was summoned—in 1614.

In 1614 each Estate had a roughly equal number of deputies, and had sat separately. They discussed the issues presented to them, then voted. Each Estate voted as a whole:

- one vote for the First Estate
- one vote for the Second Estate
- one vote for the Third Estate.

This meant that the First and Second Estates could always outvote the Third Estate, two votes to one.

This declaration radically changed public opinion, and the Parlement of Paris lost the support of the bourgeoisie and common people. Now the Third Estate suspected that the First and Second Estates simply wanted to gain more power for themselves, rather than fight for justice for the whole nation.

The Third Estate demanded greater representation. They wanted:

- double their number of deputies to the Estates-General—an increase from 300 to 600, as their estate represented over 90 per cent of the population.
- voting by head, rather than by chamber or estate—which meant all the deputies to the Estates-General would sit as one body, with majorities to be decided on the basis of individual votes.

On 27 December 1788, Louis XVI made his decision: he would grant double representation to the Third Estate, but he did not make any decision about voting.

Swiss journalist Mallet du Pan wrote about the controversy caused by Louis XVI's indecisiveness:

> The public debate has assumed a different character. King, despotism and constitution have now become only secondary questions. Now it is war between the Third Estate and the other two orders.[9]

Louis XVI's advisers asked that the Third Estate restrict itself to asking for changes to taxes, and promised that, in return, 'the first two orders ... will, by the generosity of their sentiments, be able to renounce those prerogatives which have a financial interest'.[10]

The battlelines were drawn between:

- the First and Second Estates, who wanted their honorific privileges preserved
- the Third Estate, who wanted fundamental changes to the way France was governed.

THE SOCIETY OF THIRTY

Many members of the nobility played an active role in support of the revolution. In 1789, the most prominent role was played by a mainly noble group who had an informal club called the Society of Thirty. Their goal was to design a new constitution for France based on principles of the Enlightenment.

In late 1788 and early 1789, this group met twice weekly at the house of the *parlementaire* Adrien Duport to debate the nature of representation to the Estates-General. The club started with thirty members, but grew to about sixty members—only five of whom were commoners. Membership was divided between the nobility of the sword and the nobility of the robe. The members of the Society of Thirty included:

- Lafayette—the hero of the American War
- the Duc de Noailles
- the Duc de la Rochefoucauld—one of the highest members of the peerage
- the Marquis de Condorcet—noted *philosophe* and mathematician
- Comte Mirabeau—soon to be hailed as 'voice of the revolution'
- Bishop Talleyrand, Abbé Sieyès and pastor Rabaut Saint-Etienne—all from the clergy
- Louis-Sébastien Mercier—journalist
- Gui Target—leading lawyer
- Adrien Duport—young radical.

As historian Simon Schama puts it, these men were 'aristocrats against privilege, officers who wanted to replace dynastic with national patriotism'.[11]

Adrien Duport, by Jean-Baptiste Vérité, 1790.

The members of the Society of Thirty embraced three principles:

- First, they rejected outright that there was some 'fundamental constitution' of France that the *parlements* had been attempting to conserve.
- Second, they believed that the only fundamental law was 'the welfare of the people'.
- Third, they believed that as France had no constitution, it was necessary to write one.

The majority of members of the society also believed that the Third Estate should have double representation because, as the Comte d'Antraigues and Abbé Sieyès argued, the state and people were one and the same: the Third Estate was not an order, but the nation itself.

Sieyès's statement strongly reflected the ideas of the Enlightenment, with its concepts of law by 'general will' and the division of the powers of government.

THE PAMPHLET WAR **KEY DEVELOPMENT**

In May 1788, when it was announced that an Estates-General would be called, Louis XVI had relaxed the censorship laws, according to custom, so that people could inform themselves about tax reform.

Then on 5 July 1788, Louis XVI had invited 'all erudite [learned] and educated people' to send their opinions on the ***convocation*** (or summoning) of the Estates-General to the Keeper of the Seals. The result was an explosion of activity. People wanted to enlighten the whole nation, not just the king—and they were not restrained by any lack of 'erudition'.

convocation summoning, calling together

DID YOU KNOW?

In the 1780s, French newspapers reached up to 500,000 people. Most papers were calling for political change.

Source 5.05 *The Pamphlet War 1788–89. New Pamphlets and Journals Poured from the Presses*. An anonymous print showing one of the printing workshops at work in the early part of the revolution.

By January 1789—with elections for the deputies underway and *cahiers de doléances* being drawn up all over France—the pamphleteering unleashed by the relaxed censorship laws had grown into a war.

The debate was everywhere, from the salons of the wealthy and powerful to the cafés and taverns where the poor drank, in the churches and in the streets, and from the heart of Paris to the provincial towns, villages and farms. Between May 1788 and April 1789, over 4000 pamphlets were published; by December 1789, the number of newspapers in Paris had grown to 250.

The most powerful of the 4000 pamphlets was Abbé Sieyès's challenge to royal absolutism and the established order, called *What Is the Third Estate?* This 20,000-word pamphlet became the most powerful and influential attack on the social and political order of France.

WHAT IS THE THIRD ESTATE? A CALL TO REVOLUTION

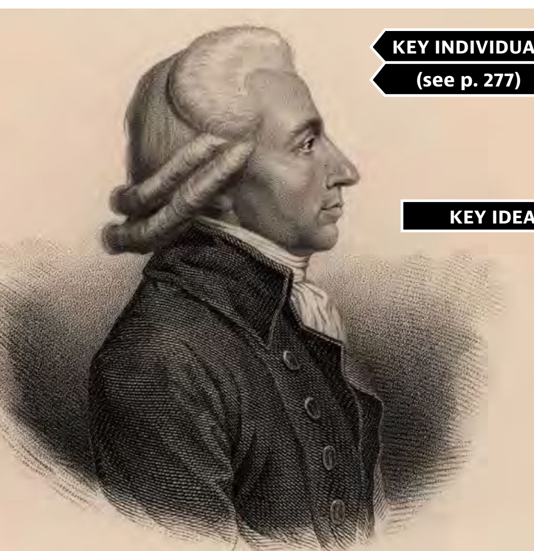
Sieyès challenged the old order of estates and the system of privilege. Under the old order, the clergy and nobility were deemed to be more useful to the state than the Third Estate, because:

- the First Estate ministered to the spiritual needs of the people
- the Second Estate defended the kingdom.

Sieyès began with three powerful questions:

> What is the Third Estate? Everything
> What had it been before in the political order? Nothing
> What does it demand? To become something therein.[12]

Emmanuel-Joseph Abbé Sieyès.



KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 277)

He followed with a comprehensive attack on the privileged orders, pointing out that it was the Third Estate that engaged in private enterprise and fulfilled public duties. Members of the Third Estate were the people who farmed, manufactured, sold and traded goods; further, it was the Third Estate that provided every type of public service 'from the most distinguished scientific and liberal professions to the least esteemed domestic service'. And what of the privileged orders? They took 'only the lucrative and honorary positions,' wrote Sieyès, claiming that the utility of the privileged orders to the state was a myth because 'all that is arduous in such service is performed by the Third Estate'. For Sieyès, the Third Estate *was* the nation:

KEY IDEA

> Who, then, would dare to say that the Third Estate has not within itself everything that is necessary to constitute a nation? It is the strong and robust man whose one arm remains enchained. ... Thus, what is the Third Estate? Everything, but an everything shackled and oppressed.[13]

These statements were a genuine call to revolution—the issue was privilege, and the battleground was the Estates-General.

'Legalised privilege in any form,' Sieyès thundered, 'deviates from the common order. ... A common law and a common representation are what constitutes one nation.' Sieyès called on the deputies of the Third Estate to take their rightful place as representatives of the people of France.

Abbé Sieyès, *What Is the Third Estate?* KEY SOURCE

What must the Third Estate do if it wishes to gain possession of its political rights in a manner beneficial to the nation? ... The Third Estate must assemble apart: it will not meet with the nobility and clergy at all; it will not remain with them, either by order or by head. I pray they will keep in mind the enormous difference between the Third Estate and that of the other two orders. The Third represents [25 million] men, ... the two others, were they to unite, have the powers of only about 200,000 individuals, and think only of their privileges. The Third Estate alone, they say, cannot constitute the Estates-General. Well! So much the better. It will form a National Assembly.

Source 5.06 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 42.

CREATIVE TASK

Abbé Sieyes's pamphlet, *What Is the Third Estate?* was extraordinarily popular in 1789 because it cut to the heart of the matter in three simple questions. In today's media, he would possibly utilise a 'tweet' of 280 characters or fewer. Devise what you think he would state. How could it get mainstream attention?

The challenge issued by Sieyès is echoed in the *cahiers de doléances* from all estates, asking for:

- political representation
- the end of privilege
- government responsibility to the people through regular meetings of the Estates-General
- personal liberties.

Sieyès's strongest influence came from the Enlightenment *philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose ideas on the liberty of the individual, law by 'general will' and government with the consent of the governed had been widely discussed among the literate French people. In particular, Sieyès reiterated Rousseau's belief that 'a law not made by the people is no law at all'.

Abbé Sieyès, *What Is the Third Estate?*

The Third Estate wishes to have real representatives in the Estates-General, that is to say, deputies drawn from its order, who are competent to be interpreters of its will and defenders of its interest. But what will it avail to be present at the Estates-General if the predominating interest there is contrary to its own! Its presence would only consecrate the oppression of which it would be the eternal victim. Thus, it is indeed certain that it cannot come to vote at the Estates-General unless it is to have in that body an influence at least equal to that of the privileged classes; and it demands a number of representatives equal to that of the first two orders together. Finally, this equality of representation would become completely illusory if every chamber voted separately. The Third Estate demands, then, that votes be taken by head and not by order.

Source 5.07 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 42.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 5.07 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline two changes to voting procedures proposed by Sieyès.
2. Explain why Abbé Sieyès might have referred to the Third Estate as 'the eternal victim'.
3. Explain the danger facing the Third Estate at the Estates-General.

THE *CAHIERS DE DOLÉANCES* KEY DEVELOPMENT

Lists of grievances (*cahiers de doléances*) were drawn up in spring 1789 by the estates in each electoral region, as the first meeting of the Estates-General approached. The *cahiers de doléances* were to guide the deputies who would be sent to Versailles to advise the king.

Some *cahiers de doléances* were conservative. For example, the First Estate of Bourges asked that the Estates-General 're-establish the empire of morals, make religion reign, reform abuses, find a remedy for the evils of the state, be an era of prosperity for France and profound and durable glory for his Majesty'.[14]

Other *cahiers de doléances* were radical and revolutionary:

> In every political society, all men are equal in rights. All power emanates from the nation and may only be exercised for its well-being. ... In the French monarchy, legislative power belongs to the nation conjointly with the King; executive power belongs to the King alone.[15]

DID YOU KNOW?

On 17 March 1789, the Duc d'Orléans (Louis XVI's cousin) sent a letter to parishioners asking them to write *cahiers de doléances* in favour of property rights, equal taxation and the abolition of hunting rights. He said he wanted to be able to support 'with all his authority the well-founded grievances of his good vassals' (tenants).

The ideas in this *cahier* suggest the reformed monarchy that many hoped would be the outcome of the Estates-General. The Third Estate of Paris had closely followed the model *cahier* written by the Society of Thirty, which was circulated in the country and gave local commoners—who were often illiterate—a framework they could use to express their grievances. Due to the model, many Third Estate *cahiers* were quite similar—stating fundamental political grievances, then identifying very local problems.

Many of the *cahiers de doléances* from the First Estate were more liberal than those of the Third Estate.[16] Of 282 *cahiers* received from the nobility, ninety of them reflected liberal ideas. Overall, of the nobles' *cahiers de doléances*:

- 89 per cent were prepared to forego financial privileges
- 39 per cent supported voting by head.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1790 the king's personal accounts were made public. Between 1774 and 1789 Louis XVI spent twenty-nine million livres on his brothers, eleven million on himself and the queen, two million on salaries and pensions, and 254,000 livres on charity.

In general, the nobles' *cahiers de doléances*:

- showed a desire for change
- were prepared to admit that high office should be determined by merit rather than birth
- attacked the government for its despotism, injustice and inefficiency.

Overall, the *cahiers de doléances* showed a remarkable level of agreement shown between the three estates, that:

- the Estates-General should meet in regular sessions
- after the king disclosed the level of state debt, he should hand control of tax revenue and its expenditure to the Estates-General or *nation assemblée*
- the laws of the nation should be made uniform and humane
- justice should be freely available to all.

DID YOU KNOW?

In its *cahiers de doléances*, the Third Estate of Bossancourt called for a law preventing horses and sheep from grazing together, on the grounds that horses needed 'healthy fodder, not infected by the bad breath of sheep and lambs'.

Also, the three estates widely agreed on the need to abolish internal customs barriers and encourage internal free trade.

However, there were also clear indicators of the divisions between the estates, as outlined below.

CLERGY

The clergy was not prepared to renounce the privileged position of the Church as the official church of the state. The clergy of Troyes stated that 'The Catholic, apostolic, and Roman religion shall be the only one taught, professed and publicly authorized; its services and teachings shall be uniform throughout the Kingdom'.[17]

NOBILITY

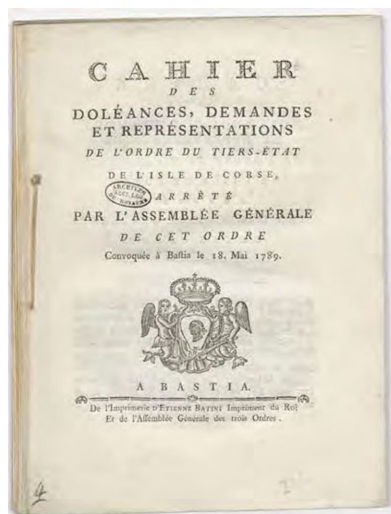
Historian Peter McPhee has claimed that for provincial nobles 'seigneurial rights and noble privileges were too important to be negotiable',[18] and this was why most of the 270 noble deputies elected to go to Versailles were unwilling to shift their position.

PEASANTS

Many of the *cahiers de doléances* received from peasants were explicit in their targeting of absolutism, seigneurialism and taxation exemptions. However, historian Peter Jones points out that peasants had problems making their demands known:

- Meetings were often run by one of the peasants' major adversaries, such as the mayor or a seigneurial representative, or even the seigneur himself.

Source 5.08 Example of a *cahier* of the Third Estate, Corsica.



CAHIER
DES
DOLÉANCES, DEMANDES
ET REPRÉSENTATIONS
DE L'ORDRE DU TIERS-ÉTAT
DE L'ISLE DE CORSE,
ARRÊTÉ
PAR L'ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE
DE CET ORDRE
Convoquée à Bastia le 18. Mai 1789.

A BASTIA.
De l'Imprimerie d'Etienne Batini Imprimeur du Roi
Et de l'Assemblée Générale des trois Ordres.

- One village submitted two *cahiers de doléances*: the first (presumably written while the seigneur was present) called in general terms for constitutional and fiscal reforms; the second, written later, contained a list of 'specific complaints' about seigneurial abuses.
- One parish sent in two *cahiers*: the first was written in advance and dated a week before the meeting; the second, two weeks later, included a protest from twenty-five villagers describing how they had been browbeaten.

Historian John Markoff studied a large number of parish *cahiers de doléances*. He claims that:

- about 33 per cent of peasants' *cahiers de doléances* demanded abolition of seigneurial rights without compensation
- an additional 45 per cent criticised the seigneurial system in either general or specific terms
- over 42 per cent wanted reform or abolition of various taxes.

In comparing the peasantry's demands with those of the Third Estate in general, and those of the nobility, Markoff observed that 'on the three great socio-economic issues of taxation, seigneurial rights and payments to the Church, the peasants were consistently the most radical and, unsurprisingly, the nobles the least'.[19]

The *cahiers de doléances* are important to historians, as they give a detailed view of the grievances of all groups in society. In France in 1789 they raised expectations of reform, which contributed to the development of a revolutionary situation.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Why were so many pamphlets published between May 1788 and April 1789?
2. What were *cahiers de doléances*?
3. Name three areas that all estates agreed upon in the *cahiers de doléances.*
4. Name three differences between the demands of the estates.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

1. Identify the advantages and disadvantages of using the *cahiers de doléances* as a source of information.
2. How have historians used the *cahiers de doléances* to further their own, sometimes conflicting, arguments?

POPULAR MOVEMENTS

RURAL REVOLT BEGINS, MARCH 1789 **KEY MOVEMENT**

Meanwhile, as *cahiers de doléances* were being drawn up and deputies for the Estates-General were being elected, discontent was rising in the towns and cities.

The discontent in March and April 1789 was fuelled by prolonged cold weather, along with rising unemployment in towns and rising bread prices. Historian William Doyle states that disturbances broke out across the country wherever people were suspected of hoarding grain. This led to market-day riots and price-fixing, as well as the ransacking of tithe barns, warehouses, monasteries and country manors.[20] Historian Georges Lefebvre attributes these uprisings to famine, combined with revolts against tax-gathering and privileged groups:

- Manosque, Provence: people stoned their bishop, who they suspected of hoarding.[21]
- Marseilles and Toulon: arsenal workers who had not been paid for two months started rioting.
- Marseilles: electors from all three estates of Marseilles took over the city's government to form a 'patriotic guard' to stop public disorder. (This strategy would be adopted four months later by the electors of Paris.)

Everywhere a general hunt for grain continued. Local councils were forced to lower the prices of bread and meat, abolish customs dues and abolish the tax related to milling grain. Even when local disturbances died down, local seigneurs were reporting that peasants were refusing to pay tithes or seigneurial dues. Historian Georges Lefebvre (see right) states that the disorder was driven by hunger.

Georges Lefebvre

> [These so-called] 'brigands' were not highway robbers or escaped galley slaves: they were the lower orders of both town and country driven to attack the *ancien régime* by sheer hunger and a profound conviction that the king was on their side.
>
> ... The pattern of the great peasant revolts was established as early as the beginning of spring [March]; they were preceded by a long period of simmering agitation which spread unrest far and wide.

Source 5.09 Georges Lefebvre, trans. Joan White, *The Great Fear of 1789; Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (London: New Loft Books, 1973), 40–46.

KEY EVENT

THE RÉVEILLON RIOTS, 27–28 APRIL 1789

Conditions in the countryside tended to be worse than in Paris, where the government subsidised prices in an attempt to maintain civil order. However, as food prices continued to rise and place pressure on the urban workers, political and economic issues fused into resentment of the government and of the privileged estates.

Tensions in Paris had reached a peak by April 1789. A four-pound loaf of bread that had cost nine sous in August 1788 had risen to fourteen sous by February 1789 and would stay at this level until after the fall of the Bastille—and at a time when an unskilled worker earned about twenty sous a day.

Also, there was considerable anger among the labourers of Paris that they had been excluded from voting in electoral districts because of changes in voting qualifications.

By the end of April 1789, serious civil disorder had broken out. On 23 April 1789, a wallpaper manufacturer named Réveillon was speaking at his local electoral assembly, when he argued for a decrease in the price of bread, 'to levels that wage-earners on fifteen sous a day could afford'. Another manufacturer named Henriot made similar comments. Both men were misunderstood: people believed they were arguing for lower wages rather than arguing for cheaper bread.

Source 5.10 *Looting of the Réveillon house and workshops, Faubourg Saint-Antoine, April 28, 1789, 4th arrondissement*, by Philippe Joseph Mailart, c. 1790.

The crowd carried a mock gallows, and a placard that read, 'Edict of the Third Estate, which Judges and Condemns the Above Réveillon and Henriot to be burned and Hanged in a Public Square'.[22] They marched on Réveillon's mansion, shouting, 'Death to the Rich, death to the Aristocrats.' The local militia prevented the crowd from reaching Réveillon's mansion, so they attacked Henriot's mansion instead, looting and destroying his possessions.[23]

The next day, now several thousand strong, the rioters stormed Réveillon's house and factory and destroyed everything in them within two hours. As the *gardes françaises* (French Guards) tried to restore order, casualties occurred—perhaps twenty-five people dead and a similar number wounded.

However, beyond the Réveillon Riots, the urban poor were afraid that rich people were plotting to find ways to retain their privileges at the expense of the poor. Rumours spread of a 'grain plot' by either the government itself, or by noble and clerical interests. The bookseller Hardy wrote that even the monarchy was suspected of being in on the 'grain plot':

> Some say the princes have been hoarding grain the better to overthrow M. Necker. ... Others said the Director-General of Finances was himself the chief and first of all the hoarders, with the consent of the King, and that he only favoured and supported such an enterprise to get money more promptly for His Majesty.[24]

In this way, people came to associate food shortages with the taxation crisis and with plots to dismiss the Estates-General: it was believed that if Louis XVI could not get the money he needed from the Estates-General—which would begin in a few days' time—he would dismiss the deputies and sell the grain to relieve his financial problems.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What prompted disturbances to break out in March 1789?
2. What sparked the Réveillon Riots?
3. What was the rumoured 'grain plot'?

CHAPTER 5 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- By 1788, France was bankrupt.
- Harvest failures, mass unemployment and severe food shortages created a climate of crisis.
- The Society of Thirty showed that some nobles were ready for reform.
- Abbé Sieyès's pamphlet *What Is the Third Estate?* summarised the problems that members of the Third Estate hoped that a meeting of the Estates-General would address.
- The proposed composition of the Estates-General enraged the bourgeoisie. Eventually the Third Estate was allowed to double their number of delegates from 300 delegates to 600.
- Louis XVI would not confirm whether voting at the Estates-General would be by head or by estate.
- The *cahiers de doléances* (lists of grievances) were drawn up all over the country to give guidance to the delegates at the Estates-General. Most of them argued for reform.
- The Réveillon Riots showed that people were prepared to take violent action against those they saw as oppressors or exploiters.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Over the first five chapters, you have been introduced to factors that contributed to the outbreak of a revolution in France. We have focused on some significant events, ideas and movements (as well as individuals) that played a role in challenging or maintaining the existing order in France. Thus, consider:

- the revolt of the Notables in 1787–1788 when they challenged Calonne's plan
- public response to the exile of *parlements*, such as the Day of Tiles
- economic collapse and bankruptcy in August 1788
- enlightenment ideas
- the constant critique of Louis XVI's absolute authority from the *parlements* and from pamphleteers
- the critique of privilege from the finance ministers and pamphleteers
- the role of the liberal nobility in challenging the existing order
- movements such as the citizens who defended the Grenoble *parlement* in 1788 or the 'mob' movements that defended the exiled Parlement of Paris at Troyes; or the peasants who engaged in market-day riots in rural France in early 1789 or the urban citizens of Paris who moved to protest against Réveillon
- individuals, such as the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, Turgot, Necker, Calonne and Brienne, Abbé Sieyès, Lafayette, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinettethe action (or lack of action) taken by Louis XVI in bringing on a revolutionary situation
- the role of Finance Minister Necker in contributing to the outbreak of revolution
- the excitement surrounding the calling of, and elections for, the Estates-General and its accompanying *cahiers de doléances*
- the harvest crisis and its effect on bread prices.

Task

Work in groups of three or four.
Choose one of the contributing factors outlined and prepare a short revision booklet (2–4 pages) for yourself and your classmates. It should include:

- facts (what we know)
- relevant evidence (how we know), including primary sources and historical interpretations
- a discussion about the extent to which your chosen factor was a significant contributor to the outbreak of revolution. Include a range of evidence and several different historical interpretations.

ESSAY

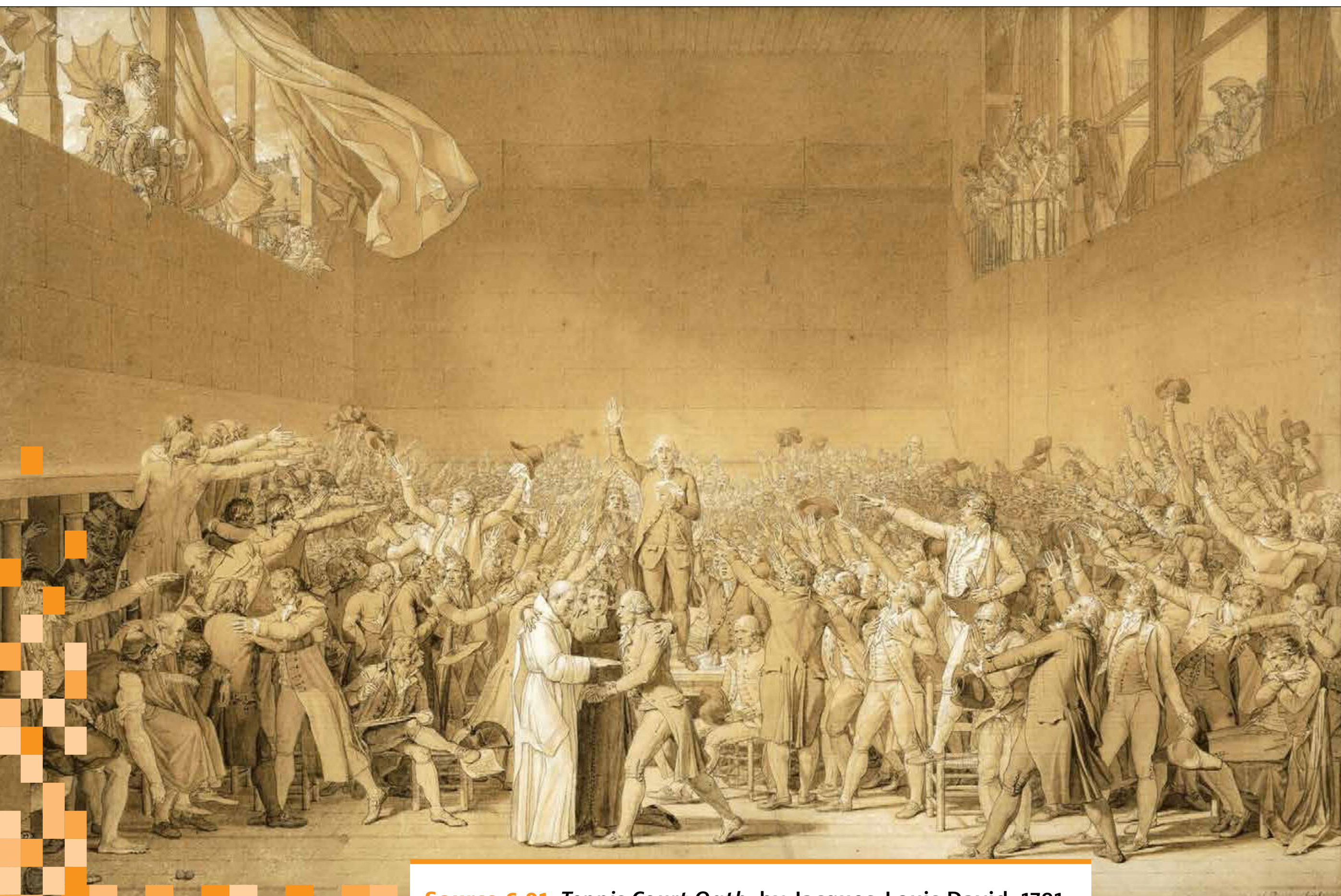
Write a 600–800-word essay on the topic below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- Explain how the environmental conditions of the 1780s contributed to calls for change in 1789.

THE REVOLUTION TAKES SHAPE
(MAY–4 AUGUST 1789)

'All members of this Assembly shall immediately take a solemn oath not to separate and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of this kingdom is established and consolidated upon firm foundations.'

—Tennis Court Oath, 20 June 1789



Source 6.01 *Tennis Court Oath,* by Jacques-Louis David, 1791.

CHAPTER 6

The opening of the Estates-General at Versailles on 5 May 1789 launched an intensive series of dramatic and revolutionary events. In the absence of Louis XVI's leadership, the declaration of the National Assembly on 17 June challenged his sovereign power. The determination of the deputies of the Third Estate was further strengthened when they took an oath on 20 June not to disband until they had written a constitution for France. The initial rejection of the creation of the National Assembly and subsequent capitulation of Louis XVI further exposed his indecisiveness and encouraged deputies to pursue reform.

When Jacques Necker was dismissed on 11 July, as the price of bread soared to its highest point, the threat of royal military intervention galvanised the people of Paris to take up arms on 14 July and seize control of the royal dungeon, the Bastille.

In the aftermath of the fall of the Bastille, France's constitutional monarchy was taking shape, with the king's acceptance of the new municipal government in Paris under the mayor Bailly and the establishment of the citizen's militia, the National Guard, under the command of Lafayette.

Not long after the crowd's cheers of 'Long live the king, Long live the nation' had died out, rumours of foreign invasion circulated, and a wave of regional disturbances shook France in the outburst contemporaries called the 'Great Fear'. Against this background of fear and turbulence, many of the deputies of the privileged orders rose to their feet in the National Assembly on the night of 4 August to voluntarily renounce their feudal privileges.

KEY EVENTS

5 May 1789
Estates-General begins; king makes no decision on voting rights; Third Estate refuses to verify their election in separate chamber

17 June 1789
Third Estate declare themselves the National Assembly

20 June 1789
Tennis Court Oath: deputies swear to stay together until a constitution is established

25 June 1789
Second Estate starts to join the National Assembly

11 July 1789
King dismisses Necker, sparking revolt in Paris

14 July 1789
Storming of the Bastille

20 July–6 August 1789
'Great Fear' occurs, a rural revolt across France caused by fears of backlash from nobles; this sparks attacks on castles

4 August 1789
'Night of Patriotic Delirium': mass renunciation of noble and clerical privileges leads to August Decrees

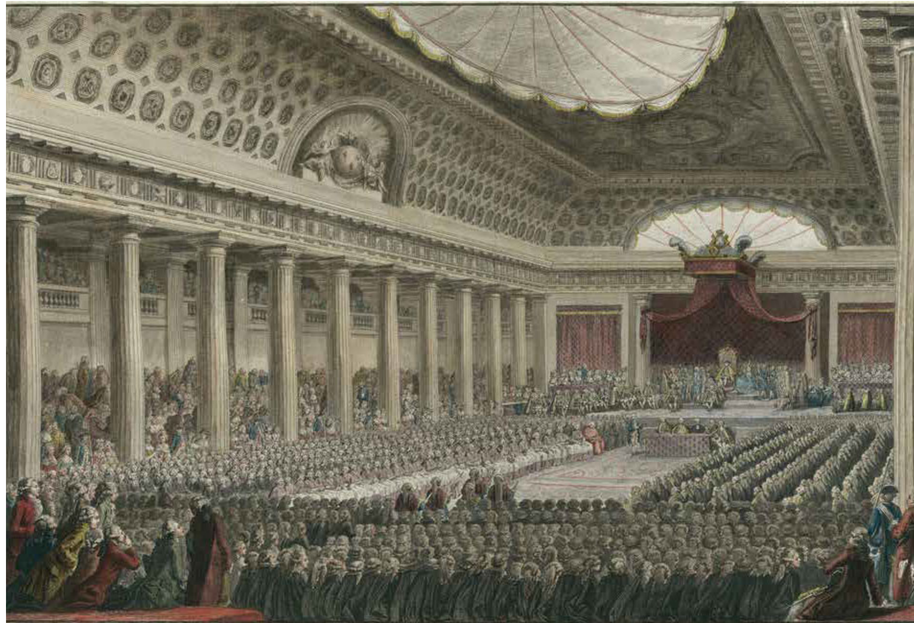
KEY QUESTIONS

- Did the calling of the Estates-General make the revolution inevitable?
- To what extent were revolutionary developments triggered by Louis XVI's decisions—or his inability to make any decisions—in May–August 1789?
- What revolutionary actions were made by the deputies to the Estates-General in the period 5 May–4 August 1789?
- How did sovereignty shift during the period 5 May–4 August 1789?
- What was the significance of the actions of the crowd of Paris on 14 July 1789?
- What did the actions of the rural popular movement achieve by 4 August 1789?

KEY EVENT

THE ESTATES-GENERAL CONVENES, MAY 1789

Barbara Lutterell: 'A rival sovereign will had loomed into view, threatening the foundations of the monarchy.'



Source 6.02 The opening of the Estates-General, 5 May 1789, in the salle des Menus-Plaisirs at Versailles.

At the end of April 1789, the deputies elected to the Estates-General began arriving at Versailles. The deputies had been selected by different means:

- First Estate—by a mix of direct and indirect voting
- Second Estate— by direct vote, with all male nobles over twenty-five voting for their representatives
- Third Estate—indirectly, with all males over twenty-five entitled to vote for electors, who then met in each district to elect their deputies.

Historian David Andress has estimated that some 4–5 million men were eligible to participate in these elections.[1]

Most of the Society of Thirty became deputies. The Comte de Mirabeau and Abbé Sieyès were elected for the Third Estate. Almost half of the Third Estate deputies were lawyers, including Target, Mounier, Barnave and Robespierre. There were some noblemen and a few priests, but fewer than twenty of the 600 deputies representing the Third Estate were from the lower orders.

The deputies were treated differently, according to their estate, and social distinctions were strictly observed. On 2 May, Louis XVI received the deputies, one estate at a time:

- Deputies for the clergy were received first. They had a private audience with Louis XVI in the Hall of Mirrors behind closed doors.
- Deputies for the nobility went next. They had an audience with Louis XVI in the Hall of Mirrors, too, but with the doors left partly open.
- Deputies for the Third Estate waited for over three hours for their audience with the king. They were taken to a lesser salon, rather than the Hall of Mirrors.

According to historian Simon Schama, the Third Estate deputies passed before the king in a single file 'like a crocodile of sullen schoolboys' and were then dismissed.[2]

On 4 May, the deputies to the Estates-General walked in procession to the Church of St Louis to celebrate mass. Once more, the social differences of the delegates were made apparent by their clothing:

- The Third Estate went first, wearing costumes made from plain black cloth.
- The Second Estate came next, wearing satin suits and gold or silver waistcoats.
- The First Estate came last—the parish priests wearing plain clerical coats, the bishops wearing scarlet and purple ceremonial clothing.

The Third Estate delegates resented the way clothing and the whole procession had been used to divide people into higher and lower estates. However, as Simon Schama puts it, 'The more brilliantly the first two orders [estates] swaggered, the more they alienated the Third Estate and provoked it into exploding the institution altogether'.[3]

The arrival of Louis XVI was greeted with shouts of 'Long live the King'. However, as American observer Gouverneur Morris noted, 'The Queen received not a single acclamation'.[4]

DID YOU KNOW?

It was noted that the queen looked sad as she passed by in the procession. She knew her seven-year-old son, the dauphin, was dying of tuberculosis. Unable to take part, he watched from a balcony. Reportedly the queen 'could scarcely hold back her tears as he smiled valiantly at her'.

Source 6.03 *Opening procession of the Estates-General in Versailles on 4 May 1789*, by Louis Boulanger.

Members of the King's House, princes of the blood.

Members of the Clergy.

Deputies of the nobility following the tail end of the deputies of the Third Estate.

Group of deputies of the Third Estate.

LOUIS FAILS TO OFFER REFORM, 5 MAY

The next day, 5 May, the opening ceremony for the sitting of the Estates-General took place at the Hôtel des Menus-Plaisirs. The deputies had great hopes that Louis XVI would lead them in a program of reform, but they were about to be disappointed.

There were three speakers:

- First, Louis XVI made a short speech of welcome. He referred to the 'much exaggerated desire for innovations', and expressed the hope that the delegates would work with him for the welfare of France.
- Next, Barentin, Louis XVI's Keeper of the Seals, also spoke about 'dangerous innovations'.
- The final speaker was Jacques Necker. Necker had been reinstated as controller-general of France, and he made a three-hour speech about the state of the nation's finances.

Necker informed the Estates that the deficit stood at fifty-four million livres, and that this could be covered by increases in taxation. Necker's speech bored the whole audience, including the king, who fell asleep.

So, the ceremonial welcome was over, with no firm plans or policies emerging from the speeches. The sole directive was that the finances must be stabilised and put in order. There was no suggestion from Necker that any new form of taxation needed consensus. There was neither any mention of two crucial questions:

- Would the deputies sit together or separately, by estate?
- Would voting would be by head or by estate?[5]

This lack of leadership and direction proved to be a massive mistake.

DISPUTE OVER CREDENTIALS, 6 MAY

On 6 May 1789, the deputies met in their separate estates to verify their credentials. The whole question of voting by estate or by head was still not settled.

Members of the First Estate and Second Estate met in separate halls, and began the process of checking the credentials of their deputies and forming committees. However, the representatives of the Third Estate demanded that every deputy should present their credentials to the full body of deputies, assembled in one place. Until this was conceded, they refused to undertake the process of verification. They knew that if verification were done by Estate, then voting would also be done by Estate, rather than by person.

Mirabeau suggested a move of passive resistance: the deputies of the Third Estate should sit and wait in the salle des Menus-Plaisirs for the other estates to rejoin them.

Meanwhile, in the nobles' assembly, a motion by Lafayette that the three estates should verify their mandates together was massively defeated, 141 votes to 47.[6] The clergy followed the same pattern, but with some disagreement: 133 deputies voted for separate representation, while 114 voted against.[7] It was a stalemate.

For a full three weeks, the deputies of the Third Estate met, talked and debated, but they would not organise themselves, elect leaders or adopt any rules of procedure. They did not want to do anything that made it look like they had accepted their separate status. The Third Estate made one decision: they would refer to themselves as 'the Commons'. They also made one appointment: an astronomer named

Jean-Sylvain Bailly was elected to control the debates. Bailly had overseen the elections of the 407 Third Estate deputies from Paris, and was a well-respected and popular figure.

Comtesse d'Adhémar on 'The King's Attitude'

We [the queen's friends] never ceased repeating to the King that the Third Estate would wreck everything—and we were right. ...

The King, deceived by [Necker] ... paid no attention to the Queen's fears.

This well-informed princess [Marie Antoinette] knew all about the plots that were being woven; she repeated them to the King, who replied, 'Look, when all is said and done, are not the Third Estate also my children—and a more numerous progeny? And even when the nobility lose a proportion of their privileges and the clergy a few scraps of their income, will I be any less their king?' This false perspective accomplished the general ruin.

Source 6.04 Comtesse d'Adhémar, *Souvenirs sur Marie-Antoinette, Archduchesse d'Austriche, Reine de France, et sur la Cour de Versailles* (4 vols, 1836), III, 156–157, cited in Leonard W. Cowie, *The French Revolution: Documents and Debates* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 45.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 6.04 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. What were Marie Antoinette's views of the demands of the Third Estate? What was the 'everything' that would be 'wrecked' by accepting their demands?
2. To what extent did Louis XVI have a 'false perspective' on the situation facing him in early 1789?
3. Analyse the Comtesse d'Adhémar's perspective on the Third Estate. Find a contrasting perspective from this book and compare it with her view.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

1. How did the beliefs and attitudes of Louis XVI and Jacques Necker about the purpose of the Estates-General differ from those of the Third Estate deputies?
2. What evidence is there to suggest that the Third Estate deputies were not satisfied with the process of verifying deputies' credentials at the Estates-General? Why did the process matter so much to them?

THE THIRD ESTATE GAINS MOMENTUM

KEY DEVELOPMENT

As May progressed into June, further attempts were made to break the deadlock over credentials. On 4 June 1789, Necker suggested that each estate should verify the credentials of its own members, but that the other estates should be able to challenge the results.

However, Sieyès had a different political strategy in mind. He proposed to the Commons that it should summon the clergy and the nobles to join with the Third Estate, or to forfeit their rights as representatives of the nation.

This was a revolutionary move. Sieyès was not asking the deputies of the clergy and the nobles to join the Third Estate, but to recognise that they were all representatives of the French nation, a power that was complementary to the monarchy, as well as being its rival. The authority of Louis XVI had been not only challenged, bult also rejected by a group that saw itself as representing a different authority—the authority of the people.

By 10 June, the deputies of the Third Estate had decided to send a delegation to the First Estate. They hoped to encourage the more liberal deputies among the clergy

to join the Third Estate. The delegation was led by Gui-Jean-Baptiste Target, who announced that:

> The gentlemen of the Commons invite the gentlemen of the clergy, in the name of the God of Peace and for the national interest, to meet them in their hall to consult upon the means of bringing about the concord which is so vital at this moment for the public welfare.[8]

This was an astute political move, as the First Estate deputies were already divided: the upper clergy favoured separate voting, but many of the lower clergy identified with the Third Estate.

According to historian Simon Schama, 'it was in the Church, more than any other group in France, that the separation between rich and poor was most bitterly articulated'.[9] Although the wealthiest bishops may have had an annual income of 50,000 livres, the standard annual stipend for a village priest was just 700 livres. These priests were not only impoverished, but also lived within their communities—unlike many of the upper clergy—and were well aware of the sufferings of the poor. Of the 303 clerical deputies, almost two-thirds were ordinary parish priests.[10] Many of them were liberal in their thinking, and eager to join the Third Estate.

However, the majority of the clergy was reluctant to join with the 'Commons', as the Third Estate deputies now called themselves, and so the delay continued.

The other privileged estate, the nobles, were not keen to unite the three estates and, according to historian Georges Lefebvre, were 'horrified' by the idea that they could lose their status.

Source 6.05 Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France*, trans. Joan White (London: New Loft Books, 1973), 35–36.

Georges Lefebvre on the impasse at the Estates-General

> The aristocracy was a violent critic of despotism, it was said, and wanted to force the king to promulgate a constitution so that henceforward no laws could be made or taxes imposed without the consent of the Estates-General. This is true. But they nevertheless intended that the Estates-General should stay divided into three, each order having one voice, the clergy and the nobility being thus assured of a majority. … The idea of a nation in which every citizen had exactly the same rights horrified them; they wanted to retain their honorific prerogatives, keep their rank and, with even greater reason, preserve the feudal servitudes. [As] Masters of the state, they would have instituted a formidable aristocratic reaction.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 6.05 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline what the aristocracy wanted from Louis XVI.
2. According to Georges Lefebvre, what were the nobles most horrified about?
3. Evaluate Georges Lefebvre's account in light of other evidence and interpretations. To what extent does it fully explain the nobles' motivations?

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Why were the deputies so disappointed at the opening sitting of the Estates-General on 5 May?
2. Why did the Third Estate refuse to undertake the process of verification? What did they want to happen?
3. In which group, according to Schama, was 'the separation between rich and poor … most bitterly articulated'?

DECLARATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, 17 JUNE 1789

KEY EVENT

Declaration of National Assembly, 17 June 1789: 'The Assembly ... recognizes that [it] is already composed of deputies sent directly by at least ninety-six per cent of the nation ... and that it, and it alone, may interpret and present the general will of the nation.'

On 12 June 1789, the Commons began the process of verification, but with a difference. The deputies were not verified on the basis of their estate, but as representatives of the nation. On 13 June, three members of the clergy joined the Third Estate. They were greeted with thunderous applause and shouts of approval. More clerics followed them on 14 June and, on 17 June, the Commons declared themselves the National Assembly of France.

The Commons

KEY SOURCE

> The Assembly, deliberating after the verification of powers, recognizes that this assembly is already composed of deputies sent by at least ninety-six per cent of the nation. ... The name of National Assembly is the only one which suits the assembly under the present circumstances. ... Because they are sent directly by almost the entire nation ... none of the deputies, from whatever class or order, has the right to perform his duties apart from the present assembly.

Source 6.06 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 87.

The establishment of the National Assembly had 'both conceptualised the idea of the nation,' claims Michael Adock, and 'actually facilitated the momentous transfer of sovereignty from the King to the Nation'.[11] This event represented the critical moment in the constitutional revolution taking place at Versailles.

THE EFFECTS OF LOUIS XVI'S INDECISION

The declaration of 17 June marked the beginning of the real revolution—and it was largely a result of Louis XVI's indecision. The king had not made any ruling in December 1788 about whether voting at the Estates-General would be by head or by estate, and had, thus, turned the issue into a dispute.

However, one reason the king had not intervened over the six weeks from May to June 1789 was that his eldest son, the seven-year-old dauphin, was dying of tuberculosis. The dauphin died on 4 June, after two years of illness. So, during a critical period of public responsibility both the king and queen were suffering from deep personal grief.

However, as Louis XVI had made no decision about voting, the Commons gradually hardened their position. If the king had agreed to common verification and voting by head, the deputies in the Commons would have had a meaningful political voice within an assembly that represented all three estates. Louis XVI's inaction inflated the issue, and the Commons gradually moved towards challenging the king's authority, urged on by a growing crowd of spectators from Paris who had little sympathy for the noble orders.

DID YOU KNOW?

The dauphin's funeral was said to have cost 600,000 livres, at a time when many of Louis XVI's subjects did not have the money to buy bread. The Marquis de Ferrières commented to his wife, 'You see, my dear, the birth and death of princes is not an object of economy'.

On 19 June, the clergy voted to join the National Assembly, and endorsed the establishment of the National Assembly on 17 June. The spectators applauded them, calling out 'Long live the good Bishops! Long live the priests!'[12]

However, when the new National Assembly arrived at the salle des Menus-Plaisirs on 20 June to begin their discussion, as arranged, they found the doors locked and signs announcing that a Royal Session would be held on 23 June, presided over by the king.

TURNING POINT

THE TENNIS COURT OATH, 20 JUNE 1789

The deputies of the National Assembly: 'All members of this Assembly shall immediately take a solemn oath not to separate … until the constitution of this kingdom is established and consolidated upon firm foundations.'

Jean-Sylvain Bailly.

Finding they were locked out of their meeting room, the Commons suspected that Louis XVI was about to take action against them in some way. Led by Parisian deputy Dr Joseph Guillotin, the deputies moved to a nearby indoor royal tennis court. There were no seats, just an armchair and a bench. Two of the deputies stayed at the door to keep out the crowds that tried to follow them in.

Sieyès suggested moving the whole National Assembly to Paris, but a young deputy from Grenoble named Jean-Joseph Mounier intervened. Mounier called on the deputies to swear an oath that they would never separate until France had a constitution. Each deputy took the oath individually in front of Jean-Sylvain Bailly, who was standing on a table that had been made by pulling a door from its hinges. Arms raised in a Roman salute, the 600 deputies swore the Tennis Court Oath. Only one man dissented. The oath stated the following:

Source 6.07 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 88.

The Tennis Court Oath

KEY SOURCE

The National Assembly, considering that it has been summoned to establish the constitution of the Kingdom, to effect the regeneration of 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 assemble; and finally, that wherever 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 this 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.

DID YOU KNOW?

Royal tennis is played indoors using small racquets and balls made from cork. Royal tennis is older than lawn tennis, and is still played by enthusiasts today.

The Tennis Court Oath is historically significant. It was the first formal act of disobedience against the monarchy, and it was signed even by those members of the Commons who had opposed adopting the name National Assembly on 17 June. Signing the oath was a dramatic moment that took on iconic status within the revolution, and it was immortalised by revolutionary painter Jacques-Louis David (see Source 6.01).

Source 6.08 Detail from *The Tennis Court Oath*, by Jacques-Louis David, 1791. The deputy Martin Dauch holds his arms tightly against his chest, refusing to take the oath.

THE ROYAL SESSION, 23 JUNE 1789

Mirabeau: 'We shall not leave except by the force of bayonets.'

On 23 June 1789, Louis XVI announced at the Royal Session that the decision made on 17 June by members of the Third Estate—that is, the decision to form the National Assembly—was null and void, and that all decisions made by them after that date were illegal and unconstitutional. He announced that the estates should meet separately unless he permitted them to meet together.

However, the king also announced some minor concessions:

- The question of equal taxation would 'be considered'.
- New taxes would only be levied with the consent of the Estates-General.
- Privileged tax status could be surrendered voluntarily, but otherwise all feudal dues, manorial dues and church tithes were to stay as they were.

Finally, Louis XVI made some promises. He would:

- extend the system of provincial assemblies to the whole of his kingdom
- abolish censorship of the press
- abolish the use of *lettres de cachet* for arbitrary arrest and imprisonment.

The king then ordered the deputies to disperse and to meet the next day in their separate estates. Then he withdrew, followed by the nobility and most of the clergy, who were not willing to challenge the king's authority.

However, the National Assembly deputies and their clerical supporters remained seated. When de Brézé, the master of ceremonies, ordered them to go, Mirabeau, a large man, rose to his feet and thundered, 'Go and tell those who have sent you that we are here by the will of the nation and we will go only if we are driven out by bayonets'.[13] Mirabeau was immediately backed up by Bailly and Sieyès. Bailly said, 'The assembled nation cannot be given orders'.[14]

KEY DEVELOPMENT

The deputies of the National Assembly then took a vote: 493 deputies vowed to stay, and 34 voted to obey the king.[15] Thus, the new National Assembly rejected royal authority, confirmed the Tennis Court Oath and proclaimed that its members were free from arrest. When the king was told of the deputies' resistance, he is reported to have said, 'They mean to stay! ... Well, then, damn it! Let them stay!'[16]

It was a huge victory for the National Assembly, and it was soon to be followed by another.

On 24 June, the soldiers sent to prevent the National Assembly from entering its meeting room shifted their loyalty to support the Assembly, telling Bailly: 'We too, are citizens'.[17] On 25 June, forty-seven liberal nobles—led by the king's cousin, the Duc d'Orléans—joined the National Assembly.

On 27 June, Louis XVI capitulated, and ordered the estates to meet in common and to vote by head. The nobles, Lafayette among them, with the rest of the clergy, joined the rebel deputies within the National Assembly. British traveller Arthur Young, writing in his diary on the events to 27 June, concluded, 'The whole revolution now seems over and the business complete'.[18]

However, in the eyes of Louis XVI and his ministers, the business was far from complete. They concluded that the failure of the Royal Session on 23 June was Necker's fault. Necker had proposed the Royal Session, as he hoped to persuade the king to

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What did the deputies swear in the Tennis Court Oath?
2. What was revolutionary about the Oath and the act of swearing to it?
3. In what ways did the Royal Session of 23 June 1789 both meet and fail to meet Necker's purpose for it?

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

1. Discuss the potential consequences if Louis XVI had decided to use the army to dissolve the Estates-General.
2. Outline the errors in judgement made by Louis XVI in the second half of June 1789.

make some concessions to the Third Estate at the session. However, other royal ministers, persuaded by the king's brother, Artois, wanted Louis XVI to assert his authority and cancel the Third Estate's 'insubordinate' decrees. On 22 June, the queen added her support to Artois, and Necker was defeated. As a result, Necker was absent on the day of the Royal Session, and sent in his resignation. Necker's resignation was rejected by the king, who persuaded him to stay.

However, now that royal authority had failed, the king's ministers advised him to quell the reform movement by sacking Necker and using armed force:

- On 26 June six regiments were ordered to Versailles.
- On 1 July ten regiments were moved from the provinces to the outskirts of Paris.

ESCALATING TENSIONS IN PARIS

Mirabeau: 'A large number of troops already surround us. ... These preparations for war are obvious to anyone and fill every heart with indignation.'[19]

Even as Louis XVI had made concessions to the Third Estate, fear had increased that he would seek reprisals against the population. The anxiety of Parisians was heightened by the arrival around the city of about 20,000 troops sent to 'protect Paris from disorder, not to overawe it'.[20]

KEY DEVELOPMENT

The National Assembly was not sure of Louis XVI's intentions, and requested that the troops be withdrawn. On 8 July 1789, Mirabeau voiced the fears of those present when he declared, 'A large number of troops already surround us. More are arriving each day. Artillery is being brought up. ... These preparations for war are obvious to anyone and fill every heart with indignation.'[21]

The National Assembly petitioned the king to withdraw the troops, but Louis XVI refused. On 10 July he suggested that:

- the troops were there to protect the Assembly
- the deputies might need to be moved further from Paris if there were riots.

However, as fears grew, so did the determination of the National Assembly and the people of Paris to resist the king's authority.

TURNING POINT

A REVOLUTIONARY TRIGGER: NECKER'S DISMISSAL, 11 JULY 1789

On 11 July 1789, Jacques Necker was dismissed without notice.

Many people felt that Necker's dismissal was the king's way of declaring war. Necker had always been popular with the people and had acted consistently since being reappointed financial controller in 1788. He had worked hard to limit the effect of the bread crisis by importing foreign grain, reimposing price controls and subsiding the cost of bread in Paris.

Louis's letter of dismissal arrived at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. It ordered Necker to leave Versailles secretly and return to Switzerland. By 5 o'clock, Necker and his wife had departed.

On the afternoon of 12 July, the news that Necker had been sacked reached the National Assembly and the Palais Royal. In Paris, frenzied crowds of people spilled onto the streets and looted shops—particularly shops that sold guns. Shouts of 'Necker and the Third Estate!' rang through the air. Soldiers found themselves retreating under a hail of stones. Groups of men marched through the streets armed with pitchforks, swords or whatever weapon they could find or steal. At the Palais Royal, Necker's dismissal brought a crowd of several thousand people to listen to speakers condemning the king's position and calling for action.

Source 6.09 *The Beginning of the French Revolution, 12 July 1789*, by Jean-Baptiste Lesueur. The first uprising of the French Revolution in Paris was caused by the sacking of Jacques Necker. The busts of Necker and the Duc d' Orléans are paraded on spikes.

One of the most vocal speakers was twenty-six-year-old Camille Desmoulins, who urged those assembled to take up arms against the treachery of kings. He urged the crowd to identify themselves as patriots by pulling leaves from the trees: green was to be the identifying mark of patriots and revolutionaries:

> To arms, to arms and let us take a green cockade, the colour of hope. ... Yes, yes, it is I who call my brothers to freedom; I would rather die than submit to servitude.[22]

On 12 July, the monastery of St Lazare—which was used as a prison and a grain and arms store—was looted. Crowds released the prisoners, stole the grain and flour, then looted the building. The looters were joined by the *gardes françaises*, an elite regiment of the French army.

The *gardes françaises* had to decide whether to engage in battle or retreat. They retreated. Despite this, rumours spread through the city that the king's troops were slaughtering Parisians. Either on the authority of those at the Palais Royal or on their own initiative, groups attacked the royal customs houses at the entry points to Paris and demolished them one by one. The stones from the demolished buildings went into a growing pile, and would later be used against the troops. Historian Simon Schama describes that night as a 'largely unobstructed riot':

DID YOU KNOW?

The Marquis de Sade (from whom we get the word 'sadism') was a prisoner in the Bastille in July 1789. Having heard news of the unrest in Paris from his wife, he began to shout out to the crowd that prisoners were being killed and that 'the people' should save them before it was too late. Sade was sent to an insane asylum just before the Bastille was stormed.

Simon Schama

> During that single night of largely unobstructed riot and demolition, Paris was lost to the monarchy. Only if Besenval was prepared to use his troops the following day to occupy the city ... was there any chance of recapture [but] ... told by his own officers that their own soldiers, even the Swiss and German, could not be counted on, he was unwilling to take the offensive.

Source 6.10 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), 387.

KEY DEVELOPMENT

On 13 July the electors of Paris took over municipal power and formed a civil militia, the *Garde bourgeoise*—renamed the following day as 'National Guard'—and over 12,000 men enrolled. The deputies of the National Assembly, fearing they might be closed down, continued their session in the salle des Menus-Plaisirs throughout the day and night. Reports came through that Mirabeau, Sieyès, Lafayette, Le Chapelier and Lameth were to be arrested, so they decided to stay overnight in the chamber, reasoning that their arrest there was less likely.[23]

On the morning of 14 July, crowds invaded the Hôtel des Invalides, which was an arms depository and home to soldier-pensioners. Finally, they attacked the great prison of the Bastille.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What reasons were given to explain the summoning of troops to Paris?
2. What reaction and response did their presence create?
3. Describe three revolutionary actions that were incited by the sacking of Necker in the two days that followed.

KEY EVENT

THE FALL OF THE BASTILLE, 14 JULY 1789

Lord Dorset, British Ambassador to Paris: 'Thus … the greatest Revolution … has been effected with … the loss of very few lives: from this moment we may consider France as a free country; the king a very limited monarch, and the nobility as reduced to a level with the rest of the nation.'

Source 6.11 *The Taking of the Bastille*, anonymous engraving, 1789–1791.

The grey Bastille prison loomed over central Paris as a visible symbol of royal authority. It housed those prisoners confined as a result of *lettres de cachet* and, thus, represented royal absolutism. On 14 July 1789, the Bastille held only seven prisoners: four counterfeiters, two 'lunatics' and one *débauché* (or 'person of abandoned moral values'). There was only one political prisoner. However, to the unruly mob, the Bastille was a potential source of weapons and, more importantly, the gunpowder they needed for the muskets they had looted from the Hôtel des Invalides.

Armed with two cannons taken from the Hôtel des Invalides, the crowd marched on the Bastille. Once there, they raised a flag of truce and sent a deputation to demand that the governor, the Marquis de Launay, hand over the arms and ammunition they wanted. The Marquis de Launay refused, but did make a concession: the cannon that directly overlooked the Rue Saint-Antoine would not be fired unless the Bastille itself came under attack. Having reached a compromise, the delegation withdrew.

Meanwhile, the crowd was concerned that the Marquis de Launay had detained their representatives. They had lowered the drawbridge that led into the inner courtyard and, as the delegation departed, around forty members of the crowd rushed into the courtyard.

Shots were fired—although it is not clear who fired first—and ninety-eight civilians died, and another seventy-eight were wounded, while six soldiers were killed.[24] Then the *gardes françaises* arrived to join the rioters. Supported by a few hundred armed civilians, the *gardes françaises* positioned five cannons taken that morning from the Invalides to fire on the courtyard gate.

At first, the Marquis de Launay threatened to blow up the Bastille rather than surrender it. However, his men persuaded him to surrender. At the same time, a delegation from the Hôtel de Ville (Town Hall) arrived under a flag of truce to persuade the crowd to stop firing. A white handkerchief was raised on one of the towers, indicating surrender.

The Marquis de Launay ordered the main drawbridge lowered, and was taken prisoner. Six members of his garrison had died defending the Bastille. Lieutenant Louis Deflue, one of a contingent of thirty-two Swiss Guards who had been sent to reinforce the Bastille, was one of those made prisoner. He later recalled what happened next:

A Swiss Guard recalls the fall of the Bastille

> They disarmed us immediately. They took us prisoner, each of us having a guard. They flung our papers out of the windows and plundered everything. The streets through which we passed and the houses flanking them (even the rooftops) were filled with masses of people shouting at me and cursing me. Swords, bayonets and pistols were being continually pressed against me. I did not know how I should die, but felt my last moment had come. Stones were thrown at me and women gnashed their teeth and brandished their fists at me.

Source 6.12 Cited in Christopher Hibbert, *The French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1980), 8.

The Marquis de Launay was killed on his way to the Hôtel de Ville. An out-of-work cook named Desnot tried to stab him, and de Launay responded by kicking him in the testicles. Desnot shouted, 'He's done me in!' Launay was then stabbed with a bayonet and attacked by the crowd, which mutilated his body as he lay on the ground. His head, said to have been severed by Desnot with a penknife, was mounted on a pike and carried in triumph through the streets. An English doctor, Edward Rigby, was in Paris that evening and recorded the scene.

Source 6.13 *Destruction of the Bastille after the Victory Won over the Enemies of Liberty on July 14 1789*, unattributed engraving 1789.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 6.13 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Identify the symbolic elements of this engraving. Who do the individuals represent?
2. What is significant about the central character wielding a sword?
3. Who does the artist of this engraving wish to denigrate in this engraving? How does the artist convey this?
4. Analyse the significance of popular movements in challenging the existing order in 1789.

Source 6.14 Reay Tannahill, *Paris in the Revolution: A Collection of Eye-Witness Accounts* (London: The Folio Society, 1996), 28.

Edward Rigby

The crowd passed on to the Palais Royal, and in a few minutes another succeeded it. Its approach was announced by loud and triumphant acclamations, but as it came nearer ... the impression made by it on the people was of a very different kind. A deep and hollow murmur at once pervaded them, their countenances expressing amazement mingled with alarm. ... We suddenly partook of this general sensation, for we then, and not till then, perceived two bloody heads raised on pikes, which were said to be the heads of the Marquis de Launay, governor of the Bastille, and of Monsieur Flesselles, *Prêvot de Marchands* [chief magistrate] ... who had tried to prevent the people from arming themselves. It was a chilling and horrid sight.

Source 6.15 *C'est ainsi qu'on se venge des traitres* (This is how we take revenge on traitors), 1789. French soldiers carry the heads of the Marquis de Launay and Jacques de Flesselles on pikes.

WHO STORMED THE BASTILLE?

Many thousands of people took to the streets on 14 July 1789. According to historian George Rudé most of the 600-strong crowd directly involved in the action at the Bastille were 'residents of the Faubourg [District] Saint-Antoine and its adjoining parishes; their average age was thirty four; nearly all were fathers of families and most ... were members of the newly formed citizens militia.'[25] (This militia was the *gardes bourgeoise*, which would later become the National Guard.)

In terms of occupations, the members of the militia were craftsmen, joiners, cabinetmakers, locksmiths, cobblers, shopkeepers, jewellers, manual workers and labourers. The largest occupational group was cabinet-makers, of whom there were ninety-seven. Eighty were soldiers. The oldest person was seventy-two, the youngest only eight. There was only one woman, a laundress.

This group of people was recognised by the National Assembly as the conquerors of the Bastille. They were issued special certificates and assigned a place of honour at the public ceremonies held annually on 14 July to celebrate what has been achieved by the revolution—the *Fêtes de la Fédération* (Festivals of Federation).

THE SYMBOLIC POWER OF THE FIRST *JOURNÉE*

journée a day of violent crowd action that achieves political change

agency initiative, activity of an individual or group to shape events and gain results

The activities of the Paris crowd on the ***journée*** (day) of the Fall of the Bastille had greater significance than demolishing a symbol of tyranny and protecting the National Assembly from the threat of foreign troops. The crowd itself took ***agency*** (or initiative) for the first time in the French Revolution.

KEY MOVEMENT

Afterwards, the people of Paris considered they had 'saved' the revolution and protected the work of the National Assembly from being destroyed by the king. They were proud of their actions and content, but then they came to expect benefits from the revolution. The people began to understand that they had power if they acted as one.

DID YOU KNOW?

Stones from the Bastille were made into jewellery, and became a popular way for women to demonstrate their support for the Revolution.

From July 1789, the Paris crowd began to take on an identity and would intervene at crucial moments in a series of revolutionary *journées*. In particular, the radicalisation of the Paris crowd would drive the revolution forwards during the years 1792–1794.

REVOLUTIONARY TRIGGERS

Using a graphic organiser or infographic, show how social, economic and political crises (including hunger and/or poverty, Necker's dismissal and the king's attempts to dismiss the Estates-General) constituted triggers to revolution by July 1789. Your graphic organiser should also show the influence of significant individuals in the crisis.

REACTIONS TO THE FALL OF THE BASTILLE

In Louis XVI's diary, written in his own hand, the entries for July 1789 read, '13th, Nothing. 14th, Nothing.'[26] The king was a keen hunter, so these entries likely refer to his lack of hunting success on those days rather than to political events.

The night the Bastille was stormed, Louis XVI was woken from his sleep by his grand master of the wardrobe, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, who told him about the day's events in Paris. 'It is a revolt', the king is reported to have said, to which the Duc replied, 'No, Sire, it is a revolution'.[27]

DID YOU KNOW?

A man calling himself 'Patriote Palloy' began demolishing the Bastille on 15 July 1789. The base of the Liberté pillar can still be seen in the Square Henri-Galli.

These two anecdotes present a picture of a man unaware of the dangers posed to his throne by a people's revolution, but this needs to be thought about in context. Louis XVI was a divine-right monarch—he believed that God had appointed him to rule. He would not have considered that a 'revolt' in Paris would challenge his position or his royal authority. It is likely that he viewed the 'revolt' as yet another working-class disturbance, like the bread riots, rather than the first step towards a great revolution.

However, on 15 July, when Louis XVI visited the National Assembly, he seemed less confident about his fate. His visit was 'so astonishing, so disconcertingly naked, that it amounted to abdication'.[28] According to historian Simon Schama, the king arrived at the National Assembly on foot. He was flanked by his brothers, the Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois. Louis XVI then:

- announced that Necker would be recalled
- confirmed that the remaining royal troops would be withdrawn from Paris
- denied he had any plans against the deputies of the Assembly.[29]

The capitulation of Louis XVI sent a strong signal to the conservative nobility.

Source 6.16 This 1789 engraving by James Gillray shows the triumphant return of Necker. The aristocrats holding Necker aloft have been identified by historian Michael Adcock as Lafayette and the Duc d'Orléans.

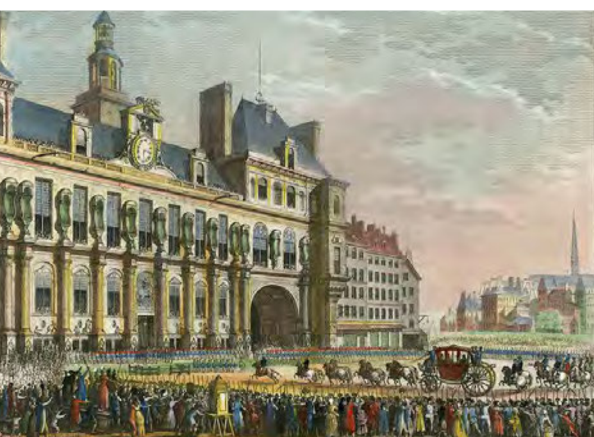
FURTHER URBAN AND RURAL UNREST

The crowd in front of the king (17 July 1789): 'Vive le roi! Vive la nation!'

THE MUNICIPAL REVOLUTIONS: PARIS, 13–17 JULY

On 13 July, the day before the fall of the Bastille, a new municipal government had been formed in Paris. It was an attempt by the electors—the men who had chosen the Third Estate deputies for Paris—to prevent Paris falling into a state of anarchy.

Of the 407 electors, 180 were lawyers, which gave the new 'permanent committee' an overwhelmingly bourgeois character. Jean-Sylvain Bailly, who had been the first president of the new National Assembly, presided over this new local government as mayor of Paris.



Source 6.17 *The King Arriving at the Hôtel de Ville, July 17 1789*, by Pierre-Gabriel Berthault and François-Louis Prieur.

tricolour cockade a rosette or cockade in the colours of the revolution: blue, white and red

On 15 July, a National Guard was formed to keep order and to defend Paris from attack if needed. The National Guard was under the command of Lafayette, the hero of the American War. The guards wore cockades (ornamental ribbons) that combined the red and blue colours of Paris with the white of the monarchy.

On 17 July Louis XVI, escorted by Lafayette, came into Paris to reaffirm the promises he had made on 15 July to the National Assembly, that:

- the remaining royal troops would withdraw from the city of Paris
- the deputies of the National Assembly need not fear for their personal safety.

The king was greeted on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville by Bailly and accepted the revolutionary cockade offered to him.

After formally endorsing the appointments of Lafayette and Bailly, Louis XVI was persuaded to appear on the balcony, wearing for the first time the new revolutionary ***tricolour cockade*** of blue, white and red. The crowd cheered: *'Vive le roi! Vive la nation!'*

KEY DEVELOPMENT At this moment, the constitutional monarchy of France was born.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Why is 14 July considered France's national day? Why is it so important?

2 If the crowd was so quick to chant '*Vive le roi*' ('Long live the king'), then who or what were they protesting against?

DISCUSSION

As a class or in a small group, discuss the following questions:

- The fall of the Bastille is not the first or last day of the revolution. Discuss why this day is celebrated more than others. Could you argue that other days were more important?
- To what extent was the direct action taken by the Paris crowds responsible for the continued existence of the National Assembly?
- Was the Paris crowd an ally of the Estates-General or a potential threat to its existence?

THE RURAL REVOLT CONTINUES **KEY MOVEMENT**

However, popular unrest was not confined to Paris. People in the provinces followed the events in Paris closely; they read the broadsheets and newspapers, met and discussed the issues, followed the actions of their deputies and sent protests to royal authorities about such things as the movement of troops to the capital and the attempts to dismiss the Estates-General.

As in Paris, food scarcity in the provinces had led to inflated prices and fed into general discontent with the actions of royal authorities. As tensions grew in Paris, they were matched by unrest in the provinces. There was unrest in the larger cities:

- Nantes and Lyons—crowds invaded the tax offices
- Rennes—the armoury was invaded and weapons stolen, which forced royal troops to surrender
- Bordeaux, Le Havre, Marseilles, Nantes and Dijon—royal citadels were seized.

Local committees were set up and National Guard units were established to support the revolution against Louis XVI. Aristocrats were forced to give up their venal posts or risk attack. Just as in Paris, there were attacks on grain stores and grain transports, and those who dealt in grain were under threat.

People everywhere refused to pay taxes, tithes and feudal dues, and the king's officers were unable to restore order because their own troops were sympathetic to the rebels. As a result, there was no means of enforcing the law or of punishing those responsible.

THE GREAT FEAR, 20 JULY–6 AUGUST 1789 **KEY DEVELOPMENT**

From late 1788 and the writing of the *cahiers de doléances*, many peasants had refused to pay tax. Peasant unrest had been heightened by the bad harvests of 1788, the threat of starvation and the increased burden of feudal dues—and this led to a breakdown of the old rules.

In March and April 1789, the peasants began to revolt against the honorific privileges of the nobility. As food became scarcer, there were more local uprisings. Starving peasants:

- grazed their stock on common land
- broke down enclosures
- refused to pay their tithes and feudal dues.

During the weeks after the fall of the Bastille, a new element was added to the revolutionary mix. People in the countryside became possessed by what the historian Georges Lefebvre calls 'the Great Fear'—the belief that the nobility were plotting to destroy the revolution.

The Great Fear was partly caused by:

- the fear that peasants would be punished for their actions
- the rapidly increasing number of beggars
- the arrival in country areas of soldiers redeployed from the capital.

According to rumours, the nobility were going to hire bands of 'brigands' (robbers) who would seek out rebellious peasants and kill anyone who had supported the revolution. Nobles were fleeing to neighbouring countries, and this only added to the fear—as the nobles were expected to return with foreign troops. In towns and villages, people began to form into groups and to arm themselves.

Historian Georges Lefebvre claims that the Great Fear was based on fear of the brigand:

Source 6.18 Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France*, trans. Joan White (London: New Loft Books, 1973), 210.

Georges Lefebvre on the Great Fear

> The Great Fear arose from the fear of the brigand. ... There had always been great anxiety at harvest time, [but in the climate of the] conflict between the Third Estate and the aristocracy (supported by royal authority) [these fears escalated]. ... Every beggar, every vagrant and rioter seemed to be a 'brigand'. ... No-one doubted that the aristocracy had taken the brigands into their pay ... and this allowed alarms which began by being purely local to spread swiftly through the country. The fear of brigands was a universal phenomenon, but the Great Fear was not, and it is wrong to confuse the one with the other.

DID YOU KNOW?

Historian George Rudé writes of the Great Fear: 'Whole villages went on the march and hundreds of châteaux went up in flames. ... But there was no indiscriminate destruction and only three landlords are known to have been killed. ... The marchers ... were single-minded and knew perfectly well what they were doing.'

There were many rumours about invading foreign armies. People claimed to have seen battalions of Austrians within the French borders.[30] These rumours were just as unfounded as rumours that nobles were hiring brigands to beat up peasants.

Historians investigating the specific path of the Great Fear show that it broke out in pockets, with news travelling from village to village at several kilometres an hour—that is, at walking pace.[31] Then, when neither the brigands nor the foreign troops arrived, armed peasants struck out at their local nobility.

TARGETS OF PEASANT VIOLENCE

In the 1780s, a French lord could collect monetary and material payments from his peasants, and enjoyed a raft of privileges (see pp. 12–13 for a refresher). Peasants who were struggling to survive deeply resented the nobles' honorific privileges. They looked with anger at the pigeons and rabbits that devoured their crops, while they were forbidden to either stop them or use them for food. Feudal dues and manorial rights kept peasant families in poverty. The *corvée* took men away from their farms and their crops. When the revolt came, according to Simon Schama, 'The first heavy casualties of the French Revolution were rabbits':[32]

Source 6.19 Destruction of the titlhe barns and attacks on nobles and chateaux to destroy the land taxes.

Simon Schama

> Hobnailed boots trampled through forbidden forests or climbed over fences and stone walls. Grass was mown in grain fields to reveal the nests of partridge and pheasant, snipe and pheasant, snipe and woodcock; eggs were smashed. ... Pit traps were even set for the most prized game, which was also the most voracious consumer of green shoots: roe deer.

Source 6.20 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), 323.

As well as the game that were hunted and trapped, dovecots, wine presses and ovens were destroyed, as they were symbols of exploitation that was no longer tolerated. Today, we might consider such actions as minor crimes, but in the late eighteenth century they were punished with flogging, branding and banishment, which would separate the peasant from his family, his farm and his neighbourhood—and most likely condemn his family to starvation. These game riots are evidence of the deep anger of the peasants in 1789, and perhaps an indicator of their desperation.

Groups of peasants attacked the châteaux and manor houses of the wealthy. Their goal was to destroy the documents that listed the dues they owed to feudal lords. By destroying the records, they hoped to avoid payments in future. In some cases, the houses were burnt down. Resistance was sometimes met with violence, but there were remarkably few fatalities recorded as a result of the Great Fear. It was the system that was the cause of anger, not the master.

The real significance of the Great Fear was that it:

- armed the people of the countryside
- pressured the nobility to reform.

Historian Georges Lefebvre claims the Great Fear allowed the peasantry to realise its strength:

TURNING POINT

Lefebvre on the Great Fear

There is no trace of plot or conspiracy at the start of the Great Fear. The aristocrat-brigand was a phantom figure [the image of which] the revolutionaries had helped spread. ... It provided an excellent excuse to arm the people against royal power ... and this reaction in the countryside gathered the peasants together to turn against the aristocracy. ... It allowed the peasantry to achieve a full realization of its strength and ... played its part in the preparations for the night of 4 August. On these grounds alone, it must count as one of the most important episodes in the history of the French nation.

Source 6.21 Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France*, trans. Joan White (London: New Loft Books, 1973), 211.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 What was the Great Fear?

2 Why were honorific privileges so deeply resented by peasants?

TURNING POINTS

Evaluate the Municipal Revolt, Rural Revolt and Great Fear as a combined turning point in the revolution. To what extent did these events limit the king's options and 'secure' the revolution?

THE 'NIGHT OF PATRIOTIC DELIRIUM', 4 AUGUST 1789

KEY EVENT

Simon Schama: 'The creation of a cult of self-dispossession ... [which] became a demonstration of honest patriotism.'

When news reached Paris about the attacks on the châteaux, the National Assembly met to discuss how to re-establish order. A committee was set up to investigate the causes of the attacks and to offer a solution. The committee's spokesman reported back about the 'disgraceful brigandage':

Report to the National Assembly

By letters from every province it appears that properties of whatever sort are falling prey to the most disgraceful brigandage; on all sides, castles are being burned, monasteries destroyed, farms given up to pillage. Taxes, payments to lords, all are destroyed: the law is powerless, the magistrates without authority, and justice a mere phantom sought from the courts in vain.

Source 6.22 William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 115.

Most committee members were in favour of quelling the riots by force if necessary, and demanding that taxes, feudal dues and tithes should continue to be paid until the National Assembly could consider the necessary reforms.

KEY MOVEMENT

However, it was all too late, as the more progressive members of the nobility had already worked out; to save anything, they needed to voluntarily give up their privileged status. A similar conclusion had been formed by the Third Estate deputies from Brittany, who had formed the Breton Club to present a united front in National Assembly debates. The Duc d'Aiguillon, one of the original Society of Thirty, was encouraged to move for the total abolition of the system of privilege.

The group chose the evening of 4 August, when attendance at the Assembly would be thin. However, before d'Aiguillon could move the motion, the Vicomte de Noailles, cousin to Lafayette and one of the veterans of the American War, spoke ahead of him. D'Aiguillon could only support de Noailles's motion.

At that stage, something like an auction began. Nobleman after nobleman rose to forfeit rights that had been sacred for hundreds of years:

- A bishop proposed an end to hunting rights.
- A noble called for the abolition of tithes.
- Country nobles were deprived of manorial rights.
- Courtiers were stripped of their pensions.
- Parish priests lost their fees for church services.
- Bishops were told they could no longer have multiple parishes.
- Towns gave up municipal privileges.
- Magistrates declared that justice should be free.

Venal offices were swept aside and replaced with salaried positions, and public offices were open to men of talent. The principle of equal taxation was introduced and accepted. The Marquis de Ferrières, lost in admiration of this orgy of self-dispossession, called it 'a moment of patriotic drunkenness'.[33]

It seemed that the old regime was to be swept away overnight and, as news of the so-called 'Night of Patriotic Delirium' became known in the countryside, many peasants certainly believed this. However, the reality was a little different. Another three years would pass before the National Convention abolished the last remains of the feudal regime.

Source 6.23

Night of August 4–5, 1789 or the Patriotic Delirium, 1789. A symbolic representation of the events of 4 August 1789: The three estates on the left and the new common man on the right destroy the emblems of feudalism.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 6.23 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. How does the artist celebrate the new unity of the estates?
2. Explain the symbolism of the objects being destroyed.
3. Explain what the figure of the 'common man' adds to our understanding of the forces for revolutionary change that emerged in France from January 1789. Use evidence to support your response.

THE YEAR 1789: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Historians such as George Rudé and Albert Soboul regard the French Revolution as a struggle between classes, based on changes in the distribution of wealth. Soboul's view on the period up to the Decrees of 5–11 August 1789 was that the peasant revolution 'ruled out any possibility of compromise with the feudal aristocracy and forced the bourgeois revolution onwards'.[34] Although George Rudé came to a different conclusion, he also used a class-based analysis to argue that 'having won its victory over "privilege" and "despotism", the bourgeoisie now wanted peace and quiet in order to proceed with its task of giving France a constitution'.[35]

However, both Rudé and Soboul ignore the vital role that the liberal nobility and the ***radicalised*** clergy played in the revolution.

radicalised take up an extreme position on a political or social issue

William Doyle argues that the turning point in the revolution was when Louis XVI followed advice not to use armed troops to restore order, as it led to the monarchy losing power. As a result, the people of Paris involved in the uprising realised they had a clear political role to play.

William Doyle

> Louis XVI's acceptance of that advice marked the end of royal authority. The monarch recognized that he no longer had the power to enforce his will. He was therefore compelled finally to accept all that had been done since mid-June. The Estates-General had gone. They had been replaced by a single National Assembly with no distinctions of order, claiming sovereignty in the name of the nation and a mission to endow France with a constitution. … The storming of the Bastille marked the climax of the [popular] movement. Challenged by it, Louis drew back, leaving the people of Paris convinced that they alone had saved the National Assembly. … Henceforth, they would see themselves as guardians of the liberty won that day.

Source 6.24 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 111.

Peter McPhee also argues that popular protest became politicised as a result of the events of mid-1789:

Peter McPhee

> The revolution of the bourgeois deputies had only been secured by the active intervention of the working people of Paris; the deputies' misgivings were expressed in the temporary proclamation of martial law on 21 October.

Source 6.25 Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution 1789–1799* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 62.

Notably, McPhee makes a distinction between the background of the deputies and that of the citizens involved in protests. Where the working people used popular protest and violence to achieve their aims, most of the deputies viewed such actions with horror. Differences in beliefs and values were not only to affect the relationship between the National Assembly and the politically active urban workers, but also lead to sharp divisions within the Assembly and between Paris and the provinces.

CONTINUED …

Simon Schama focuses directly on the outcomes of 1789:

Source 6.26 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), 859.

> **Simon Schama**
>
> Suddenly, subjects were told they had become Citizens; an aggregate of subjects held in place by injustice and intimidation had become a Nation. ... [But] before the promise of 1789 could be realized ... it was necessary to root out Uncitizens. Thus began the cycle of violence which ended in the smoking obelisk and the forest of guillotines. However much the historian ... may be tempted to see that violence as an 'unpleasant' aspect of the Revolution, it would be [naive] to do so. From the very beginning—from the summer of 1789—violence was the motor of the revolution.

Schama concludes that there was a direct link between the events of 1789 and the institution of the Terror: the revolution began with bloodshed and this became its means of progression. Thus, what started with the murders of de Launay and de Flesselles, de Sauvigny and Foulon was to reach a bloody climax in the Terror of 1793–1794.

François Furet focuses on what was gained by the early revolutionaries:

Source 6.27 François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds. *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1989), 112.

> **François Furet**
>
> The decrees of August 4–11 number among the founding texts of modern France. They destroyed aristocratic society from top to bottom, along with its structure of dependencies and privileges. For this structure, they substituted the modern autonomous individual, free to do whatever was not forbidden by law.

The outcomes of revolutions are never simple.

In destroying one form of government and social hierarchy, revolutions create different structures—and although individuals and groups can find unity in opposition to oppression, splits emerge from different visions of the new society. As power passes from one group to another, many of the problems of the old regime remain, and new challenges emerge.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Using Sources 6.24–6.27, other historical interpretations and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Summarise the main views put forward by these historians about the outcomes of the French Revolution.
2. Work out whether the historians see the outcomes of the revolution in positive, negative or neutral terms. Justify your decision with quotations from the extracts provided.
3. Determine your own opinion on the outcomes of the revolution. Which of these historians best sums up your view?

CHAPTER 6 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The meeting of the Estates-General at Versailles in May and June 1789 was a disappointment to all three estates.
- Disagreement over voting by head or by estate led the Third Estate to form their own National Assembly. On 20 June, when the National Assembly deputies were locked out of their meeting hall, they took the Tennis Court Oath and vowed not to disband until they had written a constitution for France.
- Louis XVI called a Royal Session to give his views on decisions made at the Estates-General.
- Meanwhile, as the price of bread soared and Louis XVI built up troops around Paris, the people of Paris took up arms on 14 July and seized control of the royal fortress: the Bastille.
- The king could not rely on his troops, as many of them sided with the rioters.
- The Parisian crowd saved the National Assembly from closure, thus, forcing the king to accept a constitutional monarchy.
- Legislative authority was placed in the hands of elected representatives of the people.
- Peasants attacked property and feudal records during the rural revolt and the Great Fear.
- On the night of 4 August, the nobility and the clergy voluntarily renounced their feudal privileges.
- Financial and honorific privileges were removed, and serfdom was abolished.
- Feudal and seigneurial dues were abandoned by the privileged estate, by the monarchy in the case of the *corvée*, by the Church in the form of tithes, and by the landowners in the form of *banalités*.

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

Create a diagram showing the challenges faced by the government of Louis XVI by August 1789. Using colour, annotations, arrows and boxes, show the:

- long-term causes of revolutionary action, including economic and political crises
- ideas that challenged divine-right monarchy
- public anger at entrenched social and economic inequalities
- following events: American War of Independence, revolt of the Notables 1787–1788, Day of Tiles, economic collapse and bankruptcy, the calling of the Estates-General and their regulation, the *Cahiers de Doléances*, political pamphlets, the harvest crisis and food shortage, Réveillon Riots, the events of the Estates-General, the storming of the Bastille, the 'Great Fear', and the night of the 4 August 1789.
- actions of key individuals, including Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, Marquis de Lafayette and Jacques Necker
- actions of popular movements, including the nobility, bourgeoisie, urban workers of Paris and peasants.

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write a 250–350-word extended response to four of the topics below. Each response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence, and a clear conclusion.

- Explain why the divine-right, autocratic monarchy was so unpopular in France by 4 August 1789.
- Explain the significance of the economic and fiscal challenges France faced by 4 August 1789.
- Explain how the Assembly of Notables and other nobles contributed to short-term causes of revolution.
- Evaluate the significance of the French clergy as contributors to social and political change by August 1789.
- Evaluate the harvest crisis of 1788–1789 as a turning point in the revolution.
- Analyse the political consequences of the government's failure to reform by August 1789.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

1. Evaluate the significance of Louis XVI's political beliefs and actions in causing the revolution. Use evidence to support your response.
2. Evaluate the significance of Necker's dismissal as a cause of revolution. Use evidence to support your response.

Additional resources: **www.htavshop.com.au/beyond-the-book**

SECTION B

CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

- What were the consequences of revolution?
- How did the new regime consolidate its power?
- What were the experiences of those who lived through the revolution?
- To what extent was society changed and revolutionary ideas achieved or compromised?[1]

'A league of kings has been formed in order to destroy the Revolution.'

***LA PATRIE EN DANGER*, 11 JULY 1792**

'You, my king. You are no longer my king, no longer my king! You are nothing but a cowardly deserter.'

Jacques Hébert's
Le Père Duchesne

'The secret of freedom lies in educating people, whereas the secret of tyranny is in keeping them ignorant.'

Maximilien Robespierre

[1] Extract from the VCE History Revolutions Study Design (2022–2026) © VCAA, reproduced by permission.

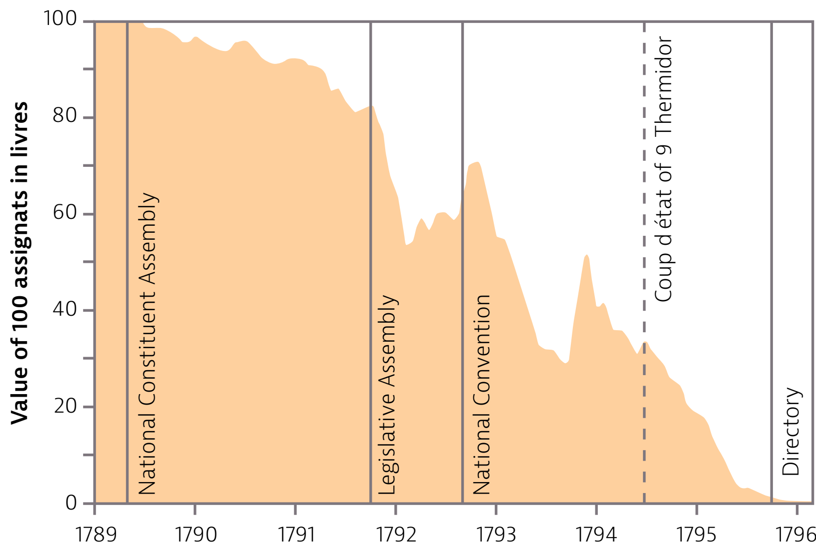
‘Death to the Austrian! We’ll wring her neck! We’ll tear her heart out!’

‘Bread, bread!’

‘Within a month of Robespierre’s fall, the central institutions of Terror and Revolutionary Government had been dismantled.’

WILLIAM DOYLE

THE DECLINING VALUE OF THE ASSIGNAT, 1789–1795



3517

PEOPLE GUILLOTINED IN FRANCE IN JANUARY 1794

‘Terror is the order of the day.’

BERTRAND BARÈRE, 1793

‘The reign of the priests has passed.’

Elysee Loustalot, the editor of the newspaper *Révolutions de Paris* on the Civil Constitution of the Clergy

EXPERIENCES OF REVOLUTION

Note: These fictional characters are based on historical research.

Charlotte Bouvier, bourgeois, c. 1795:
'In 1789 we talked of liberty and the rights of citizens. We met and discussed what that new liberty meant for us, women. We were excited at the dawn of a new France. No longer an absolute kingdom but a constitutional monarchy with a new franchise. Our hopes were dashed. Like those enslaved and "passive citizens" we were denied our right to elect our representatives and to stand for legislature.'

Maurice Berthe, bourgeois, c. 1793:
'But what does liberty really mean? The rights of one against the rights of many? How do we balance the rights with the duties and take care of those who can't do it themselves?

Alain Gérard, non-juring priest, c. 1795:
'Our churches destroyed, our parishioners murdered, our priests in hiding. The revolution is now in the hands of a bloodthirsty Parisian mob.'

Bishop Charles de Fauchet, c. 1790:
'It is only just that our Church takes part in this great national renewal for the benefit of all French men and women. Let us share in the wealth of the Church! It is our patriotic duty.'

Pierre-Joseph, Parisian worker, c. 1793:
'How am I going to feed my family with the prices of bread so high again and the bakeries empty? Is this a grand conspiracy to let us suffer and suffer more? Is this a Girondin plot?'

Marie, peasant, c. 1794:
'I cried when the local commune officials removed our village parish priest. He refused to swear the oath in the village square. He was a good priest who took care of us all. What will become of our church? Will our prayers be heard?'

Jean-Baptiste, peasant, c. 1795:
'The rule of the lords is over but the work on the land is still hard. The tithe is now replaced by a tax, but the tax collector is still the same man. I don't work for the local seigneur anymore, and offer my labour to the one who can pay me most.'

Madame Sophie Récamier, noble, c. 1792:
'The works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau gave us an idealised vision of what the world could be like. We wept when we read them publicly in our salons. Then came the hope that we can wrest the power from the monarch and become arbiters of French politics once again. Mirabeau was sure to secure a strong constitutional monarchy. Who will lead France in his absence?'

Jean-Albert de Corneille, noble, c. 1795:
'France needs to return to a position of strength internationally but first needs to secure stability at home. This can only be achieved with the power vested in one man. Such a man can ensure that the lawlessness of the lower classes is restrained using military force loyal to him. After years of rule of rabble-rousers, the time is now for a return to normality!'

Marie-Victoire, *sans-culotte*, c. 1792:
'Who takes our side? Who sees what we see? Who starves as we starve? Not the king or the aristocrats or the government officials! It is the *sans-culottes* that are true to the revolution and who are suffering to make it continue. Down with the monarchy! Give us bread and give us a republic!'

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Consider the perspectives portrayed here, then discuss the following as a class or in small groups:

- Which person's experience do you connect or empathise with the most? Why?
- Identify one or more historically significant events or developments that affected each person's experience.
- Select the person whose experience most highlights to you the ways that revolutionary ideas were achieved or compromised. Be prepared to justify your response.

4–11 August 1789 August Decrees
26 August 1789 Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen
5–6 October 1789 Women's March on Versailles: king forcibly moved to Paris
2 November 1789 Church property nationalised
13 February 1790 Monastic vows banned
26 February 1790 France divided into eighty-three departments
19 June 1790 Nobility abolished
12 July 1790 Civil Constitution of the Clergy enacted
14 July 1790 Festival of the Federation
16 August 1790 *Parlements* abolished; judiciary reorganised
27 November 1790 Oath of the Clergy introduced
20–21 June 1791 Louis XVI and family captured at Varennes

1789

KEY EVENT **4–11 AUGUST 1789**
August Decrees

KEY EVENT **26 AUGUST 1789**
Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen (DORMAC) proclaimed

11 SEPTEMBER 1789
King is granted a suspensive veto

19 SEPTEMBER 1789
King gives qualified acceptance of August Decrees and Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

KEY EVENT **5–6 OCTOBER 1789**
Women's March on Versailles: king is forcibly moved to Paris

KEY EVENT **2 NOVEMBER 1789**
Church property nationalised

DECEMBER 1789
First assignats issued

1790

KEY EVENT **13 FEBRUARY 1790**
Monastic vows banned

KEY EVENT **26 FEBRUARY 1790**
France divided into eighty-three departments

KEY EVENT **19 JUNE 1790**
Nobility abolished

KEY EVENT **12 JULY 1790**
Civil Constitution of the Clergy enacted

KEY EVENT **14 JULY 1790**
Festival of the Federation
(*Fête de la Federation*)

KEY EVENT **16 AUGUST 1790**
Parlements abolished and judiciary reorganised

KEY EVENT **27 NOVEMBER 1790**
Oath of the Clergy introduced

1791

13 APRIL 1791
Pope condemns Civil Constitution of the Clergy

KEY EVENT **20–21 JUNE 1791**
Louis XVI and his family are captured at Varennes after they attempt to flee

KEY EVENT **17 JULY 1791**
Massacre at Champ de Mars: National Guard opens fire on demonstrators

27 AUGUST 1791
Declaration of Pillnitz

1791 (continued)

14 SEPTEMBER 1791
King swears oath of allegiance to Constitution of 1791

1 OCTOBER 1791
Legislative Assembly convenes, replacing National (Constituent) Assembly

9 NOVEMBER 1791
Decree against émigrés issued
(vetoed by king 12 November)

29 NOVEMBER 1791
Decree against refractory priests issued
(vetoed by king 19 December)

1792

4 APRIL 1792
Freedom granted to free black men and free men of mixed race in Saint Domingue

20 APRIL 1792
Declaration of war against Austria

27 MAY 1792
Decree ordering deportation of non-juring (refractory) priests (vetoed by king 11 June)

8 JUNE 1792
Decree to raise an army of 20,000 *fédérés* to camp outside Paris (vetoed by king 11 June)

KEY EVENT **20 JUNE 1792**
Demonstrators invade Tuileries Palace and force king to wear red liberty cap

11 JULY 1792
Assembly declares the homeland in danger
(*La patrie en danger*)

KEY EVENT **25 JULY–28 JULY 1792**
Brunswick Manifesto threatens Parisians if royal family is harmed. Its circulation in Paris causes fury against the king

KEY EVENT **10 AUGUST 1792**
Louis XVI is deposed by armed insurrection organised by the Paris Commune and the sections

KEY EVENT **2–7 SEPTEMBER 1792**
September Massacres (murders of non-juring clergy and prisoners thought to be royalists)

20 SEPTEMBER 1792
French victory at Valmy; National Convention holds its first session

KEY EVENT **22 SEPTEMBER 1792**
Convention proclaims abolition of monarchy, declaring France a republic

TIMELINE

- **17 July 1791** Massacre at Champs de Mars
- **20 June 1792** Demonstrators invade Tuileries Palace
- **25 July–28 July 1792** Brunswick Manifesto
- **10 August 1792** Louis XVI deposed
- **2–7 September 1792** September Massacres
- **22 September 1792** Abolition of monarchy, France declared a republic
- **21 January 1793** Louis XVI executed
- **13 July 1793** Marat assassinated
- **10 November 1793** De-Christianisation campaign begins
- **28 July 1794** Robespierre executed
- **22 August 1795** Constitution of Year III and Two-Thirds Decree

1792 (continued)

10 DECEMBER 1792
Convention's trial of King Louis XVI begins

1793

KEY EVENT **21 JANUARY 1793**
Louis XVI executed

1 FEBRUARY 1793
France declares war on Great Britain and the Dutch Republic

24 FEBRUARY 1793
Levée of 300,000 men to defend Republic

9 MARCH 1793
Representatives on Mission established

10 MARCH 1793
Revolutionary Tribunal established

11 MARCH 1793
Vendée region revolts

21 MARCH 1793
Committees of Surveillance established

6 APRIL 1793
Committee of Public Safety established

31 MAY–2 JUNE 1793
Sans-culottes and National Guard in conjunction with Jacobins expel the Girondins from the Convention

24 JUNE 1793
Constitution of 1793 approved

KEY EVENT **13 JULY 1793**
Jean-Paul Marat assassinated by Charlotte Corday

27 JULY 1793
Maximilien Robespierre elected to Committee of Public Safety

1 AUGUST 1793
Convention implements 'scorched earth' policy in Vendée region

23 AUGUST 1793
Decree of *levée en masse*: mass mobilisation of entire population

5 SEPTEMBER 1793
Day of the *Enragés*; Government by terror begins

10 OCTOBER 1793
Constitution of 1793 suspended—government 'revolutionary until the peace'

1793 (continued)

16 OCTOBER 1793
Marie Antoinette executed, followed by deaths of the 21 Girondin leaders (31 October), Olympe de Gouges (3 November), Philippe Égalité (7 November), Madame Roland (8 November), Bailly (12 November) and Barnave (29 November)

KEY EVENT **10 NOVEMBER 1793**
De-Christianisation campaign begins

4 DECEMBER 1793
Law of 14 Frimaire enacted

1794

4 FEBRUARY 1794
Slavery abolished in French Empire

24 MARCH 1794
Hébertists executed

5 APRIL 1794
Dantonists executed

8 JUNE 1794
Festival of the Supreme Being

10 JUNE 1794
Law of 22 Prairial enacted

KEY EVENT **28 JULY 1794**
Robespierre executed

1 AUGUST 1794
Law of 22 Prairial repealed

12 NOVEMBER 1794
Jacobin Club closed

DECEMBER 1794
White Terror begins (ends in July 1795)

1795

21 FEBRUARY 1795
Freedom of worship allowed

1–2 APRIL 1795
Germinal uprising—demands reinstatement of Constitution of 1793

26 APRIL 1795
Representatives on Mission abolished

20–23 MAY 1795
Prairial uprising—demands reinstatement of Constitution of 1793

31 MAY 1795
Revolutionary Tribunal abolished

KEY EVENT **22 AUGUST 1795**
Constitution of Year III, Two-Thirds Decree

26 OCTOBER 1795
Final session of National Convention

NEW REGIME FOUNDATIONS: UNITY AND REFORM (AUGUST–OCTOBER 1789)

'All men are born and remain free and equal in rights ... to liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression.'

—Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

The work of the National Assembly—and the actions of both the rural and popular movements between August and October 1789—set in place the foundations and power relations of the new regime.

While the formal decrees of 5–11 August—called the August Decrees—made it clear that changes could not be made overnight, many peasants immediately stopped paying all feudal dues and other taxes, which added to the fiscal problems of the government.

KEY SOURCE

While the National Assembly worked at writing a constitution, it also created:

- the Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen—26 August 1789
- Fundamental Laws of Government (a draft to act as a temporary constitution)—1 October 1789.

Here, the power relations between the National Assembly and the king were defined, with a single chamber and suspensive veto—meaning that the king had the power to suspend legislation.

However, Louis XVI declined to ratify these important decrees. Popular concern was rising in Paris, along with economic unrest over food shortages and increasing bread prices. The market women of Paris marched to Versailles to demand the king provide bread and ratify the Assembly's decrees.

Source 7.01 ***Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, c. 1789.** This painting is a celebration of the principles of liberty and equality enshrined in the legislation passed by the National Constituent Assembly, 27 August 1789.

CHAPTER 7

KEY QUESTIONS

- How was the new regime to be organised under the August Decrees?
- How do the values and ideas underpinning the August Decrees and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen differ from the values and ideas of ancien régime practices?
- Why was the success of the popular action of the October Days an important turning point in the revolution?

KEY EVENTS

4–11 August 1789
August Decrees

26 August 1789
Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen proclaimed

5–6 October 1789
Women's March on Versailles: king is forcibly moved to Paris

KEY CONCEPTS

FROM THE AUGUST DECREES	
Promotion by merit	Social utility (usefulness or ability to meaningfully contribute to society)

FROM THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN	
Natural and inalienable rights	Popular sovereignty
Personal liberty	General will
Equal duty to pay taxation	Consultation on payment of tax
Separation of powers	Freedom of speech, religion, press
Accountability of public ministers (office holders)	Inviolability of right of property

THE DECREES OF 5–11 AUGUST

KEY DEVELOPMENT

David Andress: 'A profound and decisive repudiation of the Old Regime.'

Six days after the events of 4 August 1789, the draft legislation was presented to the Assembly:

KEY SOURCE

Decree for the abolition of feudalism

1. The National Assembly abolishes the feudal regime in its entirety. It decrees that, as regards feudal rights and dues, ... those relating to personal *serfdom* are abolished without compensation; all others are declared to be redeemable in the manner to be decided by the National Assembly. Any rights which are not abolished by this decree will continue to be collected until their owners have been compensated.

4. All seigneurial courts are abolished without compensation

5. All forms of the tithe are abolished, subject to making alternative provision for the expenses of divine worship, payment of priests and poor relief. ...

7. Venality of judicial and municipal offices is abolished with immediate effect. Justice is to be administered without charge. ...

9. Financial privileges, whether relating to persons or land, in matters of taxation are abolished for all time. Payment will fall on all citizens and all lands, in the same manner. ...

11. All citizens, without the distinction of birth, are eligible for all offices and dignities, whether ecclesiastical, civil or military.

Source 7.02 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 107.

The decrees signalled that the ancien régime was gone and a new France was in its place. Liberty, equality and popular sovereignty would replace the old structures of absolute monarchy, the corporate society (estates) and the system of privilege.

The revolution, which had begun with the 'aristocratic revolt' of the Assembly of Notables and the Parlement of Paris, now placed power firmly in the hands of the National Constituent Assembly—whose major task was to begin drafting a constitution.

What of Louis XVI? The Decrees of 5–11 August proclaimed him to be 'Louis XVI, Restorer of French Liberty' and although his power was reduced, his monarchy was untouched.[1]

The National Constituent Assembly was not committed to continuing revolution. While there were radical deputies, there were also conservatives and moderates; besides, the deputies represented all three estates, as well as cities and provinces.

Most deputies believed that once the constitution was written, the revolution would be over, as the Assembly's major objectives had been met. As the National Constituent Assembly got on with the business of structuring reform, Robespierre declared, 'The Revolution is finished'.[2]

KEY CHALLENGE

DID THE DECREES FULFIL THEIR PROMISE?

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1790, Abbé Grégoire found that in up to 80 per cent of departments, most people spoke local dialects—which meant that few local people would have understood the Assembly's decrees.

Abbé Grégoire.

However, before reform could take place, the concessions from the 'night of patriotic delirium' on 4 August had to be converted into legislation.

Merlin de Douai, the jurist who had to convert the concessions of 4 August into the Decrees of 5–11 August, described Article 1 as an 'embarrassing text'.[3] In practice, the grand and sweeping statement, 'The National Assembly abolishes the feudal regime *in its entirety*' was highly ambiguous.

As time went on, it became clear to the peasants that: **KEY GROUP**

- harvest dues had not been abolished after all
- tithes would remain in force until 1791
- all the National Assembly was offering was a chance to buy out feudal dues.

The former privileged orders did not abandon their seigneurial claims. From late 1789 until 1793, the courts were choked with claims and counterclaims from seigneurs and rural communities. The compensation payable to the seigneur was 25–30 per cent of the year's dues, which was an almost impossible amount for a peasant or rural community to raise. Non-redeemed dues were to continue for the foreseeable future and, in fact, now had greater legitimacy.

However, in the short term the satisfaction of political objectives neither filled the bellies of the poor nor stemmed their deep resentment of the aristocracy and the monarchy. It would be the popular movement and the Commune of Paris and their leaders—both within and outside the Assembly—that would radicalise the revolution, and it would be the peasants in the countryside who would nurse their grievances against it.

KEY CONCEPTS

This stage of the revolution incorporates some challenging concepts, and it is important that you understand these concepts and use them in your writing. In pairs, divide the key concepts from the beginning of this chapter. On small cards, write the name of the concept on one side, and on the reverse compose a working definition of that concept. Then swap cards with your partner and quiz each other.

Panel 1: *'We must hope this game will end soon.'*

Panel 2: *'This is the way I always wanted it to be.'*

Panel 3: *'I knew we'd have our turn!'*

Source 7.03 *Réunion des trois ordres* (Reunion of the three estates), 1789.

The words that appear above the image in panel 3 are *'Vive le roi: Vive la nation'* ('Long live the King: Long live the Nation'). The label in the old man's pocket reads 'peace and concord'. The sword he carries is labelled 'Full of courage' and the digging tool reads 'tireless'. Labels on the man in front name the areas where reform is needed: land taxes and relief of the people. The scales are marked 'Equality and Liberty'.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 7.03 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Describe what is depicted in each of the three panels.
2. Identify features of the peasant's appearance in the third image that indicate changes to his status and lifestyle.
3. Explain the effects on each estate of the night of 4 August 1789.
4. Explain the most significant achievements of the revolution by late 1789. Use evidence to support your response.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Write a 250–350-word extended response to the topic below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence, and a clear conclusion.

- Georges Lefebvre maintains that, 'Four revolutions had already taken place in France by the end of August 1789'. To what extent do you agree with this assessment of the period from 1787 to August 1789?

THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN, 26 AUGUST 1789

Peter McPhee: 'The revolutionary proclamation of the principles of a new golden age … universal in tone, resounding in optimism and a great statement of liberalism and representative government, … a "blueprint" for the new society.'

The passing of the August Decrees abolished many of the inequalities of the old regime—on paper at least. People were no longer subjects of the king, and were neither part of a rigid social order determined by birth. Now they were citizens of a new state, with equal rights that were to be guaranteed by the Assembly.

The deputies set to work to permanently enshrine in legislation the gains won by the revolution—values of liberty, equality and popular sovereignty. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen became the foundation document of the new society, establishing the ideology of the new state as the legal basis of the new society.

KEY IDEAS

The key influences on the Declaration can be seen below. Its text drew heavily on the ideas spread by the thinkers of the Englightenment.

Source 7.04 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 114.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

KEY SOURCE

1. All men are born and remain free and equal in rights. … — *From Rousseau's* The Social Contract, *American Declaration of Independence 1776*

2. The aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and inalienable rights of man; these rights are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression. … — *Rousseau—personal liberty,* Social Contract

3. The source of all sovereignty lies … in the nation. … — *Rousseau,* The Social Contract

4. Liberty consists of the power to do whatever is not injurious [harmful] to others. …

6. Law is the expression of the General Will; all citizens have the right to concur personally or through their representatives in its formation. … — *Rousseau,* The Social Contract

7. No man may be accused, arrested or detained except in cases determined by law. — *Voltaire and British civil law—the law of habeas corpus 1679*

9. … every man is presumed innocent until declared guilty. … — *Voltaire—'It is better to risk saving a guilty man than to condemn an innocent one' (Zadig, 1747)*

10. No one is to be disquieted [be made uneasy or accused] because of his opinions, even religious, provided their manifestation [expression] does not disturb public order. … — *Voltaire—*Treatise on Toleration

11. Free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man. … — *Voltaire*

13. For the maintenance of the public force and for the expenses of administration a common tax is indispensable; it must be assessed equally on all citizens in proportion to their means.

14. Citizens have the right to ascertain, by themselves or through their representatives, the necessity of the public tax, to consent to it freely and to supervise its us. … — *Magna Carta 1215, British Bill of Rights 1689, American Declaration of Independence 1776*

15. Society has the right to require of every public agent an accounting of his administration. … — *Montesquieu,* Spirit of the Laws.

16. Every society in which the guarantee of rights is not assured or the separation of powers not determined has no constitution at all.

17. The right to property is **inviolable** and sacred.

inviolable never to be broken, infringed or dishonoured

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 7.04 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1 Outline the groups in society who would gain the most from the adoption of the Declaration.

2 Outline the groups in society who would lose benefits as a result of the Declaration.

3 Identify the ideas and values laid out in the Declaration. As you investigate the new society, use these to evaluate the extent to which revolutionary ideas were achieved or compromised.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which was to form the preamble to the new constitution, defined and made law the principles for which the revolution had been fought. Historians George Rudé, Peter Jones and Peter McPhee all agree that the declaration was, 'above all, a statement of bourgeois idealism'.[4] McPhee sees it as 'the revolutionary proclamation of the principles of a new golden age ... universal in tone, resounding in optimism and a great statement of liberalism and representative government'.[5] It was a 'blueprint' for the new society.

DID YOU KNOW?
In 1790, the Marquis de Condorcet (the last living *philosophe*) published an essay 'On Giving Women the Right to Citizenship'. In it he argued that 'Either no member of the human race has any true rights or else they all have the same ones'.

Groups of women organised to petition the National Assembly to reform French law. In one petition from 1789 they wrote asking for, among other things, 'equal liberty, advantages, rights, and honours between the sexes' the right to bear arms, stand for election—and to wear breeches! Petitioning the Assembly, they declaimed:

Women's Petition to the National Assembly

> the French are a free people. Yet still you allow thirteen million slaves shamefully to wear the irons of thirteen million despots! You have divined the true equality of rights—and you still unjustly withhold them from the sweetest and most interesting half among you!

Source 7.05 Cited in Karen M Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 54.

CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS OF THE KING

The Fundamental Principles: 'The French government is ***monarchical***; there is no authority in France superior to the law; the King reigns only thereby and only in the name of the law may he exact obedience.'

monarchical relating to a monarch or monarchy

Throughout September 1789, debate raged in the Assembly over what powers should be granted to the king in the new constitution. There were three main groups.

CONSERVATIVES

The conservatives—also known as the ***monarchiens***—wanted the king to have the power of absolute veto over legislation and to limit radicalism in the Assembly by creating a hereditary upper house that represented the nobility. In their view, an upper house would ensure the rule of law and restrain the unruliness of the lower orders. The conservatives were led by Mounier, the Marquis de Lally-Tollendal, the Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre and Baron Malouet, and were supported by Necker.

monarchiens group of conservative deputies in the National Assembly who wanted a hereditary upper house and to give the king absolute veto over legislation. They continued to support the idea of a constitutional monarchy even after the king's flight from Paris in June 1791

RADICALS

The radicals wanted no royal veto and no second chamber, so there would be no constitutional checks to the absolute power of the Assembly. Sieyès and Le Chapelier led the radicals, and Robespierre initially shared their views.[6]

MODERATES

The moderates would accept a two-house legislature—meaning two chambers—but demanded that the power of the king to ***veto*** legislation should be suspensive only, and should not include the right to dismiss the Assembly. This group included the patriot 'triumvirate' of Duport, Barnave and Target.

veto an *absolute veto* would give the king the power to immediately and permanently block any legislation that he did not like. A *suspensive veto* would allow the king to hold up particular legislation for three successive two-year terms (making six years altogether). This veto was eventually accepted on the second ballot

Mirabeau took a position between the conservatives and the radicals. He was committed to the idea of a constitutional monarchy based on the British model, but argued for a single chamber with an absolute veto for the king. Mirabeau believed the single chamber was necessary, as two chambers would lead the people to believe that there were still privileges and noble cliques—there had to be one chamber to speak for all Frenchmen. With this arrangement, the king should have an absolute veto, as that would be the only thing that would stand in the way of unconstitutional moves by the legislature of the day.[7]

As debate dragged on, the crowds at the Palais Royal increasingly spoke about marching on Versailles. Again, popular agitation in Paris threatened both the monarch and the deputies of the Assembly.

THE VOTING

The vote on 10 September 1789 saw the defeat of the *monarchiens* and the defection of the moderates.

The Assembly voted for a one-house legislature: 849 votes to 89. The deputies were not prepared to hand power to the nobility through an upper house.

The deputies did not show much trust in the king either. On 11 September, they voted in favour of Lafayette's proposal that the monarch should have only the power of suspensive veto over legislation. This meant that the king could delay legislation, but could not veto it indefinitely. The deputies also made sure that the suspensive veto could not apply to laws relating to the constitution or taxation. Again, the vote was overwhelmingly in favour: 673 votes to 325, with eleven deputies abstaining.

The king also lost:

- the power to appoint judges, which had been a venal office under the ancien régime
- the authority to declare war or negotiate
- the authority to sign treaties without the permission of the National Assembly.

Finally, instead of having access to tax revenue, Louis XVI was awarded a royal allowance—a maximum of twenty-five million francs per year.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Identify and describe three changes and three continuities to French society and politics that resulted from the issuing of the August Decrees.
2. What key ideas and ambitions did the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen hope to enshrine?
3. The Declaration claimed to be a 'blueprint' for the new society, but it did not represent the whole of that society. Which groups were left out?
4. What divisions existed within the National Assembly regarding the king's place and purpose in France?
5. What powers and privileges did King Louis XVI still possess by the end of September 1789?

THE DECREE ON THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT

J.H. Stewart: 'Both a statement of accomplishment and a program on which the deputies could and did base subsequent legislation'.

On 1 October, the Assembly passed the Fundamental Principles of Government. These reflected the deliberations of the deputies and foreshadowed the Constitution of 1791. Some of the principles are outlined below.

The Fundamental Principles

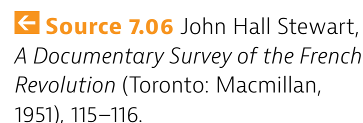
1. All powers emanate essentially from the nation. ...

2. The French government is monarchical; there is no authority in France superior to the law; the King reigns only thereby and only in the name of the law may he exact obedience.

3. The National Assembly has ... declared as fundamentals of the monarchy that the person of the King is sacred and inviolable ... that the crown is hereditary ... from male to male. ...

8. Legislative power resides in the National Assembly. ...

9. No act of the legislative body may be considered as law if it is not made by ... representatives of the nation and sanctioned by the monarch.



Source 7.06 John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 115–116.

These fundamental principles meant that the monarchy remained as a hereditary office, descending through the male line. However, the king no longer had supreme power, which was now vested in the laws of France organised in a constitution.

The National Assembly was given legislative power and control over taxation and expenditure. The king could choose his ministers, who must not be part of the Assembly, but he could not propose laws—although he could 'invite the National Assembly to take a matter under consideration'.[8]

Judicial power belonged to the courts alone, as Montesquieu had wanted. Justice was administered in the name of the king, but neither the king nor the Assembly could interfere with the justice system.

DID YOU KNOW?
A new version of the game snakes and ladders was created during the French Revolution. Players aimed to win a new constitution for France. Along the way, they climbed ladders to achievements like the abolition of *lettres de cachet*, or slid down snakes to evils like the *parlements*.

KEY IDEAS

Make a copy of the extract from the Fundamental Principles of Government. Highlight phrases in the extract that express the idea of popular sovereignty. Then, using a different colour, highlight phrases that confirm the authority of the king. What was the new status of Louis XVI? Was he a citizen like everyone else or was he still above the law?

CLASS DISCUSSION

The National Assembly was not even two months old when it found itself in power. With little experience, the members of the Assembly laid out a 'blueprint' for a new regime. Discuss as a class:

- what they got 'right' in addressing the inequities of the ancien régime
- which groups in society they were trying to protect, promote or punish
- what errors they made.

KEY CHALLENGE
KEY GROUP

THE OCTOBER DAYS: THE WOMEN MARCH TO VERSAILLES

Jules Michelet: 'Men made the 14th of July; the 6th of October was the day of the women. Men took the royal Bastille, women took royalty itself.'

Source 7.07 Women's March on Versailles, 5–6 October 1789.

IMMEDIATE CAUSES

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see pp. 274–275)

By October 1789, there were serious doubts about whether Louis XVI accepted the revolution. He had not been to Paris since 17 July, when he had been welcomed by his people and had attached the new tricolour cockade to his hat.

However, since then, he had failed to ratify the new legislation, including the Decrees of 4 August and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. This left both pieces of legislation in limbo, as they did not have the status of laws.

Source 7.08 Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette are toasted by the Flanders regiment at a banquet at Versailles. A notable feature of the image is the cockades littering the floor.

DID YOU KNOW?

The rumour that reached Paris from the banquet was that soldiers tore off their red and blue cockades and trampled on them, then replaced them with white cockades in honour of the monarchy.

The National Assembly demanded that the king publicly confirm its decrees. However, these demands were met with silence, which led to the general belief that the king, influenced by Marie Antoinette, was planning to move against the revolution. The rumours became credible when Louis XVI summoned an additional regiment of soldiers—the Flanders regiment—to Versailles.

The Flanders regiment was given a traditional welcome banquet by the *gardes du corps* (King's Guards). When Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette visited the banquet, the arrival of the king and queen encouraged the expression of loyalist sentiments and calls for the overthrow of the revolution.

When the news of the banquet reached Paris, it led to great anger: while Versailles feasted, the people of Paris went hungry. Bread prices were high and there were shortages of other foodstuffs. The rumours that the military had insulted the emblem of the revolution (the cockade) inflamed people even further.

On 5 October, the crowds gathered in the gardens of the Palais Royal. It seemed obvious to them that the king must be brought back to Paris among his loyal subjects, and removed from the corrupting influence of Versailles.

TO VERSAILLES! 5–6 OCTOBER 1789

The action began at the Hôtel de Ville, where women had come to demonstrate about the high price of bread. A soldier named Stanislaus Maillard—a member of the National Guard and 'veteran' of the taking of the Bastille—told the women that the Commune was powerless and that 'as they only wanted to go to the National Assembly to demand justice and bread, they should go without arms' to Versailles.[9] The women decided this was a satisfactory solution, and began to march the twenty kilometres to Versailles. From the Hôtel de Ville, the demonstration moved to the Champs Elysées, where the marchers were joined by other groups of women.

Women from the fish market abandoned their trade as the bell tolled for the march to begin. The owners of market stalls, shopkeepers, prostitutes and passers-by swelled the crowd until finally there was a force of some 6000 people—most of them women. Armed with knives, pikes, swords and some muskets, they demanded bread, the passing of the decrees of the Assembly and access to the monarch in person.

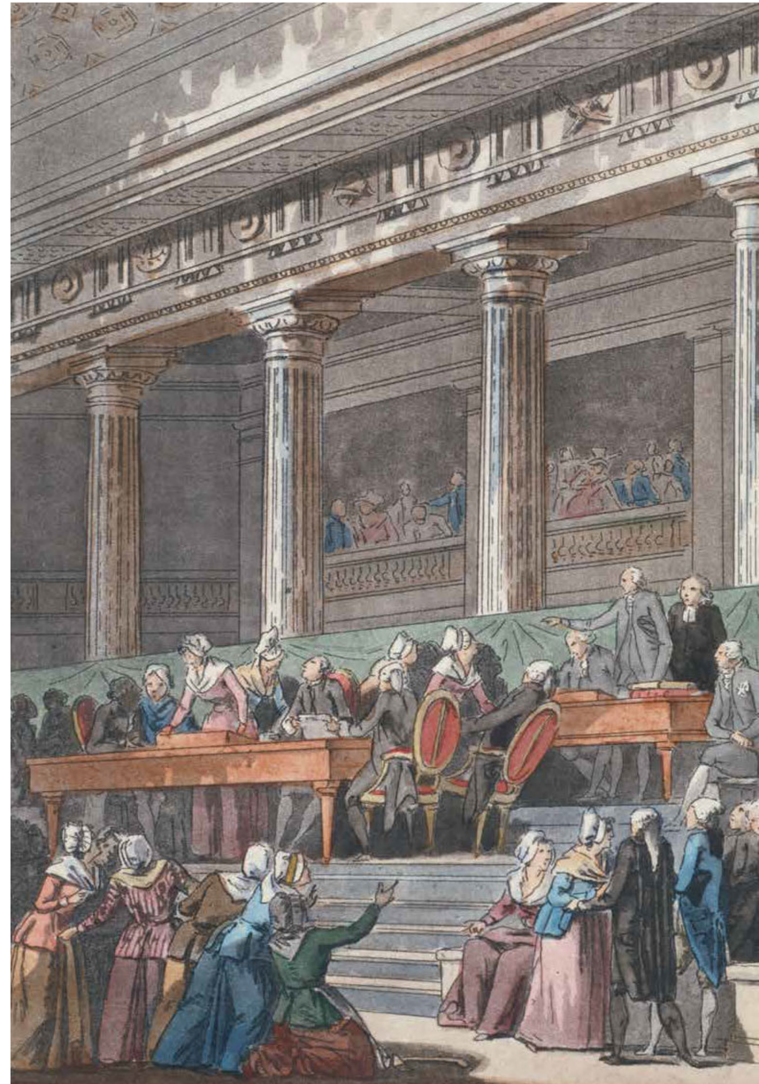
Agitators paid by the Duc d'Orléans urged the crowd on. Lafayette and his National Guards followed the crowd in the hope of gaining control when emotions had been worn out by the long walk. By five o'clock, they had reached Versailles and by half past five, they had entered the hall of the National Assembly. The new president of the Assembly, Jean-Joseph Mounier, attempted to keep the peace, but with little effect.

Historian Timothy Tackett writes that the events of 5–6 October were a 'jolting experience' for the deputies; for most of them, it was their first face-to-face confrontation with the revolutionary Parisian crowd. 'Tired and impatient after hours outside in the rain, the women began entering the hall in large numbers, muddy and bedraggled, wedging themselves onto the benches between the deputies, shouting for bread', as the Assembly tried to pursue its normal business. Later, after the Assembly had adjourned, 'most stayed on, breaking into the deputies' refreshment stall, settling down to a boisterous picnic, to the amazement of those deputies who had remained behind to watch'. Tackett also notes a number of violent incidents against individual deputies both inside and outside the hall.[10]

DID YOU KNOW?

Dislike of Marie Antoinette was widespread in Paris. She was characterised by cartoonists and pamphlet writers as wasteful and as an unfaithful wife, as in this verse:

> *Louis, si tu veux voir*
> *Bâtard, cocu, putain,*
> *Regarde en ton mirroir*
> *La Reine et le Dauphin.*
>
> Translation: 'Louis, if you want to see a bastard, a cuckold and whore, look in your mirror, at the queen and the dauphin.'



Source 7.09 *Le quatrième évènement du Octobre 1789* (The Fourth Incident of October 5, 1789). The women of Paris in the National Assembly, seated among the deputies.

DID YOU KNOW?
It took two to three hours for a horse and carriage to get to Versailles from Paris. It would have taken the women who marched there on 5 October 1789 about six hours to reach Versailles.

Calls for order went unheeded. The crowd would not withdraw until it had been heard. Mounier went to consult Louis XVI, who agreed to meet the women—provided they were accompanied by Mounier. A deputation of twenty women went to meet the king, but only six were allowed in for the audience. According to Christopher Hibbert, the meeting went well:

Christopher Hibbert

> The King walked into the room, looking rather nervous, to ask the women what they wanted. 'Sire,' replied one, a pretty girl who sold flowers at the Palais Royal, 'We want bread'. 'You know my heart,' the King told her. 'I will order all the bread in Versailles to be collected and given to you.' At these words the girl fainted. Revived by smelling salts, she asked to be allowed to kiss the King's hands. 'She deserves better than that,' His Majesty said, and took her into his arms.

Source 7.10 Christopher Hibbert, *The French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1980), 99.

THÉROIGNE DE MÉRICOURT, 1762–1817

Théroigne de Méricourt.

Anne-Josèphe Théroigne de Méricourt was born in the Austrian Netherlands, and came to be known as a strong supporter of the French Revolution and a warrior for women's rights. Living in Paris, she acquired notoriety for being well armed and for wearing a man's riding habit, which earned her the name 'Amazon'.

Her great claim to fame was that she rode at the head of the women marching to Versailles on 5 October 1789. However, she had actually taken a room in the village of Versailles to watch all the proceedings of the National Assembly and simply met the marchers on horseback at the outskirts of the village. Making a visit home in 1790, she was arrested by Austrian authorities and questioned about her role in the revolutionary affairs of 1789. She was eventually released and returned to Paris in 1792.

Back in Paris, Méricourt called for the creation of 'legions of amazons' to protect the revolution. Significantly, the historian Olwen Hufton stresses that, as part of her call, she claimed that 'the right to bear arms would transform women into citizens'.[11]

Through 1792 Méricourt was a common figure at the Jacobin Club, still wearing the riding habit, but by 1793 she had become allied to the Girondins. In May 1793, while making a pro-Girondin speech in Paris, she aroused the anger of a group of Jacobin women, who stripped her naked and beat her savagely.

Afterwards she had poor mental health and suffered from severe headaches—and probably had what we would call post-traumatic stress. Her behaviour became increasingly erratic. In September 1794 she was certified insane and sent to an asylum. In 1807 she was transferred to the Salpêtrière Hospital, where she was sometimes coherent, speaking constantly about the revolution. She died there in 1817.

Source 7.11 *Armed Revolutionary Woman, Theroigne de Mericourt*, by the Lesueur Brothers.

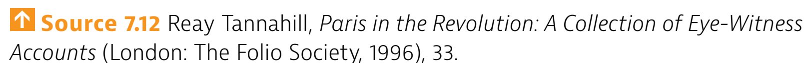
However, the women waiting outside the meeting were not convinced by the king's promises. Louis XVI may have been sincere, but Marie Antoinette and her circle were not. The delegates returned and received a written declaration from the king. This satisfied many women and the demonstration broke up. Some women stayed at Versailles, but most started on the long journey back to Paris. The arrival of Lafayette with 20,000 members of the National Guard and some representatives of the Commune of Paris seemed to mark the end of the matter.

The king's ministers advised him to leave Versailles for his own safety, but he chose to stay. He received Lafayette and the Commune delegates, and agreed to ratify the August Decrees and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and other decrees passed by the Assembly. Then, he and Marie Antoinette went to their bedchambers.

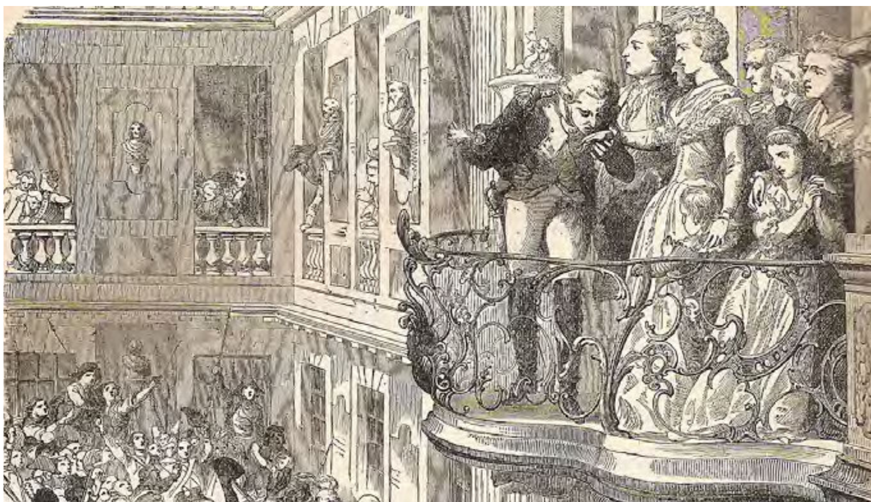
At two o'clock in the morning, a crowd of women invaded the palace and found the queen's bedchamber, shouting, 'Death to the Austrian! Where is she? Where is the whore? We'll wring her neck! We'll tear her heart out! We'll fry her liver!'[12] On their way through the palace, one of the King's Guards tried to prevent their entry. He was decapitated with an axe. At the door to the queen's bedchamber, as she hastily escaped through a secret door leading to the king's apartments, another guard was killed with a blow to the head. Outside, a larger crowd called for the king to show himself to his people.

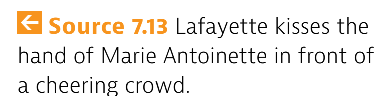
Lafayette's rather self-satisfied account demonstrates the extreme danger facing the king and queen. Writing in the third person, he recounted the events of the day:

> **Lafayette**
>
> 'Madame' said he [Lafayette] to the Queen, 'what is your personal intention?' 'I know the fate that awaits me,' she replied nobly. 'But my duty is to die at the feet of the King and in the arms of my children.' 'Very well, Madame, come with me.' 'What, alone on the balcony? Did you not see the gestures they made at me?' 'Yes, Madame. Let us go.' And appearing with her in the face of those waves which still roared ... Lafayette—unable to make himself heard—had recourse to a gesture which was hazardous but decisive. He kissed the Queen's hand. The multitude, struck by this act, cried *'Vive le Général! Vive la Reine!'* ... From that moment, peace was restored.



Source 7.12 Reay Tannahill, *Paris in the Revolution: A Collection of Eye-Witness Accounts* (London: The Folio Society, 1996), 33.





Source 7.13 Lafayette kisses the hand of Marie Antoinette in front of a cheering crowd.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What actions by Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in early spring of 1789 made Parisians feel that the royal family had not accepted the revolution?
2. Why were women so predominant among those who marched to Versailles on 5 October 1789?
3. The 'Women's March' was not a peaceful protest. Identify actions made by the mob that illustrate the power the people had gained from the events of the preceding months.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES —SOCIAL GROUPS

Start a 'social groups file' to track the experiences of different social groups and their responses to the changes and challenges of everyday life.

The different social groups are:

- the bourgeoisie
- parish priests and other clergy
- urban workers
- women
- peasants
- the nobility.

You will be prompted to add to your file as you read the next five chapters.

You can find guided questions and further prompts at the end of this book (p. 269) and on the Beyond the Book website.

- Start your social groups file by making notes about the following group: **women**.

THE KING IS BROUGHT TO PARIS IN TRIUMPH

Popular song (October 1789): 'Bringing the baker, the baker's wife and the baker's lad to Paris.'

TURNING POINT

The 'March of the Women' was a significant turning point in the revolution.

The day after the march, the royal family left Versailles for Paris. The National Guard rode in front of and behind the royal carriage, with Lafayette personally escorting the royal family. Behind them came the royal ministers and the deputies of the Constituent Assembly, followed by the Flanders regiment and the National Guard, who were escorting wagonloads of grain and flour.

Source 7.14 The triumph of the Parisian Army reunited with the people upon its return from Versailles to Paris, 6 October 1789.

Along the route, crowds accompanied them and shouted into the carriage, 'Long live the baker! Long live the baker's wife and son!' Loaves of bread were brandished on the tips of pikes and bayonets. The crowd carried on pikes the heads of the guards who had been killed, in full view of the royal carriage. When Bailly met the king and queen at the gates of Paris to present them with the keys to the city, a man fired four rifle shots over Marie Antoinette's head.

The royal family was now to be lodged at the Tuileries Palace in the heart of Paris —prisoners of the people they once ruled.

KEY GROUP

A new wave of emigration by the nobility and officers in the royal army followed. Mounier, although president of the Constituent Assembly, left Paris and returned to his native Dauphiné.

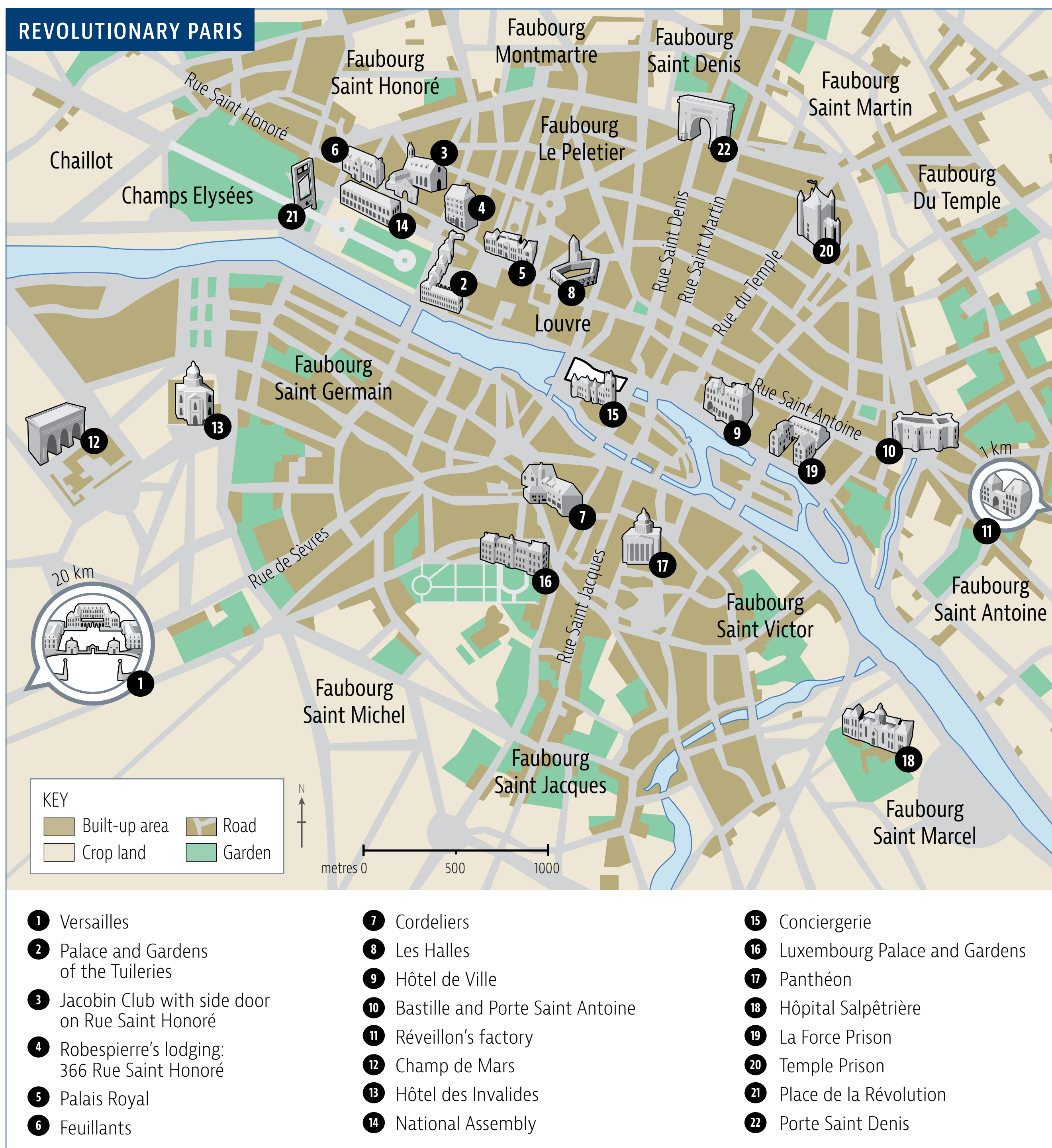
After Louis XVI moved to Paris, the deputies of the Constituent Assembly unwillingly followed, setting up their meeting place in the Manège, a former riding school of the Tuileries Palace. Thus, the March of the Women also made the deputies captives of the people.

There were now three sources of power in Paris:

- the king—whose position was increasingly weak
- the deputies of the Constituent Assembly—the representatives of the people
- the ***menu peuple***—the ordinary people of Paris, who had demonstrated their capacity for violence, and were increasingly a force with which to be reckoned.

menu peuple the ordinary people of Paris

Accordingly, on 21 October 1789, the Assembly passed the Decree on Martial Law. Proposed by Mirabeau, it stated that 'while liberty strengthens empires ... licence destroys them', and ordered that if the public order were disturbed, a red flag was to be hung from the window of the Hôtel de Ville or displayed by the National Guard. If the crowd then failed to disperse immediately, it would be committing a criminal act and armed force could be used to restore order.



Source 7.15

The Decree on Martial Law was the first indication of the deputies' desire for the revolution to end and for a restoration of law and order, as opposed to the crowd's determination to achieve its goals by direct action.

DID YOU KNOW?

As the revolution progressed, new terms were adopted by the French general public to refer to new social groups, such as the *sans-culottes*. This name reflected both their social class—men without the knee breeches and stockings of the middle class—and their role as armed and active defenders of the people's revolution.

WHAT HAD BEEN ACHIEVED BETWEEN 4 AUGUST AND 6 OCTOBER 1789?

During the two months between 4 August and 6 October 1789, the critical foundations for the new revolutionary society were laid. The old feudal order was discarded—in principle, at least—on the night of 4 August when deputies of the First and Second Estates gave up some of their privileges. Then these changes were written into legislation, with some qualifications, in the decrees of 5–11 August.

The decrees were practical in nature, and were a response to specific grievances in the *cahiers de doléances*. The new laws had wide-reaching effects, but their implementation was slow, which frustrated many peasants and led to uprisings in 1790–1791.

The vision for France's future was articulated on 26 August 1789 in optimistic and universal terms in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. These foundational ideas—which were drawn from Enlightenment thinkers, British civil law and the American Revolution—were in many ways the complete opposite of the principles of the old regime, which had been founded on absolute rule and privilege through birth. As the revolutionaries faced increasing challenges, emergency measures would override some of these foundational ideas, but the liberal principles of the declaration have endured, and have prefaced every French constitution since 1791.

With the forced removal of the king, his family and his government from Versailles to the heart of Paris, the people of Paris had once again taken decisive action to safeguard the revolution and the National Constituent Assembly.

Faced with the threat of violence—and Marie Antoinette would have had no doubt her life was in danger on the night of 5–6 October—Louis XVI was forced to give in to the demands of the crowd, and to pass both the August Decrees and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Just like the action of 14 July, the crowd could once again claim to have 'saved' the National Assembly. In time, it would demand that the Assembly honour its debt and fulfil the demands of the common people.

This was a critical turning point for the revolution for three reasons:

- First, Louis XVI was no longer a figure of authority, but a virtual prisoner in the Tuileries Palace. The change in his status would alter how the common people viewed both the king and the monarchy.
- Second, many members of the Constituent Assembly, who followed Louis XVI to Paris about two weeks later, held extreme misgivings. They had been alienated by their close brush with the violence of the crowd during the October Days, and several deputies became ill or applied for leave. The legislators of France were now at the mercy of the people and no National Assembly from that point on could rule without the support of the people of Paris.
- Third, the Paris-centric control of the revolution would create resentment in the provinces, which elected their own representatives to the National Assembly, paid their taxes and served in the nation's armies. In 1789, the population of Paris was about 600,000 people, while the population of France as a nation was about twenty-eight million.

The seeds of the Federalist Revolt of 1793 were sown at this point, as were the seeds of the radical phase of the revolution.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Why were the deputies now, to some extent, prisoners of the people?
2. What division between the Assembly and the *menu peuple* is revealed by the Declaration of Martial Law?

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on the topic below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'The initial gains of the new regime satisfied only some of those who had demanded change. In failing to meet the expectations of reform for all groups, the deputies of the National Assembly created the grounds for further revolution.' To what extent do you agree with this view?

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES —SOCIAL GROUPS

Continue your 'social groups file' (see p. 121 for instructions).

- Make notes about the following group: **the nobility**.

CHAPTER 7 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- Feudalism was theoretically swept away by the enactment of the August Decrees, but its dismantling took much longer in practice.
- Many peasants immediately stopped paying all feudal dues and other taxes, adding to the government's fiscal problems.
- The National Assembly proclaimed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen on 26 August 1789, based on the writings of the *philosophes*.
- 1 October 1789 saw a constitutional monarchy established with a single chamber and suspensive veto.
- At first, Louis XVI did not ratify the decrees. This led to rumours that he would contest the revolution.
- Popular concern was increasing in Paris, along with economic unrest over food shortages and rising bread prices.
- Working women marched from Paris to Versailles on 5 October 1789 to speak directly with the deputies and the king, and to ask for bread.
- The activities of the revolutionaries become more Paris-centric, which created resentment in the countryside.
- As a result of the Women's March, the king, queen and dauphin were escorted to Paris and placed under guard in the Tuileries Palace—effectively making the king a prisoner of the revolution.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

George Rudé

The march to Versailles on 5 October [1789], by ending in the King's return to the capital, completed the Paris revolution of July … The King's refusal to give his assent to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and to the Assembly's famous resolution of 4 August, which eventually led to the abolition of the feudal system of land-tenure, the long struggle over the 'veto', and the constant intrigues to abduct the King to a safe distance from Paris, showed how precarious as yet were the gains of the July revolution.

[The result of] the October insurrection was to consolidate these gains. By placing the King under the watchful eye of the majority in the National Assembly, the Paris city government, and Districts, … it established the ascendancy of the constitutional monarchists which, in Paris, found its reflection in the long rule of Bailly as mayor and of Lafayette as commander-in-chief of the National Guard. It must, of course, be added that by placing the Assembly itself under the equally watchful eye of the Parisian *menu peuple,* whose more active elements began to crowd the tribunes and, often, to influence its debates, it opened the way for further developments that were neither foreseen, nor in the event welcome, by the victors of October; but this, of course, lay still in the future.

Source 7.16 George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 61.

Using Source 7.16 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. According to George Rudé, why were the gains of the July revolution 'precarious'?
2. How did the constitutional monarchists, such as Bailly and Lafayette, dominate the revolution once Louis XVI returned to Paris?
3. Identify one or more other political consequences of the king's return to Paris, as suggested by Rudé.
4. Evaluate George Rudé's view that the October insurrection had consequences the revolutionaries would come to regret. What signs were there in October 1789 that 'the people' might themselves pose a danger to France?

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What were the direct 'triggers' of the October Days?
2. The Women's March illustrated the new-found 'agency' of the crowd. What factors and events fuelled this agency?
3. Consider the manner in which the royal family was escorted back to Paris. In what ways had the position of the king and queen been altered?
4. Discuss the extent to which the ideas of popular sovereignty and equality had been implemented in France by October 1789.

CHANGING FRENCH SOCIETY

(1789–1791)

On 9 July 1789, the National Assembly adopted the name of the Constituent Assembly to signify its task of giving France a constitution. While its title was now officially the National Constituent Assembly, the group still referred to itself in legislation as the National Assembly, and was generally known as such in newspapers and by the population at large. All three titles above can be used interchangeably from 9 July 1789 until 30 September 1791.

In their bid to rejuvenate and remake the nation, the deputies of the National Constituent Assembly worked with great dedication over the next two years to 'recast all that was unsound in the constitution of France'—as they had sworn to do in the Tennis Court Oath. The scope of their vision was vast; to achieve their reforms, much had to be torn down to make way for the new. Although there was resistance and violence in some places, the Assembly was able to achieve so much because of the desire of French citizens to create a new and better society. Many historians regard the reforms of the Constituent Assembly as the most successful and enduring aspect of the French Revolution.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the principles underlying the Constituent Assembly's reform program, and how were they applied?
- What was the difference between active and passive citizenship, and how did Sieyès justify this distinction?
- Which groups in society benefited the most from the Constituent Assembly's reform program?
- Which groups in society lost previous benefits because of the Constituent Assembly's reform program?

This image is dated to 1792. The revolutionary dress, including the red bonnet and long striped trousers, is a symbol of the emerging new social group: the *sans-culottes*.

Source 8.01 ***Plantation d'un arbre de la Liberté*** **('Planting a Liberty Tree'), by Jean-Baptiste Lesueur, 1792.**

CHAPTER 8

‘The French people “must be renewed, rejuvenated, transformed through their institutions to change their ideas”. They must be “changed in their laws to change their morals”. “Everything must be destroyed, for everything must be recreated.”’

—Protestant priest and deputy for Nîmes, Rabaut Saint-Étienne

KEY EVENTS

- **2 November 1789** Church property nationalised
- **December 1789** First assignats issued
- **26 February 1790** France divided into eighty-three departments
- **19 June 1790** Nobility abolished
- **14 July 1790** Festival of the Federation (*Fête de la Federation*)
- **16 August 1790** *Parlements* abolished and judiciary reorganised

THE REFORM PROGRAM OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

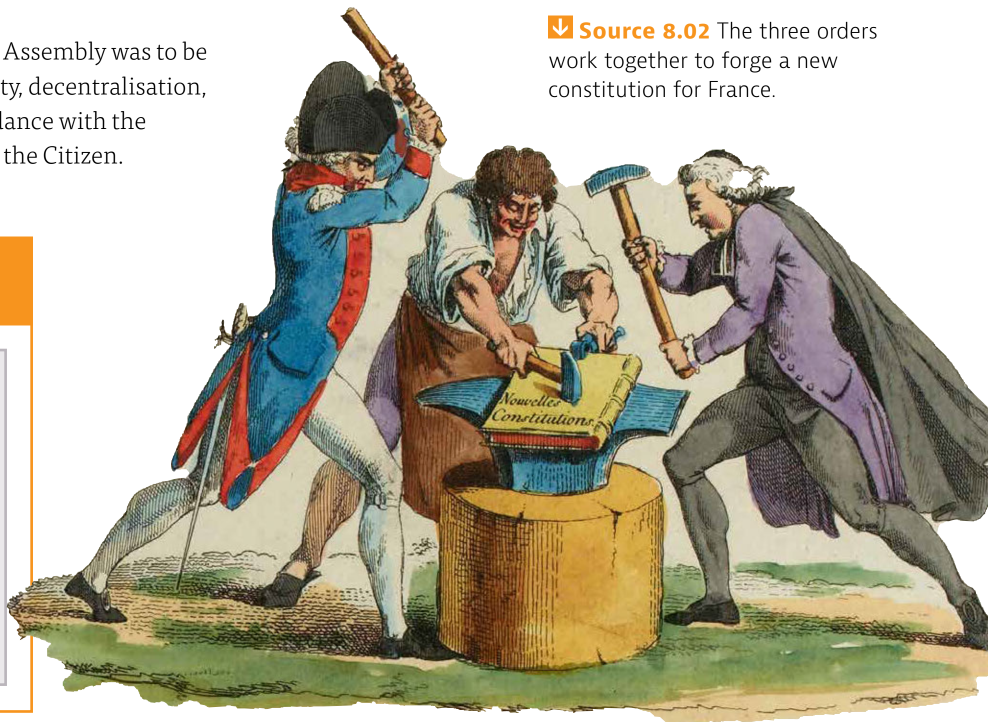
KEY CHALLENGE

Peter McPhee: ‘In every aspect of public life … traditions of corporate rights, appointment, and hierarchy gave way to civil equality, accountability, and elections within national structures.’[1]

The reform program of the Constituent Assembly was to be based on principles of reason, uniformity, decentralisation, representation and humanity, in accordance with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

THE MAIN AREAS IN WHICH CHANGES WERE MADE

- Local government
- Finance
- Taxation
- The economy
- Labour relations
- The legal system
- Military reforms
- The Church (see Chapter 9)
- The Constitution (see Chapter 9)[2]



Source 8.02 The three orders work together to forge a new constitution for France.

NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (JUNE 1789–30 SEPTEMBER 1791)

Year	Date	Event
1789	5 11 AUGUST	**August Decrees:** • Feudalism and attendant rights and privileges of the seigneurial regime were abolished; ***however***, all dues considered redeemable would continue to be collected until full reimbursement was made. • All were to have right to kill pigeons and hunt other game on their own land. • Seigneurial courts were to be abolished … but officials of such courts were to continue until the Constituent Assembly had provided some other system. • Tithes and other dues were abolished … subject to finding other ways of financing the Church's operation. • Taxation was made uniform for all citizens. • All citizens were to be admitted, without distinction of birth, to all ecclesiastical, civil and military employments … venality abolished thus allowing for promotion by merit.
	10 AUGUST	**Decree establishing National Guard.**
	26 AUGUST	**Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen:** • laid out fundamental principles of freedom and equality of rights under natural law • defined the aim of government as the maintenance of liberty, property and security of all citizens • identified the fundamental source of all sovereignty (power) as residing in the nation • established equality of legal rights, and freedom of speech, press and religion • established principle of equality of taxation of all citizens according to their means and the right of all citizens to identify the need for the tax and to freely consent to it • established the right of all men to own property as being inviolable and sacred.
	1 OCTOBER	**Fundamental Principles of Government** laid out working principles for the Constituent Assembly and king to work by until the formal Constitution could be finished.
	7 OCTOBER	**Nationalisation of Crown lands:** Lands previously belonging to the king were taken over by the Constituent Assembly to be used for the benefit of the nation.
	29 OCTOBER	**Decision on voting rights:** Voters were divided into 'active' and 'passive' citizens. Active citizens were men over twenty-five who paid tax equivalent to three days' labour in local taxes; they had the right to vote in primary assemblies. Passive citizens were domestic servants and those who paid tax that was less than three days' labour; they had no voting rights.
	2 NOVEMBER	**Nationalisation of church property:** Church land was appropriated by the government for the benefit of the nation; later other church property was taken as well. The value of Church property was estimated at 400 million livres—and this money was to be used to secure the new paper assignats (government bonds).
	NOVEMBER	**Suspension of *parlements*.**
	14 19 DECEMBER	**Decree Establishing Municipal Government:** Formal legislation establishing qualifications for active and passive citizenship for purposes of voting.
	19 DECEMBER	**First issue of assignats**, initially redeemable only through purchase of nationalised land.
	22 DECEMBER	**Decree Establishing Electoral and Administrative Assemblies** announced new administrative structures of departments, districts and cantons. It divided citizens into active and passive categories for the purpose of defining voting rights. The qualifications for active citizens were specified, and favoured property owners. These qualifications were to be laid out in the 1791 Constitution. Provincial cities and towns were divided into sections, for voting purposes.
	24 DECEMBER	**Grant of religious liberty to Protestants:** This legislation applied to the approximately one million Protestants and allowed them to: 1. vote and stand for election, provided they fulfilled the general taxation and citizenship requirements 2. be eligible for all civil and military positions.
1790	28 JANUARY	**Grant of religious liberty to Sephardi Jews:** This decree, which covered Jews in the south of France, particularly in Bordeaux and Metz, together with the 1791 decree relating to Ashkenazi Jews in the east of France, enfranchised 60,000 Jewish men, who: 1. could vote and stand for election 2. be eligible for all civil and military positions.

Event	Date	Year
Decree prohibiting monastic vows: All monasteries and convents, except those dedicated to educational and charitable work, were dissolved, and new religious vows were forbidden.	**13 FEBRUARY**	**1790**
Decree dividing France into departments: Old *généralités* and *pays d'état* were replaced with eighty-three administrative departments of roughly equal size, each with a departmental capital that was to be no more than one day's ride away from any canton in the department.	**26 FEBRUARY**	
Abolition of nobility as a requirement for army officers.	**28 FEBRUARY**	
Inheritance Law introduced equality of rights of inheritance for sons and daughters.	**15 MARCH**	
Abolition of *lettres de cachet*.	**16 MARCH**	
Suspension of the *gabelle*.	**21 MARCH**	
Decree on assignats: The Assembly decreed assignats to be legal tender and used in any transaction. More notes in lower denominations were to be printed. This change in the use of the assignat created the potential for inflation.	**17 APRIL**	
Creation of forty-eight sections of Paris (territorial and administrative divisions) to replace the previously existing sixty districts. Each section had a civil committee, a revolutionary committee and an armed force (sectional National Guard).	**21 MAY**	
Decree abolishing all noble ranks, titles and distinctions.	**19 JUNE**	
Civil Constitution of Clergy: The administration of the Church was reorganised in line with the local government reforms of December 1789. Abuses such as plurality of positions and absenteeism were abolished. The number of dioceses was reduced to eighty-three to match the number of departments, with the cathedral of the bishop moved to the capital of the department, if necessary. Parishes were rationalised and, because the tithe had been abolished, Church officials were to be paid salaries by the state. Further, all clerical positions except for bishop and priest were to be abolished, and those offices were to be filled by election, by active citizens, thus, enfranchising Jews and Protestants, but excluding devout Catholic women. (See also 27 November 1790).	**12 JULY**	
The *Fête de la Fédération*, a celebration of the revolution and the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille.	**14 JULY**	
***Parlements* formally abolished.**	**6 SEPTEMBER**	
Revolt of slaves and black freedmen in French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue (modern-day Haiti).	**29 OCTOBER**	
Decree providing uniform tariffs: All internal customs barriers and tariffs were abolished to free up the movement of produce and goods around the nation and stimulate a national market. In the opinion of historian John Hall Stewart, this decree was 'the most important contribution of the Constituent Assembly'.	**31 OCTOBER**	
Decree requiring Clerical Oath: All clergymen—who were now civil servants of the state—should swear an oath of allegiance to the Constitution and the French state. This offended many clergy, who considered that such a requirement went against their spiritual obligations to obey the pope, their spiritual leader.	**27 NOVEMBER**	
Juring priests elected as the first bishops in the new 'Constitutional Church'. They became known as '**Constitutional Clergy**'.	**5 FEBRUARY**	**1791**
Dissolution of guilds and all trade monopolies: These measures aimed to open up a range of crafts and occupations to a wider range of people. Organisations that had formerly held special privileges or exerted restrictions on employment were abolished.	**2 MARCH**	
Papal Bull *Charitas*: The pope made it clear that no one could remain a member of the Church unless they 'remained at one' with its visible head, the pope himself. Catholics would be forced to choose between their religion or the revolution.	**13 APRIL**	
Children of free black men in French colonies were granted equal rights.	**15 MAY**	
Le Chapelier Law prohibited worker unions, associations and strikes.	**14 JUNE**	
Slave rebellion broke out in Saint-Domingue.	**14 AUGUST**	
Wearing religious clothing in public was banned.	**15 AUGUST**	
King formally ratified **1791 Constitution** and swore a public oath of allegiance.	**14 SEPTEMBER**	
Ashkenazi Jews granted equal civil liberties. **Decree abolishing slavery in France** (although not in the colonies).	**28 SEPTEMBER**	
Legislative Assembly elected after Constituent Assembly finishes its work on the Constitution and is dissolved.	**SEPTEMBER**	

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGE

Many changes were made to local government and administration. These changes were made to:

- decentralise power from the central government in Paris to local authorities
- provide a simple, uniform and coherent structure of local administrative procedures
- make sure that local councils were elected democratically and were directly accountable to voters.

WHO HAD VOTING RIGHTS?

The two grand documents of August 1789 were the August Decrees and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. These documents stated the foundation principles for the new regime, but they were full of compromises:

- Feudalism was abolished in its entirety, but not yet.
- All men were born free with equal rights, but these equal rights did not extend to women, children or slaves.
- Sovereignty resided in the nation, but did this mean all citizens should have the right to vote?

This compromise over equal rights was glaringly obvious in the distinction the Constituent Assembly made between 'active' and 'passive' citizens.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE CONSIDERS CITIZENSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

Enlightenment principles that everyone is equal at birth and has equal rights under the law suggest that every person has the right to a vote. However, the deputies of the Constituent Assembly argued that for citizens to be able to exercise their electoral rights independently they needed to possess a certain level of wealth. This would guarantee their freedom to cast a vote without any undue pressure.

On 20–21 July 1789, Abbé Sieyès had proposed a solution: create two categories of citizens, and distinguish them by whether they were 'active' or 'passive'. In his report to the National Constituent Committee, Sieyès claimed that 'Natural and civil rights are rights *for* whose maintenance and development society is formed. These are passive rights'. There also existed political rights, 'those *by* which society is formed'. From this distinction, Abbé Sieyès drew the following conclusion:

Sieyès on passive and active citizens

> All inhabitants of a country should enjoy in it the rights of passive citizens: all have the right to protection of the person, of their property, of their liberty. But all do not have the right to play an active role in the formation of public authorities: all are not active citizens. Women (at least at the present time), children, foreigners, and those others who contribute nothing to sustaining the public establishment should not be allowed to influence public life actively. Everyone is entitled to enjoy the advantages of society, but only those who contribute to the public establishment are true stockholders of the great social enterprise. They alone are truly active citizens, true members of the association.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Compare and contrast the tone and content of Source 8.03 with Sieyés's earlier pamphlet, *What Is the Third Estate?* (see pp. 74–75).

Source 8.03 Cited in I. Wallerstein, 'Citizens All? Citizens Some! The Making of the Citizen,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 no. 4 (October, 2003), 651.

During the week of 22 October 1789—with the intimidating behaviour of the crowd that invaded Versailles on 5 October still fresh in their minds—the matter was debated furiously in the National Constituent Assembly. On 29 October they decided that the citizenry was to be divided into active and passive citizens, with the divisions apportioned according to how much tax each citizen paid.

Such a division of citizens was immediately denounced by the popular press—especially the very high amount of tax required to be eligible to stand for deputy. 'There is only one voice in the capital,' complained Camille Desmoulins in one of the first issues of his *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, 'and soon there will be but one in the provinces against the silver mark. It has turned France into an aristocratic government. ... But what is this much repeated word *active citizen* supposed to mean? The active citizens are the ones who took the Bastille.'[3]

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE CITIZENS

ACTIVE CITIZENS

- Only active citizens had the right to vote, and they fell into three categories:

1. MEN OVER TWENTY FIVE WHO PAID THE EQUIVALENT OF THREE DAYS' LABOUR IN LOCAL TAXES

- In 1790 approximately 4.3 million Frenchmen were 'active' citizens. These citizens chose **electors** in primary assemblies.
- They would also vote for all public officers, except ministers of the Crown. This meant they elected local administrators, judges, magistrates and even parish priests.

2. ELECTORS: ACTIVE CITIZENS WHO PAID THE EQUIVALENT OF TEN DAYS' LABOUR IN LOCAL TAXES

- About 50,000 men qualified.
- Elected **deputies** to the National Assembly.
- Members of canton and departmental assemblies could become officials in these electoral assemblies.

3. DEPUTIES: ACTIVE CITIZENS WHO PAID AT LEAST A SILVER MARK (FIFTY FOUR DAYS' WORTH OF LABOUR) IN DIRECT TAXATION

- This was a very high qualification—Doyle states that 'barely one in ten active citizens [electors] met this requirement', thus, creating a pool of fewer than 5000 possible candidates eligible for election to the National Assembly.[4]

PASSIVE CITIZENS

A passive citizen:

- paid fewer than three days' worth of taxes
- had no voting rights at all
- was not eligible for service in the National Guard.

This division of citizens was to become a very strong grievance by 1792.

However:

- women had no vote
- slaves had no vote.

MUNICIPAL COMMUNES

In December 1789, the new municipal governments (called communes) that had emerged in the cities and towns during the municipal revolution of 1789 were made permanent. Municipal officers, including the mayor, were to be elected by the active citizens sitting as a single assembly. Guidelines were set about the length of their tenure, their duties and their procedures. This was immediately followed by the Decree Establishing Electoral and Administrative Assemblies, which reorganised the electoral and administrative systems.

Historian John Hall Stewart claims that in their haste to replace the structures of the old regime, the National Assembly built in new faults:

> Too many officials, too brief tenures, too frequent elections, too much self-government for a politically inexperienced people, too great a degree of decentralisation and the absence of adequate intermediate agencies between local and central authorities.[5]

However, the reforms did give a degree of local autonomy, which had been requested in many of the *cahiers de doléances*.

DEPARTMENTS, DISTRICTS, CANTONS, COMMUNES

83 DEPARTMENTS

- Elected officials.

547 DISTRICTS

- Elected officials.

CANTONS

- Cantons were for voting purposes only.
- Between 40–60 cantons in each department.
- Primary assemblies for elections held.
- Courts of Justices of Peace (elected).

44,000 COMMUNES (MUNICIPALITIES)

- Smallest administrative unit.
- Existed even in small towns and villages.
- Elected officials who were responsible for a range of administrative duties previously undertaken by paid officers of the crown.

DEPARTMENTS, DISTRICTS, CANTONS, COMMUNES

The reforms continued in February 1790, when France was reorganised into eighty-three administrative departments. These departments replaced the confusing and often overlapping borders of the ancien régime, which were made up of provinces, *pays d'état* and *généralités*. Each department was administered by local officials elected through the municipal assemblies—a system that proved extremely popular.

PARTICIPATION AND CONTROL OF THE MUNICIPAL COMMUNES

Over 60 per cent of French men had the right to participate in some form of election, but, overall, the system was heavily weighted in favour of wealthy men and landholders. At a local level, most peasants had the right to vote and were eligible to stand for office.

Before the revolution, government officials ran local administration, and there were no elected councils at all. Now there was not one government official at the local level, as they had been totally replaced by elected councils.

In the south, these new councils were controlled by the bourgeoisie, but in the north, where the bourgeoisie largely lived in the towns and cities, the rural communes were under the control of **laboureurs**, small merchants and artisans. Thus, as Doyle explains, the councils often relied on local officials with little experience.

laboureur the upper level of the peasantry; they usually hired labour and owned a plough

William Doyle

> Central government under the new system was to be completely dependent on the zeal and energy of thousands of underpaid (and, at the humblest level, unpaid) local officials, of very variable levels of ability, understanding, or indeed political sympathy, for the implementation throughout France of its entire range of reforms. Most were completely inexperienced.

Source 8.04 William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1980), 125.

Even so, during the decade 1789–1799, an estimated one million men were elected to councils and gained experience in administration and local government.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MUNICIPAL COMMUNES

The duties allocated to the communes were burdensome and wide-ranging. At first, communes had to:

- assess and collect direct taxes, which was never a popular job
- maintain law and order
- control the National Guard
- carry out public works.

Plus, now that tithes had been abolished and Church property nationalised, communes also had to maintain churches and educational institutions.

Later in the revolution, the communes had to:

- register births, deaths and marriages
- administer the Clerical Oath of loyalty.

The communes were at the heart of local social life. Officials were elected by their neighbours to carry out important functions of social control.

Historian David Andress has pointed out some of the difficulties associated with the commune system:

- Only active citizens could be elected, which meant the number of citizens eligible to hold office in many rural communes was very limited.
- Candidates were not allowed to declare themselves or solicit support, which meant that unwilling or less competent citizens could be elected.
- Elected officers could find their duties interfering with their working lives.
- If there were few active citizens, the same people could be re-elected on a continual basis.

Andress has observed that while those chosen may not have wished to serve, 'in a few cases [they] might even have been elected out of malice'.[6]

ABOLITION OF TITLES AND DISTINCTIONS

In March 1790, the Assembly abolished 'all honorary distinctions ... deriving from the feudal system'.[7] This was followed on 19 June 1790 with the abolition of all hereditary and noble titles. From that point on, citizens could only use their family name and could niether display coats of arms, nor have servants who wore livery. All other titles were swept away, including clerical titles. All were now equal and all were addressed as 'citizen' or 'citizeness'.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What key principles underpinned the changes to France's administrative bodies?
2. How did these changes empower individuals while also replicate the venality (corruption) of the ancien régime at the same time?
3. What separated active from passive citizens?
4. List three critical acts of legislation that occurred between 1789 and 1790, and describe their effect on society.

Source 8.05

THE DEPARTMENTS OF REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE, 1790–1798

KEY
1789 frontier
1798 frontier

CELEBRATING UNITY: THE FESTIVAL OF THE FEDERATION

On 14 July 1790, the unity of the monarchy, the Church and the people was celebrated throughout France on the first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. Historian Simon Schama describes it as 'a coming together of individual wills in a fresh sense of community'.[8]

Across France, communities celebrated with public meetings, patriotic speeches, and oaths of loyalty to the new state. They also created tableaux vivants, which were 'living pictures' of still and silent people arranged to represent scenes from the revolution. Trees were planted to symbolise the liberty won by revolution.

In Paris, Lafayette and Talleyrand organised the *Fête de la Fédération* (Festival of the Federation) at the Champ de Mars, the parade ground for cadets from the military school. Here, citizens of Paris gathered in front of the king to watch a procession of National Guards from all over France.

Description of the Festival of the Federation from the newspaper, *Révolutions De Paris*, 10–17 July 1790

Forty-two departments, in alphabetical order, the deputation of ground and sea troops, [then] the forty-one remaining departments made up the federal army; a detachment of grenadiers and guards on horseback closed the parade. ... A great spectacle greeted the eyes of the federates as they arrived; 300,000 spectators, men and women, all of them decorated with ribbons *à la nation* were seated on benches, which, extending from a triple triumphal arch, form a sloping boundary whose top blends with the branches stretching from the trees like wings and whose bottom dominates an immense platform, in the middle of which an arch had been raised. ... A moment later, the National Assembly swore an oath; there was a cry of 'Long live the King!' ... Finally the King stood up ... and from his place he said out loud, and with a highly satisfied look, the oath decreed by the National Assembly.

Source 8.06 Cited in Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution and Napoleon* (London: Routledge, 2002), 32.

Source 8.07 *General Federation in Paris*. The first Festival of the Federation took place on the Champ de Mars just one year after the fall of the Bastille. A great ball was held that evening on the site where the Bastille had stood.

In the eyes of his people, it was the moment when Louis XVI was truly as Bailly had addressed him in February: 'Louis the Just, Louis the Good, Louis the Wise, ... Louis *le Grand*,'[9] the citizen-king of the French people.

As the people cheered and shouted their loyalty, Marie Antoinette rose and presented her son, the dauphin, to the crowd. Again the people cheered and, in this atmosphere of mutual goodwill, the festivities continued until six in the evening and then for the rest of the week.

KEY DEVELOPMENT

NATIONALISATION AND SALE OF CHURCH PROPERTY

John Hall Stewart: 'One of the shrewdest financial manipulations ever devised—at least on paper.'

By September 1789, the bankruptcy crisis was back. The Assembly had vowed to honour the national debt in the Declaration of the National Assembly of 17 June, and took the long-term decision to nationalise Crown and Church lands as security against an issue of government bonds, called ***assignats***.

assignats paper money issued from 19 December 1789 against capital raised from the sale of church lands

THE NEW CURRENCY: ASSIGNATS

First, the Assembly needed to appropriate the lands:

- 7 September—Crown lands nationalised
- 2 November—Church lands nationalised.

biens nationaux wealth or goods of the nation

Church lands were referred to as ***biens nationaux*** (national wealth). In its Decree on Nationalisation of Church Property (which passed 568 votes to 346), the Constituent Assembly stated, 'All ecclesiastical property is at the disposal of the nation, upon condition of providing in a suitable manner for the expenses of worship, the maintenance of its ministers, and the relief of the poor'.[10]

As the lands of the Church comprised about 10 per cent of all the land in the nation, the nationalisation of its property substantially reduced the wealth and power of the Church in France. Later, property belonging to nobles who had fled the country (émigrés) was also nationalised.

↓ (top) A 1792 assignat for 400 livres. (bottom) A 1791 assignat for five livres.

In December 1789, the printed assignats were issued as government bonds, secured against the nationalised Church land. They were declared to be legal tender (the equivalent of coin), paid 5 per cent interest, and could be purchased only with cash—which the government desperately needed.

At first, the bonds were redeemable *only* through purchase of the very lands that had originally served as security. After the land purchase, the paper was to be destroyed.

Given the value of Church property was estimated to be about 400 million livres, this meant the government could obtain a large amount of money (in metal, gold or silver coins) through selling paper bonds, without borrowing and without having to redeem interest payments—as everyone who purchased the assignats was keen to buy land. This was a tightly controlled arrangement, and if it had stayed in place, possibly all would have been well.

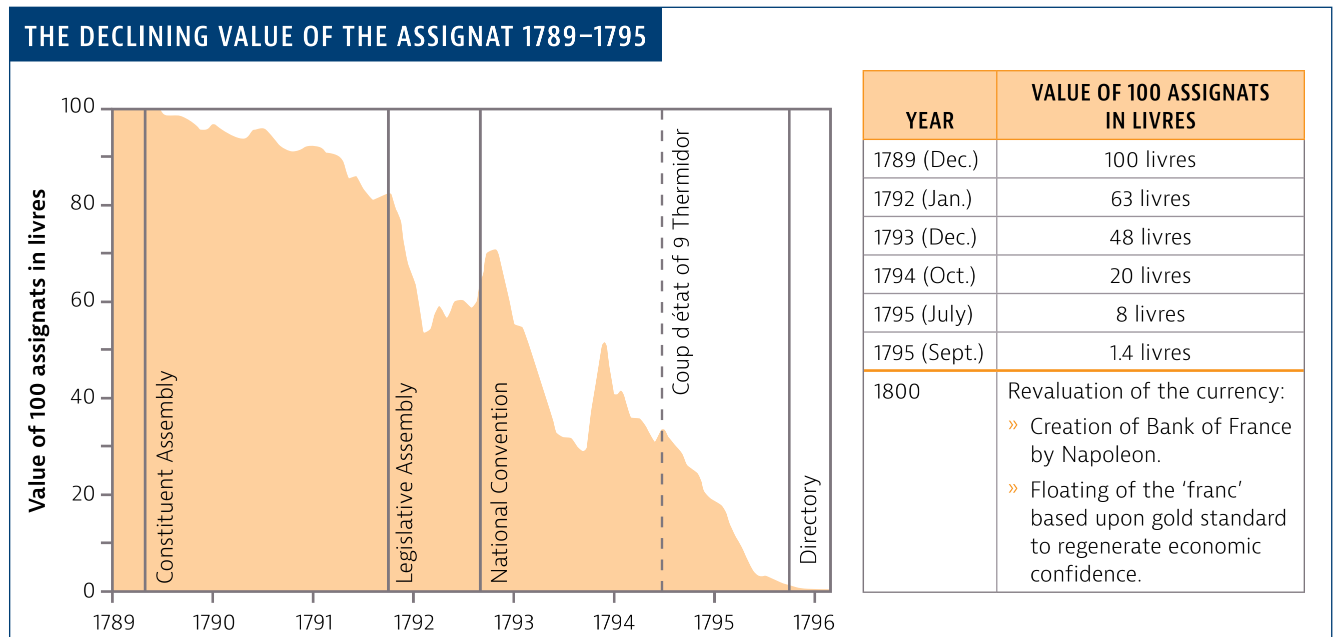
However, by April 1790, taxation revenue had collapsed and huge sums of money were needed to compensate the holders of former venal offices. So, the Assembly decided to treat the assignats as paper money and to print the notes in much lower denominations. According to McPhee, by September 1790 there were 1200 million livres worth of assignats in circulation.[11]

However, merchants and the clergy did not trust the paper money. In the debates leading up to the 17 April 1790 decree, Abbé Maury and Bishop Talleyrand were concerned that treating assignats as paper money would create inflation (which is a dramatic increase in prices). Their fears were well-founded—by 23 September 1795, 100 livres in assignats equalled 1.4 livres in coins—1.4 per cent of their face value. The assignats were discontinued on 19 February 1796.

Not only were there fears about inflation, but also people were not used to carrying around paper money and often lost their assignats. Newspapers carried personal notices like this one, which appeared in Bordeaux:

> **Personal notice in the newspaper**
>
> Dropped in the Fosses des Chapeaux Rouges an assignat to the value of 1,232 livres. Please return to M. Pierre Desclaux, Quai des Chartrons 53.

Source 8.08 *Journal patriotique et de commerce de Bordeaux*, Archives Départementales de la Gironde, SU 67, no. 7 (9 March 1790): 4.



YEAR	VALUE OF 100 ASSIGNATS IN LIVRES
1789 (Dec.)	100 livres
1792 (Jan.)	63 livres
1793 (Dec.)	48 livres
1794 (Oct.)	20 livres
1795 (July)	8 livres
1795 (Sept.)	1.4 livres
1800	Revaluation of the currency: » Creation of Bank of France by Napoleon. » Floating of the 'franc' based upon gold standard to regenerate economic confidence.

Source 8.09 The barometer of the revolution—the declining value of the assignat, 1789–1795.

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS

KEY CHALLENGE

John Hall Stewart: 'On the whole, the financial endeavours of the Assembly were not successful. Inadequate tax returns, the costs of liquidating the old regime and [introducing] the new … left France in 1791 with a larger debt and deficit than had faced the Estates-General in 1789.'

RATIONALISATION OF TAXES

The peasant revolt and the subsequent August Decrees in 1789 had led to massive tax evasion throughout France.

Many peasants had already stopped paying their feudal dues in 1788 when the Estates-General was announced. Many more believed that the line 'The National Constituent Assembly abolishes the feudal regime' in the August Decrees had abolished all feudal taxes.

Liberty and equality were taken to mean freedom from supporting the state. Citizens simply did not pay tax, and municipal and city authorities were often helpless to make them do so. In Picardy, a land agent named 'Gracchus' Babeuf led a movement to abolish indirect taxes altogether. Babeuf was sent to gaol, but the deputies of the Assembly were intent on reforming the old, complex and unfair taxation system. Failure to pay taxes had severely limited the taxation income of the government in 1789–1790.

In January 1791, the new taxation system was implemented.

THE NEW TAXATION SYSTEM

ABOLISHED

- Indirect taxes: *aides*, *octrois*, *gabelle*.
- Direct taxes: *taille*, *capitation*, *vingtième*.
- State monopoly on tobacco.
- Tax farming.

INTRODUCED

- *Contribution foncière*: a land tax—with no exemptions or special privileges.
- *Contribution mobilière*: tax on movable goods such as grain, payable by active citizens.
- *Patente*: tax on commercial profits.

See Chapter 1, pp. 22–23 for a refresher on taxes.

Under the new taxation system, all citizens would pay taxes according to their ability, and these taxes would be collected by the municipal councils.

The reforms simplified the taxation system, recognised the principle of equality and benefited from the growing wealth from trade and industry. However, there were problems in implementing the reforms:

- There was no system for valuing land; the process was labour-intensive and the Assembly could not afford it.
- The new tax rolls were based on those of the ancien régime, so there were huge variations between regions. For example, taxes in the department of Seine-et-Marne were five times higher than taxes in the Ariège.[12]

Despite this, the new taxation system did benefit the poor, as:

- indirect taxes on movable goods (such as grain) were paid only by active citizens
- the burden of taxation fell on people who produced goods, rather than people who consumed them
- payment was according to means, with no exemptions or privileges.

However, these reforms on their own could not solve the financial problems of the state.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Create a table that shows:

- the changes to taxation that took place in the first two years of the new regime
- the principles behind each change
- the groups in society who were advantaged or disadvantaged by each change.

RATIONALISATION OF TARIFFS AND COMMON WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

On 31 October 1790, the Constituent Assembly passed the Decree Providing for a Uniform Tariff, which abolished the jumble of internal customs duties. This was a single uniform tariff on imports and exports, a policy that historian John Hall Stewart recognises as 'the most important contribution of the National Assembly'.[13]

In May 1790, a preliminary decree had been issued to introduce a common system of weights and measures across France—something that would be a great advantage to all commerce. However, it was not until August 1793 that the National Convention would finally pass the Decree Introducing Uniform Weights and Measures, something that had been demanded in the original *cahiers de doléances* and that the Convention was convinced would be 'one of the greatest benefits that it could offer to all French citizens'.[14]

POOR RELIEF

One group that lost in the revolution was the very poor. Under the ancien régime, the Church had provided charity for the poor, drawing resources from the tithe and from parish donations. So, after the revolution, there was an urgent requirement for some sort of national organisation to meet this need, financed through taxation.

In 1791—two years after the Church had been deprived of its means to assist the poor—the Constituent Assembly established a committee to investigate the matter. It concluded that two million people could support themselves only by begging. The ongoing National Assemblies accepted their responsibility to provide for poor relief out of taxes, as it had paid clergy salaries. In March 1793 the National Convention passed its Decree on Poor Relief:

> Every man has the right to his subsistence through work, if he is physically fit; and to free aid if he is incapable of working; ... the care of providing for the maintenance of the poor is a national obligation.[15]

However, after being challenged to provide practical measures for poor relief, the Convention found that there was not enough money available to deal with such a desperate problem, so nothing was done. This lack of action to support the poor was one of the great failures of the French Revolution.

ABOLITION OF CORPORATE PRIVILEGES

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Under the ancien régime, guilds were regarded as privileged corporations that had special monopolies and powers. Guilds limited their numbers through a system of apprenticeships, and were able to restrict opportunities for entry into their craft or trade so that they could maintain high wages and high charges for their services and goods.

In March 1791, the Assembly passed the d'Allarde Law, which dissolved all guilds.

KEY GROUP

However, other problems arose once guilds were abolished. By mid-1791, journeymen artisans, who worked for daily wages, tested their freedom from guild restrictions by holding a series of strikes to demand higher wages. In Paris these trade groups created a ***coalition*** of about 80,000 workers who threatened a general strike. Among them were building workers, carpenters, typographers, hatters and journeymen.

coalition combination or alliance

THE LE CHAPELIER LAW, 14 JUNE 1791

The Constituent Assembly responded swiftly. It passed a law proposed by its deputy, René Guy Le Chapelier, to control labour. The Le Chapelier Law forbade associations or meetings of workmen, who were told that they 'may not, when they find themselves together, name a president or secretary, nor keep registers, make decrees or form regulations on their supposed common interests'.[16]

Historian Simon Schama argues that the Le Chapelier Law was 'enacted less out of ideological fixation with free trade than out of a desire to protect the citizen's common interest ... against the particularism [individual interest] that strikes were held to represent'. Citizens were now protected by national institutions, and had no need for their own associations.[17]

Historian Peter McPhee sees the law as demonstrating a 'commitment to economic liberalism' and creating a free market in labour throughout France. However, he

also points out that both the d'Allarde and Le Chapelier laws were also 'aimed at the counter-revolutionary practices and privileges of the old regime. No longer were there specific orders of clergy or nobility, or guilds, [or] provinces and towns which could claim particular monopolies, privileges and rights.'[18]

DISADVANTAGES FOR EMPLOYEES

However, Le Chapelier Law gave the advantage to employers rather than employees—it banned the right to organise or strike, and was actually a backward step for employees. People involved in striking or organising a strike were punished heavily: they incurred a fine of 500 livres, plus loss of citizenship rights and loss of admission to primary assemblies for a year.

seditious inciting discontent or rebellion against government

Clause 8 of the Law declared that 'all assemblies composed of artisans, workers, journeymen, day labourers or those incited by them ... shall be considered as ***seditious*** assemblies, and ... shall be punished according to the rigor of the laws'.[19]

DISCUSSION

To what extent did the Le Chapelier Law meet the intentions stated in the Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen?

As industries grew—and right up until the middle of the nineteenth century—workers could only organise as mutual benefit societies, as they lacked the power to strike or withdraw labour on an organised basis. Whatever the original intent of the Le Chapelier Law, the deputies of the Constituent Assembly left the workers, as historian John Hall Stewart has stated, 'at the mercy of their employers'.[20]

LEGAL CHANGE

The National Constituent Assembly applied the same principles of reason, uniformity, decentralisation, representation and humanity to its reform of the legal system as it had to its local government and administrative systems. In its Decree on Reorganising the Judiciary, 16 August 1790, the Assembly abolished the old and imposed a new structure.

LEGAL CHANGE

ABOLISHED

- The different legal systems: common law in the north; written laws in the south.
- The different types of law courts: the *parlements* (abolished in September 1790), seigneurial courts and ecclesiastical courts.
- Venal offices: sale of public offices in the military, government, administration or clergy.
- Single person or office holding all three powers of government: legislative, executive and judicial.
- Specialised courts for each estate.
- *Lettres de cachet* (March 1790).

INTRODUCED

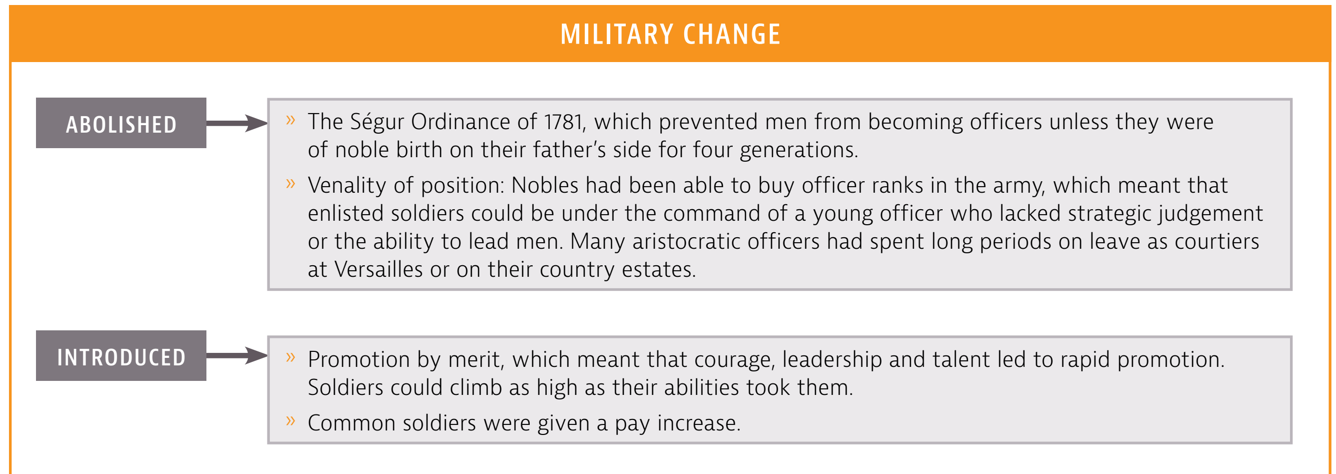
- Equal rights before the law. Innocent until proven guilty. Anyone arrested to be brought before a court within twenty-four hours. Punishments to be more humane. Number of crimes punishable by death reduced.
- New system introduced, based on the administrative divisions of local government, department, district and canton.
- Qualified judges with at least five years' legal experience now elected by active citizens. Judges held their office for six years and could then be re-elected.
- Justices of the Peace to be elected for every canton to arbitrate on minor matters. This replaced the seigneurial court. The king still appointed the public prosecutor, who held his position for life.
- Jury system for criminal cases. Punishments were made less cruel and torture was abolished. Capital punishment to be only by decapitation. In 1792, the guillotine replaced the sword for decapitations.
- The abolition of hereditary nobility and titles (June 1790) to remove legal social distinctions.

The reform of the legal system was one of the lasting successes of the Constituent Assembly.

The law was the same for all, available to all—and free.

MILITARY CHANGE

The National Constituent Assembly also applied principles of rationality and equity to reorganising the military, abolishing regulations linked with the ancien regime and opening up the military to 'men of talent'.



THE FATE OF ARISTOCRATIC OFFICERS

By the end of 1790, the French army was in disarray. The officer corps was still largely made up of aristocrats, who found it increasingly difficult to maintain order. Soldiers in some regiments turned against their aristocratic commanders and attacked them. General Bouillé had put down one such uprising at Nancy, but was then accused of being 'anti-revolutionary'.

KEY CHALLENGE

Aristocratic officers began to emigrate after the fall of the Bastille, with another wave leaving after Louis XVI was removed from Versailles during the October Days. After the king's failed attempt to flee Paris in June 1791, over 2100 officers of the royal army fled France between 15 September and 1 December alone.[21] Many joined the émigré army of the Prince de Condé.

Many of the officers who stayed were imprisoned as suspects or executed during the Terror. High-ranking officers such as Lafayette, Rochambeau and Périer Dumouriez were soon accused of having royalist sympathies and were either forced into or chose exile.

In the years 1793–1794, France was in peril from civil and foreign wars. Military commanders were closely monitored by the Committee of Public Safety (CPS), which assigned representatives-on-mission to keep watch on the army generals:

- 1792: General Lafayette deserted to the Austrians on 17 August, seven days after the fall of Louis XVI.
- 1793: General Dumouriez deserted in April.
- 1794: General Westermann was executed in April as part of the ***purge*** of the Dantonists.

purge an abrupt or violent removal of a group of people

The transformation of the army was most apparent in the officer corps:

- 1788: 90 per cent of officers were aristocrats.
- 1794: 3 per cent of officers were aristocrats.

THE FIRST TWO YEARS: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Great achievements in reform

Historians see the two years from August 1789 to July 1791 as years of achievement for the new regime. William Doyle points to the number of changes made in France since the end of the ancien régime as the deputies 'sought to endow France with a constitutional monarchy, decentralised and representative institutions, civil and fiscal equality, and guarantees for civil liberty', all of which had been called for in the *cahiers de doléances* of 1789. In addition, the assemblies made unplanned changes such as the abolition of feudalism, venal offices, the *parlements* and Church property.

In most cases, these changes were willingly accepted, which Doyle sees as evidence of 'a broad national consensus':

Source 8.10 William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 135.

William Doyle

> In the country at large millions welcomed the end of feudalism and indirect taxes, while hundreds of thousands of bourgeoisie eagerly seized the opportunity offered by the new regime to participate in public affairs.

KEY GROUP

Bourgeoisie penetrate government and professions

However, Simon Schama claims that the early French Revolution 'produced no significant transfer of social power' but simply 'accelerated trends that had been taking place over a longer period of time'.[22] This trend was the move by the bourgeoisie to attain positions in government and the professions. As appointed positions gave way to elected offices, new men succeeded in entering public life.

Fate of nobles and clergy

What of the old elite? Simon Schama has claimed that the fate of the old elite depended on their political beliefs, rather than their former social position. Schama argues that those who clung to the old system of orders and status became 'uncitizens, forced into emigration or armed rebellion'.[23] This contrasts with those nobles and clergy who were able to change themselves into 'citizen-tribunes, servants of the state, and who were able to see their fortunes in terms of property rather than privilege, were able to make the crucial metamorphosis from nobles to notables'.[24]

The winners of the revolution at this stage were the revolutionary elite from all estates. According to Simon Schama, the elite 'constituted a knot of influence and power that would effectively dominate French society for the next century'.[25]

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. The Fête de la Fédération sets the scene for this 'honeymoon period' of the revolution. What aspects of it showed the unity and liberty that the new society promised?
2. Why was poor relief now a state concern? How successful was the new society's performance of this responsibility?
3. What was the purpose of the Le Chapelier Law? Whose interests did it serve?
4. How did the shift away from the ancien régime's 'corporate society' affect the former nobility in the first two years of the new society?

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES—SOCIAL GROUPS

Continue your 'social groups file' (see p. 121 for instructions).

- Make notes about the following groups: **urban workers** and **the bourgeoisie**.
- Add to your notes about the following group: **the nobility**.

CHAPTER 8 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The transformation of society was motivated by ideals, but often failed in practice.
- The Constituent Assembly deputies, dominated by men holding bourgeois ideals, were afraid of the common people.
- 'Active citizens' were men over twenty-five who paid the equivalent of three days' labour in local taxes. Men who earned less were called 'passive citizens' and could not vote. Women and slaves could not vote either.
- Local government was often run by inexperienced new 'active citizens', who were placed under a heavy burden to collect tax and run affairs.
- Abolition of internal tariffs, uniformity of weights and measures, and the abolition of guilds helped to establish a national market.
- Changes to labour laws favoured employers over employees.
- Church land was being progressively sold.
- Invention of assignats as surety for land succeeded at first, but later led to inflation when assignats were printed as paper money.
- Law reforms were popular and long-lasting, especially equality before the law and the use of local justices.
- Military reforms led many experienced officers to emigrate to other countries.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Using the following template as a guide, create a table that shows the social, political and economic changes that France experienced in the first two years of revolution.

Aim to include four facts in each category.

After completing the table, identify aspects of life that are continuities between the old and new regimes.

		Ancien régime	August 1789–September 1791
SOCIAL	• Daily life • Social Interactions • Work life	Example: *Population was twenty-eight million by 1789 and growing.*	
POLITICAL	• Who ruled? • Structure of government • How was law enforced?	Example: *The philosophy of government was that King Louis XVI ruled by divine right.*	
ECONOMIC	• Who owned what? • How was revenue raised?	Example: *Second to Britain as the most taxed nation in the world.*	
CULTURAL	• Which institutions had power? • Religious life? • Education?	Example: *Catholicism was the national religion, and the Church was responsible for education and highly influential in social trends.*	
GENDER	• Did men and women experience the revolution in the same way?	Example: *Women held no political rights and were taught to be committed to their husbands.*	

CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW REGIME (AUGUST 1789–1791)

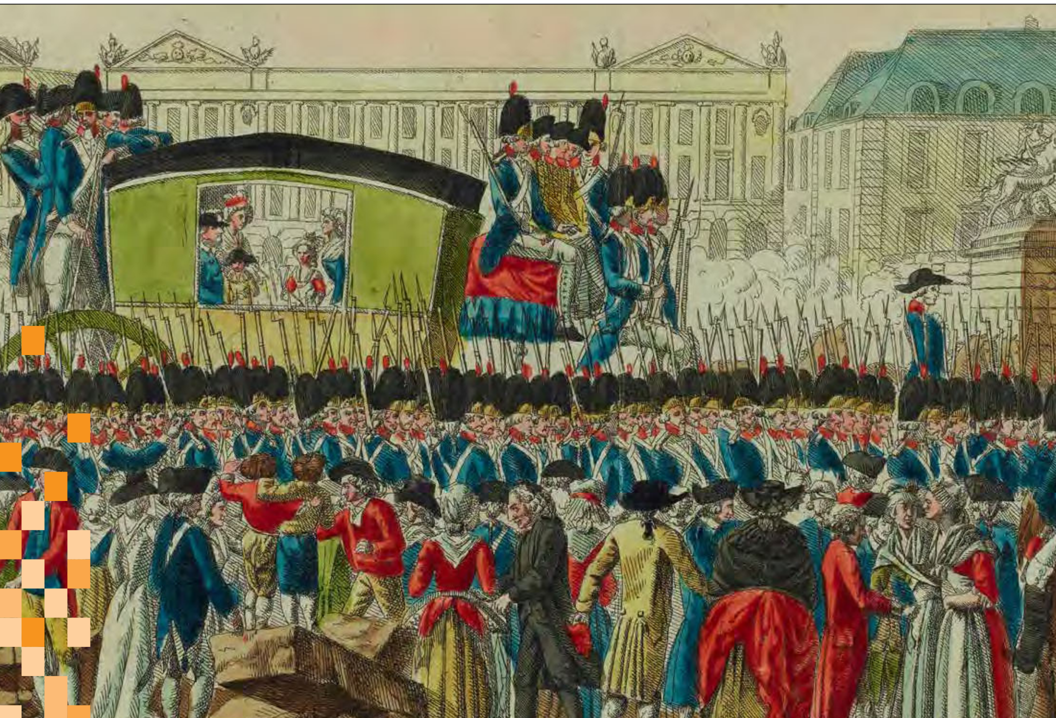
‘By fleeing, one king had renounced his sovereignty, while another king, the people, grimly looked on.’
—Dennis Richet

People from most social groups supported the first changes of the revolution, but then the deputies set about restructuring the Church, without consulting it. They insisted the clergy make a secular oath of allegiance to the French state and constitution. This undermined the spiritual foundations of the clergy and created a serious split among the deputies’ supporters.

The results of this split would reverberate throughout the rest of the revolution. Alienated clergy and Catholic worshippers would swell the numbers of the counter-revolutionary movement. Louis XVI was a devout Catholic, and his distress over the Civil Constitution and the Clerical Oath was a major factor in his 1791 decision to flee France.

The king’s flight was considered the act of a traitor, and made the hope of a collaborative constitutional monarchy obsolete. The king was brought back to Paris amid growing demands for his abdication.

Despite the king’s great unpopularity and the violence by Lafayette commanding the National Guard against popular protesters at the Champ de Mars in July 1791, the National Constituent Assembly pushed on with the planned Constitution, which the king formally accepted on 14 September 1791.



Source 9.01 On 20 June 1791, Louis XVI and his family fled towards the Austrian border. They were intercepted at Varennes by the National Guard and on 25 June 1791 returned to Paris under heavily armed escort.

KEY EVENTS

- **13 February 1790** Monastic vows banned
- **12 July 1790** Civil Constitution of the Clergy enacted
- **27 November 1790** Oath of the Clergy introduced
- **20–21 June 1791** Louis XVI and his family are captured at Varennes after they attempt to flee
- **17 July 1791** Massacre at Champ de Mars: National Guard opens fire on demonstrators

CHAPTER 9

TURNING POINT
KEY CHALLENGE

ABOLITION OF CHURCH PRIVILEGES AND NATIONALISATION OF PROPERTY

William Doyle: The clergy were to suffer 'even more cataclysmically' than the nobility.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why was the Civil Constitution with the Clerical Oath such a grave mistake for the Constituent Assembly? How have historians explained this mistake?
- Had Louis XVI always intended to desert the revolution, or were there specific developments that led to this?
- What was the significance of the actions of Lafayette and the National Guard at the Champ de Mars?
- What were the outcomes for the Constituent Assembly of the king's flight from Paris?

In 1789 the Constituent Assembly began to reform the Church. In the Decrees of 5–11 August 1789, tithes were abolished along with other feudal dues.

After the formal proposal by Mirabeau, the Assembly decreed that 'all ecclesiastical property is at the disposal of the nation, upon condition of providing in a suitable manner for the expenses of worship, the maintenance of its ministers, and the relief of the poor'.[1] Church lands, representing up to 10 per cent of the wealth of the kingdom, were then sold by auction in large lots. McPhee tells us that there were up to 700,000 purchasers. While nearly one family in eight bought some land, it was purchased mainly by urban and rural bourgeoisie, and many nobles.[2] These groups had the ready money to buy.

RESTRUCTURING TIMELINE

11 August 1789: Tithes abolished

2 November 1789: Church property nationalised

13 February 1790: Monastic vows suppressed (forbidden)

19 April 1790: All other Church property transferred to state ownership

DID YOU KNOW?

A Boston magazine valued Church possessions in France at around 180 million pounds sterling: 'When these enormous sums are paid into the public treasury, … France will [be] almost a new country, … without debts, and without oppressive taxation.'

The sale of Church lands was followed by other legislation. On 13 February 1790, monastic vows were suppressed by decree, and all religious orders and congregations were dissolved—except for those involved with teaching children or ministering to the sick. The Assembly declared the following:

1. The constitutional law of the Kingdom shall no longer recognise solemn monastic vows of persons of either sex. Accordingly, the regular orders and congregations in which such vows have been taken are and shall remain suppressed in France, and no similar ones may be established forthwith.
2. All individuals, of either sex, at present in monasteries and religious houses may leave them by making their declaration before the local municipality, and they shall be provided for immediately by a suitable pension.[3]

Then, on 19 April 1790, all other Church property was transferred to state ownership and the state assumed responsibility for paying clerical salaries.

Source 9.02 *The Third Estate Marrying Priests with Nuns*, 1790. This image shows dissolving the religious orders as the crucial element in religious reorganisation, rather than the confiscation of lands. It shows 'the National Assembly marrying nuns and monks' so they will become productive citizens.

DID YOU KNOW?

The *Encyclopédie* definition of 'religieuse' (nuns) lamented that nuns were 'too often the victims of their parents' luxury and vanity' and that their productive potential, economic and sexual, was 'dead to the patrie'. The convent came to represent the perceived decadence, luxury and despotism of the ancien régime.

EARLY RESPONSES OF THE CLERGY TO ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

KEY GROUP

Historian William Doyle claims that the clergy was the group that suffered most from the renunciations of 4 August 1789, when feudal privileges were given up. 'Parish priests lost their tithes, their vestry fees, and their ability to group poor benefices through pluralism', as one cleric could no longer hold several ecclesiastical positions. Charitable and educational bodies in the Church lost their income from any feudal dues they owned, without any compensation.

The deputies made further threats to seize Church lands, and Mirabeau offended many people when he suggested that clergy should be happy to receive a salary from the state.

To add to the complexity, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen:

- did not declare Catholicism the state religion
- allowed religious tolerance
- declared public office and civil rights available to all, including Protestants and Jews.

Faced with ongoing financial crises, the Assembly returned to the idea of nationalising Church property. This move, claims Doyle, was 'fought tooth and nail' by the clergy, 'not simply to protect what they had left, but also because they saw that the loss of the Church's remaining independent resources would make further action of the Assembly inevitable'.[4]

Source 9.03 'The Patriotic Thinning Machine ... Your Turn Monseigneur', anonymous, 1790. From the right: A bloated bishop is brought forward by a soldier of the National Guard and a member of the Assembly. In the middle, a priest is being squeezed in the patriotic 'thinning machine', and at left, a very thin priest and monk stagger away from their 'thinning' experience.

The suspicions of the clergy were right, as nationalisation of Church property on 2 November 1789 was followed by:

- granting full civil liberties to Protestants (December 1789)
- granting full civil liberties to Sephardi Jews (January 1780)
- suppression of religious orders (February 1790).

Historian William Doyle argues that although the clergy welcomed the revolution with 'goodwill and enthusiasm', they were rewarded with nothing more than dispossession.[5]

THE CIVIL CONSTITUTION OF THE CLERGY, 12 JULY 1790

Bishop Talleyrand (recognising how destructive to national unity the Civil Constitution of the Clergy would be): 'Perhaps the biggest political blunder of the Assembly'.

The Civil Constitution of the Clergy represented the last step in the state's attempt to reform the abuses of the Church. The deputies of the Constituent Assembly did not intend to attack religion itself, but saw the Civil Constitution as their chance to reorganise the clergy.

On 29 May 1790, the Civil Constitution legislation came before the Assembly for discussion. It proposed that the boundaries of the dioceses of the Church be changed and have the same extent and limits as the new departments. This would reduce the number of bishops from 130 to eighty-three. Each diocese would have a bishop and parish clergy.

The number of parishes within each diocese would be reduced, so that the organisation of the Catholic religion in France would echo that of the state. Each diocese would have a single seminary for the training of priests. All titles other than 'bishop' and 'curé' (priest) would be abolished. These reforms were generally acceptable—although they did mean that some clergy would lose their parish church.

There were two major problems with the legislation, which in the long term alienated loyal Catholics, including King Louis XVI:

- First, the pope's role as head of the Church was replaced by state control.
- Second, the pope's right to appoint clergy was replaced by a system of popular election, as outlined in Clause 4:

Article 4 of Civil Constitution of the Clergy

As soon as the departmental ...[senior legal officer] receives notice of a vacancy in ... [a diocese] ... he shall ... convoke the electors who effected the last election of members to the administrative assembly. ... He shall indicate the day on which the election of the bishop shall take place, which shall be no later than the third Sunday after his letter of notification.

Source 9.04 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 174.

The legislation demanded not only that all appointments of bishops and parish priests were to be made by election—that is, by ballot and counting of votes—but also that non-Catholics, as well as Catholics, have the vote. Historian Peter McPhee points out that 'by applying the practice of "active" citizenship to the choice of clergy, the Assembly excluded women and the poor from the community of the faithful, and theoretically included Protestants, Jews, and non-believers who were wealthy enough to vote'.[6] In this way, clerical appointments became a civil matter rather than a religious matter.

The role of the pope was also altered.

Article 19 of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy

The new Bishop may not apply to the Pope for confirmation, but shall write to him as the Visible Head of the Universal Church, in testimony of the unity of faith and communion which he is to maintain therewith.

Source 9.05 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 174.

Traditionally, the pope was the only person who could appoint the bishops and cardinals. Even though the kings of France had been given the right to nominate a candidate, the

actual appointment still lay in the hands of the pope. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy made such an appointment a civil matter.

DID YOU KNOW?

After the revolution, many artisans who had served the Church and the court found their skills no longer in demand. Goldsmiths and silversmiths, lace-makers, silk weavers, embroiderers, candle-makers, wig-makers, dancing teachers, musicians, builders, carpenters, and makers of glass, ceramics and pottery all suffered economically from the rise of revolutionary activity and the decline of the court and the Church.

OPPOSITION TO THE CIVIL CONSTITUTION: THE FIRST MAJOR DIVISION

KEY CHALLENGE

The Civil Constitution of the Clergy provoked debate and criticism in the Assembly. The Archbishop of Aix expressed the concerns of many of the clergy and church faithful when he protested on 30 May 1790:

Source 9.06 Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution and Napoleon* (London: Routledge, 2002), 23–24.

The Archbishop of Aix

> Jesus Christ passed on his mission to the apostles and their successors for the salvation of the faithful; he entrusted it neither to the magistrates nor the king; we are speaking of an order which magistrates and kings must obey. The mission we have received through ordination and consecration goes right back to the apostles.

The concern is clear: the appointment of clerics was something that belonged to the Church, not the state. Despite clerical deputies—including leading revolutionary figures like Abbé Sieyès—demanding changes to the legislation, the Assembly went ahead with its reforms.

A crisis emerged between the Church and the state. The deputies of the Assembly saw themselves as reforming an old regime institution that had become corrupted, but the Civil Constitution challenged some of the most basic beliefs of the Church, such as the belief in the descent of clerical authority from Christ to the pope, with the upper clergy being the spiritual descendants of the first apostles.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Which abuses of the pre-revolutionary Church were removed by the reforms made under the Civil Constitution of the Clergy?
2. Why did practising Catholics, such as the Archbishop of Aix, see the Civil Constitution as an attack on religion?

THE CLERICAL OATH, 27 NOVEMBER 1790

On 27 November 1790, the Assembly introduced a further piece of legislation, the Clerical Oath.

Source 9.07 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 182.

The Clerical Oath, 27 November 1790

KEY SOURCE

> Article 2: [Clergy] shall swear ... to be faithful to the law, the nation and to the King, and to maintain with all their power the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly.

The Oath also included the following decrees:

- Article 1: All bishops, former archbishops and priests absent from their parishes must return to them within a fortnight.
- Article 7: Any cleric who did not swear the Oath would be deprived of his salary, his French citizenship and his office as a priest.
- Article 9: Any citizen who publicly opposed the decree 'will be pursued and punished for having disrupted the public peace'.[7]

In effect, this meant that priests who refused to take the Oath would be allowed to retire quietly on a pension, but not to continue as priests—but those who protested publicly would be punished.

The Oath widened the divide between Catholicism and the state, as it forced Catholics to choose between supporting the government and supporting the Church. It alienated loyal Catholics like King Louis XVI, many of the clergy who had previously supported the revolution, and ordinary citizens who saw their faith compromised by the state or who were threatened with the loss of their parish priests.

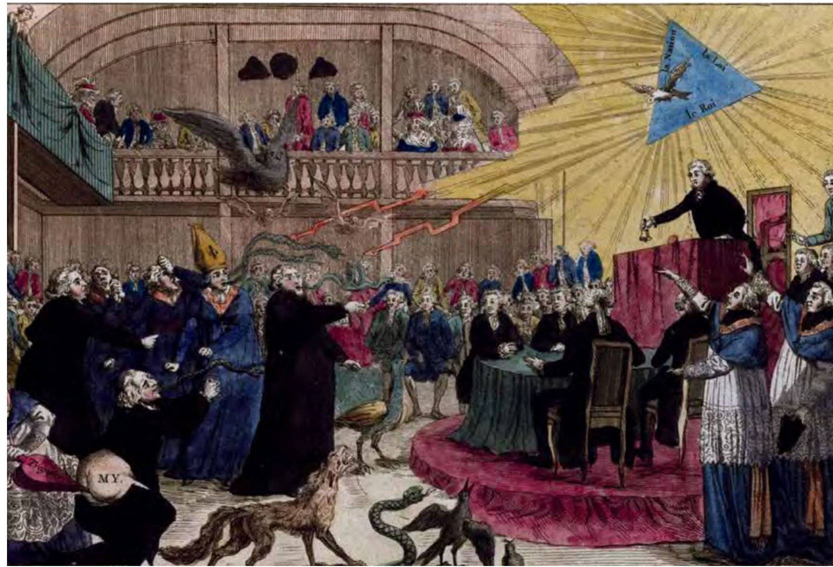
DID YOU KNOW?

Abbé Pottier was superior of the seminary (training college for priests) at Rouen. He swore the Clerical Oath, but a week later, retracted it publicly. However, his students refused to acknowledge him, declaring, 'Sir, we no longer acknowledge you as our Superior. You left the fold of the Church and we cannot pray with you.'

Abbé Baude, the parish priest of Quesques and Lottinghem, voiced the views of many others when he wrote to his parishioners:

Source 9.08 Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution and Napoleon* (London: Routledge, 2002), 48–49.

> **Abbé Baude**
>
> I declare that my religion does not allow me to take such an oath as the National Assembly requires; I am happy and I even promise to watch over as well as one possibly can the faithful of this parish who are entrusted to me, to be true to the nation and the King and to observe the Constitution ... but where the government and the laws of the Church are concerned, I recognise no superior and other legislators than the Pope and the bishops.



Source 9.09 The Announcement of the Clerical Oath in the Constituent Assembly, 12 July 1790.

The non-juring priests (in black) have serpents issuing from their mouths and are accompanied by a hyena, a raven, a rat, and peacock, bats and a black owl. Above the president's table is the triangle of equality, illuminated by enlightened principles, the white dove of peace issuing forth from the words 'the nation, the law and the king'.

At the front of the clergy depicted on the left-hand side taking the oath are Henri Grégoire (priest) and Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (Bishop of Autun), with five others behind.

Pope Pius VI did not officially respond until 1791, but made it clear that French Catholics could not condone the Assembly's legislation regarding the Church.

THE POPE'S RESPONSE: THE PAPAL BRIEF *CHARITAS*, 13 APRIL 1791

KEY CHALLENGE

The issuing of the Papal Brief *Charitas* increased tensions between the Church and the revolutionary state. Pope Pius VI was speaking as head of the Church and the representative of Christ on Earth. He told French Catholics not to abandon their religion:

Source 9.10 Cited in Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution and Napoleon* (London: Routledge, 2002), 50.

> **Pope Pius VI to French Catholics**
>
> We ... urge you not to abandon your religion, inasmuch as it is the one and only true religion which bestows life eternal. ... Shun all invaders, whether they be called archbishops, bishops or parish priests. ... There can be no relations between you and them. ... No one can be in the Church of Christ unless he is one with its visible head and established in the Chair of Peter.

The pope's directive was clear. Catholics could not compromise with the state and remain members of the Church. They must make a choice between their religion and the revolution.

REFRACTORY AND NON-REFRACTORY CLERGY

KEY CHALLENGE
KEY GROUP

The terms 'refractory' and 'non-juring' clerics refer to those who would not take the Clerical Oath. Within the Constituent Assembly, only two bishops and 109 priests, one-third of the clerical deputies, took the Oath. Of the bishops, only seven chose the state over the Church. Within the lower clergy, 54 per cent took the Oath; 36 per cent would not. In radical Paris, there was pressure on priests to swear the Oath, with one parish priest being threatened by his parishioners with the cry 'the oath or the gallows'.[8]

However, views of the Oath differed between Paris and the countryside.

In Paris and the surrounding area, there was broad acceptance of the Civil Constitution, as public life had become relatively secular and priests were regarded as providing only a spiritual service. Yet, many people in the countryside were opposed to arbitrary rule from Paris and the attempt to alter their traditional religious practices.

In areas that had prominent Protestant minorities, any Catholic community that lost its non-juring clergy feared the loss of its way of life. Historian Peter McPhee tells us there were many parishes in country areas where previously pro-revolutionary parishioners expressed grief at the departure of clergy or an order of nuns, and irritation at the closure of 'excess' parish churches. Rural women were particularly angry and violent about changes to familiar patterns of ritual and support. McPhee cites women from the small southern town of Millau shouting, 'We want to conserve our religion, the religion of Jesus Christ, we want our Clergy!'[9]

The publication of the decree also led to riots in western France, because it challenged the fundamental basis of community life—the parish, which was the heart of both social and religious life.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

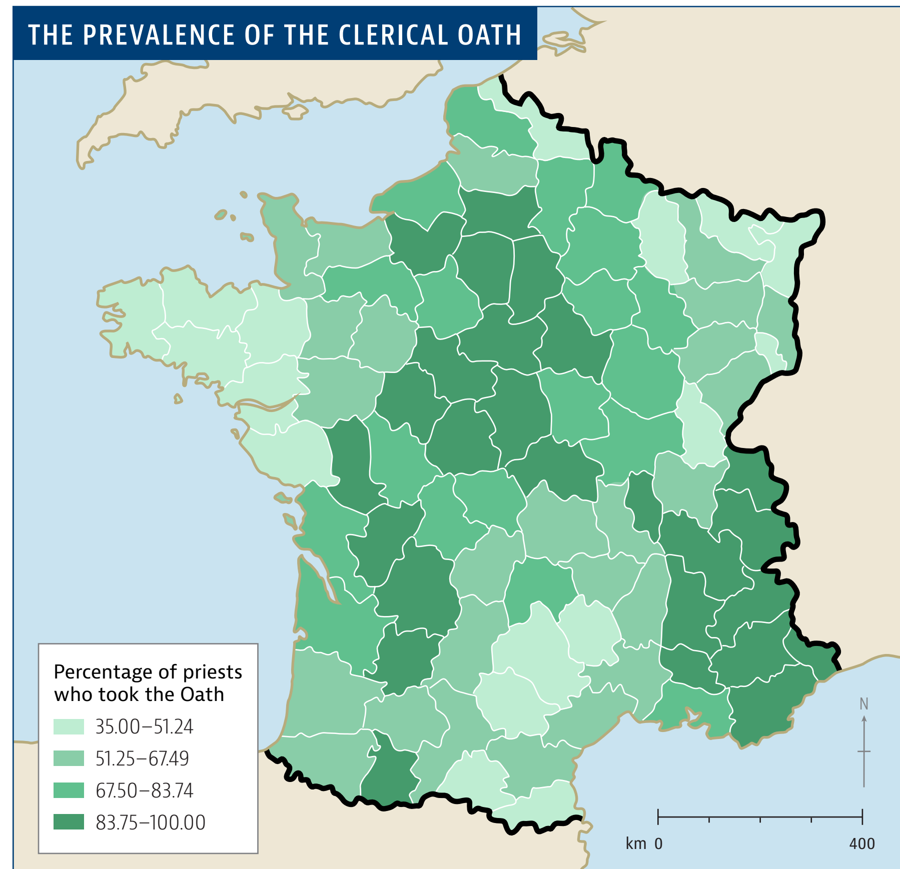
Using Sources 9.08, 9.10 and 9.11 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline the beliefs and attitudes underpinning Abbé Baude's objection to the Clerical Oath.
2. To what extent did people in Paris and in the countryside have similar attitudes to the Clerical Oath?
3. Explain why it was so difficult for the new regime to change religious institutions. Refer to Source 9.11 in your response.
4. Sources 9.02, 9.03 and 9.09 depict members of the clergy (nuns, monks, priests, bishops). List the specific aspects of the pre-revolutionary Church that are being highlighted in these images.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES—SOCIAL GROUPS

Continue your 'social groups file' (see p. 121 for instructions).

- Make notes about the following groups: **parish priests** and **other clergy.**



Source 9.11 The prevalence of the Clerical Oath.

This map is useful for gauging the level of support in France for the revolution. This was because, in many cases, the priest discussed the issue very fully with his parishioners. Often priests were forced to follow their parishioners' inclinations over his own. Note the low rate of the swearing the oath in the north-west in the area of the Vendée, where the 1793 rebellion against the government took on a distinctly royalist tinge. Similarly, the rate of oath-taking was lower in the south and south-west of France, areas affected by the 1793 Federalist Revolt.

THE CIVIL CONSTITUTION: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Historians of the French Revolution see the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the Clerical Oath as points that the fractured the revolutionary consensus. François Furet writes:

François Furet

> It is clear that refusal to take the oath was the first sign of popular resistance to the Revolution. ... The religious element was immediately transformed into a political issue because both the monarchy and the Revolution had turned the Catholic Church into an auxiliary [additional] of the state.

Source 9.12 François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (Cambridge.: The Bellknapp Press, 1989), 455.

William Doyle discusses the Oath of the Clergy as a turning point:

William Doyle

> The French Revolution had many turning points; but the oath of the clergy was, if not the greatest, unquestionably one of them. It was certainly the Constituent Assembly's most serious mistake. For the first time, it forced fellow citizens to choose: to declare themselves publicly for or against the new order.

Source 9.13 William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 144.

J.F. Bosher writes that the Civil Constitution 'aroused the determined hostility of at least half the French clergy and of the entire Church establishment abroad'.[10] He concludes:

J.F. Bosher

> This was fated to divide the nation more than any other single measure. ... The clergy in general objected to a reorganisation on which the Church had not been consulted.

Source 9.14 J.F. Bosher, *The French Revolution* (Canada: Penguin Books, 1988), 146.

Peter McPhee argues that the Assembly had 'crossed the narrow line separating spiritual and temporal life'[11] and that 'in the end, it proved impossible to reconcile a church based on divinely ordained hierarchy ... with a revolution based on popular sovereignty'.[12]

Alfred Cobban, perhaps most revealingly, explains:

Alfred Cobban

> The anti-clericalism of Voltaire and the *philosophes* had bitten so deeply into the minds of those who represented the Third Estate at Paris that the extent of opposition that their reorganisation of the Church was to provoke was hidden from them. Unknowingly, they added religious schism to other causes of political and social unrest.

Source 9.15 Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France*, Vol. 1 (1715–1799) (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957), 173.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 9.12–9.14 and your own knowledge, explain how the introduction of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy challenged the revolution.

TURNING POINT

THE KING'S FLIGHT FROM PARIS, 20 JUNE 1791

Timothy Tackett: 'The dramatic effort of Louis XVI and his family to escape the capital … set in motion an extraordinary chain of actions and reactions with profound effects on all elements of society and virtually every corner of the nation.'

THE REASONS FOR FLIGHT

By 1791, Louis XVI and his family saw themselves as prisoners of the revolution. From the end of 1790 they had been making plans to leave France. The king's desire to leave France was based on a mixture of political and religious factors.

Political factors: If the king were able to escape France and reach Austria, then he would be able to ask the other monarchs of Europe to help restore France to monarchical rule. His brother-in-law, Austrian Emperor Leopold II, and the King of Spain Charles IV, had both said they would act only if he was in a place of safety outside France. Even if they did not agree on invading France, Louis XVI would be in a much stronger and safer position to negotiate his status with the Constituent Assembly.

Religious factors: Louis had been crowned a monarch by divine right and, as such, had a duty to rule France. He was a genuinely religious man and, although he had signed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, he privately opposed it.

Despite the secrecy with which such plans were discussed, it was widely accepted that at some stage he would attempt to escape. When the royal family tried to attend Easter mass at Saint-Cloud in April 1791—where a non-juring clergyman was to preach—crowds shut the gates and prevented the royal carriages and their escort from leaving the Tuileries Palace. Even when Lafayette and Bailly arrived at the Tuileries, the crowd could not be persuaded to let the carriage pass. The king was forced to return to the palace, and it became clear to the royal family from this point on that they were prisoners.

During May and June 1791, the conspirators, led by the Swedish special envoy to the French Court Count Axel von Fersen, made their plan. The royal family was to leave the Tuileries Palace in two carriages on the night of 19 June and head for the town of Montmédy, on the border with Luxembourg. There they would be met by troops, who would escort them over the border. This plan was frustrated by a maid servant who was meant to be on holiday that night, but had postponed it. The royal family could not get out of the palace while she was there, so the plan was postponed until the next night.

When Louis fled the Tuileries Palace on 20 June 1791, he left behind a memorandum justifying his departure. He wrote that he was willing to sacrifice his power and status while he was able to hope that the Constituent Assembly would re-establish order and act for the welfare of the people.

Source 9.16 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 205.

Louis XVI

Today, when his sole recompense for so many sacrifices consists of seeing the monarchy destroyed, all powers disregarded, property violated, personal security everywhere endangered, crimes unpunished and total anarchy taking the place of law. While … the new Constitution is insufficient to repair a single one of the ills afflicting the Kingdom … the King deems it his duty to place before Frenchmen … the picture of his conduct and that of the government.

Louis XVI argued in his memorandum that his only recourse was to leave France until a new constitution should be written that 'shall cause our holy religion to be respected, the government to be established on a firm foundation and made useful by its functioning'.[13]

DID YOU KNOW?

In the attempt to flee Paris, Marie Antoinette took with her jewellery, a set of new clothes, a jade manicure set and a hairdresser.

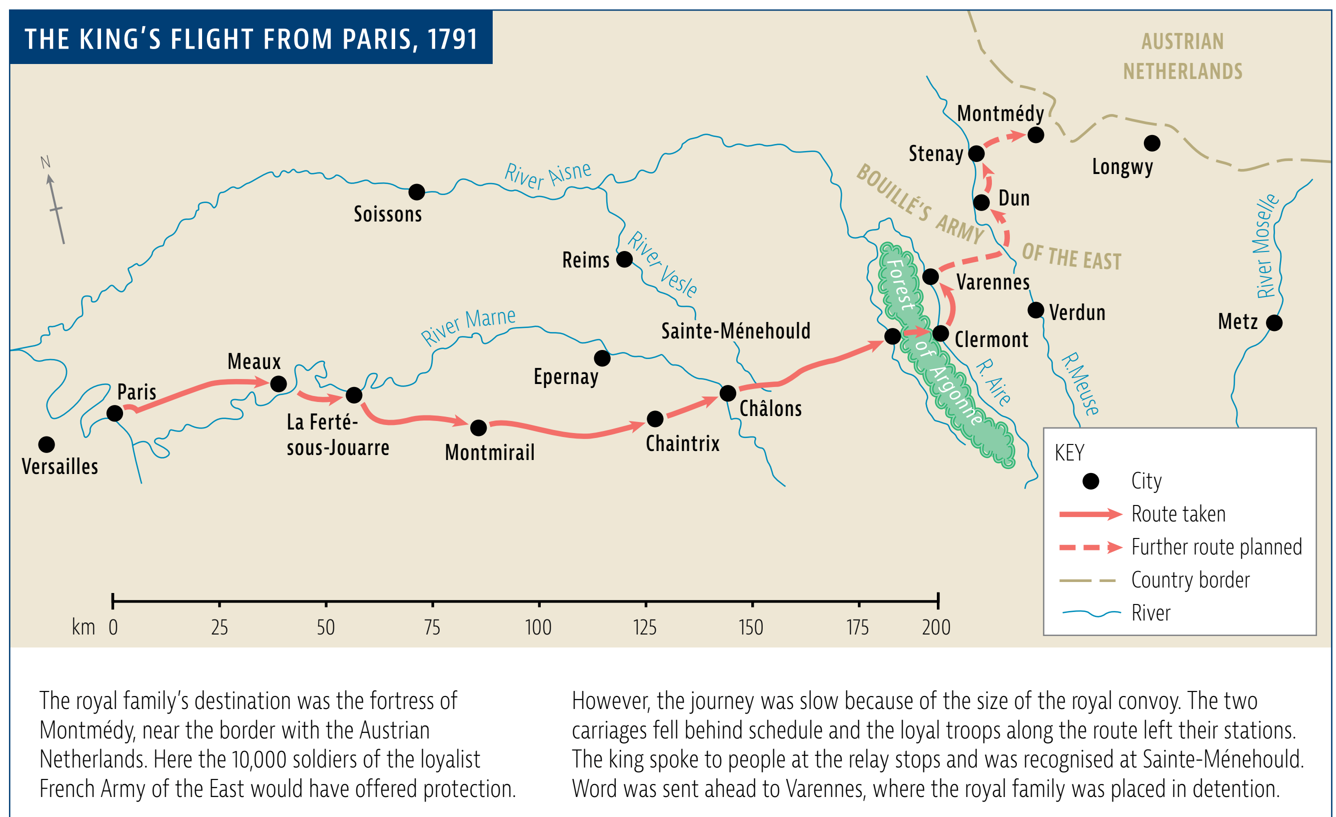
HUMILIATING RETURN TO PARIS, 25 JUNE

Tthe royal family's escape lasted only twenty-four hours. Despite disguising themselves, they were recognised and captured at the town of Varennes and brought back to Paris on 25 June 1791. Historian Simon Schama tells us that unlike the king's entry into Paris on 17 July, 1789, there was not even the faintest pretence of a 'royal entry'. The Assembly had instructed the crowds to show 'restrained disrespect': 'Anyone who applauds the king will be beaten,' but 'anyone who insults him will be hanged'.[14]

Historian Denis Richet states that 'By fleeing, one king had renounced his sovereignty, while another king, the people, grimly looked on'.[15] The king's actions had dramatically illustrated that he was not prepared to be king over a revolutionary state, or renounce his religious beliefs.

Source 9.17 *Arrest of King Louis XVI and His Family at Varennes, June 21, 1791,* by A. Closs, 1883.

Source 9.18



The royal family's destination was the fortress of Montmédy, near the border with the Austrian Netherlands. Here the 10,000 soldiers of the loyalist French Army of the East would have offered protection.

However, the journey was slow because of the size of the royal convoy. The two carriages fell behind schedule and the loyal troops along the route left their stations. The king spoke to people at the relay stops and was recognised at Sainte-Ménehould. Word was sent ahead to Varennes, where the royal family was placed in detention.

Historian Timothy Tackett identifies the attempt to flee Paris as a turning point in the direction of the revolution:

Source 9.19 Cited in François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: The Bellknapp Press, 1989).

Timothy Tackett

> The night the King suddenly appeared in a small town in north eastern France is arguably one of the most dramatic and poignant moments in the entire French Revolution. For the local inhabitants the experience was unforgettable and in some cases it would entirely reshape their lives. ... Beyond [their] effect on the inhabitants of Varennes, the events of that night would prove a turning point in the history of the Revolution and of the French monarchy, with an enormous immediate impact on Paris, on the National Assembly, and indeed on the whole of France and of Europe.

DID YOU KNOW?
During the failed escape attempt, Marie Antoinette's diamond jewellery was given to a common soldier at Varennes, instead of to the loyalists at Montmédy. The next day that soldier was found murdered, and the diamonds were missing.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LOUIS XVI'S FLIGHT

Jacques-René Hébert: 'You, King? You are not even a citizen. Now that the nation has resumed its rights it will not be so stupid as to take back a coward like you.'

Louis XVI's flight from Paris, as historian Timothy Tackett has suggested, was one of the most significant crises of the revolution—and it had a variety of consequences:

- The monarchy was doomed, and never again had any influence on affairs in France.
- The 1791 Constitution giving the king the right of veto over legislation was obsolete before it came into action.
- The Assembly moved from being the legislative power to assuming full control of government.

It was the question of Louis XVI's fate that split the Assembly into ***factions*** and led eventually to the downfall of many of the original 'men of 1789' who, in defending the constitution they had written, became seen as monarchists and traitors to the revolution.

faction a group of dissenters within a larger group

Just like the Assembly, the country became divided between those who wanted Louis XVI tried and executed, and those who believed the revolution should come to an end. Finally, the king's imprisonment forced Austria and Prussia to act to protect him and his family.

DID YOU KNOW?
Napoleon believed that the National Assembly should have helped the royal family escape from France. He said that Varennes gave the National Assembly the chance to rid France of royalty without cruelty. The deputies could then have got on with the work of creating a republic, without burdening the state with a sovereign they had no reason to destroy. What do you think?

However, many influential men believed that a compromise was necessary. Antoine Barnave, a deputy from Dauphiné, tried to find a way to save the monarchy and the 1791 Constitution. Barnave's views were supported by Adrien Duport, Abbé Sieyès, the de Lameth brothers, Jean-Sylvain Bailly and Lafayette. As a result, all of these men became identified as *monarchiens* (supporters of the monarch) and conservatives. However, at first, they were able keep the backing of the majority of deputies and maintain a conservative approach to the question of the king's fate.

On 15 July 1791, the Assembly declared its belief that Louis XVI and his family had been kidnapped, thus, clearing him from responsibility for his flight. The Assembly then issued a document that set out the grounds by which a king might forfeit his position. This Decree Determining Abdication gave Louis another chance, but suspended his power.

Decree Determining Abdication, Clause 4

The effect of the decree of the 25th of last month [June 1791], suspending the exercise of the royal functions and of the executive power in the hands of the King shall prevail until, the Constitution completed, the entire constitutional act has been presented to the King.

Source 9.20 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 217.

This effectively states that under the Decree Determining Abdication, the king was neither a constitutional monarch nor a prisoner of the revolution, but was held in his position by a fiction that no one believed.

PUBLIC RESPONSES TO THE KING'S FLIGHT: GROWING REPUBLICANISM

KEY DEVELOPMENT

On 25 June 1791, after the king's humiliating return to Paris, Jacques-René Hébert wrote about the event in his revolutionary newspaper, *Le père Duchesne*:

Jacques-René Hébert in *Le père Duchesne*

You my King. You are no longer my King, no longer my King! You are nothing but a cowardly deserter. ...

You, King? You are not even a citizen. Now that the nation has resumed its rights it will not be so stupid as to take back a coward like you.

Ah, I don't doubt that once again you are going to pretend to be honest and that, supported by those scoundrels on the constitutional committee, you are going to promise miracles, ... but no, damn it, that will not happen! From one end of France to the other, there is only an outcry against you.

Source 9.21 'Press Reports of the King's Flight: *Père Duchesne* (No 61, June 1791),' *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/316

Between 21 June and the end of July 1791, the National Assembly received over 650 letters from people from a range of provincial clubs, towns and villages who wished to affirm their support for the National Assembly in the crisis and to express their ambivalent feelings about the monarchy.

Many letters contained intensely moving statements expressing deep disillusionment with the king. A political group called Jacobins, from the village of La Bassée in northern France, grieved a king who had deserted his people, saying they had 'always worshipped their kings as idols, loving them in spite of their vices'.[16] Timothy Tackett comments that the image of the king as an idol, 'now smashed and destroyed forever, appeared again and again in the rhetoric of the provincial correspondence'.[17]

Jacques-René Hébert.

Timothy Tackett on the king's flight from Paris

In opting to flee from Paris ... the King greatly contributed to the destabilisation of the state. ... For a great many people the shock was brutal. ... They experienced a profound sense of desertion and betrayal. ... Louis was denounced as a liar, a coward, a traitor.

Source 9.22 Timothy Tackett, *When the King took Flight* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 222–223.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 9.22 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. In the short term, how did the king's capture at Varennes contribute to the destabilisation of the state and society?
2. According to Timothy Tackett, how did the people of France react to the king's escape attempt?

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What reason did Louis XVI give for his attempted escape from France?
2. What other reasons explain the failed venture?

KEY EVENT

THE CHAMP DE MARS, 17 JULY 1791: VIOLENCE WITHIN THE THIRD ESTATE

George Rudé: 'In terms of the social history of Paris the Champ de Mars affair ... represented the first bloody clash within the Third Estate.'

THE ORGANISATIONAL ROLE OF THE POLITICAL CLUBS

referendum direct vote of an entire electorate on a particular proposal

sans-culottes originally a derogatory term aristocrats used to describe for working people who wore trousers rather than breeches. Soon the term was used to describe urban workers, shopkeepers or artisans who supported the revolution. After the Champ de Mars massacre, *sans-culottes* clothing became symbolic of the revolution

Feuillants political faction that split from the Jacobins; monarchists.

On Saturday 16 July 1791, crowds assembled at the Champ de Mars parade ground demanding a ***referendum*** on the king's fate. They had come to sign a petition drawn up by the leaders of the Cordeliers Club calling for Louis XVI to abdicate his throne.

The Cordeliers Club was a radical and populist club founded in 1790. It had low subscription fees, and was one of the few political clubs that admitted women. It was the champion of democracy won on the streets, and champion of the ***sans-culottes***.

The Cordeliers opposed the Assembly's attempt to prevent common people from voting or becoming deputies. They believed that the common people were the 'active citizens' of the revolution. Thus, the Cordeliers supported:

- direct democracy
- the participation of the people in the electoral and legislative process
- the accountability of the deputies to the people
- the right to protest through days of revolutionary crowd action.

The Cordeliers had approached the Jacobin Club to help them organise the petition. Most of the leaders of the Cordeliers—Danton, Hébert, Desmoulins, Brissot and Marat—were also members of the Jacobins.

However, Robespierre convinced the Jacobins not to support the abdication petition, which led to the club splitting into two factions.

On 16 July 1791, Antoine Barnave led approximately 1000 constitutional monarchists to resign from the Jacobin Club to form the Feuillant Club, in protest against the petition to remove the king from his throne. The Feuillant Club included 300 deputies from the National Assembly.

The ***Feuillants*** did not trust the king, but they wanted to maintain stability and see the Constitution of 1791 implemented. In doing so, they tied their fortunes to Louis XVI, and as he lost favour with the people, so did the Feuillants. Robespierre was left to lead what remained of the Jacobin Club—a small group of about 100 members.

PETITION FOR THE ABDICATION OF THE KING

At the Champ de Mars, the petition was laid out on a memorial celebrating the second anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. The petition demanded that Louis XVI abdicate the throne:

> His perjury, his desertion, his protest, to say nothing of all the other criminal acts which have preceded, accompanied and succeeded them, entail formal abdication of the constitutional crown entrusted to him.[18]

Further, the petition declared that the nation was 'outraged' by the Assembly's decision to 'entrust the control of the realm henceforth to a perjurer, traitor, and fugitive'.[19]

The next day, a further petition was presented, but the 50,000-strong crowd rejected it, and a third was then written. The third petition was even more radical than the previous petitions:

Petition for the king's abdication

> A monstrous crime was committed; Louis XVI fled; he infamously abandoned his position; the realm was on the brink of anarchy. Citizens stopped him at Varennes; he was brought back to Paris. ... You, Gentlemen, have judged in advance that he was innocent and inviolable. ... Legislators! This was not the will of the people, and we had thought that your greatest glory, even your duty, consisted in being agents of the public will.

Source 9.23 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 219.

The petition demanded that Louis XVI abdicate and that he be put on trial for his crime; then the Assembly could move towards creating a new executive power in France.

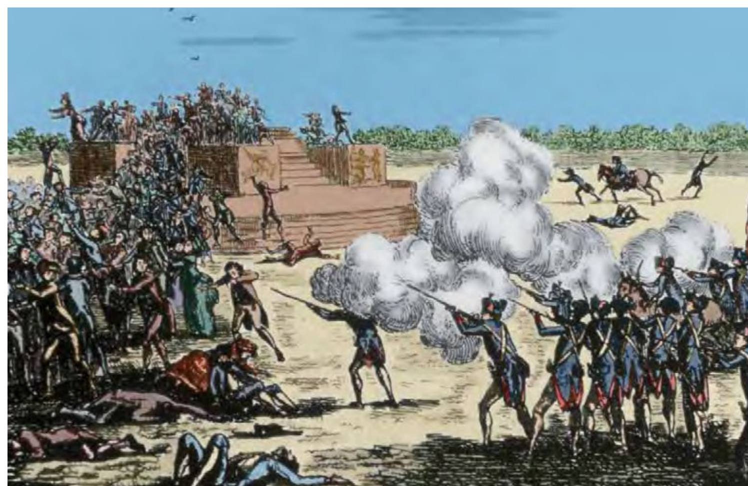
LIBERAL BOURGEOISIE v. REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRATS

TURNING POINT
KEY GROUPS

Meanwhile, the number of people gathering at the Champ de Mars provoked fears of a riot. At the Hôtel de Ville, Bailly, the mayor of Paris, declared martial law and called out the National Guard, led by Lafayette, to disperse the crowd.

The militia arrived at the Champ de Mars and demanded that the people go home, but were met with boos and a hail of small stones. The troops were ordered to fire off a few guns as a warning. Then Lafayette, trusting in his own popularity with the people, personally addressed the crowd and demanded that they go home. When nothing happened, he ordered the troops to fire on the crowd, killing perhaps fifty demonstrators and wounding another twelve.

Source 9.24 Champ de Mars massacre, 17 July 1791.



The massacre at the Champ de Mars was highly significant. At first, the forces of law and order prevailed. Letters poured into the Assembly, supporting the actions of Bailly and Lafayette and condemning the protesters. The elections to the Legislative Assembly in September 1791 returned almost purely bourgeois legislators, many of whom considered the *sans-culottes* to be a dangerous force. The Feuillants were the largest group in the Assembly.

Extremists such as Desmoulins and Santerre, both from the Cordeliers Club, were forced to go into hiding to avoid arrest. Danton went to England and Robespierre, although not involved, quietly moved his lodgings and kept a low profile. Martial law was kept in place, and newspapers that had supported the *sans-culottes* were closed.

Yet, the Champ de Mars massacre was a turning point. At first, the broad community supported the attempt to impose law and order, but the forces of radicalism triumphed, as war with Austria was declared and the fear of traitors within France grew.

The result was a decline in popularity for the 'men of 1789'. Bailly and Lafayette were held responsible for the massacre; as a result, Bailly's political career was ruined and Lafayette lost his popularity with the people of Paris.

More significantly, the Champ de Mars marks a division of power and the beginning of a struggle for supremacy: moderate deputies in the Legislative Assembly, then the National Convention, would find themselves helpless to restrain the *sans-culottes* and

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 9.25 and 9.26 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1 How does George Rudé characterise the power struggle that formed the backdrop to the Champ de Mars massacre?
2 Outline two social consequences of the Champ de Mars massacre.
3 Explain the political significance of the *sans-culottes* during this period.
4 Compare Rudé's interpretation of the French 'crowd' or *sans-culottes* involved in the Champ de Mars massacre with that of Timothy Tackett. To what extent was the Champ de Mars a turning point in the radicalisation of the *sans-culottes*?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Use a diagram or graphic organiser to compare and contrast the perspectives of the *sans-culottes* protesting at the Champ de Mars with those of the deputies of the National Assembly regarding what should be done with Louis XVI.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES—SOCIAL GROUPS

Continue your 'social groups file' (see p. 121 for instructions).

- Add to your notes about the following groups: **urban workers** and **the bourgeoisie**.

the politicians who urged them on. Radical political leaders such as Danton, Marat and Robespierre would come to prominence because of their support for the *sans-culottes*.

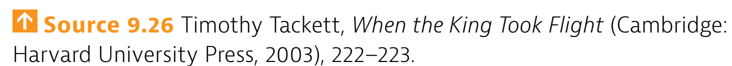
George Rudé

In terms of the social history of Paris the Champ de Mars affair both represented the first bloody clash within the Third Estate ... and the culmination of several months of social upheaval and of revolutionary agitation, at the end of which the democrats organised in the Jacobin and Cordeliers clubs appear as the undisputed leaders of the Parisian sans-culottes. In the course of this movement the tradesmen, artisans and wage-earners of the capital emerge more clearly as elements which the main protagonists in the struggle for power cannot afford to ignore, and whose interests the revolutionary democrats, at least, must affect to espouse [pretend to believe in]. In this sense, then, the Champ de Mars demonstration itself should be seen as the culmination of a process and ... treated in the context of the varied social and political movement that preceded it.

Source 9.25 George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 80.

Timothy Tackett

Wielding the logic of expediency, the need to save the Revolution at all cost from the enemies, ... patriot leaders readily violated the very laws and the 'rights of man' that they themselves had only just proclaimed. For the first time, they crossed the threshold of state-sponsored violence, vigorously promoting the armed repression of the demonstration at the Champ de Mars. ... Freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, habeas corpus, judicial due process—rights guaranteed in the Constitution—were all set aside. ... In this sense, the weeks following the flight to Varennes marked an anticipation, a pre-figuration of both the psychology and the procedures of the Terror.


Source 9.26 Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 222–223.

KEY CHALLENGE

LOOMING WAR WITH AUSTRIA AND PRUSSIA

Declaration of Pillnitz (27 August 1791): 'The Emperor and the King of Prussia regard the situation of His Majesty the King of France as a matter of joint interest for all sovereigns of Europe.'

While the rulers of the other European states were opposed to the French Revolution, they had not taken any positive action to overthrow it, despite appeals from the increasing numbers of French nobles who had left France. Likewise, they did not respond with action to the pleas for aid made by Louis XVI or a faction based around Marie Antoinette, known as the ***Court Party***.

Court Party also sometimes called 'the Austrian Faction'; comprised Marie Antoinette and a number of courtiers who were either Austrian or personally loyal to the monarchy, who viewed an Austrian invasion as desirable

However, when the new Austrian emperor, Leopold II, was told that the French royal family planned to leave France, he decided to act. Leopold II called a meeting of the leading European states in May 1791, known as the Mantua Conference. It resulted in a general agreement to come to the aid of Louis XVI, but without a definite plan of action.

However, when Louis XVI was recaptured at Varennes, the situation was much more urgent. Leopold II went into action again. On 6 July 1791 he issued the 'Padua Circular', calling on the heads of European states to form a union 'for counsel, co-operation and measures to restore the liberty and honour of the Most Christian King and his family, and to limit the dangerous extremes of the French Revolution'.[20]

Leopold II's plan was that the states would 'unite to avenge in a forceful manner any future outrages which may be committed against the security, the person and the honour of the King, Queen and the Royal Family'.[21]

THE DECLARATION OF PILLNITZ, 27 AUGUST 1791

On 27 August 1791, after the Padua Circular, Leopold II and King Frederick William II of Prussia issued the Declaration of Pillnitz. In it, they stated that Louis XVI's position was 'a matter of common concern to all the sovereigns of Europe'.[22] They threatened that unless Louis XVI's power was restored they were 'resolved to act promptly ... with the forces necessary to attain the proposed common objective'.[23]

However, the Declaration of Pillnitz did *not* mention:

- what actions the monarchs would take
- when their intervention would take place.

There was not much hope that other European countries would join with Austria and Prussia, or that there would be much enthusiasm for war. Within France, the Declaration of Pillnitz backfired: instead of intimidating those who wanted Louis XVI tried and executed, it encouraged people to make greater efforts to force the issue and see that the king was removed from office.

THE 1791 CONSTITUTION: A LIBERAL BOURGEOIS VISION OF SOCIETY

KEY GROUP

John Hall Stewart: 'Despite its defects, it is doubtful if a better constitution could have been devised. ... At best, it represented an earnest attempt by the bourgeois deputies to fulfill their mission; at worst it was a fairly intelligent compromise between the Old Regime and the revolutionary ideal.'

Meanwhile, work had been going ahead on the Constitution.

The 1791 Constitution was prefaced with a list of fundamental freedoms that echoed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. These included civil liberties such as:

- the admission of all citizens to offices and employment by talent
- taxation of all citizens in proportion to means
- similar punishments for all people for similar offences
- freedom of speech and of the press
- freedom of worship
- government responsibility for public relief (charity) and instruction
- the right to assemble peacefully without arms
- the right to present petitions to government.[24]

The values of the Constitution were essentially bourgeois, emphasised by the way it defined active and passive citizenship and enshrined the principle of property:

Source 9.27 National Assembly, *The Constitution of 1791* (3 September 1791). Title I ('Fundamental Provisions Guaranteed by the Constitution').

The 1791 Constitution KEY SOURCE

> The Constitution guarantees the inviolability of property, or a just and previous indemnity for that of which a legally established public necessity requires the sacrifice.

Property was to be untouchable, except when it was needed for the public good, in which case it could not be seized without payment. The government was bound to pay the true worth of the property in advance to the owner before making use of it, and only for the public good:

imprescriptible cannot legally be taken away

Title III ('Of Public Powers'), clause 1.

> Sovereignty is one, indivisible, inalienable, and ***imprescriptible***. It appertains to the nation; no section of the people and not any individual may assume the exercise thereof.

Sovereignty resided in the whole of the nation, it was intrinsic to the nation and could not be taken away from the nation: it was inalienable. No individual or faction could seize power:

Title III ('Of Public Powers'), clauses 3–5.

> The legislative power is delegated to a National Assembly, composed of temporary representatives freely elected by the people, to be exercised by it, with the sanction consent] of the King, in the manner [set out in the rest of the Constitution].
>
> The government is monarchical: the executive power is delegated to the King, to be exercised, under his authority, by ministers and other responsible agents in the manner [set out below].
>
> The judicial power is delegated to judges who are elected at stated times by the people.
>
> ...

Title III ('Of Public Powers'), section 2 ('Primary Assemblies—Section of the Electors'), clause 2.

> In order to be an active citizen it is necessary:
>
> To have been born, or become, a Frenchman
> To be fully twenty-five years of age
> To pay ... a direct tax equal to at least the value of three days' labour ...
> Not to be a servant for wages
> To be inscribed upon the roll of the National Guard ...
> To have taken the civic oath.
>
> ...

Chapter II ('Of Monarchy, the Regency, and the Ministers'), section 1 ('Monarchy and the King'), clauses 2–4.

> The person of the King is inviolable and sacred; his only title is King of the French ...
>
> There is no authority in France superior to that of the law; the King reigns only thereby, and only in the name of the law may he exact obedience.
>
> On his accession to the throne ... the King, in the presence of the legislative body, shall take oath to the nation to be faithful to the nation and to the law, to employ all the power delegated to him to maintain the Constitution decreed by the National Constituent Assembly in the years 1789, 1790 and 1791, and to have the laws executed.

In the light of the king's attempt to flee from France, the Constitution was very specific about the circumstances under which the king may have been 'deemed to have abdicated the throne'. These clauses would later form a key part of the charges laid against the king at his trial in 1792–1793. They were:

Chapter II ('Of Monarchy, the Regency, and the Ministers'), section 1 ('Monarchy and the King'), clauses 5–7.

> If the King ... has not taken the [above] oath, or if, after having taken it, he retracts it,
>
> ...
>
> If the King places himself at the head of an army and directs the forces thereof against the nation, or if he does not, by a formal statement, oppose such an undertaking carried out in his name, ...
>
> If the King, having left the Kingdom, does not return after invitation has been made by the legislative body ... within less than two months.

After much debate in the National Constituent Assembly about whether the veto to be granted to the king should be full or merely suspensive—meaning he could delay legislation but not veto it permanently—the Constitution proclaimed that:

> In the case that the King refuses his consent [to decrees presented to him by the legislative body] such refusal shall only be suspensive. When the two legislatures following the one in which the decree was introduced have again successfully presented the same decree in the same terms, the King shall be deemed to have given his sanction [consent].

Chapter III ('Of the Exercise of the Legislative Power'), section 3 ('Royal Sanction'), clause 2.

At first, all seemed calm. On 3 September 1791, the Constitution was completed. On 13 September, it was signed by Louis XVI. It must have seemed as though the revolution was drawing to an end and that the Constituent Assembly had achieved all it set out to do:

- The ancien régime was no more.
- Feudalism had been 'abolished in its entirety' by the decrees of 5–11 August 1789.
- The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen had established a new egalitarian and liberal order.

France had been reorganised in a rational fashion, and many of the old practices that had hampered trade and commerce had been abolished. On 30 September, the National Constituent Assembly came to an end. On 1 October 1789, the newly elected Legislative Assembly held its first session.

However, France was not united and was still in conflict over major issues.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1792, Louis XVI would use his power of suspensive veto to stall key pieces of legislation needed to safeguard the revolution—and make the government of France increasingly unworkable.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Source 9.28 Two popular and disrespectful characters, Jean Bart (left) and Père Duchesne (right), reflect the suspicion with which Louis XVI was viewed after his capture at Varennes. They are assessing Louis's loyalty to the Constitution. Above, the angel of France smashes off the tip of the triangular monument to the constitutional monarchy, toppling the Crown and the Constitution of 1791, which was then in preparation. They fall against a stunted liberty tree. The republican sentiment of this image is very clear. The very rude nature of the character of Le Père Duchesne is made clear, as he uses the document of the Constitution as toilet paper. Later, at his trial, Louis would argue that he was not bound by the Constitution because he had agreed to it under duress. The criticism is directed against Louis Capet '*l'ainé*' (the elder), not the young dauphin.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 9.28 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Identify the historical context in which the source was created.
2. Analyse how the context of the source would have affected its meaning and purpose.
3. Explain how the people of France responded to Louis XVI's attempt to flee Paris.
4. Evaluate the significance of the king's attempt to flee Paris as a consequence of the revolution. Use evidence to support your response.

KEY GROUP

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES

Now that France had a new Constitution, a new Legislative Assembly needed to be elected. Voting favoured those who were well-off, dividing the populace into 'active citizens' and 'passive citizens' for the purposes of voting and standing for election. (Only 'active citizens' could vote; see p. 131 'Active and Passive Citizens' for a refresher.)

Only men who paid a silver mark in tax could stand for office. The choice of deputies was made by electors—who had to be active citizens and property owners, or tenants who paid a substantial rent. Neither women nor males under twenty-five could vote.

Peter McPhee on voting

> The ambiguity about the meaning of citizenship in the Declaration of the Rights of Man was resolved by excluding women and 'passive' male citizens—perhaps 40 percent of adult men—paying less than three days labour in taxes and by imposing sharp property qualifications on those eligible to be electors and deputies. While there were at least four million 'active' citizens, only about 50,000 of them paid enough taxes to be electors; the 745 deputies in the Legislative Assembly had to pay a silver mark, equivalent to fifty-four days labour in taxes.

Source 9.29 Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution 1789–1799* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 68.

Finally, anyone who had been a deputy in the National Constituent Assembly could not stand for election to the Legislative Assembly; this decision was made by deputies in May 1791. What this meant in practice was that a new representative body was to comprise of men who had not sat in the Estates-General.

With the changed political environment, virtually no one other than the bourgeoisie stood for election. Of the 745 new deputies, only twenty-three were clergy. The 745 new men elected had no experience in national government, although many had been active in their local Assemblies.

William Doyle on the new deputies

> Mostly they were men of property, and above all, lawyers. To the departing Constituents, who had deliberately barred themselves from election to the new body, they seemed obscure, inexperienced and (given the relative youth of most of them) callow. Few, certainly, were nationally known, although the journalist Brissot and the mathematician and publicist Condorcet were men of reputation. But most of the new deputies owed their election to prominence in their home localities, a prominence won in the new circumstances of revolutionary clubs.

Source 9.30 William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 175.

This inexperienced group would have to deal with war and counter-revolution, and seek a solution to the violence of the *sans-culottes* in adopting Terror as an arm of government.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Apart from celebrating the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille and the Fête de la Fédération, why else did crowds assemble on the Champ de Mars in mid-July 1791?

2 Why was the Champ de Mars massacre a 'turning point' for the revolution?

3 Why did the European heads of state consider Louis XVI's position a 'matter for common concern'? What repercussions did they fear?

4 Make a list of the key provisions of the Constitution of 1791 and identify their links to the *cahiers* of 1789.

CHAPTER 9 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The reforms of the Church began with the confiscation of its property, which was placed at the disposal of the nation.
- The Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the Clerical Oath forced people to choose between their religion and allegiance to the Church, and their support for the revolution.
- The division within French society deepened when the pope rejected the reforms as heretical.
- Only seven bishops and 54 per cent of the clergy took the Clerical Oath, prompting violence against them and in support of them.
- Louis XVI's attempt to escape his virtual imprisonment in Paris and subsequent capture signalled the beginning of the end of the monarchy.
- The king's rejection of the revolution destroyed the public's trust in the monarch.
- The subsequent massacre at the Champ de Mars divided the revolutionaries along factional lines into the supporters of the monarchy and the republicans.
- Austria and Prussia issued diplomatic declarations suggesting that they would intervene in France to aid Louis XVI and his family.
- Under the 1791 Constitution, France became a constitutional monarchy with a single chamber of the Legislative Assembly as its parliament.
- Louis XVI was still head of state and head of government. He appointed his ministers and could temporarily block the passing of legislation by using his suspensive veto.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 9.01 (see p. 144) and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline the regard the people of Paris held for Louis XVI after his attempted escape from France.
2. Explain how this event triggered conflict between various groups in French politics.
3. Evaluate the extent to which Louis XVI's actions in June 1791 created a crisis for the new society. Use evidence to support your response.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES—SOCIAL GROUPS

Continue your 'social groups file' (see p. 121 for instructions).

- Add to your notes about the following group: **the bourgeoisie**.

KEY CHALLENGES

Evaluate France's relations with other countries between April and August 1791. Which religious and political tensions emerged in this period?

CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

Create a table showing the main 'winners' and 'losers' from the French Revolution by the end of 1791. List in order of how much was won or lost, and cite specific examples.

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write a 250–350-word extended response to one or more of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence, and a clear conclusion.

- Explain the ideas and objectives underpinning the 1791 Constitution. Why did it fail to bring an end to the French Revolution? Use evidence to support your response.
- Explain who was entitled to vote following the 1791 Constitution and what it meant to be an 'active citizen' in France. Use evidence to support your response.
- Explain why there was deep social discord in France following the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1790) and other reforms to the Church. Use evidence to support your response.

THREATS FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT (1792)

'Let's march, let's march so that their impure blood should water our fields!'

—The Battle Song of the Army of the Rhine, better known as 'La Marseillaise'

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why did France declare war on Austria in April 1792?
- Which groups supported the war and why?
- Why did Robespierre and his group oppose the war?
- What actions by the king alienated the popular movement during the period of the Legislative Assembly?
- What developments marked the radicalisation of the popular movement during the summer of 1792?

The fear of counter-revolution provoked a range of emergency responses from the revolutionaries. It was the declaration of war against Austria that exposed the central truth of the revolution, that it needed violence to consolidate its achievements and propagate its ideals. When it was declared, the war seemed to unite all revolutionary factions. But the first military defeats brought home the fundamental truth: the war had unintended and unpredictable consequences, and in the chaos of the international conflict, revolutionaries turned against real and imagined enemies. The most prominent casualty of war was the constitutional monarchy; the most prominent victims of the war were Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and their son Louis XVII. Revolutions know only one way to respond to violence—with violence.

KEY EVENTS

—20 April 1792
Declaration of war against Austria

—20 June 1792
Demonstrators invade Tuileries Palace for the first time

—11 July 1792
Assembly declares the homeland in danger (*La patrie en danger*)

—25 July–28 July 1792
Brunswick Manifesto

—10 August 1792
Storming of Tuileries Palace for the second time; Louis XVI is deposed

—2–7 September 1792
September Massacres

Source 10.01 ***La patrie en danger*** **(The Homeland in Danger), by Guillaume Guillon Lethière, 1799.**
Also entitled 'The enrolment of the volunteers'. The women are wearing imitation classical dress.

CHAPTER 10

THE NEW LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 1 OCTOBER 1791–20 SEPTEMBER 1792

Timothy Tackett: 'The new representatives ... were fully committed to the success of the Revolution. It is ironic, then, that the Legislative Assembly would soon be sharply torn into factional alignments that were at least as divisive ... as the patriots and aristocrats ... in the first National Assembly.'

On 1 October 1791, the new National Legislative Assembly of the French Revolution met in Paris in the Manège, a converted riding school. Due to the Self-denying Ordinance of May 1791, the entire chamber was filled with 'new men', as there were no deputies from the previous Assembly.

Historian David Andress states that this Assembly was a 'remarkably uniform body'. The property qualification for election to the Assembly resulted in the majority of deputies sharing bourgeois ideas.

There were no peasants or artisans in the new Legislative Assembly, and only a few merchants. There were fewer than 20 clergy and roughly the same number of former nobles—so out of 745 deputies, over 700 were commoners. Almost two-thirds of these had held elective office since the beginning of the revolution. Thus, Andress has concluded, the Legislative Assembly 'embodied a clear rejection of older centres of power in favour of the new order' and was quick to take action against the revolution's visible enemies: émigrés and non-juring priests.[1]

POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The alignments within the Legislative Assembly quickly fell into three groups. The notions of 'left' and 'right' had begun to solidify in the National Constituent Assembly in late 1789, when the Assembly was divided over issues such as the king's veto.

Due to the Self-denying Ordinance, experienced leaders from the Constituent Assembly could not be re-elected; however, they could still exert influence through political clubs, the press and through their personal networks.

THE RIGHT

The deputies who sat to the right of the speaker's tribune at the Legislative Assembly were conservatives. They included supporters of the king, Feuillants—who did not trust the king but wanted stability—and *monarchiens*, and had 264 deputies. As advocates of a constitutional monarchy, they believed that the revolution had finished with the publication of the Constitution of 1791.

The Feuillants were led by Lafayette, Bailly, Barnave and Duport. However, Mounier, who had founded the *monarchiens in* June 1789, had resigned from the Constituent Assembly after the October Days and left France.

DID YOU KNOW?
The terms 'left' and 'right' we use today to refer to political parties originated with the French Revolution. Members of the National Assembly who supported the king sat to the president's right, and those who supported the revolution sat to his left.

THE ASSEMBLY

THE RIGHT
- conservatives
- supported the king

THE CENTRE
- moderates
- supported the war
- supported execution of king

THE LEFT
- radicals
- distrusted the king
- wanted democracy
- supported by *sans-culottes*

THE CENTRE

The centre was composed of 345 unaligned moderate deputies, who sat opposite the speaker's tribune. They had no definite policies or defined leadership, and voted with the left or the right on an issue-by-issue basis. The centre supported the war against Austria and Prussia, and supported executing the king. Later, under the leadership of Barère, it supported the emergency measures of the Terror.

THE LEFT

The left was a radical group of Jacobins and Cordeliers. They sat to the left of the speaker's tribune and had approximately 136 members. They distrusted the king, wanted greater political democracy in France, and gained support from the *sans-culottes* and the Paris sections. Their leaders came from the Jacobin Club, where new men were rising to prominence: Jerôme Pétion, who was elected in November 1791 to replace Bailly as mayor of Paris; Jacques-Pierre Brissot, now a member of the Legislative Assembly and leader of the 'Brissotin' faction; Maximilien Robespierre; Georges Danton and Jean-Paul Marat, the editor of *L'ami du peuple*.

KEY DEVELOPMENT

THE PATH TO WAR

In August 1791, Austria and Prussia had issued the Declaration of Pillnitz—and threatened action unless Louis XVI was restored to power—but since then they had made no sign that they were about to invade France.

This was fortunate, as the French army had lost many of its aristocratic officers in the exodus of ***émigrés***. It was undergoing a process of new recruitment and reform. Led by the *monarchiens*, the deputies in the Constituent Assembly had agreed to overlook Louis XVI's attempt to flee Paris in July 1791, and in September the king had accepted the Constitution of 1791.

émigrés people who fled France because of the revolution; many of them were nobles

However, foreign relationships remained tense under the Legislative Assembly in 1792. When foreign monarchs looked at Louis XVI, they saw what might be their own fate if revolution spread throughout Europe. French émigrés within their courts were demanding that the monarchs act to restore Louis XVI's position. From Paris and within their own states, there were radical voices calling for the use of war and conquest to spread revolutionary principles.

Meanwhile, the political climate within France was moving further to the left, as fears spread about conspiracies to overthrow the revolution.

BRISSOT AND THE RISE OF THE GIRONDINS

Etienne Dumont (political writer and collaborator of Brissot): 'Brissot was continually writing, moving about, convening meetings, directing all the maneuvers.'

Jacques-Pierre Brissot was prominent from the opening weeks of the Legislative Assembly in October 1791. Brissot was a vocal member of the Jacobin Club, and he was convinced that war would unite the French people and spread the flame of revolution throughout Europe.

On 14 October 1791, Brissot gave a long and powerful speech about the need for war. He argued that France's problems came from two sources:

- enemies outside France who were determined to restore the power of the monarchy
- enemies within France who were conspiring to bring down the revolution.

'We cannot be calm,' Brissot argued, 'until Europe, all Europe, is in flames'.[2] Increasingly, the deputies of the Legislative Assembly supported Brissot.

On 9 November 1791, the Assembly passed a decree ordering émigrés to return to France. French men living outside France were suspected of conspiracy, and failure to return meant they would be 'declared guilty of conspiracy … prosecuted as such, and punished with death'.[3] Anyone who failed to return by 1 January 1792 was guilty of conspiracy, sentenced to death in their absence and their income forfeited 'for the benefit of the nation'.[4]

Military officers who left their troops and left France were considered to be deserters—a crime punishable by death. The émigrés living across the border in cities such as Coblenz and Worms were seen as a direct threat to the revolution, massing across the border in preparation for a war in France to restore the monarchy.

JACQUES-PIERRE BRISSOT, 1754–1793

Jacques-Pierre Brissot—in full, Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville—was a lawyer and a writer of political pamphlets. He was strongly influenced by the ideas of Rousseau. In 1788, Brissot joined with Abbé Grégoire and Mirabeau to found the anti-slavery Society of the Friends of the Blacks. On 6 May 1789, he published the first edition of his journal *Le patriote français* (The French Patriot), which became a strong advocate for revolution.

Brissot was an early member of the Jacobin Club, where he became known for his speaking skills, and was subsequently elected to both the Legislative Assembly and the National Convention.

From 1791 Brissot was a leading advocate for war, and became leader of the Brissotin faction in the Legislative Assembly. Later, in the National Convention, the Brissotin faction would become known as Girondins.

Personal animosity between Brissot and Jacobin leader Robespierre led to the 1792–1793 rivalry between the Girondins and Jacobins. This ultimately led to the Girondins being expelled from the National Convention, and also to the outbreak of Civil War.

Brissot and twenty-one other Girondins were executed on 31 October 1793, the first faction to fall casualty to the guillotine.

Jacques-Pierre Brissot.

THE BRISSOTINS

The men who gathered around Brissot during the period of the Legislative Assembly were known as 'Brissotins'. Later, during the National Convention, they became known as Girondins (meaning 'from Gironde'), the name of the department from which many of them came.

These men were moderate-left bourgeois republicans who represented the interests of the provinces. In early 1792, they split from the Jacobin Club.

The most prominent members after Brissot were Vergniaud, a powerful speaker and a president of the Legislative Assembly; Gensonné, a lawyer from Bordeaux; Roland, Gaudet, Isnard, Pétion, Buzot, Barbaroux; and Condorcet, who was the last surviving *philosophe*.

MANON ROLAND, 1754–1793

Manon Roland was a highly ambitious woman. Intelligent and articulate, she was widely read and well-informed. At twenty-seven she married Jean-Marie Roland de la Platière in Lyons.

In 1791, the couple came to Paris. Roland joined the Jacobins, and Manon sought out the Girondins, with whom she had corresponded throughout 1789–1790. In 1792, Brissot helped Roland become minister for the interior.

The Rolands moved into Hôtel Pontchartrain, the official residence of the minister, where Manon Roland ran a highly influential political salon that attracted many of the important revolutionary leaders. She also gave twice-weekly dinners to her husband's friends and political associates, which became the unofficial 'club' of the Girondins.

Manon had a vast influence over Girondist policy and often wrote newspaper articles under her husband's name. With her husband's appointment as minister, Manon's political influence grew.

Manon Roland.

She had control over the content of ministerial letters, memorandums and speeches, and was involved in decisions about political appointments.

Manon was both admired and critically attacked—and was particularly hated by the Parisian *sans-culottes*. The publicists Marat and Hébert conducted a smear campaign against Madame Roland as part of the power struggle between the Girondins and the more radical Jacobins and ***Montagnards***. With the expulsion of the Girondins from the National Convention in 1793, Manon, too, was arrested on 1 June.

She was executed on 9 November 1793, crying out to the crowd, 'Oh Liberty! What crimes are committed in your name!'

Montagnards radical deputies of the Legislative Assembly, they were members of the Jacobin and Cordeliers clubs who sat on the high benches to the left of the president of the Assembly

BRISSOT ADVOCATES WAR

As fears of war increased, Brissot's view gained popularity: he wanted France to strike first against its enemies to achieve victory. He made increasingly fiery speeches in the Jacobin Club and in the Legislative Assembly. According to Brissot, a successful war would:

- require all citizens, including the king, to make obvious their loyalty to the revolution
- flush out internal traitors
- boost enthusiasm for the revolution
- demonstrate the permanency of the new regime.

Manon Roland agreed with Brissot, declaring that war 'would be a great school of public virtue. Peace will set us back. ... We can be regenerated by blood alone.'[5] Further, a war would allow France to extend its revolutionary ideas abroad, and French armies would have the active support of their enemies' citizens. However, Robespierre did not agree with this point: 'No-one,' he proclaimed in the Jacobin Club, 'loves armed missionaries'.[6]

Finally, Brissot reminded the Assembly that the time was right for a war, as European powers such as Russia and Britain were preoccupied with other issues, and would not join the war unless their own security was threatened.

The call for war was greeted with enthusiasm. The speeches of Brissot and his supporters encouraged people to believe that the French nation was under attack, that France's honour and glory as a free nation were in jeopardy, and that patriotic Frenchmen must come to the support of the nation they loved. In the Assembly, Brissot declaimed, 'I tell you that you must avenge your glory or condemn yourself to eternal dishonour'.[7] His rhetoric convinced the deputies of the centre and led to the dismissal of the Feuillants from the king's ministry.

Most Jacobins supported a war, but it was opposed by Robespierre and his colleagues Couthon, Desmoulins, Danton, Hébert and Marat.

Robespierre feared that victory in war might give power to the generals, especially Lafayette. If they were defeated, the French would find all the gains of 1789 overthrown and the monarchy restored by foreign forces. However, Robespierre's major argument was that the real danger was not from the émigrés or foreign armies, but from counter-revolutionaries within France:

> You propose to give supreme power to those who most want your ruin. The only way to save the state and to safeguard freedom is to wage war in the right way, on our enemies at home, instead of marching under their orders against their allies across the frontiers.[8]

Robespierre called on the Assembly to 'restore order at home before taking liberty elsewhere. ... Restore order in the finances, put an end to corruption.' However, popular opinion was against him, as most of the Assembly supported Brissot's call 'for a new crusade, a crusade for universal liberty'.[9]

On 20 April 1792, with the support of the majority of National Legislative Assembly deputies, France declared war on Austria. When the king appeared before the Assembly, to propose formally that France declare war, the vote in favour was almost unanimous, with only seven deputies voting against it.

The war was supposed to end with a swift and decisive French victory, but it would last for over twenty years.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Contrast the nature of the Legislative Assembly to the National Assembly. Identify the new voices in power and summarise their key ideas.
2. What did Brissot hope war would achieve within France? What did he hope it would achieve outside France?
3. What were Robespierre's reasons for opposing war?

DID YOU KNOW?

The Black Legion was a counter-revolutionary group of exiled nobles formed in September 1790 in Baden (south-west Germany). Similar units were formed by the Duc de Condé and the Duc de Bourbon. However, problems arose when the volunteers insisted on being officers, being paid their previous salaries and refusing to take orders. The units were dissolved by the Duke of Brunswick in 1792.

THE WAR WITH AUSTRIA AND PRUSSIA

TURNING POINT

Peter McPhee: 'The war was one of the major turning points of the revolutionary period and would dominate the history of France and Europe for twenty-three years.'

In its declaration of war in April 1792, France accused Austria of:

- granting open protection to French rebels
- colluding with other European nations against the independence and security of France.

Austria and its allies were also accused of making hostile preparations to invade France, and of arming French citizens against their nation. As a consequence:

> The National Assembly ... takes arms only to maintain its liberty and independence. ... The war which it is forced to undergo is not a war of nation against nation, but the just defence of a free people against the unjust aggression of a king.[10]

France went to war hoping that the oppressed peoples of other nations would revolt against their rulers and support the 'liberating' French armies. The French hoped for a short, victorious campaign to unify the people and consolidate the gains of the revolution.

However, the French armies realistically had little hope against the trained Austrian and Prussian troops: the French officers were untrained, the soldiers were volunteers, and much of the army command defected to the other side.

THE KING, COURT AND GENERALS

Louis XVI supported France's war against Austria. At first, this seems strange. Why would a man who saw in Austria his greatest hope of survival now support his own country's quest to defeat the state ruled by Leopold II, who was Marie Antoinette's brother?

This was exactly the king's thinking, but the other way around:

- If France lost, the revolution would come to an end and he would be restored to the throne.
- If Austria lost, he would have shown that he was a true French patriot and his attempt to flee Paris would no longer be an issue.

As supreme commander, no one was more aware of the unprepared state of France's military forces than Louis XVI. Both he and Marie Antoinette believed that France would be defeated. Accordingly, he publicly supported the war but secretly plotted with the Austrians. As historian Simon Schama puts it:

> Given his plight, he had hardly anything to lose (or so he imagined). Should a war go well, it would be a means to concentrate power in his hands as commander in chief and might even give him the military force he needed to restore power at home.[11]

Marie Antoinette agreed. 'The imbeciles!' she wrote. 'They cannot see that this will serve us well, for … if we begin it all the Powers will become involved.'[12] It was widely believed that the queen's court supporters were in league with her brother, Austrian emperor Leopold II, and were sending reports of secret French military plans to Coblenz and Vienna.

The army generals such as Lafayette and Dumouriez were also supportive of the war. Lafayette was out of favour in Paris and in command of one of the border armies, but thought he could use a successful war to reinstate his prestige as a general. This would allow him to shore up the authority of the king, and dictate his own terms to both the monarchy and the Legislative Assembly. Dumouriez could also see that war would be to his personal benefit. He acted as foreign minister in the Girondin ministry and served briefly as minister for war.

EARLY DEFEATS

Initially, the French declared war solely against Austria. In this way, it was hoped that Austria's ally, Frederick William II, king of Prussia, would not join the conflict. This was an error. It resulted in the ill-equipped French army—supplemented with poorly trained volunteers who were not ready to fight—facing two professional armies. The beginning of the war was disastrous.

Under the command of General Dumouriez, three armies had been formed: one to guard the Swiss border; one at Metz, commanded by Lafayette; and one at Valenciennes under the command of General Rochambeau.

The armies lacked trained officers, as a third of the entire officer corps—over 3000 officers—had emigrated since 1789. In addition, the French army had only 140,000 troops, many of them recent volunteers, enthusiastic but lacking in training

and experience. They were not well disciplined, their equipment was often defective and ammunition was in short supply. Rather than respecting their officers, they suspected they were covert traitors who might be deliberately betraying the troops to give victory to Austria.

The Duc de Biron was further north, fighting Austrian troops who had come over the French border. At Mons, he found that no one would obey his order for a bayonet charge—his troops voting against it. Although his troops outnumbered the Austrians, he was forced to order them to fall back. Lafayette refused to advance into battle, afraid his troops would disobey him. Rochambeau offered his resignation.

Then, in May 1792, the entire regiment of the Royal-Allemand—a cavalry unit that had been stationed in Paris in July 1789 when the Bastille was captured—defected to the Austrians. The Austrian and Prussian armies were marching into France and it seemed as though nothing would stand in their way. By the end of June, Paris was under threat, and popular opinion blamed Louis XVI and the court for betraying their country.

By mid-1792 the French army was surrendering at a rapid rate.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ESCALATE FEARS **KEY CHALLENGE**

Meanwhile, economic problems added to fears of military defeat. The 1791 harvest had been poor, which led to increased prices and inflation. The deregulation of the grain trade had added to price problems, and desperately hungry people were attacking grain wagons, barges and depots.

In January 1792, grocers' riots erupted in Paris, as women forced grocers to sell essential goods at 'fair' prices. The assignat had lost value: 100 livres in notes was worth only sixty-three livres in coins—and all this seemed to point towards deliberate efforts by people within the French nation to bring down the revolution.

Marat's journal, *L'ami du peuple* (Friend of the People), and the leaders of the Cordeliers Club led the attack on the 'traitors'. They:

- accused the court of sabotaging the war
- accused the king of plotting with Austria
- accused speculators and rich members of the bourgeoisie of hoarding their wealth and depriving of food those who had won the revolution.

René Hébert's newspaper, *Le Père Duchesne*, called on the *sans-culottes* to attack those in power as a patriotic duty, while radical priest Jacques Roux, leader of the ***Enragés***, demanded that those who deprived the poor of food be brought to justice. Mob violence was equated with patriotism—the *sans-culottes* seeing themselves as defenders of the nation against traitors who would hand over France to the invading Austrian and Prussian forces.

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 280)

Source 10.02 Jean-Paul Marat, editor *L'ami du peuple,* Cordelier.

Enragés literally 'furious ones', a group of extreme revolutionaries led by a former priest, Jacques Roux, who advocated social and economic measures in favour of the underprivileged

THE ROYAL FAMILY IN DANGER

As a consequence of this political fervour, by the summer of 1792 the royal family's safety was increasingly in jeopardy. The family was lodged in the Tuileries Palace right at the heart of Paris—a city that was becoming more hostile to them. The *sans-culottes* who formed the Paris sections were increasingly vocal in their attacks on the monarchy.

The atmosphere was becoming more tense. In the Assembly, the *sans-culottes* supported the radical Jacobins and Cordeliers, who were pressing for:

- the trial of the king
- the establishment of a republic.

Meanwhile, Pétion, a Jacobin, had replaced the *monarchien* Bailly as mayor of Paris. Pétion increased the threat of popular violence by distributing pikes to the *sans-culottes*. Pikes were long spears that were designed to be thrusted with two hands, rather than thrown. Cordelier leader, Hébert, writing in *Le père Duchesne*, made it quite clear what the pikes were for: 'To your pikes, good *sans-culottes*, sharpen them to exterminate aristocrats.'[13]

bonnet rouge the red cap, a symbol of the freed slaves of ancient Rome; also known as a Phrygian bonnet

Patriotism, symbolised by the wearing of the ***bonnet rouge*** and the tricolour cockade (the colours of the revolution), turned ordinary men and women into vigilantes. From 1 August 1792, the National Guard was opened up to 'passive citizens', which made it a militant fighting force drawn from the workers of Paris rather than an armed bourgeois force designed to protect property. The National Guard had a new leader, Santerre, who was one of the people who stormed the Bastille.

KEY DEVELOPMENT

THE RISE OF THE *SANS-CULOTTES*

Jean-Baptiste Vintergnier: 'A *sans-culotte* has always his sharp sabre ready to cut off the ears of the malevolent. Sometimes he marches with his pike. But at the first sound of the drum, he can be seen leaving for the Vendée, for the Army of the Alps or for the Army of the North.'

Source 10.03 A *sans-culottes* with a halberd (a hook and axe on a pole).

The *sans-culottes* were drawn from the workers of Paris. According to historian George Rudé, they were 'the small shopkeepers, petty traders, craftsmen, journeymen, labourers, vagrants and city poor'.[14] These groups found a common identity in the French Revolution that was partly economic and partly sociopolitical. Because they were poor, they were bound together by fluctuations in the price of food. Pétion, mayor of Paris, described the *sans-culottes* as 'the have-nots as distinct from the haves'.[15]

However, there was more to the *sans-culottes* than just a shared economic experience. The *sans-culottes* saw themselves as citizens with rights and these rights included a prompt remedy for whatever was wrong, achieved by direct action on the streets. They were, as historian Norman Hampson puts it:

> straightforward men, accustomed to rough living and brutal treatment by authority, used to planning on a short-term basis and advocates of simple solutions. ... At once credulous and suspicious, they tended to see everything in black and white ... and to believe any rumour against a man who had fallen from popular favour.[16]

To some extent the political views of the *sans-culottes* were a response to their own experiences—but they were also formed by the revolutionary leaders.

By 1792, the *sans-culottes* were demanding benefits from the revolution, in particular:

- a direct voice in the elected Assembly
- an end to the distinction between passive citizens and active citizens.

Their actions in the *journées* of 1792 and 1793 prompted the National Convention to accept a program of direct democracy, and to control the economy through fixed maximum prices and minimum wages.

Source 10.04 *Modèle de la Bastille* (Model of the Bastille), by Jean-Baptiste Lesueur, 1792. This image shows *sans-culottes* carrying a model of the Bastille. These models were carved from stone taken from the demolished Bastille. They were sent to every Hôtel de Ville in all the major centres of France.

Cartoons, public speeches and popular journals (such as Marat's *L'ami du peuple* and Hébert's *Le père Duchesne*) were influential in shaping public opinion and giving identification to the *sans-culottes* as a political force. The Cordeliers Club was also important; its low entrance fee gave it a broader membership than the Jacobin Club. Then there was the recently opened membership of the National Guard, the section committees and the Paris Commune. Finally, the location of the *sans-culottes* within the central city of Paris gave them greater access than other groups to public meeting places where information was exchanged, such as wine shops, markets, workshops and public buildings.

Sometimes the *sans-culottes* acted independently in response to a crisis—for example, the storming of the Bastille. At other times, they responded to the call of leaders:

- 17 July 1791: demonstration at Champ de Mars, organised by the Cordeliers
- 10 August 1792: attack on Tuileries Palace, ordered by the radical Paris Commune.

However, the *sans-culottes* did not represent the majority of urban workers in Paris. Historian George Rudé estimates that perhaps 10 per cent of this population was committed to revolutionary action. Some were literate, but the majority were probably not. The composition of a crowd of *sans-culottes* varied:

- If the *journées* involved the price of food, as in the October Days of 1789, women were likely to be present in substantial numbers.
- If the *journée* was overtly political and organised, as with the 10 August 1792 attack on the Tuileries, the crowd was largely male.

As the revolution radicalised, the *sans-culottes* exerted much more power: direct democracy through the *journées* forced the Legislative Assembly and then the National Convention to adopt more extreme policies, and brought Robespierre and the radical Jacobins to power.

DID YOU KNOW?

As the influence of the *sans-culottes* grew in Paris, people dressed deliberately shabbily because they were afraid of being labelled 'aristocrats'. Philippe-Egalité, the former Duc d'Orléans and cousin of Louis XVI, wore short unpowdered hair, a short jacket and pantaloons, and shoes without laces. Robespierre was one of the few who continued to powder his hair and dress fastidiously in the tailored costume of a lawyer from the ancien régime.

Philippe-Egalité.

Source 10.05 Female and male *sans-culottes*. Note that both are armed. The man wears long striped trousers rather than knee breeches, as suggested by the term *sans-culottes*, as well as the *bonnet rouge* and tricolour cockade.

Jean-Baptiste Vintergnier, 'Reply to the Impertinent Question: What is a *Sans-Culotte*?' April 1793

> A *sans-culotte* is a man who goes everywhere on his own two feet, who has none of the millions you are all after, no mansion, no lackeys [servants] to wait on him, and who lives simply with his wife and children, if he has any, on the fourth or fifth storey. He is useful because he knows how to plough a field, to handle a forge, a saw and a file, to cover a roof, to make a pair of shoes, and to shed the last drop of his blood to save the Republic. And since he works, you are sure not to find him at the Café de Chartres [a favourite of the Duc d'Orléans and associates]. ... In the evening, he goes to the meeting of his Section, not powdered and perfumed and dressed up in the hope of being noticed by all the citizenesses ... but in order to support the right sort of resolutions with all his power and to smash ... vile factions. ...
>
> For the rest, a *sans-culotte* has always his sharp sabre ready to cut off the ears of the malevolent. Sometimes he marches with his pike. But at the first sound of the drum, he can be seen leaving for the Vendée, for the Army of the Alps or for the Army of the North.

Source 10.06 Cited in Leonard W. Cowie, *The French Revolution, Documents and Debates* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 98.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 10.06 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Describe the author's perspective on the *sans-culottes*, using short quotes from the source.
2. List the key characteristics that set the *sans-culottes* apart from others.
3. Evaluate the significance of the *sans-culottes* in the new society. Use evidence to support your response.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. When did the *sans-culottes* emerge as a political force?
2. What were the most persuasive demands of the *sans-culottes*?
3. Make a list of the most significant days of revolutionary action and describe the role *sans-culottes* played in them.

THE *FÉDÉRÉS*

As the danger to Paris increased, the Legislative Assembly took measures to deal with the supposed traitors within France. Decrees were issued to:

- deport 'non-juring priests'—priests who refused to swear an oath of loyalty to the state
- supplement the National Guard with men from the countryside.

fédérés volunteer National Guards from the provinces

On 8 June 1792, the Assembly published a decree to enlist a further 20,000 men to defend the capital. This army of **_fédérés_**, or provincial National Guards, would be stationed within the districts of Paris, so soldiers could be released to fight at the front. The decree was enacted because the Assembly considered 'that it is important to discourage the enemies ... who are conspiring in the interior [and] ... to draw still closer

in the bonds of fraternity the National Guards of other departments with those of Paris who have served the country'.[17] For the Girondins, the *fédérés* represented a strongly armed force that would defend the government as well as Paris.

However, the presence of the *fédérés* in Paris made the mood more dangerous.

Nicolas Ruault, to his brother

Quite a number of National Guardsmen have arrived here in the last few days since the fête de la fédération of 14 July, and you must have a good idea why: for the most part, they are old soldiers with fierce moustaches. ... Last night there was much unrest. ... The National Assembly, which can see the storm coming, is at a loss to know which side to take. Should it decree that the King be dethroned to prevent terrible things from happening? But then it would have to organise a new executive power. Who would be appointed? ... It is impossible to offer the throne to any prince. Who would want ours at this moment?

Source 10.07 Nicolas Ruault, *Gazette d'un Parisien sous la révolution: Lettres à son frère 1783–1796* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1976), 375.

To Louis XVI, the *fédérés* represented a force that might be used against him, so he used his constitutional power of suspensive veto to delay both decrees.

On 13 June 1792, an open letter to Louis XVI from Roland, minister of the interior, was read to the Assembly. Roland's warning was clear.

Minister of the Interior Roland to Louis XVI

Two important decrees have been passed; both essentially concern public peace and the safety of the State. Delay in sanctioning them creates distrust; if it is prolonged, it will cause discontent; and, I must say, in the present ferment of feelings, discontent may lead to anything.

There is no longer time to withdraw, there is no longer even means of temporising. The Revolution is accomplished in men's minds; it will be completed at the price of blood and will be cemented with blood, unless wisdom anticipates misfortunes which it is still possible to avoid.

Source 10.08 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 296.

Louis XVI's response to Roland's threat was to dismiss him, plus two other Girondin ministers that same day. General Dumouriez resigned on 15 June 1792 to go to the front, which meant the Girondin ministry had collapsed. The king replaced them with a new Feuillant ministry, which he felt was more trustworthy.

Then, on 18 June, a letter came to the Assembly from Lafayette, demanding that the Jacobins be restrained and that the revolutionary clubs be suppressed.

People feared Lafayette would lead a military coup in the name of the king. Thus, the division widened between the moderates within the Assembly, who feared that popular violence would overcome the forces of law and order, and popular leaders who increasingly feared counter-revolution from traitors within France.

In September 1789, the National Assembly had granted Louis XVI the right to issue a suspensive veto. This power was confirmed in the 1791 Constitution, and allowed the king to suspend legislation, effectively blocking it. The king used his power of suspensive veto four times in eight months to block measures decreed by the Legislative Assembly for the security of the nation in a time of war. On 19 June 1792, Louis XVI:

- vetoed the decree of 27 April that banished non-juring priests
- vetoed the decree of 8 June 1792 that established the camp of the *fédérés*.

By June 1792, the perception of Louis XVI's use of the suspensive veto was toxic, and many accusations of treachery were levelled against him.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Who were the *fédérés*?
2 Why was the king's use of the veto seen as his attempt to block the progress of the revolution?
3 Why did non-juring priests present a danger to the revolution?

VETOES BY THE KING

12 November 1791: Decree ordering return of émigrés to France by 1 January 1792, otherwise declared 'suspect' and land nationalised. VETOED

19 December 1791: Decree declaring non-juring priests or refractory priests to be 'suspect'. VETOED

19 June 1792: Decree banishing all refractory clergy. VETOED

19 June 1792: Decree establishing the camp of the *fédérés* in Paris. VETOED

KEY EVENT

THE PROTEST OF 20 JUNE 1792: FIRST INVASION OF TUILERIES

Nicolas Ruault: 'By mid-June the tensions and anger of a great many Parisians were palpable [touchable]. ... The king, according to Ruault, "has lost all respect, all believability".'

Source 10.09 *Le peuple aux Tuileries, 20 Juin 1792* (The people at the Tuileries, 20 June 1792), by Denis-Auguste-Marie Raffet.

Source 10.10 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 300.

On 20 June 1792—the anniversary of both the Tennis Court Oath and Louis XVI's flight to Varennes, the *sans-culottes* held an armed demonstration, encouraged by the leaders of the Cordeliers.

That morning, about 8000 demonstrators marched to the Hôtel de Ville and then to the Legislative Assembly. The leaders were associated with the Cordeliers Club: the brewer, Santerre; the butcher, Legendre; Fournier, known as 'the American'; Varlet, a postal clerk; and Théroigne de Méricourt, Etta Palm and Pauline Léon, all members of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women (whose goal was to gain equal citizenship for women).

The crowd was a mixed group of men and women, mostly urban workers who were 'passive citizens'—and, thus, excluded from voting. They were armed with pikes, pitchforks and scythes. They entered the Assembly peacefully and presented petitions demanding the recall of the Girondin ministry and condemning Louis XVI's power of veto over legislation. Even so, they presented a direct threat to the legislators in their petition.

Petition of *sans-culottes* of Paris to Legislative Assembly

What a misfortune ... for the free men, who have delegated all their power to you, to see themselves reduced to the cruel necessity of imbruing [staining] their hands in the blood of conspirators! ... The plot is discovered; the hour is at hand. The tree of liberty that we are about to plant will flourish in peace, or blood will flow. Who then, can stop us in our course? ... Since the cause is a common one, action should be universal; if the first defenders of liberty had thus temporised, would you be sitting in this august chamber today?

Then the crowd moved on from the Assembly to the Tuileries and invaded the palace, meeting little resistance from the National Guard. Once inside the gates, they were able to reach the salon where the king was and demand that he listen to a petition read by Legendre. In the courtyard below, the crowd shouted in unison: 'No aristocrats! No veto! No priests!' and 'Long live the nation!'

Louis XVI remained calm. He put on a *bonnet rouge* and drank a toast to the revolution. The crowd further demanded that he retract the dismissal of the Girondin ministers and give up his power of veto. Louis would not make any commitment—although no help came from the Assembly or from Pétion (the mayor of Paris), until six hours had passed.

The king's courage and steadfastness won him much support in the days that followed, while the Legislative Assembly faced criticism for its failure to protect the royal family. A petition with 20,000 signatures was presented to the Assembly, condemning the demonstration at the Tuileries. Lafayette made a speech condemning the protest, and was loudly supported. Pétion, the mayor, was suspended from his post. Pro-royalist members of the National Guard volunteered for duty at the Tuileries Palace.

However, in reality, Louis XVI's days as king were numbered. He was now one step away from being imprisoned as a traitor.

DISCUSSION

In what ways did the protests at the Tuileries Palace illustrate that the Assembly was unable to continue as a constitutional monarchy?

LAFAYETTE'S LAST POLITICAL PLOT

Simon Schama: 'Spurned by those he wanted to help, the butt of ridicule and hatred in the press, Lafayette returned to his military post in Alsace'.

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 278)

Source 10.11 *Portrait of the Marquis de Lafayette as Lieutenant General in 1791,* by Joseph-Désiré Court, 1791.

From the onset of the war in April 1792, with its crippling initial defeats, Lafayette had been concerned that the monarchy was in peril. As early as May 1792, historian David Andress writes, Lafayette had begun to play 'an immensely dangerous game, trying to save the monarchy in spite of itself'.[18]

In early May 1792, Lafayette sent an envoy to the Austrian diplomat Mercy-Argenteau, a confidante of Marie Antoinette, based in Brussels. Lafayette proposed that Austria should suspend hostilities against France until he could reach Paris and, with the use of military force, secure the safety of the king and queen and a revision of the Constitution. Although this communication remained secret, Lafayette's public attitudes and past record were enough to make members of the Legislative Assembly suspicious about his intentions. These suspicious were inflamed further with his letter of 18 June 1792, in which he proposed closing the radical political clubs.[19]

Then, on 28 June 1792, Lafayette appeared in person before the Legislative Assembly. He demanded:

- closure of political clubs
- new restrictions on the freedom of the press
- suspension of the right of petition.

The Assembly did not take any of Lafayette's advice, correctly suspecting that is was a ruse to facilitate a coup d'état.

However, Lafayette had not made sufficient military preparations to ensure the success of his plans. His attempts to mobilise the National Guard were, in the words of historian Simon Schama, 'a dismal failure'.[20] Lafayette had lost his influence with the National Guard after the Champ de Mars massacre in July 1791. In addition, the king—and especially the queen—had long hated Lafayette. Marie Antoinette herself had alerted the authorities to Lafayette's intentions, as she had no desire to be 'rescued' by a man she so heartily despised. Meanwhile, Louis XVI was counting on the manifesto he had begged the Prussians to publish (see 'Brunswick Manifesto', pp. 179–180), bribery and support from the Girondins—and hoping to hold his position until the invaders arrived.[21]

Source 10.12 La Fayette-Janus, cartoon by unknown artist, c. 1791.

Lafayette now found himself ridiculed and hated by the press, rejected by the king and queen, without supporters and facing a serious legal challenge. He had abandoned his army command without permission and now faced moves to ***impeach*** him. He returned to his army in Alsace in disgrace. On 17 August 1792—just seven days after the fall of the monarchy—the new authorities in Paris suspended his commission, and Lafayette crossed the lines to the Austrian camp. He spent the next five years in an Austrian prison in Olmütz.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. In 1790, Lafayette was arguably the most popular leader in France. Why had he lost popularity by the end of 1791?
2. What treacherous actions did Lafayette undertake between April 1792 (the start of the war) and August 1792 (the fall of the monarchy)?
3. How does Lafayette's fall from popularity illustrate the new direction of the revolution?

impeach to charge someone with misconduct while in public office

KEY CHALLENGE

'THE HOMELAND IN DANGER' DECREE, 11 JULY 1792

Decree of Legislative Assembly (11 July 1792): 'Make haste, citizens, save liberty and avenge your glory.'

Meanwhile, the war had become more critical, and the threat to Paris had increased. At the end of June 1792, Jacobin leader Lazare Carnot had demanded that the Assembly issue pikes to citizens so they could protect themselves and their families against the invading forces.

By July 1792, public opinion had swung in favour of the radical leaders. The Legislative Assembly proclaimed a state of emergency. By 11 July, the Assembly was declaring that France was in danger and that all citizens must sacrifice themselves for its defence. In its decree *La patrie en danger* (The Homeland in Danger), the Assembly stated that the nation was under attack and liberty needed to be saved:

Source 10.13 Cited in Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution and Napoleon* (London: Routledge, 2002), 64.

***La patrie en danger* (The Homeland in Danger)**

> A league of kings has been formed in order to destroy it [the revolution], their battalions are advancing, they are numerous, subject to rigorous discipline and trained long ago in the art of war. ... Our armies are barely yet brought to completion, an imprudent sense of security moderated the spirit of patriotism too early; and the recruitment which was ordered did not have as much success as your representatives had hoped. Interior agitation increases the difficulty of our position ... Make haste, citizens, save liberty and avenge your glory.

On 12 July, the Legislative Assembly called for 50,000 volunteers. Such was the height of feeling that 200,000 people registered. On 13 July, Pétion was reinstated as mayor of Paris. On 17 July, the Assembly decreed the sale of seized émigré property.

The scale of the emergency made any past distinctions between 'active' and 'passive' citizens in the National Guard irrelevant. On 30 July, the Legislative Assembly formalised these arrangements and passed a decree opening the National Guard to passive citizens.

Source 10.14 *Levée en masse 1793*, by Jean-Baptiste Lesueur, 1793. Volunteers rush to enlist after hearing that the nation was in danger.

A CALL TO ARMS: *LA MARSEILLAISE*

In July 1792, the Assembly passed a decree to replace the king's personal guard with *fédérés*, the volunteer National Guardsmen from the provinces.

On the way to Paris, the *fédérés* had passed through Marseilles and learnt a song that had been written by Rouget de Lisle at the start of the war. It soon became known as *La Marseillaise* and took on the status of a revolutionary anthem.

La Marseillaise

Let us go, children of the fatherland
Our day of glory has arrived,
Against us stand tyranny
The bloody standard [flag] is raised.
The bloody standard is raised.
Do you hear in the countryside
The roar of these savage soldiers
They come right into your arms
To cut the throats of your sons and
Your countrymen.

To arms, citizens!
Form your battalions!
Let us march ...
until impure blood [that of your enemies] waters
our fields!

'Marche des Marseillais'. Song sheet published November 1792, by William Holland, London.

Source 10.15 Richard Cobb and Colin Jones, *The French Revolution: Voices from a Momentous Epoch 1789–1795* (London: Guild, 1988), 149.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1795, *La Marseillaise* became the official anthem of France. It was banned during the Napoleonic era and the Restoration, but was reinstated as a national anthem in 1879 during the Third Republic, as a pledge of the permanence of France's republic and its values.

THE BRUNSWICK MANIFESTO, 25 JULY 1792

KEY CHALLENGE

Timothy Tackett: 'Written in the name of the Prussian Commander by one of the emigrant nobles, ... this curious document seems only to have further infuriated the Parisian radicals. Ruault snarled at its "insolence" which he maintained "only increases our courage".'

All this time, as the danger to Louis XVI's life increased, the invading armies sought to protect him until he could be rescued. On 25 July 1792, a manifesto was issued in the name of the duke of Brunswick, commander of the Austrian forces. The Brunswick Manifesto, as it came to be known, was intended to frighten the French and make sure that no further harm would come to the royal family.

The Brunswick Manifesto threatened Parisians with 'the most severe punishment' if Louis XVI and his family were harmed. The goal of the Austrian forces was to:

> terminate anarchy in the interior of France, to check attacks on the throne and the Church, to re-establish legal power, to give the king the security and liberty of which he is deprived, and to enable him to exercise the legitimate authority which is his due.[22]

The manifesto further demanded the king's freedom, stating that failure to place the king 'fully at liberty' would mean that those involved would be held personally responsible, 'to be punished by military law, without hope of pardon'.[23]

As for the people of Paris, they were threatened with 'military punishment and total destruction':

Source 10.16 Mark Fielding and Margot Morecombe, *The Spirit of Change: France in Revolution* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1999).

> **The Brunswick Manifesto**
>
> If the least violence, the least outrage be done to their majesties, the King, the Queen and the Royal Family, if their security, preservation and liberty be not provided for immediately, they [the armies of Austria and Prussia] will exact an exemplary and ever memorable vengeance thereon by delivering the city of Paris to military punishment and total destruction, and the rebels who are guilty of these outrages, to the punishments they deserve.

However, the Brunswick Manifesto had the opposite effect than intended. It brought disaster—not only to Louis XVI, but also to those imprisoned in Paris because of the revolution, and to the moderate Feuillants who had sought to preserve the 1791 Constitution.

Instead of making sure the king was safe, the Brunswick Manifesto exposed him to further danger, as it confirmed the popular belief that he was leading a conspiracy against the revolution.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 What was *La patrie en danger*?

2 What was the aim of the Brunswick Manifesto? What were its demands?

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Evaluate the significance of the Brunswick Manifesto in the treatment of Louis XVI. Use evidence to support your response.

THE STORMING OF THE TUILERIES, 10 AUGUST 1792

Robespierre in speech to *fédérés* (11 July 1792): '[You are in Paris] to defend not only the "fatherland in peril" but also the "fatherland betrayed"'.

THE PRECONDITIONS TO INSURRECTION

By the end of July, over 5000 young *fédérés* had arrived in Paris from all over France. They were members of their local Jacobin clubs, and saw themselves as agents of the revolution in the provinces, frequently taking action against activities they perceived as being counter-revolutionary. They were 'armed to the teeth', as one observer put it, bringing artillery and singing their already popular battle song, and they made a powerful impression on the Parisians.

Historian Timothy Tackett tells us that the Marseillais guardsmen, 'the six hundred men who know how to die',[24] were primarily workers and artisans, and, as such, extremely militant. These young and enthusiastic volunteers were not going to depart for the battlefront until the 'problem of the king had been resolved'.[25]

On 17 July, then again on 23 July, the *fédérés* petitioned the Legislative Assembly, demanding the removal of the king. In these demands they were joined by section after Paris section.

On 3 August, news of the exact terms of the Brunswick Manifesto became known on the streets of Paris. The citizens were outraged, and further inflamed to radical action. The sections were now holding daily meetings. The distinction between 'active' and 'passive' citizens had disappeared, as sections were inviting the whole population, 'sometimes even women and adolescents' to attend meetings and vote.

There was close cooperation between the radical *fédérés* and the leaders of the sections. By the end of July, a central office had been established to coordinate policy among all sections.[26] On 1 August, the Assembly had issued the order for the pikes to be made and distributed to all citizens. The war news had worsened and France now faced the threat of invasion and defeat. In turn, this increased the threat to:

- Louis XVI and his family
- non-juring clergy
- remnants of the nobility
- anyone who did not show open and convincing patriotism.

The radical *fédérés* now ruled the streets, refusing to leave Paris. The Assembly's weakness gave strength to the *sans-culottes*, who were reinforced in their role as defenders of the revolution.

On 3 August 1792, Mayor Pétion went to the Legislative Assembly and demanded, on behalf of forty-seven out of the forty-eight sections of Paris, that the monarchy be abolished. The Assembly refused to ***depose*** the king and defeated a motion to put Lafayette on trial.

depose to remove from a throne or other high position

On 6 August 1792, a huge meeting of Parisians and *fédérés* took place in the Champ de Mars and demanded that the king abdicate. The Faubourg Saint-Antoine, which had led the sectional movement since mid-July, warned the Assembly that Louis XVI must be deposed or suspended by 9 August—or the sections would take armed action.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNE, 9–10 AUGUST 1792

KEY EVENT

The establishment of the Revolutionary Commune through the night of 9–10 August was the result of a carefully planned and widely announced mobilisation of Paris.[27] Representatives of the forty-eight sections of Paris assembled throughout the night and replaced the old municipal authority of the Hôtel de Ville.[28] After taking control of the National Guard and command of the *fédérés*, the new Revolutionary Commune agreed to attack the king's residence with the intention of removing him from the throne.

KEY EVENT

THE FALL OF THE KING, 10 AUGUST 1792: THE SECOND REVOLUTION

On 10 August 1792, orders went out from the Revolutionary Commune: the Tuileries Palace was to be taken by force, and the king deposed. About 20,000 armed *sans-culottes* from the sections converged on the palace, accompanied by the *fédérés* and sectional National Guards loyal to the Revolutionary Commune. The Tuileries Palace was defended by 900 Swiss Guards and about 300 gendarmes. There were also about 2000 National Guards stationed at the palace, but in the course of the day they abandoned their posts and joined the attackers.

Louis XVI went down to the courtyard to inspect the troops where the crowds were massing—but by then, many of the palace gendarmes and guards had deserted their posts to join the protesters. Cannons were being turned around to face the palace. The king sent a message to the Assembly, asking for protection, but none came. However, Pierre-Louis Rœderer, the public prosecutor of the Paris Department, advised Louis to abandon the Tuileries and seek refuge with his family in the National Legislative Assembly.

The Tuileries was now defended only by the Swiss Guards. Louis XVI left orders that they were not to fire on the crowd, in the hope of preventing bloodshed.

However, despite the king's order, what followed was a slaughter. Some of the Swiss Guards did not receive the king's command, as they had already begun the defence of the Tuileries. As the crowd advanced, singing *La Marseillaise*, the soldiers of the Swiss Guard moved down the steps of the palace, firing their rifles and running towards the cannon, which they then turned on the people.

The crowd fell back, but then rallied and renewed its assault. As the Swiss Guards ran out of ammunition, the crowd fell on them and slaughtered them. Then they invaded the palace, killing anyone it encountered: soldiers, servants, doorkeepers and cooks. Rooms were looted and destroyed. People were thrown out of windows or hacked to death as they tried to escape.

One of the royal servants later recalled the slaughter:

Source 10.17 Cited in Christopher Hibbert, *The French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1980), 161.

A royal servant

> Dressed in a plain coat, I managed to make my escape. Some of the Swiss who were pursued took refuge in an adjoining stable. I concealed myself in the same place. They were soon cut to pieces close to me. On hearing their cries, the master of the house ran up and [he took me back to his house with him]. Presently a body of armed men came in to see if any of the Swiss were hiding there. After a fruitless search these men, their hands red with blood, they stopped and calmly related to each other stories of the murders they had committed. I remained in the house until four o'clock in the afternoon, having before my eyes a view of all the horrors that were being perpetrated. Some of the men were still continuing the slaughter; others were cutting off the heads of those already slain; while the women, lost to all sense of shame, were committing the most indecent mutilations on the dead bodies from which they tore pieces of flesh and carried them off in triumph.

About 560 Swiss Guards were killed that day, as well as an unknown number of civilians within the Tuileries Palace. Of the attackers, some 400 were killed and many others wounded. Those Swiss Guards who were in Paris, but not at the Tuileries, were later rounded up and killed. The underground passages at the Tuileries were flooded, in an attempt to drown anyone who might be hiding there.

DID YOU KNOW?

On 12 August 1792, an English visitor to the Tuileries saw a crowd of women looting Marie Antoinette's clothing: 'How many curiosity seekers had assembled there! How many bonnets, elegant hats, rose-coloured skirts, and white petticoats flew out of the bedroom doors!' In prison, Marie Antoinette would wear black and had only one change of clothes.

Source 10.18 *Storming of the Tuileries on 10 August 1792,* by Jean Duplessis-Bertaux, 1793.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 What was the Revolutionary Commune?

2 What brought about the storming of the Tuileries?

3 Why do you think the events of 10 August 1792 are referred to by historians as the 'second revolution'?

THE AFTERMATH

The Revolutionary Commune and the power of the *sans-culottes* left the Legislative Assembly with little choice, as it could no longer pretend:

- that it held power in Paris
- that Louis XVI could remain as a constitutional monarch in France.

The new Revolutionary Commune now had more influence over the population than the elected legislature.

However, the Revolutionary Commune was not the government of France, so compromises had to be reached. The Revolutionary Commune was expanded by elections to a membership of 288, but was composed largely of unknowns. Other leaders were veterans of the Cordeliers Club and closely linked to the Montagnards (radical Jacobins): this included people such as Hébert, Chaumette, Collot d'Herbois, Fabre d'Églantine and Billaud-Varenne.

However, 'the single most influential member of the Commune,' says historian Timothy Tackett, 'was Robespierre', who was admitted on 12 August. 'No one had greater prestige among the radicals and no one possessed more consummate skill as a politician.'[30]

DID YOU KNOW?

One witness to the massacre at the Tuileries Palace was a twenty-three-year-old lieutenant colonel named Napoleon Bonaparte, who would later become emperor of France. Bonaparte later told his brother Joseph that the slaughter he saw that day affected him more profoundly than any of the killing fields he witnessed later in his career.[29]

The Temple prison.

Thus, the Assembly recognised the authority of the Revolutionary Commune, while the Revolutionary Commune accepted the decisions made by the Assembly.

Louis XVI's monarchy was suspended. The Assembly refused to end the monarchy, but confined the king and his family in the Temple prison, where they were supervised by the National Guard, under the control of the Commune. Santerre became the chief jailer of the royal family.

The Feuillants were now seen as traitors and royalists, their influence over. On 19 August, Barnave and other Feuillant leaders were arrested. They were later executed.

FINAL IMPORTANT LEGISLATION

In this climate of fear, those deputies of the Legislative Assembly who had been constitutional monarchists—which was about two-thirds of the Assembly—did not feel safe, and those who had not been arrested went into hiding and stayed away from the Assembly. This left the caretaker Assembly of about 300 deputies, which was dominated by the Girondins.

A provisional council of six ministers was appointed to take over the executive function, including Danton as minister for justice. Danton was energetic and determined, and soon emerged as the single most effective leader of the government.

On 11 August 1792—under pressure from the new Revolutionary Commune—the Assembly set a date for its dissolution, and provided for the election of a National Convention within six weeks, on the basis of ***universal manhood suffrage***.

universal manhood suffrage
the right to vote held by all adult male citizens, regardless of income, property, religion, race or any other qualification

In the six weeks between the fall of the monarchy on 10 August and the summoning of the National Convention (the new republican legislative body) on 20 September 1792, the Assembly did all that the Revolutionary Commune wanted:

- On 23 August, with the enemy just a few hundred kilometres from Paris, the Assembly decreed that all refractory priests should leave France within seven days, 'considering that the unrest excited in the kingdom by the priests who are not under oath is one of the major causes of danger of the fatherland'.[31]
- On 25 August, the Assembly took further action against seigneurialism. Feudal dues were abolished without compensation, unless there was a separate legally binding contract to validate them.

Although the promise of the August Decrees—that the feudal regime would be killed off 'in its entirety'[32]—was still not fully realised, this was a significant step forward. Further, the Assembly ordered that the lands of émigrés should now be sold in small lots, which made it possible for more modest farmers to buy land, not just wealthy bourgeois landholders. In its very last session, on 20 September 1792, the Legislative Assembly passed a divorce law that gave women 'remarkably broad grounds for leaving an unhappy or meaningless marriage'.[33]

DID YOU KNOW?
Danton was disfigured in childhood: he was gored by a bull, leaving a long scar on his face; his nose was broken after an attack by a herd of pigs; and he was scarred by smallpox. Despite this, he was considered an attractive and popular man.

NATIONAL CONVENTION ELECTIONS

Elections were held for the republican National Convention. The category of 'passive' citizen no longer existed, and no level of property ownership or tax payment was required as a voting qualification. However, voters had to be male, be over twenty-one years of age and have an income.

Domestic servants were still excluded because of their dependent status.

This created an electorate of about six million voters, which was 50 per cent more than that created by the 1791 Constitution. Voter turnout was small, probably because of the war and the political turbulence—with about 6 per cent of eligible males voting.[34] Such a limited voter turnout worked in favour of the more radical candidates.

On 20 September, the tide of the war turned, with French forces winning a victory over the Prussians at Valmy. To great elation, the National Convention convened for the first time on 20 September 1791. It unanimously agreed to abolish the monarchy and formally declared the first day of the Republic to be 22 September 1792.

In time, 22 September 1792 would become known as day one of the Republic, Year One.

VOTER REQUIREMENTS

- Male
- Aged over twenty-one years
- Have a permanent place of residence for over one year
- Domestic servants excluded

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 10 AUGUST 1792: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Simon Schama argues that the storming of the Tuileries on 10 August 1792 was a logical progression from the events at the Bastille in July 1789:

Simon Schama

> It was not an incidental moment in the history of the Revolution. It was, in fact, its logical consummation. From 1789 … it had been the willingness of politicians to exploit either the threat or the fact of violence that had given them the power to challenge constituted authority. Bloodshed was not the unfortunate by-product of revolution, it was the source of its energy. The verses of the 'Marseillaise' and the great speeches of the Girondins had spoken of the *patrie* in the absolute poetry of life and death. Perversely, only if it could be shown that blood did indeed flow in its defence could the virtues of the Revolution be shown to be worth dying for. Means had become ends.

Source 10.19 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), 617–618.

William Doyle characterises 10 August 1792 as 'a long awaited trial of strength' between the Legislative Assembly and the Commune, in which the chief victim was Louis XVI:

William Doyle

> It was the bloodiest day of the Revolution so far, but also one of the most decisive. Though the King and his family remained unscathed, his authority fell with his palace. … Few believed that he would ever sit on the throne again, unless with foreign aid.

Source 10.20 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 189.

Norman Hampson states that 'for the Parisian nobility it was 10 August 1792, rather than 14 July 1789, that marked the end of the ancien régime'.[35]

Both Timothy Tackett and Georges Lefebvre point out the importance of the role of the *fédérés* and their close relationship with the Paris sections in the planning of 10 August. On 17 July and 23 July the *fédérés* had submitted petitions to the Legislative Assembly asking for the deposition of the king. 'In this sense,' Lefebvre comments, 'the revolution of 10 August was not Parisian, as July 14 had been, but national'.[36]

In supporting this claim, Timothy Tackett writes about the national spread of the Civil War:

Timothy Tackett

> The terrible civil war in the heart of Paris had lasted little more than two hours. Yet over a thousand people had died—the greatest hecatomb [great slaughter] in the city since the sixteenth century. The largest toll was amongst the Swiss Guards, of whom some 600 were killed. But another hundred or so of the noble volunteers had also succumbed, and close to 400 insurgents were killed or wounded. The young volunteers from Marseille and Brittany [*fédérés*] caught in the crossfire of the courtyard represented the single largest number of patriot casualties. Other victims came from nearly every quarter of Paris and from many different provinces of France.

Source 10.21 Timothy Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2015), 190.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

1. Explain the consequences of the 10 August storming of the Tuileries for the Feuillant faction.
2. What further consequences were there from the actions of 10 August for other groups seeking power?
3. To what extent do you agree with Schama that 10 August was a logical progression from the storming of the Bastille in July 1789?

KEY EVENTS

THE INVASION OF FRANCE AND THE SEPTEMBER MASSACRES

Simon Schama: 'The September massacres … [arguably exposed] a central truth of the French Revolution: its dependence on organised killing to accomplish political ends.'

Meanwhile, the war was still going on. On 16 August 1792, Prussian forces had moved into France. On 19 August, Austrian forces had entered France. Just five days later, on 24 August, news reached Paris that the fortress of Longwy had fallen to the enemy. Once again, the Legislative Assembly proclaimed '*la patrie en danger*' (the nation is in danger). Then, on 2 September, Verdun was captured; it was just 140 kilometres away and the last fortified town before Paris. People in Paris began to panic.

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 279)

Georges Danton.

It was Danton who exercised enormous influence over the morale of the city. On 28 August, upon Danton's orders, house to house searches were made by officials from the Revolutionary Commune. In theory, they were searching for additional weapons that could be taken to the battlefront, but in reality they were hunting for counter-revolutionary suspects such as:

- non-juring clergy hiding in ordinary clothes
- ex-royal servants
- royalist writers.

All of these suspects would swell the populations of the prisons of Paris. Historian Simon Schama claims that Danton's 'own fearlessness and genuine belief that Paris and France would survive … was extraordinarily infectious', and that his proclamations at this time 'may well have made the difference between resolution and panic'.[37]

On 2 September 1792, Danton addressed the remnants of the Legislative Assembly still in session:

Source 10.22 Cited in Lucille Kekewich and Susan Rose, *The French Revolution: Self-Study at A-level* (London: Longman, 1990), 136–137.

Danton

One part of the people will march to the frontiers, another will dig trenches, the third, with pikes if that's all we've got, will defend the towns. Commissioners will proclaim solemnly an invitation to all citizens to arm themselves and to march for the defence of the Country. The National Assembly will become a committee of war. We demand that you join with us to assist this sublime movement of the people. We demand that whoever refuses to serve in person or to give up any arms, be punished with death. The tocsin [bell] that we are going to sound is no alarm signal, it is the charge, the charge against the enemies of the Fatherland.

Volunteers rushed to the front, and Paris was left virtually undefended. The war that political leaders and politicians had once embraced so eagerly was now threatening to bring an end to the revolution. To compound these fears, the prisons were filled with nobles and clergy who might break out and take their revenge on the population.

Fear and hysteria galvanised people into action. There were demands that royalist officers be purged from the army, that non-juring priests be rounded up, and that watch committees should arrest anyone likely to be involved in a royalist conspiracy.

Revolutionary leaders encouraged the crowds to take action. Danton encouraged citizens to take up the fight:

> Citizens, no nation on earth has ever obtained liberty without a struggle. You have traitors in your bosom; well, without them, the fight would have been over.[38]

Marat, Hébert and other radical journalists urged the people to kill the traitors. Marat demanded, 'Let the blood of traitors flow. That is the only way to save the country.' Posters appeared on walls throughout the city: 'To arms, citizens! The enemy is at our gates!'[39]

Danton's friend, Fabre d'Églantine, also fanned the flames:

> **Fabre d'Églantine**
>
> Once more, citizens, to arms! May all France bristle with pikes, bayonets, cannons and daggers, so that everyone shall be a soldier: let us clear the ranks of these vile slaves of tyranny. In the towns, let the blood of traitors be the first holocaust to Liberty, so that, in advancing to meet the common enemy, we leave nothing behind to disquiet us.

Source 10.23 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), 630.

During the night of 2 September 1792, crowds of *sans-culottes* armed with axes, knives and pikes attacked the prisons, slaughtering without mercy the people who were held there. The massacres continued for four days.

Altogether, of the approximately 2700 prisoners jailed in Paris, about 1200–1400 died; this included 240 priests who were either massacred by the *sans-culottes* or sentenced to death by paralegal courts of *sans-culottes*, which had been set up quickly for that purpose.

DID YOU KNOW?
The 1792 September Massacres were not confined to Paris. Throughout the countryside and in the towns, violent murders and arson attacks occurred, either in retribution for past grievances or because nobles and priests were believed to be in league with the invading enemy.

There is some evidence, although it is not conclusive, to suggest that the radicals in the Revolutionary Commune had advance knowledge of the intended killings. For example, various individuals were rescued from the prisons in the first days of September, among them a member of the Legislative Assembly and the headmaster of Robespierre's and Danton's old school, Louis-le-Grand.[40]

Much of the blame for the September Massacres can be attributed to the failure of Roland, minister for the interior, and Danton, minister for justice, to intervene. Roland remained silent about the massacres until after they were over. Danton 'turned a blind eye to the violence he clearly knew was about to take place in Paris'.[41] On 3 September 1792, he was reported as saying that the 'executions were necessary to appease the people of Paris'.[42] While the massacres were happening, no one in power even attempted to stop them.

The 1792 September Massacres further exposed the great divide between the radical Revolutionary Commune and the moderate Legislative Assembly. The Commune was hostile to the Assembly's failure to end the monarchy and bring Louis XVI to trial. The Assembly, controlled by unaligned deputies and the moderate 'faction of the Gironde'—as Robespierre was now calling the Girondins—was horrified by the bloodlust of the *sans-culottes*. The *sans-culottes* saw the massacres as a legitimate means of defending the revolution against its enemies to save Paris, but to the Girondins, the people involved were bloody murderers.

By September 1792, the political landscape in France was radically different from what it had been at the opening of the Legislative Assembly in October 1791.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. How did Danton's actions and rhetoric protect France from capitulation in August–September 1792?
2. How did the words of Danton, Hébert and Marat give 'agency' to the mob?

THE SEPTEMBER MASSACRES: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Historians have different views on the September Massacres. John Hall Stewart has written that they must be understood 'in the light of circumstances. They were occasioned by fear and hysteria. To the average Frenchman they doubtless seemed a regrettable but unavoidable necessity.'[43]

Stewart further concludes that 'at times it is difficult to tell just when the local authorities lose control of such a situation'.[44] William Doyle also attributes the massacres to 'the paranoid atmosphere in Paris' and to 'the desire of the Commune for revenge on its enemies'.[45]

George Rudé focuses less on the violence of the massacres than their political significance:

Source 10.24 George Rudé, *The French Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 79.

George Rudé

Whatever their origins and unsavoury as they were, the massacres were an event of some importance: they appeared to complete the destruction of the enemy some weeks before the volunteers at Valmy, on 20 September, routed Brunswick's army and drove it back across the frontier. Thus the Republic, proclaimed that autumn, became established on what seemed a solid enough foundation—by the victory of the Revolution over its enemies at home and abroad.

However, Simon Schama makes no excuses for the massacres, seeing them as evidence that violence was the 'motor of the Revolution'. According to Schama:

Source 10.25 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), 637.

Simon Schama

The September massacres … [arguably exposed] a central truth of the French Revolution: its dependence on organised killing to accomplish political ends. For however virtuous the principles of kingless France were supposed to be, their power to compel allegiance depended, from the very beginning, on the spectacle of death.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Using Sources 10.24, 10.25, the information above and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline four different reasons for the violence of the September Massacres.
2. To what extent do the actions of the revolutionary leaders provide evidence for one or another of the above historical interpretations?
3. To what extent does the record of the *journées* over the period 1789–1792 support Schama's interpretation that the revolution depended on organised killing to achieve political ends?

CHAPTER 10 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- **Fears about the loyalty and commitment of Louis XVI to the revolution were well-founded. The king consistently vetoed proposed legislation against counter-revolutionaries.**
- **War was proposed by Brissot, but supported by most of the country.**
- **In April 1792, Louis XVI declared war on Austria.**
- **The popular movement of Paris identified themselves as *sans-culottes* and wore the *bonnet rouge*. They invaded the Tuileries Palace on 20 June 1792, demanding the king ratify the vetoed decrees.**
- **Petitions and calls for a republic became insistent, and were boosted by the radicalised *fédérés* who arrived in Paris throughout July.**
- **The sectional committees of Paris planned and carried out the takeover of the Commune of Paris during the night of 9–10 August 1792. They replaced the Commune of Paris with the Revolutionary Commune representing the citizen *sans-culottes* of the forty-eight sections.**
- **On 10 August, the second invasion of the Tuileries Palace took place, with the Marseilles *fédérés* spearheading the attack against the royal bodyguard: the Swiss Guards.**
- **Louis XVI and his family were taken into custody in the Temple prison.**
- **Authority was divided between the Revolutionary Commune of Paris, the Executive Committee led by Danton as minister for justice, and the remains of the Legislative Assembly.**
- **There was enormous panic as the enemy armies approached Paris. This spread fear of internal enemies, such as the priests, nobles and counter-revolutionaries in the prisons of Paris.**
- **Incited by radical popular leaders, armed gangs of *sans-culottes* worked their way through the prisons from 2–6 September; they held ad hoc 'trials' and summarily executed the 'guilty', butchering them with axes and meat cleavers.**

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write a 250–350-word extended response to the topic below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain the extent to which the absolute monarchy of Louis XVI was still intact by July 1792.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Referring to Chapters 9 and 10, compare and contrast the revolutionary experiences of two or more of the following groups of people between October 1789 and December 1792. Present your findings in a slideshow, as a diagram, or as a scripted conversation.

Groups:

- The bourgeoisie
- Parish priests and other clergy
- Urban workers
- The nobility
- Women
- Peasants

TYPES OF CHANGE

Make a timeline for the year 1792, sorting events from this chapter into the following types of change: political, economic, social and cultural.

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'The revolutionary consensus of 1789 had vanished by September 1792.' Discuss.
- To what extent had revolutionary ideals been achieved by late 1792? What, if any, compromises had been made?
- Why did France go to war with Austria and Prussia? What were the consequences for the new regime?
- 'Louis XVI continued to be a pivotal figure in France after the revolution.' Discuss, with specific reference to the events of 1792.
- To what extent had the absolute authority of Louis XVI been transformed into popular sovereignty by the end of 1792?

THE RADICALISATION OF THE REVOLUTION (1792–1793)

'I die innocent of all the crimes laid to my charge; I pardon those who have occasioned my death; and I pray to God that the blood you are going to shed may never be required of France.'

—The last words of Louis XVI

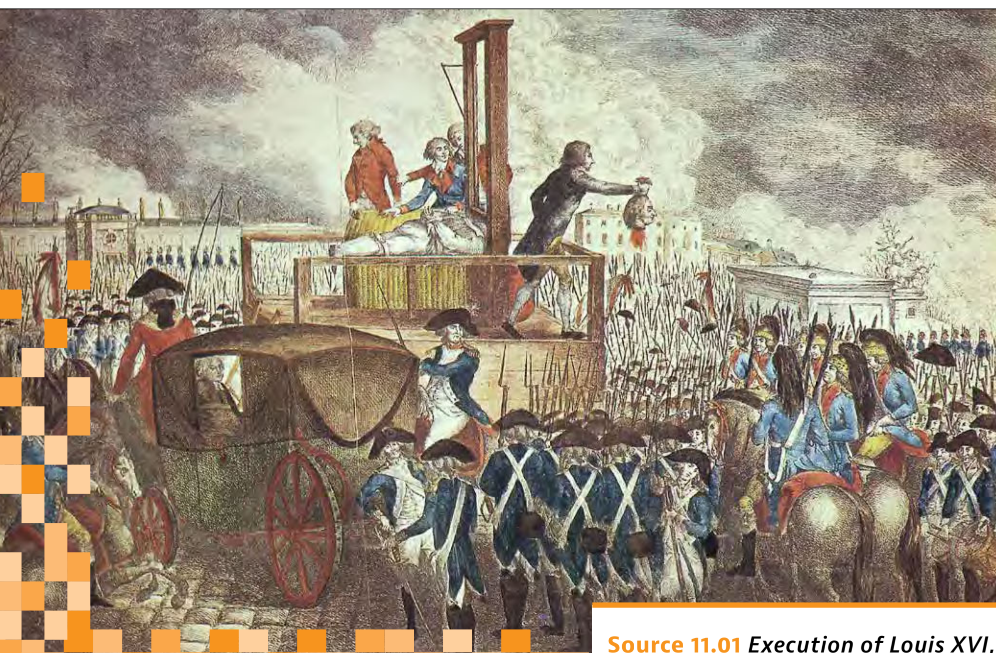
In September 1792 the French Republic was born. It was to be governed by National Convention, elected for the first time by full manhood suffrage. While the new republic would require a rewritten constitution, the Convention had more immediate problems in:

- how to deal with the king
- how to win the foreign war.

Deputies debated whether the king could be put on trial by the people, and who would sit in judgement. After the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793, the Convention deliberately broadened the number of countries they were fighting against to include Britain, Spain and the Netherlands (as well as Austria and Prussia), thus, creating a coalition of foreign enemies who threatened France on five external fronts.

During March and April 1793, the Convention decided to establish a strongly centralised government with institutions and laws for social control—effectively a policy of Terror. The Terror was most active in the Vendée. The people of the Vendée had supported neither the Civil Constitution of the Clergy nor the dethronement of the king, and a bitter civil war broke out between government forces and Vendéan rebels. In turn, the population of the Vendée region suffered horrific reprisals at the hands of revolutionary troops.

Meanwhile, in Paris, the Girondins followed a policy of hostility towards the *sans-culottes*. This led to a popular uprising on 29 May–2 June 1793, when a crowd of 30,000 people laid siege to the Convention and demanded the expulsion of the Girondins.



Source 11.01 *Execution of Louis XVI*, by Georg Heinrich Sieveking, 1793.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why was the division of deputies into factions the key political weakness in the National Convention?
- What were the legal and ethical difficulties of placing the king on trial?
- What were the external and internal results of the king's execution?
- Why did the National Convention decide to launch a policy of Terror in 1793?

CHAPTER 11

A NEW REPUBLIC

Jacques Pinet, deputy in the National Convention: 'As their first major decree, [the National Convention] unanimously vowed the abolition of the monarchy and the creation of the First French Republic … the whole Convention roared its approval, with shouts of "Long live the nation". … It seemed like the hall might collapse from the thundering applause.'

On 20 September 1792, the new Assembly of France gathered. It was now called the National Convention, and had a range of deputies, from the peasant Jacques Chevalier to the former Duc d' Orléans—who had changed his name to Philippe-Egalité.[1]

On 21 September the deputies held their first formal sitting. They restated their commitment to:

- the sovereignty of the people
- the protection of all persons and property
- the abolition of the monarchy.

On 22 September, the deputies declared from that day on, all public documents should be dated from the first year of the French Republic: 'Year One of French Liberty'. This created a new republican calendar. While the new deputies reached consensus on these issues, they had fierce confrontations over the major challenges facing the National Convention. This included:

- creating legislation for a successful war effort
- conducting the trial and execution of Louis XVI
- establishing the principles of a new republican constitution for France.

These three issues created fierce debate and dissent between the deputies of the two main factions: the Girondists and the increasingly powerful Montagnards (mountain men).

Also on 20 September 1792—the day the Convention first sat—the French army won a victory over the allied armies at Valmy. General Kellermann and General Dumouriez, with more men but fewer guns, succeeded in turning back the Prussian troops and changing the course of the war. This led to a boost in the number of recruits joining the army, with 20,000 men volunteering to go into battle to defend the revolution.[2] General Dumouriez then moved to 'liberate' the countries to the north: Belgium and the Netherlands. On 6 November 1792, Dumouriez won a major battle at Jemappes, while other French armies invaded the Rhineland and the states of Savoy and Nice.

KEY EVENTS

22 September 1792
Convention proclaims abolition of monarchy, declaring France a republic

10 December 1792
Convention's trial of King Louis XVI begins

21 January 1793
Louis XVI executed

11 March 1793
Vendée region revolts

13 July 1793
Jean-Paul Marat assassinated by Charlotte Corday

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

What beliefs and attitudes underpinned French republicanism and the decision to restart the calendar at 'Year One'?

KEY DEVELOPMENT

FACTIONS IN THE CONVENTION

Jean-Baptiste Louvet: 'There exist only two parties in France. The first [the Girondins] is composed of *philosophes*; the second [the Montagnards] of thieves, robbers and murderers.'

In the Convention, power was divided between the two main factions: the Girondins and the Montagnards. The Montagnards was a faction made up of radical Jacobins and Cordeliers.

GIRONDINS

There were about 180 Girondins. Their leaders were Brissot, Vergniaud and Roland. They represented the more conservative and wealthy landowners and factory owners who lived in the countryside and provincial cities. At the time, the bourgeoisie was suffering from the economic downturn caused by the war, and was antagonised by the way that Paris decided the policies for the whole of France.

The Girondins saw themselves as protecting the liberties of these outlying regions against the more radical policies of Paris. They wanted a stable, federalist system of government in which power was shared by all the provinces, rather than having centralised power in the hands of the Convention in Paris.

The Girondin deputies were strongly opposed to the savagery of the *sans-culottes*. Bitter antagonism emerged between the Girondins and the Montagnards as a result of two events: the invasion of the Tuileries Palace on 10 August, and the September Massacres. The Girondins blamed Montagnard leaders Marat, Danton and Robespierre for the butchery of these events.

The Girondins believed that Robespierre had attempted to have the Revolutionary Commune arrest members of their group—including their leaders Brissot and Vergniaud—during the September Massacres. By October, the Girondins took action to have Montagnard leader Marat placed on trial. On 29 October, Girondin deputy Louvet accused Marat of creating a personality cult around himself and of wanting to become a dictator.

However, as Marat was a respected and popular leader, this led to a counterattack by the Montagnards, who accused the Girondins of initiating secret correspondence with the king.[3] The Girondins' attempts backfired, and led its more moderate members to align themselves with the Jacobins and against the Girondins.

DID YOU KNOW?

At the opening session of the National Convention, groups of old political allies sat together. The Girondins disapproved of the violence used by the *sans-culottes* on 10 August and during the prison massacres. They blamed Robespierre, Danton, Marat and the 'Mountain' for not stopping these excesses. The Girondins called out epithets (phrases) of abuse across the meeting hall to the Mountain: 'You drinkers of blood!', 'You Septembrists!' The ugly division between the two factions was intensified because of the bitter personal enmity (hostility) between Brissot and Robespierre that undermined the work of the Convention during 1793.

MONTAGNARDS

There were 200–300 Montagnards, recruited from members of the Jacobins and Cordeliers clubs. The Montagnards drew their power from their alliance with the Parisian popular movement—the urban poor and the *sans-culottes*. Where the Girondins believed in a federalist system, the Montagnards believed in strong, centralised government.

Early on, the Jacobins had supported physiocratic notions of free trade and the abolition of guilds. However, by 1793 they had modified their beliefs because price inflation was causing increasing urban poverty. On 12 February 1793, the forty-eight Paris sections petitioned for controls on grain prices; by September, the Montagnards would bring in the 'Law of the Maximum' in an attempt to regulate the prices of essential goods.

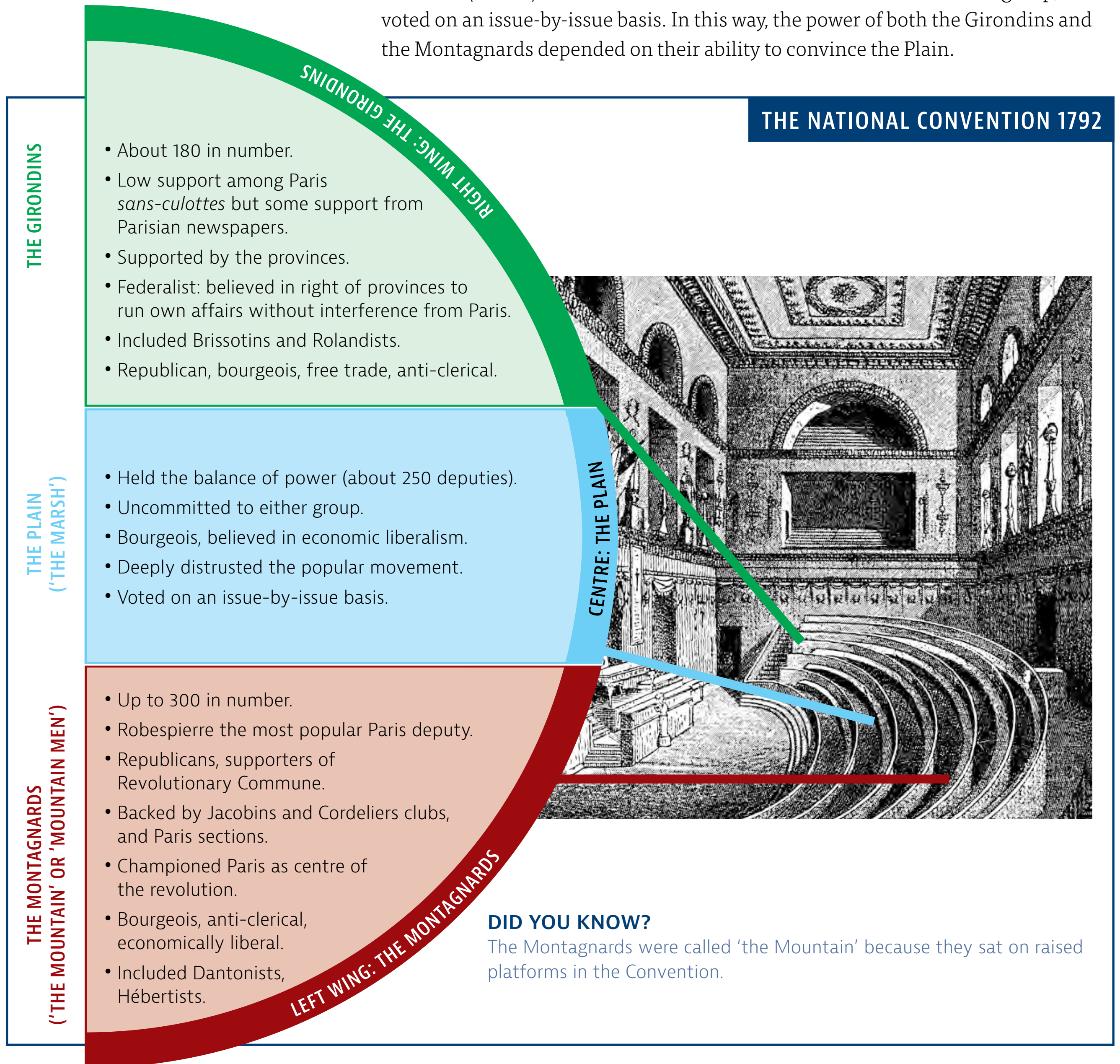
MONTAGNARDS

JACOBINS
- Robespierre
- Couthon
- Saint-Just
- Carnot

CORDELIERS
- Danton
- Marat
- Desmoulins
- Hébert

THE PLAIN

However, neither the Girondins nor the Montagnards controlled the National Convention. In the middle ground were about 250 deputies, known as 'the Plain' or *Marais* (Marsh). Members of the Plain were not committed to either group, and voted on an issue-by-issue basis. In this way, the power of both the Girondins and the Montagnards depended on their ability to convince the Plain.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Montagnards were called 'the Mountain' because they sat on raised platforms in the Convention.

KEY IDEAS

Copy and complete this table comparing and contrasting the views of the different groups:

GROUP	VIEW OF ECONOMICS	VIEW OF PARIS COMMUNE	VIEW OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS
Girondins			
Plain			
Montagnards			

A MORAL AND POLITICAL DILEMMA: THE KING

Antoine St Just: 'No man can reign innocently. The folly is all too evident. Every king is a rebel and a usurper. ... Louis must be judged promptly, but only by deciding whether or not he is the enemy of the French people and if he is, then putting him swiftly to death.'

The first critical issue facing the new National Convention was what to do with the deposed king. Could Louis XVI be tried? If so, did the National Convention have the right to try him? Also, what should be done with him if he were found guilty?

Louis XVI's correspondence with Austria—which had been discovered in the Tuileries Palace in November 1792—formed the basis of his trial. As Austria was France's enemy, any citizen engaged with the enemy was, by definition, a traitor. With Louis XVI now locked up in the Temple prison, his guilt was accepted by the deputies and by the majority of the people of Paris, so the verdict was a foregone conclusion.

LOUIS XVI'S TRIAL

On 11 December 1792, 'Citizen Louis Capet'—as the king was now known, after being deposed—was indicted before the National Convention and accused of 'having committed a multitude of crimes in the establishment of [his] tyranny', and having 'violated the sovereignty of the people'.[4] Specifically, the indictment mentioned the king's flight to Varennes, the massacre at the Champ de Mars, a conspiracy with Lafayette and Mirabeau, and financing counter-revolution within France.

THE KING'S DEFENCE

Historian David Jordan writes that Louis XVI had decided on his defence at the time of his indictment, making his own decision without reference to others. He would not defend his actions as an anointed king, but rather as a constitutional monarch who had fulfilled his oath of office.

One of the king's key arguments was that after his imprisonment in the Tuileries Palace on 6 October 1789, all oaths that he had made of loyalty to the Constitution of 1791 had been made under duress—and were, therefore, null and void. It is clear the king knew that he would not be acquitted. On their first meeting in the Temple prison, the king told his lawyer Malesherbes:

> I am sure they will make me perish. They have the power and the will to do so. That does not matter. Let us concern ourselves with my trial as if I could win, and I will win, since the memory that I will leave will be without stain.[5]

DID YOU KNOW?

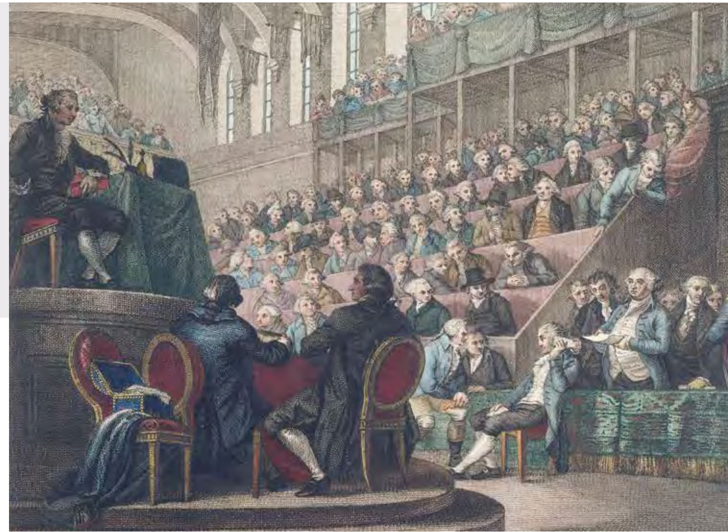
The lawyer who defended Louis XVI at his trial was Malesherbes, known to all as an honest man and a defender of individual liberties. To defend Louis XVI was dangerous. When Malesherbes was asked by the Convention, 'What makes you so bold?' he replied, 'Contempt for life'. In September 1793, the Malesherbes' family was arrested and Malesherbes had to witness his family being executed before he himself was put to death.

Over the following weeks, the king's trial became public entertainment rather than a serious legal battle. L.S. Mercier was a deputy to the Convention and a Girondin supporter. In 1797, he recalled the atmosphere of the courtroom:

L.S. Mercier on the trial of Louis XVI

> The far end of the room was transformed into a grandstand, where ladies in the most charming loose attire ate ices and oranges and drank liqueurs. We went to pay our respects; we returned to our place. The ushers played the part of attendants at boxes at the opera. They were constantly to be seen opening the doors of the reserved galleries. ... The public galleries ... were never less than crammed with foreigners, and people of every class. The betting was open in every neighbouring café.

Source 11.02 L.S. Mercier, *The New Paris* (1797), cited in Reay Tannahill, *Paris in Revolution: A Collection of Eye-Witness Accounts* (London: The Folio Society, 1996), 75.



Source 11.03 Louis XVI, now addressed as 'Louis Capet', responding to charges at his trial. Note the setting, with the president of the elected body (upper left) sitting far higher than the king (lower right), who stands on the floor. The lawyers for the prosecution (the National Convention) sit at the table below the president, and a reference is made to the supposedly incriminating evidence found in an iron chest in the Tuileries Palace, which is shown on the third chair. The king's defence team stands behind him. Members of the public look on from the galleries.

However, just how to convict Louis Capet, and the penalty he should pay, proved a source of division. The Girondins in the National Convention found themselves in a difficult position. As moderates, they did not wish to vote for the death of the king. The 1791 Constitution had declared Louis XVI's person to be 'sacred and inviolable'. They believed that the best way to decide his fate would be to have a referendum, to consult the French people. In theory, a referendum would help restore national unity by destroying the suspicion that Paris was trying to dictate to the rest of France—and, most importantly, it would honour the idea of the sovereignty of the people.

For the Girondins, the best solution to the problem was that the king should abdicate the throne, but not suffer the death penalty.

The Jacobins and Cordeliers wanted immediate execution. On 3 December 1792, Robespierre pointed out to the Convention that the people had already judged the king on 10 August 1792, and that to hold another 'formal' trial was to put the revolution itself on trial: 'If the King is not guilty, then those who have dethroned him are.'[6] Tension increased, with extreme responsibility on the deputies, as they knew that all of Europe was watching them. Marat further demanded that the decisions be reached publicly, so that any 'traitors' in the Assembly could be known.

THE CONVENTION PASSES JUDGEMENT

On 14 January 1793, three questions were put to the Convention:

1. *'Is Louis Capet guilty of conspiracy against public liberty and of attacks on the general security of the state*?' On 15 January, the deputies voted unanimously that he was—although some added qualifications.
2. *'Will the judgement of the National Convention against Louis be submitted for public ratification*?' This question was also asked on 15 January, and the majority of deputies voted 'No'.
3. *'What penalty should be inflicted*?' This final question was voted on after a public debate that lasted twenty-four hours.

The deputies cast their votes verbally and as individuals. These votes would mark each man for the rest of his life as either a:

- 'regicide'—voting for the execution of the king
- 'non-regicide'—voting against the execution of the king.

The result was a majority in favour of the death penalty: 387 deputies voted for execution, and 334 voted against, giving a majority of 53 votes to those in favour.[7] The Jacobins demanded that the penalty be carried out immediately—perhaps to stop any of the moderates in the Convention from rethinking their position. Marat declared, 'The Republic is only a house of cards until the head of the tyrant falls under the axe of the law'.[8]

Source 11.04 A nineteenth-century engraving showing Louis Capet greeting his lawyer Malesherbes in his cell on 17 January 1793. Malesherbes is telling Louis about the guilty verdict and the sentence of execution.

DID YOU KNOW?

Of the 749 deputies in the National Convention, only 721 were recorded in the final vote. A small number of deputies, terrified at the gravity of the decision and the public nature of the vote, absented themselves on various pretexts.

The position adopted by the Girondins created the perception, at least in Paris, that they were traitors. Historian Michael Adcock argues that 'it was the resistance by Girondin deputies that so profoundly alienated the people of Paris and undermined the credibility of the government'.[9] He concludes that the decision to execute Louis Capet created a lasting division between the Montagnards and the Girondins, as well as between the Girondins and the people of Paris, leaving 'a terrible legacy of bitterness' in the Convention.[10]

KEY EVENT

THE KING'S EXECUTION

Louis XVI: 'Do what you will; I will drink this cup, even to the dregs.'

Louis Capet was to be publicly executed by guillotine on 21 January 1793. When he returned to prison after the trial, Louis asked to see his family and told them of the verdict. He spent the night alone. In the morning he asked for scissors to cut his hair, so that it might not impede the descent of the guillotine blade. But his request was refused. He asked to see the Irish priest, Father Edgeworth, who was his minister, and made his last confession. Then he was escorted by two soldiers to the carriage that would take him to his death. Father Edgeworth and two policemen accompanied him. Surrounded by an armed guard, Louis travelled to the Place de la Révolution. The carriage arrived at 10.10 am. By 10.20 am, he was dead.

COMPROMISED IDEALS

1. Robespierre had been an ardent critic of the death penalty early in the revolution. Why then did he support the execution of the king?
2. Why didn't the National Convention ask the people for their decision before executing Louis Capet?

The order was given to bind the king's hands before his execution. Louis protested against this humiliation and attempted to resist. Father Edgeworth recorded this testimony:

Father Edgeworth's testimony

This was the most agonizing moment of this whole terrible morning; one minute more and the best of kings would have received an outrage a thousand times worse than death, by the violence they were about to use towards him. He appeared to fear this himself, and turning his head, seemed to ask my advice. At first, I remained silent, but when he continued to look at me, I said, with tears in my eyes: 'Sire, in this new outrage I see one last resemblance between your Majesty and the God who is about to be your reward.' At these words, he raised his eyes to heaven with an expression of unalterable sadness. 'Surely' he replied, 'it needs nothing less than His example to make me submit to such an insult.' Then, turning to the executioners: 'Do what you will; I will drink this cup, even to the dregs.'

Source 11.05 Cited in Reay Tannahill, *Paris in Revolution: A Collection of Eye-Witness Accounts* (London: The Folio Society, 1996), 76.

His coat removed, his hair now chopped so as not to impede the blade and his hands pinioned, the king climbed the stairs to the guillotine with difficulty and attempted to address the crowd:

Louis Capet addresses the crowd

I die innocent of all the crimes with which I am charged. I forgive all those who are guilty of my death and I pray God that the blood you are about to shed may never be required of France.

Source 11.06 Cited in Reay Tannahill, *Paris in the Revolution: A Collection of Eye-Witness Accounts* (London: The Folio Society, 1996), 77.

Louis was unable to say more. The executioner ordered a roll of drums, drowning out his voice. He was strapped to the plank and placed in position. The blade fell and the executioner, Sanson, held up Louis Capet's head for the crowd to see.

Mercier was there and recorded the scene:

Mercier

His blood flows. Cries of joy from eighty thousand armed men rend the air. The cries are repeated all along the quays. I see the pupils of the Collège des Quatre Nations raising their hats on high. His blood flows and there are people who dip a fingernail, a quill … in it. There is one who tastes it and says 'It is vilely salt!' An executioner at the scaffold sells small bundles of his hair; people buy the ribbon that tied it. Everyone carries off a small fragment of his clothing or some other bloodstained remnant from the tragic scene.

Source 11.07 Cited in Reay Tannahill, *Paris in Revolution: A Collection of Eye-Witness Accounts* (London: The Folio Society, 1996), 77.

DID YOU KNOW?

The guillotine was a merciful death compared to previous forms of punishment. In eighteenth-century Europe, the most common method of execution was drawing, hanging and quartering. The criminal was first 'drawn' (or stretched) on the rack, then brought to the place of execution. Once there, he was hanged until he lost consciousness, cut down before death and disembowelled, with his intestines pulled out of his body. Women were not subjected to this punishment, as the final phase would have exposed the whole body.

Source 11.08 'Matter for reflection for Crowned Jugglers'. The hand of the executioner, Sanson, holds up the head of the king for the crowd to see. The line of text printed below that is a quotation from the Marseillaise: 'that their impure blood should water our fields!'

The script at the bottom is from a letter that Robespierre wrote to his constituents on 21 January 1793. He describes the execution in some detail, then declares that the execution has 'imprinted a grand character on the National Convention and makes it worth of the confidence of the French'.[11]

The body of Louis XVI—king of the French, Citizen Capet—was taken to the Madeleine cemetery to be buried between the graves of his Swiss Guards that were massacred on 10 August and the victims of the Champ de Mars massacre. His body was put into a grave and covered with quicklime, so that it would dissolve quickly and leave no relics for royalists to retrieve.

On 23 January 1793, the Convention issued a proclamation to the French people:

Source 11.09 Cited in Reay Tannahill, *Paris in the Revolution: A Collection of Eye-Witness Accounts* (London: The Folio Society, 1996), 293.

Proclamation to the people

Citizens, the tyrant is no more. For a long time the cries of victims, whom war and public dissension have spread over France and Europe, loudly protested his existence. He has paid his penalty and only acclamations for the Republic and for liberty have been heard from the people.

The execution of Capet outraged the other monarchies of Europe, which were already angry over Danton's declaration in the National Convention's Decree of Fraternity (19 November 1791) that France intended to expand its borders and spread the revolution throughout Europe.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What was the basis of Louis XVI's defence when he was tried for 'committing a multitude of crimes in the establishment of his tyranny'?
2. Why were the Girondins unwilling to call for the death penalty even though they recognised Louis XVI was guilty?

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 11.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Explain how the former First and Second Estates were viewed in France by 1793.
2. Outline why the Convention ultimately decided to eradicate the monarchy in France.
3. Analyse the extent to which the response by the Convention compromised the revolutionary ideals of the new society.

ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

Discuss your own personal response to the execution of Louis XVI. To what extent was it necessary? What other options could have been explored?

Source 11.10 *The Zenith of French Glory. The Pinnacle of Liberty. Religion, Justice, Loyalty and all the Bugbears of Unenlightened Minds, Farewell!* by James Gillray, 1793.

This satirical view of the radicalism of the French Revolution appeared in Britain in February 1793, after the execution of Louis XVI.

THE EUROPEAN WAR INTENSIFIES

William Doyle: '*Regicide* meant there would be no compromise, no going back. ... Throughout Europe, it made the Revolution far more enemies than friends.'

regicide killing the king

One result of the execution of Louis XVI was the suspension of diplomatic relations between France and the other European powers, which signalled that the war would inevitability escalate. Increasingly, the other European leaders felt that the French Revolution must be crushed before it spread, so that the balance of power in Europe could be maintained, along with political stability.

In February 1793, rather than waiting for a conflict that threatened to overwhelm it, France declared war on Britain and the Dutch Republic, then on Spain. These countries joined with Austria and Prussia to form the First Coalition, which meant that France was now facing the combined strength of the European powers. 'The Kings in alliance try to intimidate us,' Danton declared. 'We hurl at their feet, as a gage [challenge] of battle, the French King's head.'[12]

France was now surrounded by enemies who were determined to overturn the revolution. This raised the levels of tension in the National Convention and in the wider population. Fears of counter-revolution, of traitors within France working for its destruction and of betrayals by people claiming to be patriots, made it increasingly problematic to criticise the actions of self-proclaimed 'patriots' such as the Montagnards and their supporters, the *sans-culottes*. This undermined the position of the Girondins.

LARGE-SCALE CONSCRIPTION **KEY DEVELOPMENT**

On 24 February 1793, the National Convention ordered the conscription of 300,000 extra men into the Revolutionary Army to meet the demands of the escalation of the war. It was called the *levée en masse* (mass conscription).

'Conscription of 300,000 men'

All French citizens from the age of eighteen to fully forty years, unmarried or widowers without children, are in a state of permanent requisition until the date of the completion of the effective recruiting of the newly levied 300,000 men hereinafter decreed ... to the number of 300,000 men who are to be raised shall be added the numbers of men enrolled for the navy plus the number of national volunteers presumed to be with the colours, who shall be estimated at 250 per battalion; the total number resulting from this operation shall be divided among the departments in proportion to their population.

Source 11.11 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 402.

KEY GROUP

Women were among the conscripts. As historian Peter McPhee puts it, 'After the call for 300,000 conscripts in March 1793, the looming menace and rushed formation of battalions of volunteers ... had opened up spaces for women keen to join the ranks'.[13] Historian David Andress adds further detail: 'At least forty women are known to have served in the ranks 1792–1794 and there may well have been hundreds of others.'[14]

The Decree of 30 April 1793 ordered all such women home from the ranks, but it was widely ignored—and many women continued to fight, successfully disguised as men. They included 13-year-old Anne Quatresols, a cavalry trooper who won honours in half a dozen battles, and Félicité Duquet, known as 'Vadeboncoeur' (Go with a good heart), who served on the northern border winter of 1792–1793. Duquet's sex was only

DID YOU KNOW?

Married men were exempt from conscription. This led to a marked increase in marriages throughout France. Where in the pre-revolutionary years there was an average of 240,000 marriages per year, in both 1793 and 1794 there were over 325,000 marriages.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Which countries formed the First Coalition?
2 What did the Decree of 30 April 1793 order?
3 How did the events of early 1793 worsen divisions among politicians and ordinary French people about the aims of the revolution?
4 Why did the National Convention vote to declare war on three more countries when they had not defeated the countries they were already fighting?

discovered when she asked for a discharge on grounds of ill health at the end of winter, and her commanding officer testified in her release papers that 'she had conducted herself with valour and courage in all the actions of the unit'.

The *levée en masse* decree was met with protests and riots throughout France. This was because of:

- general hostility to the conscription of young men
- other accumulated grievances, both religious and political.

Historian Timothy Tackett argues that in the eyes of much of the rural population, particularly in the west of France, the decrees of the revolution had:

- taken away their priests
- killed their king
- passed laws that did not reduce their taxes—and sometimes even increased them.

Rough and arrogant National Guards had been sent from the towns to enforce these laws. Now was the ultimate indignity: the government expected young conscripts to die for this revolution in a war that was being fought in foreign territory, while the politicians who argued for the war remained at home.

Tackett quotes one rebel leader who explained that 'the conscription law brought about an explosion of indignation among people already long unhappy with the wrongs they had suffered under the revolution'.[15] The historian Donald Sutherland goes into detail:

Source 11.12 D.M.G. Sutherland, *France 1789–1815: Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (London: Fontana Press, 1989), 167.

Donald Sutherland

> Young men tore down liberty trees, burned draft lists, beat up mayors or National Guardsmen, or constitutional curés [priests] and donned white royalist cockades. North of the Loire ... people armed with hunting weapons and farm tools marched on the towns behind white flags demanding the abolition of the districts, which were thought to be the source of every evil from the Civil Constitution to arbitrary taxes.

Uprisings broke out in many large towns, notably Lyons, Marseilles and Bordeaux. Provincial France was in an uproar with people opposed to the direction of the revolution (this would later evolve into the Federalist Revolts of June–August 1793) as well as people who wanted to *counter* the revolution entirely. This type of rebellion was particularly fierce in the four departments in the west-central region of France, known as the Vendée.

KEY CHALLENGE

COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN THE VENDÉE

The Curé Chevallier: '[Frenchmen on both sides] turning their fury and rage against one another ... ultimately forgot they were human beings.'

The population of the Vendée region had long resisted being told what to do by Paris. When the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was issued in July 1790, the area remained staunchly loyal to the Church—with 90 per cent of the local priests refusing to take the Clerical Oath that followed in November 1790.

By 9 October 1791, the Legislative Assembly was being informed of armed uprisings against the state in the Vendée region. This influenced the passing of a further decree in November:

The Decree Requiring Non-Juring Priests to take the Civic Oath

The National Assembly, having heard the report of the civil disturbances dispatched in the department of the Vendée ... relative to the disturbances instigated in several departments of the Kingdom, under the pretext of religion [believe] that for the enemies of the Constitution, religion is only a pretext [and] ... that such motives require that the legislative body take major political measures to repress the rebels who conceal their plots behind a sacred veil.

Source 11.13 Cited in John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 276.

Priests who refused to take the Civic Oath were 'deemed suspect of revolt against the law and of sinister intent toward the *Patrie*'.[16] The penalty was removal of the priest from his parish and the forfeit of his stipend (annual income) from the state. Although Louis XVI vetoed the decree, it came into effect immediately, resulting in the arrest and imprisonment of non-juring priests. This disturbed loyal Catholics who believed that the pope should govern the Church, and who were loyal to their priests and the practices of the Catholic religion.

The execution of Louis XVI in January 1793 added to the flame of counter-revolution. In general, the people of the Vendée were conservative and supported royalty. Besides, the revolution had not brought any tangible benefits to the peasants: the sale and redistribution of church land generally benefited the more affluent bourgeoisie.

Source 11.14 *Forging Musket Barrels for the French Revolutionary Army,* by Pierre-Etienne Le Sueur, 1793.

The trigger for outright rebellion came in February 1793 with the decree for a *levée en masse*—essentially military conscription. The *levée* would take the young men of the Vendée away from the farms or their place of employment. In addition, the law exempted all public officials and National Guards, who were described as 'mobilised in place' and so stayed home.

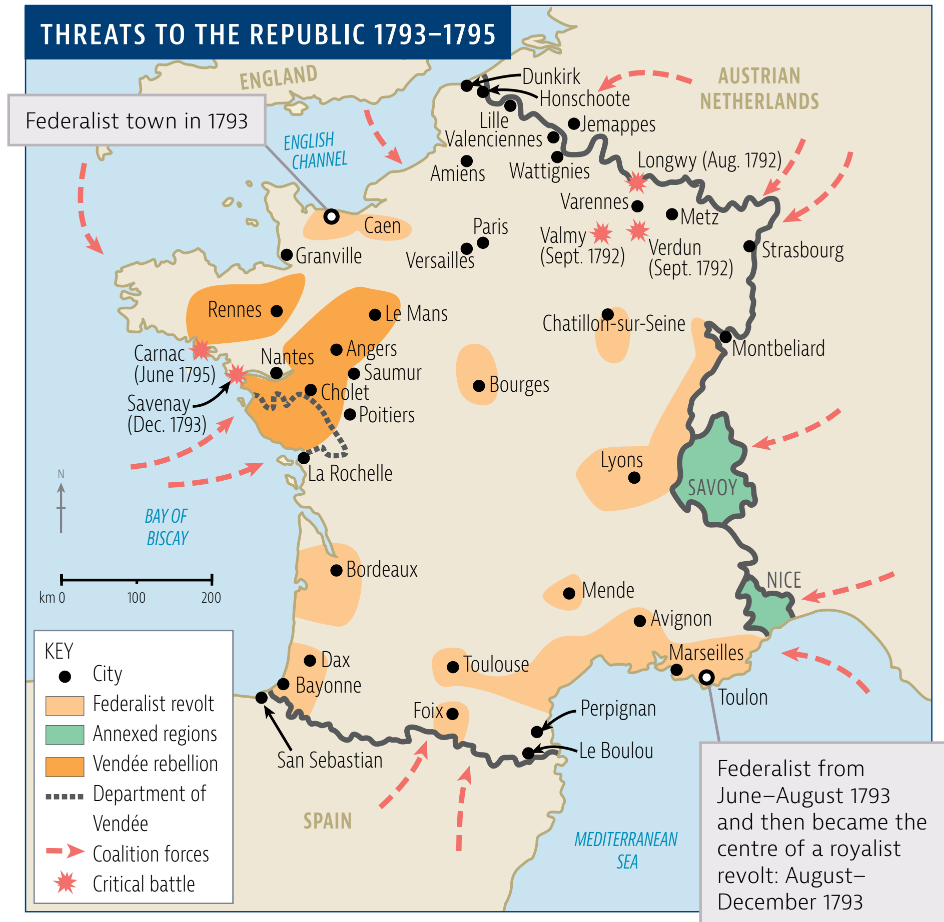
It seemed that those who supported the revolution were exempted from conscription, while those who opposed it were to be drafted into the army. One deputy of the National Convention, Jacques Pinet, wrote in his memoires that the Convention carefully avoided the word 'conscription'—calling it a *levée* (levy) instead—as conscription was not regarded as appropriate for a free people,[17] and the method of recruitment was left to local authorities. Quotas were established for each department, with areas that had not produced as many volunteers in 1792 given greater enlistment targets. Since each commune had to produce a quota of 'enlistments', the men would be chosen by lot, and this also created tensions. The result was counter-revolution.

Revolt against the revolutionary government in Paris began in mid-March 1793, breaking out almost simultaneously throughout the region. Peasants, priests, local nobles and some townsfolk rose up to challenge the National Convention—or at least its local representatives—in Nantes, Poitiers, La Rochelle and Angers.

At first, the revolt was local and uncoordinated, with action aimed at local patriots, juring priests and local officials who took their orders from Paris. Although the trigger for the outbreak was the call for enlistment, the revolt also saw the recurrence of longstanding local divisions and grievances, most notably between the 'patriot Blues', who were overwhelmingly urban, and the insurrectionary 'White' rural communities, with 'fervent supporters on both sides, fighting to the death with terrible ferocity'.[18]

The Curé Chevallier described Frenchmen on both sides 'turning their fury and rage against one another ... [and who] ultimately forgot they were human beings'.[19]

Source 11.15



KEY DEVELOPMENT

FIRST STEPS TO GOVERNMENT BY TERROR

Timothy Tackett: '[The] state policy during the period 1793–1794 that used institutional violence and the threat of violence ... both to punish and intimidate the purported [supposed] enemies of the nation.'

CONDITIONS IN 1793

In 1793, the atmosphere of suspicion and anxiety within France worsened, because of:

- the execution of Louis XVI
- the war with the First Coalition
- the emergence of counter-revolution in the Vendée.

In addition, the price of necessities had increased. This time it was not just the price of bread—the price of other basics such as soap, candles, firewood, unrefined sugar and coffee had risen by 25–40 per cent since 1790.[20] This was a different type of crisis, as historian Simon Schama notes: 'The real crisis of 1793 was a phenomenon for which a descriptive term had yet to be invented: inflation.'[21]

ARGUMENTS IN THE CONVENTION

By March 1793, almost all members of the National Convention were convinced that they needed to strengthen the powers of the state to prevent France being pulled apart. To fight the war against both internal and external enemies, the support of the people was necessary—so the government would have to meet some popular demands.

The Montagnards realised that they would have to grant some price controls. As the Montagnards grew closer to the *sans-culottes*, members of the Plain—the unaligned centre of the Convention—grew closer to the Montagnards.

Many of the members of the Plain shared the Girondins' hatred of Montagnard leaders Marat and Robespierre, but they also held the Girondins responsible for:

- the failures of the war
- the uprising in the Vendée
- the economic crisis.

Thus, the Plain allied itself with the Montagnards, and was in favour of repressive measures.

In a speech made to the Convention on 18 March 1793, Bertrand Barère, a leader of the Plain, told the Convention it should recognise three points:

1. In a state of emergency, no government could rule by normal methods.
2. The bourgeoisie should not isolate itself from the people, whose demands should be satisfied.
3. The bourgeoisie should retain control of this alliance; thus, the Convention must take the initiative by introducing the necessary measures.[22]

On 10 March, Danton supported Barère's position, arguing in the Convention that the state should assume the monopoly of authorised violence: 'Let us be terrible so that the people will not have to be.'[23]

Danton argued two main points. First, it was essential that the Convention take into its own hands the power to punish conspirators—and to use those powers publicly and demonstratively—to deny the lynch mobs and improvised murder gangs their prey. Second, the increasing factionalism within the Convention had to end. Danton recognised that factionalism was a great danger to unity. Further, he directly appealed to the Girondins and the Montagnards to avoid an internal war that would inevitably result in the Convention losing power.[24]

Thus, by establishing exceptional instruments of social control through the legislation it passed in March and April 1793, the National Convention set up the machinery for the Terror.

THE MACHINERY OF TERROR

THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL SECURITY, OCTOBER 1792

In October 1792, the Committee of General Security had been established in response to the September Massacres. According to Danton, the Committee was intended 'to replace the supreme tribunal of the people's vengeance'[25]—which was a reference to the revolutionary *journées* and, in particular, the ad hoc and paralegal peoples' courts that had led to the mass slaughter in the prisons only months before.

In this way, the Committee of General Security became a kind of police agency to bring traitors to justice.

THE REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNAL, 10 MARCH 1793

On 10 March 1793, the Revolutionary Tribunal was set up to hasten the trial and execution of suspects. It was to be reorganised for greater efficiency in September, with sixteen examining magistrates, a jury of sixty and a public prosecutor with a staff of assistants.

Trials in the Tribunal were quick, the judges lacked independence, and in October 1793 hearings were confined to three days to limit the defence. The Tribunal could impose a variety of penalties, but after the Law of 22 Prairial Year II (10 June 1794) was enacted, if the suspect was not freed, there was only one penalty: death. Verdicts were passed by majority vote after secret deliberations, with the judge publicly stating the grounds for the verdict.

COMMITTEES OF SURVEILLANCE OR WATCH COMMITTEES, 21 MARCH 1793

The establishment of the Revolutionary Tribunal was followed by the creation of the Committees of Surveillance or watch committees, which were responsible for identifying and arresting suspects and issuing certificates of civic '*vertu*' (loyal and patriotic citizenship). The Watch Committees were appointed by the sections or local communes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Serving on the Committee of Public Safety was equivalent to a year-long death sentence. Danton formed the Committee on 6 April 1793 and was executed exactly a year later, as was Delacroix. Robespierre and St Just attended their first Committee meeting on 28 July 1793—and were executed on the same date one year later: 28 July 1794.

COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY, 6 APRIL 1793

The Committee of Public Safety was created to control the conduct of the war inside and outside France, and to maintain supplies to the army and the civilian population. Thus, it took charge of the country economically and politically.

From July 1793, its original committee of nine expanded to twelve members who worked in secret and kept no records of their meetings. From their rooms in the Tuileries Palace, they issued orders to the representatives-on-mission, who were given virtually unlimited powers to deal with rebels and counter-revolutionaries.

With the Law of 14 Frimaire Year II (4 December 1793), the Committee of Public Safety was granted full executive powers by the National Convention. It controlled ministers and generals, foreign policy and local government. The representatives-on-mission (see below) reported directly to the Committee—not to the Convention, as they had previously done.

REPRESENTATIVES-ON-MISSION, 9 APRIL 1793

The position of 'representative-on-mission' required deputies to ensure that the spirit of the Convention's decrees was being followed in full in the provinces. The position was created in March 1793, but formalised by decree in the Convention in April.

Deputies were drawn from the National Convention. At first, there were eighty-two representatives-on-mission, who were tasked with raising troops for the war effort. However, they became local agents for the two 'Great Committees': the Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of General Security, enforcing the dictatorship of Paris.

Historian John Bosher states that 'none played a bigger role in terrorising the nation than the representatives-on-mission'.[26] The number of representatives was increased in December 1793—although by then the Vendée and Federalist revolts had been crushed.

TERROR AS A GOVERNMENT POLICY OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Robespierre, Barère, Danton and the other revolutionary leaders believed that the dangers to the revolution demanded strong, centralised government and firm leadership, rather than the spontaneous storming of the Tuileries Palace on 10 August 1792, or the September Massacres. Robespierre argued that 'Revolution is the war of liberty against its enemies. Revolutionary governments owe good citizens the protection of the state; to the enemies of the people, it owes only death.'[27]

On 5 September 1793, the National Convention declared, 'Let Terror be the order of the day'. In this way, it officially announced that the state would systematically eliminate all threats to its existence through repressive laws imposed by institutions that had been specially set up. The population was now divided into:

- loyal citizens—people whose first duty was to save the Republic
- counter-revolutionaries—people who opposed the Republic.

Anyone who was critical of particular policies, indifferent to the fate of the Republic, or had retained some connection with the ancien régime was considered to be a counter-revolutionary—a traitor deserving of death.

The roles of the two 'Great Committees' are outlined below. There was no clear division between the Committee of General Security and the Committee of Public Safety.

COMMITTEE OF GENERAL SECURITY	COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY
Objective: To protect the Revolutionary Republic from internal enemies (counter-revolutionaries, non-juring priests, hoarders and speculators). Dates of operation: 2 October 1792 to 1795 (disbanded under Constitution of Year III).	**Objective:** To protect the Revolutionary Republic from its external enemies (foreign armies and émigrés) and to allow the government to operate in wartime. Dates of operation: 6 April 1793 to 1795 (disbanded under Constitution of Year III).
Key activities: ▪ maintain internal security ▪ pursue suspected counter-revolutionaries ▪ supervise the treatment of suspects ▪ conduct surveillance for the police ▪ send suspects to Revolutionary Tribunal.	**Key features:** ▪ initially dominated by moderates, the committee was increasingly radical from mid-1793 ▪ Committee of Public Safety members were Convention deputies ▪ the Convention renewed its emergency powers monthly.
Key members: ▪ Fouché ▪ Amar ▪ Vadier. By mid-1794 the Committee of General Security became part of the opposition to Robespierre. Fouché, Vadier and Amar were directly involved in Robespierre's downfall on 9–10 Thermidor Year II (27–28 July 1794).	**Key members:** ▪ Robespierre (most influential) ▪ Barère ▪ Carnot ▪ Saint-Just ▪ Couthon. The committee was restructured in August 1794, following the fall of Robespierre, severely limiting its power.

DID YOU KNOW?

Adam Philippe, General Comte de Custine, was guillotined as a traitor for failing to raise the siege on the town of Condé L'Escaut, on the Belgian border. He went to his death calmly, saying, 'I have no more defenders; they have disappeared. My conscience charges nothing against me. I die calm and innocent.' His son was also executed for attempting to defend him.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Which act of legislation most angered the people of the Vendée?
2. What further grievances did they have against Paris?
3. What concessions and legislation did the Convention introduce in 1793 to stop France from being pulled apart?
4. Describe the role of three of the committees that were formed in the first six months of the Convention's existence.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

'With France at war in 1793, rebels and counter-revolutionaries had to be ruthlessly dealt with by the Convention.' To what extent do you agree?

KEY DEVELOPMENT

CAUSES OF THE FALL OF THE GIRONDINS

Timothy Tackett: 'If there was one issue that separated the two [factions] … it was their attitude towards the Parisian masses. … The Mountain [Montagnards] continued to glorify the people … [while] Brissot and his colleagues [Girondins] … seemed to exhibit a near physical revulsion to them.'

By early 1793, the Girondins had lost power to the Montagnards. This was because of:

- the rebellion in the Vendée
- the expansion of the war into a five-front struggle against the First Coalition
- the Girondins' condemnation of the September Massacres.

The Girondins were supporters of federalism, of weakening the power of the central government and of strengthening local government. They opposed the 'direct democracy' of the *sans-culottes*, attacking them as anarchists and *buveurs de sang* (drinkers of blood), and accused the Jacobins of being 'levellers'—that is, wanting to reduce everyone to a common level.

KEY GROUP

ECONOMIC ANGER OF THE *SANS-CULOTTES*

However, the actions of the *sans-culottes* were motivated by the deteriorating economic situation as much as by their political goals.

Petitions sent to the Convention by *sans-culottes* on 22 and 24 February 1793 requesting the setting of maximum prices on food were accompanied by attacks on grocery shops and wagons carrying foodstuffs. Just like the bread riots of 1789 and the grocery riots of 1792, these crises were mainly led by women desperate to feed their families.

At the base of popular action were hunger and economic suffering—as the difference between survival and starvation was so minute that any small change in grocery prices was critical. The assignat had dropped to only 50 per cent of its face value. Coinage was rare and difficult to get. Food requisitioning for the army—along with the British navy blockading the ports—created shortages of foodstuffs and led to a rise in the price of raw materials.

The food crisis of February 1793 intensified the conflict between the Girondins and the *sans-culottes* and their leaders. While the Montagnard leaders accepted popular protest as legitimate, the Girondins blamed Marat for inciting violence and Jacques Roux and his *Enragés* for preaching violence in the streets.

DISCUSSION

As a class or in small groups, consider and discuss the following questions:

- How had the *sans-culottes* risen to a position of influence by 1793?
- Was being supported by the *sans-culottes* an asset or a liability?

FAILED ATTEMPTS TO HALT THE RADICALS

On 13 March, the Girondin Pierre Vergniaud began to attack the radicals, demanding that violence be restrained and the revolution brought to an end. He argued that the revolution should be stopped to give the people peace and to ensure that the gains of the revolution were preserved.

Vergniaud characterised the *sans-culottes* as 'idlers, men without work ... ignoramuses', condemned the lawlessness of the *journées*, and highlighted the danger to the nation if the revolution continued on a path of violence. Vergniaud said to the National Convention:

> So, citizens, it must be feared that the Revolution, like Saturn, successively devouring its children, will engender, finally, only despotism, with all the calamities that accompany it.[28]

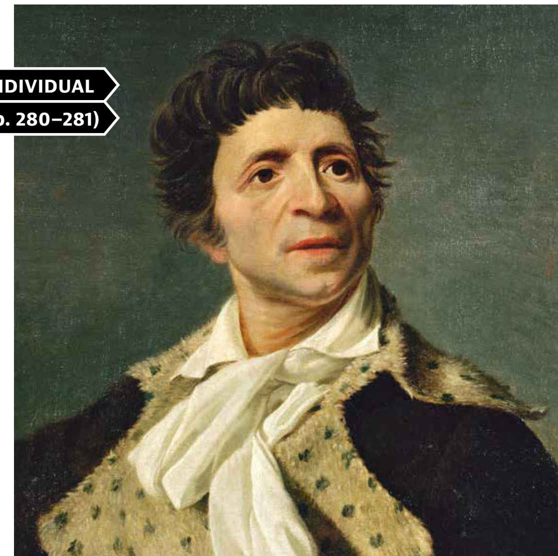
Despite his inflammatory language, Vergniaud finished his speech with a call for peace:

> Citizens, let us profit from the lessons of experience. We can overturn empires by victories, but we can only make the Revolutions for other people by the spectacle of our own happiness. We want to upset thrones. Let us prove that we know how to be happy with a Republic.[29]

To the Montagnard leaders, Vergniaud's speech was a declaration of war. By attacking the *sans-culottes* and 'direct democracy', he was attacking the Montagnards' power base—and Paris itself. Vergniaud's words would appeal to those who considered Paris to be too radical, who were against the bloodshed that accompanied the revolution, and who wished that the political structures were decentralised. Vergniaud and the other Girondins became linked with Dumouriez's defection to the Austrians in April 1793, the military defeats France was suffering and the growing anti-revolutionary feeling in the port cities.

MARAT ON TRIAL

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see pp. 280–281)



The conflict was reflected in the arrest and trial of Jean-Paul Marat, who was then president of the Jacobins. In his *Journal de la république française* (Journal of the French Republic), Marat had called on the people to attack the deputies of the Convention, especially the Girondin leaders, calling them 'criminal accomplices of royalty', 'enemies of liberty and equality' and 'atrocious men ... who try to kindle the flames of civil war'.[30]

The Girondins fought back, demanding that Marat be brought to trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal for accusing deputies who had voted for a public referendum on the king's execution of being the accomplices of Dumouriez.

This was a poor tactic: Marat was a leader of the *sans-culottes* and his revolutionary loyalty was unchallengeable in their eyes. In addition, the Revolutionary Tribunal was dominated by Jacobins, not Girondins. On 24 April 1793, Marat was acquitted. His supporters turned this into a spectacular personal triumph, crowning him with laurel wreaths and proclaiming him the 'father of the people'. He was paraded in the Convention, carried shoulder-high, with his supporters chanting and singing his praises.

DID YOU KNOW?

Marat was afflicted with a rare, chronic skin disease that was characterised by intense eruptions of itching all over his body. Marat relieved his itching with frequent bathing. As you will see later, the most famous image of Marat shows him in his bath.

Le patriote français (The French Patriot), a journal produced by the Girondin leader Brissot, reported this in an extremely sour tone:

Source 11.16 *Le patriote français*, No. MCCCLI: Buchez and Roux, XXVI: 148–149, cited in John Gilchrist and William Murray, eds, *The Press in the French Revolution: A Selection of Documents Taken from the Press of the Revolution in the Years 1789–1794* (Melbourne and London: Ginn and Cheshire, 1971), 189.

Le patriote français on Marat's acquittal

> The crime absolved and crowned, the audacious infringer of the laws carried in triumph in the midst of the sanctuary of the laws; this respectable sanctuary soiled by the impure gathering of drunken men and women of ill-fame, a worthy procession for the triumphant Marat; these are the events of the day, a day of mourning for all virtuous men, for all the friends of liberty.

Historian Simon Schama describes the failed attempt to impeach Marat as 'a collective disaster for the Girondins'.[31] The Girondins had ignored a vital principle: a deputy of the National Convention was immune to prosecution. The Girondins had not only destroyed that principle, but also created a precedent that would be used by their enemies against them in just a few weeks' time.

Moreover, the Girondin leaders misread the public mood, which saw Marat as a hero and them as potential traitors. In the event, Marat was acquitted and the *sans-culottes* were determined to exact their revenge.

Source 11.17 *The Triumph of Marat,* by Louis-Léopold Boilly, 1794. After his acquittal, Marat was carried in triumph through the streets of Paris and into the National Convention by his *sans-culottes* supporters.

FURTHER GIRONDIN MISTAKES

The Girondins made further blunders. They had ignored the demands of the Paris Commune for a price control on grain—as had other members of the Convention—until the Commune threatened to revolt against the Convention, and they were forced to act.

The Convention had set up a commission to investigate the actions of the Paris Commune. It was called the ***Commission of Twelve***—and the majority of its members were Girondins.

Commission of Twelve (18 May–31 May 1793) had been formed by the National Convention and was largely made up of Girondins. It sought to break the power of the Revolutionary Commune and the Paris sections

In mid-May, the Commission of Twelve ordered the arrest of René Hébert, the deputy prosecutor of the Commune, and Jean Varlet, one of the leaders of the *Enragés*. When the Commune protested, Girondin commissioner Maximin Isnard replied, 'If these extremists are allowed to have their way and the principle of national representation suffers, Paris will be annihilated; and men will soon be searching the banks of the Seine to see if the city had ever existed.'[32]

In effect, Isnard was declaring that the Convention was at war with the Paris Commune and the *sans-culottes*. The Convention, as could be expected from a group of predominantly middle-class men, was more conservative and had moved politically to the right, while Paris was becoming increasingly radical.

In the streets, the Paris sections led the demands for the arrest and trial of the Girondins. On 10 April, the district of Halle et Blé called for the arrest and execution of Roland, the former minister for the interior. The *sans-culottes* from that district called on the Convention to save the French Republic, while at the same time threatening the deputies that if they failed, the sections would take matters into their own hands.

This petition was then supported by thirty-three of the forty-eight sections and, on 15 April, by the Commune of Paris itself: the Girondin deputies must be expelled from the National Convention.

Yet, who were the dominant voices in the Paris Commune? They were Danton, Marat, Hébert and Robespierre. Robespierre was responsible for the attack on the Girondins within the National Convention, accusing them of being involved in Dumouriez's treason. On 26 May, Robespierre called on the people to rise up in anger against the 'corrupt deputies'[33] within the Convention and declared his own stand against them.

EXPULSION OF THE GIRONDINS **TURNING POINT**

Albert Soboul: 'The Gironde ceased to be a political force. It had declared war without knowing how to conduct it; it had denounced the king but shrunk from condemning him; ... it had contributed to the worsening of the economic crisis but had swept aside claims made by the popular movement.'

The anti-Girondin riots from 31 May to 2 June 1793 were instigated by the Cordeliers, particularly Marat.

The action began on 27 May when an angry mob burst into the Convention, demanding (and obtaining) the release of Hébert, Varlet and the other prisoners, as well as the abolition of the Girondin-dominated Commission of Twelve. By 28 May, the Commission had been re-established—although the prisoners remained free—and so the *sans-culottes* prepared to take to the streets once more. A new insurrectionary committee was formed, with Varlet as one of its members, and a militia of 30,000 *sans-culottes* was raised.

Source 11.18 *Portrait of François Hanriot,* by Georges-François-Marie Gabriel, 1794.

In the absence of Santerre, command of the National Guard was given to François Hanriot, who had gained prominence during the storming of the Tuileries Palace on 10 August 1792. On 31 May, Jean Varlet rang the bell that signalled the start of these revolutionary *journées*; dissatisfied with the indecision of the Convention on that day, a Friday, it was decided to march again on Sunday 2 June, when all workers would be free to join the uprising.

Accordingly, on Sunday 2 June, angry crowds of *sans-culottes* responded to the tocsin (a bell rung as a warning) and invaded the Convention. They demanded that:

- the Girondin deputies be expelled
- the Commission of Twelve be dissolved.

The crowds were reinforced by 75,000–100,000 members of the National Guard, who guarded the exits.

The *sans-culottes* issued a series of demands. They wanted:

- a tax imposed on the rich
- a maximum price on grain
- thirty Girondin deputies purged
- Girondin ministers Roland, Clavière and Lebrun arrested
- an army of *sans-culottes* created to deal with all traitors to the revolution—with a payment of forty sous per day to volunteers.

Barère, in the name of the Committee of Public Safety, refused to recommend the arrest of the named deputies, but by now it was clear that the Convention was under siege.

With cannons aimed at the hall and armed guards at every door, the National Convention had little choice but to expel the moderate Girondins. It ordered the arrest of twenty-nine deputies, including most of the Commission of Twelve. The Montagnards led the vote, while most deputies stayed silent. Vergniaud offered the deputies a glass of blood, a metaphor for their betrayal of the Girondins.

The Girondins were reaping the consequences of abandoning the principle that representatives of the people were immune from arrest. Their unsuccessful attempt to impeach Marat five weeks earlier had exposed them all to danger.

From this point on, no deputy in the National Convention was safe, and over the next year successive factions would be arbitrarily arrested and executed. The revolution had begun to devour its own children.

Although the troublesome Girondin faction had been disposed of, the Montagnards still had to negotiate the increasingly insistent demands of the *sans-culottes*. As tension increased, the controls of the Terror would grow more rigid—and the executions would increase.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What were the major points of difference between the revolutionary factions?
2. Why had the Girondins lost power to the Montagnards by early 1793?
3. What happened in February 1793 to further intensify the conflict between the Girondins and the *sans-culottes* and their leaders?
4. Why did the Girondins choose to impeach Marat?
5. What made the Parisian *sans-culottes* admire Marat?
6. What was the role of the Commission of Twelve?
7. Who instigated the anti-Girondin riots from 31 May to 2 June 1793?
8. What act had essentially exposed the Girondins to danger and led to their expulsion? Why?

DISCUSSION

With a partner, discuss the following points. Then share with the class.

- What do you see as the fundamental differences between the Girondins and the *sans-culottes* by April 1793?
- Why were the Girondins so despised by late May 1793?

CHAPTER 11 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The new National Convention gathered on 20 September 1792. Power was divided between the two main factions: the Girondins and the Montagnards.
- The first issue for the Convention was what to do with the king. He was ultimately sent to trial, found guilty of treason, and executed.
- The French government was at war with most of the monarchies of Europe and Britain, and the execution of the king enraged them further. France was surrounded by enemies determined to quell the revolution.
- A Federalist Revolt broke out in many small towns, along with counter-revolution in the Vendée region.
- In 1793, conditions in France had deteriorated. Apart from Louis's execution, the wars and the local rebellions, provisioning the cities was made harder because prices were inflated.
- The Convention set up the machinery of the Terror to deal with the crises.
- The Girondins accused Danton, Robespierre, Marat and others of inciting the September Massacres.
- The Girondins believed in a free-market economy and in early 1793 refused the *sans-culottes*' demands to control prices and requisition food.
- The Girondins impeached Marat for 'crimes against the revolution'. This tactic failed spectacularly, with Marat acquitted and returned in triumph by the *sans-culottes* to the Convention.
- The Girondins were expelled from the National Convention due to pressure from the *sans-culottes*.
- The expulsion of the Girondins saw the breakdown of the principle of parliamentary immunity, which then allowed other factions to be purged from the Convention. Such purging made the escalation of Terror more likely.

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'The execution of Louis XVI was a necessary evil along the path to popular sovereignty.' To what extent do you agree?
- 'The Girondins made a number of fatal errors between late 1792 and mid-1793.' To what extent do you agree?

NEW REGIME CHALLENGES

Create a diagram, graphic organiser or infographic showing the key challenges faced by the new regime in the first six months of 1793. Identify whether each challenge helped or hindered the new regime as it attempted to consolidate its power.

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Compile a glossary of terms used to describe people under the new regime in France. Identify possible consequences for being identified in each group. Include the following terms:

- *sans-culottes*
- counter-revolutionaries
- aristocrats/royalists
- Montagnards
- Girondins
- *menu peuple*.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES—SOCIAL GROUPS

Continue your 'social groups file' (see p. 121 for instructions).

- Make notes about the following groups: **urban workers** (the *sans-culottes*) and **parish priests** (priests in the Vendée).

THE TOTALITY OF THE TERROR

(1793–1794)

KEY SOURCE

By September 1793, the revolution faced extreme threats from all sides—both within France and from foreign enemies. The National Convention had been split by factional divisions, which culminated in the purge of the Girondins and the expansion of the Federalist Revolt. Conspiracy was everywhere, and internal traitors were feared even in Paris, where in July Charlotte Corday had assassinated the Montagnard Marat. Heightened tensions forced the Convention to adopt a range of extreme policies known collectively as the Terror.

At the same time, France had continued economic problems, including the plunging value of the assignat, and exorbitant price rises for basic commodities, which were believed to be caused by hoarders and speculators.

The words on the flags read 'Terror to kings' (left) and 'uniting of republicans' (right).

This was a popular poster celebrating the French Republic. The two figures represent the common people. At left is a soldier of the Revolutionary Army. His role is to safeguard the revolution from external enemies. At right is a member of the *sans-culottes*, armed with a pike. His job is to guard the revolution at home. United, these two groups of the population will ensure the safety of the revolution.

Source 12.01 ***'Unité, indivisibilité de la république, liberté, égalité, fraternité ou la mort'*** **(The Indivisible Unity of the Republic: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity or Death), 'Propaganda manifesto with sans-culotte and cockade', 1794.**

CHAPTER 12

'*What is needed is one single will. ... The danger within France comes from the middle classes and to defeat them we must rally the people.*'

—Robespierre (during insurrection to expel Girondins, 31 May–2 June 1793)

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why was a policy of Terror adopted?
- What features of the Terror did the National Convention impose in 1793?
- What key crisis did the National Convention face in 1793?
- What was the program of the *sans-culottes* in 1793?

KEY EVENTS

29 April 1793
Federalist uprising in Marseilles

5 September 1793
Government by terror begins

16 October 1793
Marie Antoinette executed

THE FEDERALIST REVOLTS: JUNE–AUGUST 1793

KEY CHALLENGE

Vernigaud, 1793: 'Men of the Gironde, rise up! The Convention has only been weak because it has been abandoned. Support it against all the furies threatening it. ... There is not a moment to lose.'

Due to the climate of crisis and alarm, by mid-1793 the government was responding to the simultaneous threats and rebellions around the country in an increasingly repressive manner. The first example of this was the way it crushed the Federalist Revolt in the large trading cities to the south of France: Bordeaux, Lyons, Toulouse, Toulon and Marseilles.

Unlike the Vendée Rebellion, which had sought to maintain traditional patterns of life, the Federalist Revolts were an expression of anger about:

- the arbitrary nature of the government in Paris
- the power of the *sans-culottes*
- the damage done to trade by the war with the First Coalition (Austria, Prussia, Spain, Britain and the Dutch Republic).

The provincial cities of the south and west had a shared hostility towards a government directed by popular radicalism. They were suspicious of the Jacobins' claims to act in the national interest, and wanted economic certainty, free trade and provincial autonomy.

THE BORDEAUX AND LYONS REBELLIONS

Bordeaux had once been France's second busiest port, but its trade had disappeared as a result of the war and the British blockade. Bordeaux was in the department of the Gironde, which was also the birthplace of Girondist politics that had sent Vergniaud, Gensonné and Guadet to Paris as the people's representatives.

Since early 1793, the local Girondin club had become increasingly concerned by the control of the National Convention by the Paris sections, under the direction of the Revolutionary Commune. There had been talk of raising an army of National Guards from the Bordeaux region to march to Paris and to protect the Convention, so that the elected representatives could do their work without being intimidated by armed Parisian crowds.

Still, the arrest of the Girondin deputies on 2 June 1793 came as a severe shock, and triggered revolt in Bordeaux. A Popular Commission of Public Safety was set up, which urged local people to reject the rule of Paris, establish their own National Convention, and march on Paris to restore constitutional government.

A force of 1200 men was envisaged, but in the end, only 400 set out, and they turned back having marched fewer than fifty kilometres.[1]

Lyons was a city famous for manufacturing silk. It had elected a Girondist mayor in February 1793, only to have him overthrown by the local Jacobin club. In June, angered by the attack on the Girondins and by the *levée en masse*, the people of Lyons rose up, prepared to defend their city against the local Jacobins and the revolutionary government. In June, Marseilles joined Lyons, formally declaring itself 'in a legal state of resistance' to the National Convention. It set up its own Revolutionary Tribunal and gave the death sentence to thirty Jacobins. In Toulon, a counter-revolutionary committee seized power and issued a declaration:

> We want to enjoy our goods, our property, the fruits of our toil and industry in peace. Yet we see them constantly exposed to threats from those who have nothing themselves.[2]

Further uprisings in Caen, Avignon, Nîmes, Marseilles and other towns led to the claim that 'more than sixty departments were in some degree "federalist" in spirit'.[3] On 5 June 1793, General Biron, the commander in the south-west, reported the following of Bordeaux: '[The rebels] don't want a king; they want a republic, but a rich and tranquil republic.'[4]

GOVERNMENT REPRISALS

The new regime responded with violence to the Federalist Revolts. In August 1793, General Kellermann's troops surrounded Lyons and cut it off from food supplies to starve it into submission. Houses were destroyed and, as food supplies became scarce, famine was widespread. On 12 October 1793, the Committee of Public Safety declared that Lyons should be destroyed and lose its name, and that a plaque be set up on the ruins, stating, 'Lyons made a war on liberty. Lyons is no more.'[5]

From October 1793, the Paris Revolutionary Army took out savage reprisals on Lyons, guillotining some twenty-six people every day. The blood ran so freely in the gutters that citizens complained that it overflowed from the drainage ditch below the guillotine.[6] However, the pace of execution was still too slow, so a special Tribunal of Seven was created to speed up sentencing. The worst action took place over three days in December 1793 when 360 people died. They were tied up in groups of about sixty, lined up in front of ditches and fired on by cannon, in what has been called the *mitraillades* (mass shootings).[7] 'What a delicious moment,' wrote one witness to a friend in Paris. 'How you would have enjoyed it! ... What a sight! Worthy indeed of liberty! Wish *bonjour* to Robespierre.'[8] By April 1794, around 2000 men, women and children had been murdered. Similar reprisals were taken against the people and cities of Bordeaux, Marseilles and Toulon.[9]

Bordeaux was the leading city of the Federalist Revolt—and it received especially severe treatment in late 1793 from the representatives-on-mission, Ysabeau and Baudot. They were replaced by a young man who was even more ruthless: Jean Tallien.

DID YOU KNOW?

A German volunteer in the Revolutionary Army was horrified by what he saw in Lyons: 'I said to a group of *sans-culottes* ... that it would be decent to clear away all this human blood—Why should it be cleared up? One of them said to me. It's the blood of aristocrats and rebels. The dogs should lick it up.'

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Explain in your own words the grievances of the Federalist rebels.
2 How did the Federalist Revolt differ in character from the Vendée Rebellion?
3 Explain the threat that the Federalists posed to the Republic.

On the night of 29–30 November 1793—a month after twenty-two Girondin deputies expelled from the National Convention were executed in Paris—200 Bordeaux merchants were arrested as a measure of general security, and 104 of them were guillotined.[10] Their suspected crime was *négotiantisme*—the crime of using the revolution to become rich. During the night raids, the merchants' account books were seized and searched for anything that could incriminate them—a word, a belief or an action. Even rubbing out words in an account book could be fatal. A Girondin deputy reported that in Bordeaux:

> A woman was charged with the heinous crime of having wept at the execution of her husband. She was consequently condemned to sit several hours under the suspended blade which shed on her, drop by drop, the blood of the deceased whose corpse was above her on the scaffold, before she was released by death from her agony.[11]

Historian Simon Schama argues that in the Federalist cities, the Terror became a 'war against commercial capitalism'. The Jacobin rhetoric against 'rich egoists' and the attacks on the commercial elites associated with federalism meant that mercantile and industrial enterprises were regarded as counter-revolutionary unless they had been pulled into the service of the war. Schama has even argued that the capitalist and industrialist bourgeois class was the revolution's 'principal victim'.[12]

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Historian Simon Schama is quoted several times in this chapter. Use these excerpts to identify Schama's view of the Terror and the revolutionary government.

THE NOYADES OF NANTES: DROWNINGS IN THE VENDÉE

Christopher Hibbert: 'The river became so choked with these barges that ships weighing anchor brought them up filled with the dead.'

On 1 August 1793, Barère, a member of the Committee of Public Safety, gave the order to subdue the rebellion in the Vendée region in western France: burn the forests, raze the houses, remove the livestock and slaughter the rebels.

General Turreau and General Westermann led an army of 30,000 soldiers into the Vendée to subdue a force of somewhere between 20,000 and 40,000 rebels,[13] many of whom were now armed with rifles captured from defeated patriots. Turreau reported that:

> They never allow themselves to be anticipated: they fight only when they want and how they want. ... Their attack is a terrible eruption, sudden, almost always unexpected, because it is very difficult in the Vendée to ... keep watch and consequently to defend oneself against surprise.[14]

The government's retaliation was severe. Columns of soldiers marched across the countryside, destroying all life. Turreau wrote to Paris:

> All brigands caught bearing arms, or convicted of having taken up arms to revolt against their country, will be bayoneted. The same will apply to girls, women and children under the same circumstances. ... Each column commander has orders to search and burn forests, villages, market towns and farms.[15]

At Nantes, 3000 people died in prison from an epidemic. The representative-on-mission there was a violent man named Jean-Baptiste Carrier, who authorised mass drownings. Between 2000 and 4800 further prisoners died, bound with ropes and thrown into barges, which were then sunk in the river. These executions by drowning are known as the *noyades*.

DID YOU KNOW?

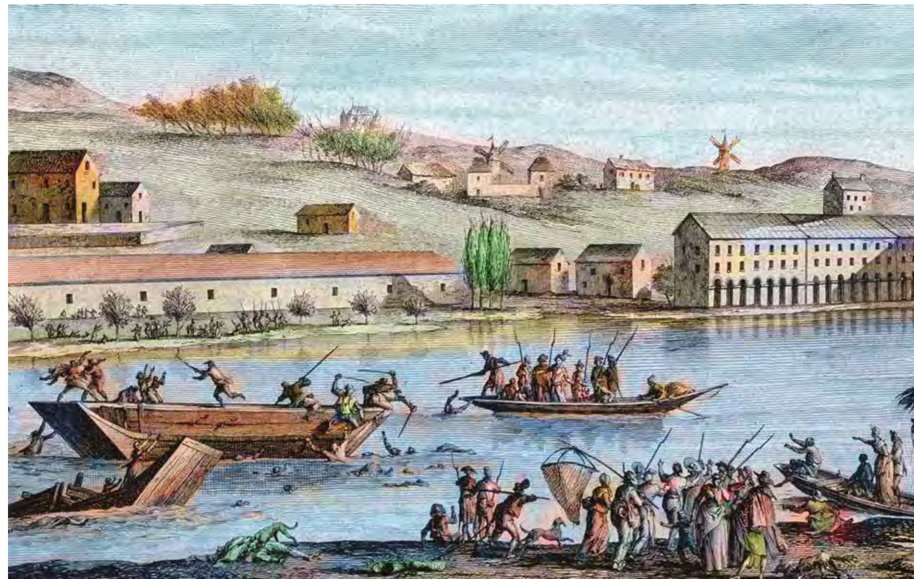
A Vendéan general, La Rochejaquelein, became popular through his rallying cry, 'Friends, if I advance, follow me! If I retreat, kill me! If I die, avenge me!' La Rochejaquelein died in battle at the age of twenty-two.

↑ *Henri de La Rochejaquelein*, by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, 1817.

At first the *noyades* were confined to priests, and took place at night. Then, these 'republican baptisms' or 'national baths', as they came to be known, became routine and took place during the day. Prisoners would first be stripped of their clothes and belongings—an important source of income for the soldiers. Accounts began to circulate of 'republican marriages'—young men and women tied naked together in the boats, then drowned.[16]

Source 12.02 Christopher Hibbert, *The French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1980), 228.

> **Christopher Hibbert**
>
> The river became so choked with these barges that ships weighing anchor brought them up filled with the dead. Birds of prey hovered over the waters, gorging themselves with human flesh, and the fish became so contaminated that orders had to be given forbidding them to be caught.



Source 12.03 *The Nantes Drownings*, engraved by Reinier Vinkeles and Daniel Vrydag, late eighteenth century. The 'national bath' (the Loire River), location of 'republican marriages', is where nearly 5000 men, priests, women, nuns, elderly and children perished.

Benaben, commissioner for Maine-et-Loire, witnessed the slaughter at the town of Le Mans, where the final battle between the Vendéan 'army' and the forces of the Republic took place:

> Soldiers spread out into the houses, and having taken the wives and daughters of the brigands who had not time to flee, took them into the squares or the streets where they were crowded together and butchered on the spot: shot, bayoneted or slashed with swords.[17]

Of the approximately 5000 rebels, two-thirds were slaughtered in the battle for the town and the mass shootings that followed.[18] When the slaughter was over and the Vendée had been conquered, General Westermann reported to the Committee of Public Safety:

> The Vendée is no more. It has died beneath the hooves of our horses, together with its men, women and children. ... I have crushed the children under my horses, massacred the women—they, at least, will not give birth to any more brigands.[19]

Seventy per cent of all deaths in the Terror occurred in the Vendée and Federalist region of Provence. Historian Charles Tilly, a leading authority on the history of the Vendée, has estimated that, of those executed, 80–90 per cent were peasants and artisans. Of the percentage remaining, 5–10 per cent were bourgeois, with a statistically insignificant number of local nobles and priests.[20]

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Write a 250–350-word extended response to the topic below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence, and a clear conclusion.

- Explain the effect of the Terror on rural people in France in the period 1793–1794.

WHAT WAS THE TERROR? WHY WAS IT IMPOSED?

Robespierre: 'Terror is nothing other than the quick, harsh and inflexible application of revolutionary justice; it is therefore righteous. Break the enemies of the Republic with Terror, and you will be justified as founders of the Republic.'

The definition of *Terror* in the context of the French revolution is very broad. There is a range of views about when the Terror occurred and how long it lasted. However, there is general agreement about the reasons for its use and what its purpose was.

We, in the twenty-first century, immediately conjure up images of terrorism in our own time. As historians, we must carefully consider the context and nature of the use of Terror within the French Revolution.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* begins its definition of *terrorism* as 'the systematic use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective'.[21]

Timothy Tackett, in his book, *The Coming of the Terror* (2015), identifies two periods of Terror.

The first Terror

The first Terror took place in August–September 1792, when the threat of the Brunswick Manifesto, the crowd action of the 10 August and panic over the invading Prussians led to the September Massacres. In this period, the *sans-culottes* used spontaneous (but illegal) violence against the institution of the monarchy and the suspect counter-revolutionary groups of nobles and refractory priests.

The second Terror

The second Terror took place in 1793—and it was Terror applied by the state to control its population. Historians disagree about when the second Terror began, with three possible starting points. These are:

- the legislation around the machinery of Terror in March and April 1793
- the first factional purge of the Convention on 2 June 1793, with the expulsion of the Girondins
- Barère's declaration in the National Convention on 5 September 1793: 'Let Terror be the order of the day.'

However, all historians agree that the Terror finished with the final purge of the National Convention—the execution of Robespierre and his close followers on 10 Thermidor Year II (28 July 1794).

Dylan Rees and other historians argue that the fundamental reason a policy of Terror was adopted was because of the need to organise and control the Republic to meet the internal and external threats to its survival posed by the foreign war.

The first Terror was a direct response to the Prussian invasion of France and the imminent threat to Paris. The second Terror, which Rees dates from the expulsion of the Girondins, started at a time when the war was once again going badly and the Republic again faced invasion. Rees points out that the end of the Terror—with the execution of Robespierre on 28 July 1794—came just a month after the decisive French victory at Fleurus on 26 June 1794, which secured France's borders. The foreign war was no longer a threat to France, and future military engagements were to be offensive—not defensive.[22]

While there is no doubt that winning the foreign war was vital to safeguard the revolution, and the structures of the Terror were set in place with this goal in mind, it is important to remember the significant internal threats that political factionalism, federalism and counter-revolutionary activity posed to the revolution.

The revolt in the Vendée accounted for 52 per cent of the executions during the Terror.[23] While this revolt was triggered by opposition to the *levée en masse*—the conscription of 300,000 men so that the foreign war could be expanded—the fundamental issues in the Vendée were more deeply rooted in long-term divisions and conflicts in the local culture, as well as grievances against the government of new regime.

The reasons why the Terror became used as a means of political, economic and social control were centred around the internal and external threats to the revolution and the Republic. Its purpose was to defend the achievements of the revolution at any cost—and literally terrorise the opposition. The Terror served also as a way to control of national resources with the aim of winning the foreign and civil wars.

Source 12.04 *The 31 May 1793*, by Jean Joseph François Tassaert, 1796–1797.

THE POWER OF THE *SANS-CULOTTES* BY 1793

Deputy Chabot (warning his fellow deputies in the National Convention): 'Never forget that you were sent here by the *sans-culottes*.'

The revolution became more radical as the influence of the *sans-culottes* movement grew. The national emergency that followed the declaration of war with Austria in April 1792 enabled the *sans-culottes* to enter the ranks of the National Guard in July. Their abandonment of the defence of the king on 10 August resulted in his deposition by the concerted efforts of the Revolutionary Commune and the sections. The *sans-culottes* militants grew in influence and were responsible for the *journées* of 31 May–2 June 1793 that brought the Jacobins to power. Between the summers of 1792 and 1794, their support was essential for the control of Paris.

IDEAS OF *SANS-CULOTTES* BY 1793

By 1793, the characteristic views of the *sans-culottes* were that they:

- were passionately anti-cleric
- were haters of aristocracy and anyone of great wealth
- were egalitarian—they addressed everyone as 'citizen' and used the familiar '*tu*' form of address. They believed all citizens should be equal, with no disparities in wealth, status or opportunity
- wore the *bonnet rouge*, which symbolised the equality of all citizens.

Sans-culottes believed that:

- democracy was direct. The sovereignty of the people and their right to exercise power could not be delegated, so they should be able to put their case directly to the elected legislature at any time.
- political life should take place in the open, and representatives should be accountable. Patriots had no reason to hide their opinions, so meetings of the Assembly should be open to the public and deputies should vote aloud.
- the people had the right to control and change their representatives at any time. If they were betrayed, they had the right of insurrection.

CONCESSIONS TO THE *SANS-CULOTTES*

The relationship between the Montagnard government and the *sans-culottes* who had put it in power was double-edged. The *sans-culottes* made demands, and the Montagnards realised that it was necessary to make compromises to keep their cooperation. From June to September 1793, the Convention took three measures designed to placate the *sans-culottes*.

JACOBIN CONSTITUTION OF 1793

The republican constitution of 1793 was hurriedly drawn up in the effort to provide some unity after the expulsion of the Girondins three weeks earlier. In the judgement of historian David Andress, the Jacobin Constitution was 'dramatically radical in comparison to that of 1791', yet also designed to sooth the fears of the Federalist provinces.

The 1793 Constitution was much shorter than the 1791 Constitution—after all, there was no longer a king to be accommodated—but the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen that prefaced the 1793 Constitution was longer. The 1793 Constitution enshrined full adult male suffrage at age twenty-one, and annual elections. It allowed voting in electoral assemblies to be by voice rather than ballot if the voters so chose. Importantly for the bourgeois Federalists, the four 'natural and imprescriptible rights' remained 'equality, liberty, security and property'. The Montagnard leadership was well aware that the Federalists had branded them as 'anarchists bent on pillage' so was keen to emphasise this element of the new constitution.[24]

Historian Peter McPhee highlights the radical social rights and popular control over the Assembly that the Constitution guaranteed. These included:

- a commitment to public education for all citizens
- the right for workers to earn enough from their work that they can subsist
- the right to public assistance for those unable to work
- the abolition of the slave trade.

Most importantly, Article 35 stated:

> When the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties for the people.[25]

The Constitution was enthusiastically accepted at referendum, with official results announcing 1.8 million 'yes' votes to a mere 11,600 against. McPhee claims the final 'yes' figure was probably closer to two million of the approximately six million eligible males, 'a remarkable figure at a time of invasion and civil war'.[26]

However, on 28 August 1793, Barère—now a member of the Committee of Public Safety—argued that the military situation would not allow for the immediate implementation of the Constitution. When, by the end of September, the policy of 'emergency government until the peace' was adopted, the Constitution was suspended. Once military security was achieved, it could be implemented.

Howiever, in reality, the 1793 Constitution was never implemented. In 1795, the Convention convened a committee to draw up a new constitution for the next legislature: the Directory.

LEVÉE EN MASSE, 23 AUGUST 1793

To fight the war effectively, the Paris sections and the *fédérés* called for further conscription. The aim in February was to find 300,000 troops—now it was believed that a further 800,000 troops were necessary. On 23 August 1793, the National Convention enacted a decree calling for a *levée en masse*, in effect, writes John Hall Stewart, 'a call for the first complete wartime mobilisation of a nation in modern history. ... It was one of the most vigorous manifestations of nationalism during the whole revolution, and suggests why the French were able to check foreign invasion.'[27] The decree had been written by Barère and Carnot:

Decree of *levée en masse,* 23 August 1793

From this moment until such time as its enemies shall have been driven from the soil of the Republic, all Frenchmen are in permanent requisition for the services of the armies. The young men shall fight; the married men shall forge arms and transport provisions; the women shall make tents and clothes and shall serve in the hospitals; the children shall turn old lint into linen; the old men shall betake themselves to the public squares in order to arouse the courage of the warriors and preach hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic.

Source 12.05 Cited in Alan Forrest, 'The Army in Year II', *Les annales historiques de la révolution française*, no. 335 (January–March 2004): 7.

All able-bodied single men between eighteen and twenty-five were called up for military service immediately. This significantly increased the number of men in the army, which reached a peak of about 800,000 fighting men in September 1794. Also, much of the civilian population was turned towards supporting the armies through armaments production and other war industries, as well as supplying food and provisions to the front. As Barère put it, 'all the French, both sexes, all ages are called by the nation to defend liberty'.[28]

ECONOMIC CONCESSIONS

Champions of the very poor, such as the leader of the *Enragés*, Jacques Roux, were alarmed that the suffering of the poor was becoming even worse than it had been under the ancien régime. Roux's followers were wage-earners, casual labourers, the poor and unemployed, and he was shocked at their abysmal living conditions. He called on the Convention to deal immediately with starvation and poverty, and when it did nothing, he denounced it. During 1793 Roux repeatedly called on the Convention to implement legislation to:

- fix maximum prices on necessities
- make hoarding goods a capital offence
- purge ex-nobles from the army.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What developments in the course of the revolution made the *sans-culottes* emerge as a highly influential political movement?
2. Why were the *sans-culottes*' demands focused on economic issues?
3. What was the purpose of the *levée en masse?*

ECONOMIC TERROR: THE *ENRAGÉS* AND THE RIGHT TO SUBSISTENCE

Jacques Roux: 'It is only by putting foodstuffs within the reach of the *sans-culottes* that you will attach them to the Revolution and rally them to the Constitutional laws.'

Jacques Roux.

Article 21 of the 1793 Constitution stated the following: 'Public assistance is a sacred debt. Society owes subsistence to unfortunate citizens, either by obtaining work for them or by providing means of existence to those who are unable to work.'[29]

However, throughout 1793, the group advocating for the 'right to subsistence'—meaning the right to earn enough from your work to be able to subsist or to be supported—was not the Jacobins, but the extreme *Enragés*, a loosely connected group of speakers and politicians. The spokesman for the *Enragés* was a former priest named Jacques Roux (also known as the 'Red Priest').

Roux was horrified by the suffering he saw in his parish during the winter of 1793, where poor market porters, water carriers and unemployed building labourers attempted to survive in frozen hunger in overcrowded tenements and garrets. Roux's political message was simple: the revolution had been exploited by profiteers for their own selfish ends, and the people were starving again—just as they had starved under the ancien régime.

Roux declared war on economic traitors. In his view, hoarders and speculators should be punished by death—and if the government refused to institute these penalties, then the people should launch a new round of massacres against these 'bloodsuckers'. The government should also fulfil its obligations to provide both work and subsistence at affordable prices.[30]

The *Enragés* had already agitated for violence during the food riots of February 1793.

On 25 July 1793, Roux startled the Convention by appearing in the evening to read an address. 'Legislators,' shouted Roux, 'you have done nothing for the happiness of the people. For four years only the rich have profited from the revolution. ... Under the old regime it would never have been permitted for basic commodities to have been sold at three times their value!'[31]

Historian Simon Schama points out that Roux had hit on an 'essential truth'. The revolution had brought no practical benefits to the people whose active support in 1789 had allowed it to succeed. 'For the first time, the revolutionaries of the street-corner seriously challenged the revolutionaries of the assembly.'[32] As 1793 progressed, the *Enragé* program—the death penalty for hoarders and speculators, and maximum prices and forced acceptance of the assignat—became widely accepted at the Cordeliers Club and in the Revolutionary Commune.

DAY OF THE *ENRAGÉS*, 4–5 SEPTEMBER 1793

The revolutionary *journées* of 4–5 September 1793 began with a crowd gathering before the Hôtel de Ville, being incited by Roux to demand bread and higher wages. Hébert and Chaumette of the Revolutionary Commune suggested that the crowd should march on the Convention the following day and demand the immediate mobilisation of a Revolutionary Army to go into the countryside to discover the evil hoarders and impound their food for delivery to Paris. Hébert even suggested that each battalion should be accompanied by a mobile guillotine.

However, when this program was carried out on 5 September 1793, the proceedings were not dominated by the economic demands of the *Enragés* but by the disastrous news the Port of Toulon in southern France had capitulated to the British. In the atmosphere of patriotic emergency that followed, the questions of prices and supplies—although they were the primary causes of the agitation on 4 September—were once again conveniently forgotten.

The issue of price control was not addressed until 29 September 1793, when the Convention finally yielded to popular pressure to pass the Law of the Maximum, which put a price limit on a large range of goods and services, including labour.[33]

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

How did the Terror change laws and taxation across France up to September 1793?

DID YOU KNOW?

Many women believed the revolution should bring equality and political rights to all citizens. Over sixty Jacobin women's clubs were formed, partly as an expression of patriotism, but also to petition for the vote for women. On 30 October 1793, the National Convention, at this time dominated by the Jacobins, banned all women's clubs after an address by Jean-Pierre-André Amar of the Committee of General Security. Amar argued that 'women should not leave their families to meddle in the affairs of government'.

Source 12.06 *Women's Patriotic Club*, by Jean-Baptiste Lesueur, 1793.

KEY DEVELOPMENT

TERROR BECOMES 'THE ORDER OF THE DAY'

Danton, 5 September 1793: 'The country entrusts this weapon to you for its defence. ... Let a gun be our most sacred object. ... Let each of us lose our life rather than our gun.'

Other important decisions were taken in the National Convention on 5 September 1793. Against the crisis of the fall of Toulon, Barère was quick to propose that 'Terror [be] the order of the day'.

Further, the Convention immediately authorised the formation of a civilian *armée revolutionnaire* (revolutionary army) to operate in the Paris region, an area extending over twenty-five departments. The Jacobins saw this measure as a means of exporting some of the troublesome militants to the countryside and addressing the crucial issue of food supplies. In addition to the official Parisian army, another fifty-six unauthorised provincial revolutionary armies were set up between September and December 1793, covering about two-thirds of the eighty-three departments.

The role of the armies was to ensure the free movement of food supplies into Paris and other large provincial cities, and to round up counter-revolutionaries—deserters, hoarders, refractory priests, political suspects and royalists.

In their mission to mobilise the nation's resources for the war effort by impounding Church silver and bells, these armies became fervent warriors in Hébert's de-Christianisation campaign, defacing and damaging many of France's most beautiful churches. These provincial armies were disbanded by the Law of 14 Frimaire Year II (4 December 1793), because the Committee of Public Safety was anxious to:

- stop the anarchy the armies were inciting
- stem the opposition to the revolution brought on by forced grain requisitioning.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 12.07 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1 Outline the steps Danton thought the National Convention should take.

2 Explain what problems Danton believed would be solved by paying people to attend section meetings.

3 Explain why some groups believed that Terror was necessary following the revolution.

4 Evaluate the significance of the Terror in the lives of a range of French people in 1793–1794. Use evidence to support your response.

Danton's address to the National Convention, 5 September 1793

This revolution must be [fully realised]. You must never fear movements that could tempt counter-revolutionaries in Paris, who would no doubt like to extinguish the flame of liberty where it burns the brightest. But the immense number of true patriots, of *sans-culottes* who have crushed their enemies a hundred times, still exists [and are] ready to take action. We only need to know how to lead them, and once again they will confound and foil all conspiracies. It is not enough to have a revolutionary army; you must be revolutionary yourselves. Remember that industrious men who live by the sweat of their brow cannot attend the sections and that it is only when the true patriots are absent that scheming can take over the section meetings. Therefore decree that two large section-meetings be held each week, and that the man of the People who attends these political assemblies will receive just [payment] for the time spent away from his work.

It is also good that you proclaim to all our enemies that we are determined to be continually and completely prepared for them ... Let it be the republic that puts a gun into the hands of the citizen, the true patriot, and let the republic say to him, 'The country entrusts this weapon to you for its defense.' ... Let a gun be our most sacred object. ... Let each of us lose our life rather than our gun.

Source 12.07 *Reimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, 32 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1858D63), 17:580D83, 586, 591.

JUDICIAL TERROR: THE LAW OF SUSPECTS, 17 SEPTEMBER 1793

Saint-Just: 'It is impossible for revolutionary laws to be executed unless the government itself is truly revolutionary.' [To the Convention 10 October, arguing that Law of Suspects be applied with utmost rigour.]

The major structures of the Terror were set in place between August 1792 and June 1793 to deal with the war, the Vendée Rebellion and the Federalist Revolt. These were the:

- Committee of Public Safety
- Committee of General Security
- Revolutionary Tribunal
- watch committees
- representatives-on-mission.

However, these emergency structures needed to be supported by laws to identify and condemn traitors to the Republic. The first significant piece of legislation was the Law of Suspects, on 17 September 1793. Under this law, all persons suspected of opposing the revolution were to be placed in custody. The reasons for becoming a suspect were broad and included those whose 'conduct, associations, talk or writing have shown themselves to be supporters of tyranny ["royal despotism"] or federalism and enemies of liberty'.[34]

Local watch committees were to make up lists of suspected people and arrest them. These lists were then passed on to the Committee of General Security, along with the reasons for their arrest. The prisoners were then transferred to national jails to await trial and sentencing. In this way, people who were 'suspects' could be held in prison without having committed any crime.

This legislation was followed by the Decree on Revolutionary Government (10 October 1793), which declared that: 'The provisional government of France is revolutionary until the peace'.[35] The declaration suspended the 1793 Constitution and placed all other government organisations under the control of the Committee of Public Safety. This included the Executive Council, the ministers of the government, the generals commanding the army and all government bodies.

Thus, laws on security initiated by the Convention had to be authorised by the Committee of Public Safety, and all laws had to be brought into effect immediately in all districts. Further, the Revolutionary Army was to be used to suppress counter-revolution, and a garrison would be placed in each city to deal with counter-revolutionary movements.

Although the Convention retained the power to dissolve the Committees, historian John Hall Stewart sees this law as fundamentally changing the nature of government in France:

DID YOU KNOW?

The 'Affair of the Carnation' was an attempt to rescue Marie Antoinette from prison. In August 1793, royalists visited the former queen in her cell and dropped a carnation that contained a message to prepare for imminent rescue. Marie wrote back, using a pin on a piece of paper, 'I trust in you. I will come'. The message was intercepted by a guard and Marie was put under twenty-four-hour surveillance, foiling the escape attempt.

Source 12.08 John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1951).

John Hall Stewart

> The government which functioned under the terms of this declaration was an emergency government, a war government, a revolutionary government, but not strictly speaking a constitutional government ... and it claimed the right to use Terror against its enemies. The agencies through which it functioned were the Committee of Public Safety, the Committee of General Security, the Convention, the Revolutionary Tribunal, the Deputies on Mission and the Watch Committees.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. How did the Law of Suspects broaden the scope of the Terror?
2. Why did the Law constitute a compromise of revolutionary ideals?
3. Identify two or more changes brought about by the Decree on Revolutionary Government.

The provisions of the Decree on Revolutionary Government were to be incorporated into the Law of 14 Frimaire Year II (4 December 1793)—the so-called 'Constitution of the Terror'.[36]

THE EXECUTION OF MARIE ANTOINETTE

On 1 August 1793, Marie Antoinette was removed from the Temple prison and taken to the Conciergerie—the 'waiting room' for the guillotine.

The pretty, frivolous and high-spirited Austrian princess who had scandalised France with her spending was now, at only thirty-eight years of age, a grey-haired and grieving woman. Her son, the former heir to the throne of France, had been taken from her; her husband was dead; her close friend, the Princesse de Lamballe, was murdered during the September Massacres; her own death was imminent. Yet, she was still seen as a potential escapee and closely guarded in case of counter-revolutionary plots to release her.

On 14 October 1793, Marie Antoinette was sent to trial, accused of conspiring with foreign powers and with the enemies of the people within France. The trial lasted around twenty hours, beginning at eight o'clock in the morning and going until four o'clock the following morning. Marie Antoinette was found guilty. The verdict delivered, she was returned to the Conciergerie, then carried by common cart to her execution. Throughout the ordeal she remained calm. At half-past twelve, her severed head was exhibited to the crowd.

Source 12.09 *The 'Widow Capet' in the Temple Prison*, by Alexandre Kucharski.

DID YOU KNOW?

Marie Antoinette's body was buried in an unmarked grave near that of Louis XVI, in the small park surrounding the Chapelle Expiatoire in Rue d'Anjou. A royalist lawyer who saw the burial from his window purchased the plot in 1796. On 18 January 1815, bones from the plot were exhumed and reburied at the St Denis Basilica, alongside other French monarchs.

PURGING THE FACTIONS IN THE CONVENTION

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Pierre Vergniaud, March 1793: 'Citizens, we have reason to fear that the Revolution, like Saturn, will successively devour all its children, and finally produce despotism, with the calamities that accompany it.'

Marie Antoinette's death heralded the start of four great waves of executions.

On 30 October 1793, the Girondin leaders—expelled through the actions of the *sans-culottes* on *journées* from 31 May–2 June—were tried and found guilty. When the verdict was pronounced, Dufriche-Valazé killed himself in the courtroom, stabbing himself with a knife he had concealed in his clothing.

On 31 October, Brissot, Vergniaud, Boileau, the journalist Gorsas and eighteen other Girondins were guillotined. They celebrated a last fraternal meal in the Conciergerie on the eve of their execution, and sang the *Marseillaise* as they mounted the scaffold to their deaths. Dufriche-Velazé's body was also guillotined, as the court did not want him to escape the fate of his colleagues. They were followed by Bailly and Barnave, the revolutionary heroes of the Estates-General in 1789. Bailly—who was hated by the *sans-culottes* for his role in the Champ de Mars massacre—died separately via a guillotine that was erected especially for him.[37]

DID YOU KNOW?

It took only thirty-six minutes to execute the twenty-two Girondin leaders on 31 October 1793. It was said that the executioner, Sanson, was very pleased with the efficiency of the guillotine.

On 7 November, Philippe-Egalité (the former Duc d'Orléans) went to the guillotine, followed by Madame Roland on 8 November. Her devoted husband, Jean-Marie Roland, died by suicide on 10 November when he heard of her death.

Pétion and Buzot shot themselves. Clavière also died by suicide, as did Condorcet.

The imprisonment and death of the Girondins sealed the triumph of the Montagnards and their close ally, the Paris Commune. Paris returned to being a city of peace and order, and the Convention concentrated on its legislative program.

Source 12.10 *Le dernier banquet des Girondins*, by Henri Félix Emmanuel Philippoteaux, painted around 1850. At their last meal in the Conciergérie the night before their execution, the condemned Girondins drank a toast to fraternity.

ANTI-GIRONDIN SENTIMENT: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

How did the popular mood in France become so radical and so opposed to the Girondins?

By mid-1793, the threat of foreign invasion was over, but the counter-revolution in the Vendée and the Federalist Revolt had divided France and intensified fear and suspicion. The Girondins were deputies from the Federalist regions, but many people also associated them with the threat of military defeat and opposition to the Jacobin patriots. They were blamed among radical *sans-culottes* for fragmenting the unity of the nation, and suspected of being traitors.

Beyond the fear and suspicion of Girondins was economic strain. Alfred Soboul explains that 'Hunger was the bond that held together such varied groups as artisans, shopkeepers, journeymen and day labourers, giving them a common hostility to big merchants, entrepreneurs, and hoarders of grain, whether noble or bourgeois'.[38] Thus, he argued, the underlying motive for the crowd's hatred of other classes was 'a demand for daily bread'.[39] Fear, hunger and hatred of those who had more than they did—an anger fanned by Marat, Hébert and Varlet—propelled the *sans-culottes* into action.

William Doyle regards the conflict between the Girondins and Paris as more personally directed. While he agrees that 'no single motive united all those involved', he points out that the Girondins deliberately provoked the *sans-culottes*:

William Doyle

> The *sans-culottes* wanted their enemies silenced at whatever cost. No compromise seemed possible with men who denounced patriotic Parisians as anarchists [and] blood-drinkers, … and repeatedly invited the provinces to march on the capital and destroy it.

Source 12.11 William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 238.

Doyle also focuses on Marat, Roux and Danton, and states that as the leaders of the popular movement, they had 'no trust in any representative form of government' and so could not allow the Girondin deputies to remain within the Convention. However, there was another factor. The Girondins had opposed ending the Commission of Twelve in March 1793, endangering the Convention itself. Thus, the Convention was prepared to sacrifice the Girondin deputies to preserve stable government in France—and to preserve its own position.[40]

David Jordan largely blames Robespierre for the execution of the Girondins.[41] He states that prior to the trial of the Girondins, Robespierre had had no personal role in the Terror. Yet, he personally intervened with the Girondin leaders. Robespierre called for their trial to be shortened: 'Citizens, written proofs are weakest of all; it is the history of the Revolution that condemns them; it is public opinion that has struck down the conspirators we are about to decree accused.'[42]

Robespierre also argued that the trial be stopped as soon as the jury declared that they were ready to give a verdict. This would have been a gross injustice even if the trial were fair and balanced—which it was not.

However, Simon Schama links the execution of the Girondins with the nature of the revolution itself:

Simon Schama

> The French Revolution had, from 1788 onward, been made possible by force of arms, by violence and riot. At each stage of its progress, those who had profited from its force sought to disarm those who had put them in power. At each successive stage, they became, in turn, prisoners rather than beneficiaries. This would continue so long as the people of Paris were allowed to pursue their chaotic resort to arms.

Source 12.12 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), 725.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Using Sources 12.11 and 12.12, the interpretations above and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Outline the similarities and differences of both interpretations.
2. Explain why 'no compromise seemed possible' between the *sans-culottes* and their opponents.
3. Analyse the role of revolutionary violence using both sources and a visual source from this chapter.
4. Were the Girondins patriots or traitors? Discuss, using evidence.

CHAPTER 12 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- By October 1793 the Jacobins held the balance of power in the National Convention after the purge of the Girondins by December 1793. The Committee of Public Safety was firmly established as the executive.
- The Federalist Revolts were coming under control, although the rebellion in the Vendée had yet to be fully subdued.
- The external war was to be met by mobilising most of the French population.
- The Convention moved to shore up the economy with the creation of citizen revolutionary armies to ensure the food supplies to cities, laws against hoarders, and price controls on essential household supplies.
- The Terror was used as a tactic to preserve the revolution.
- The guillotine was normalised with the first wave of political executions, which included Marie Antoinette, the Girondins, Bailly, Barnave and Philippe-Egalité.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

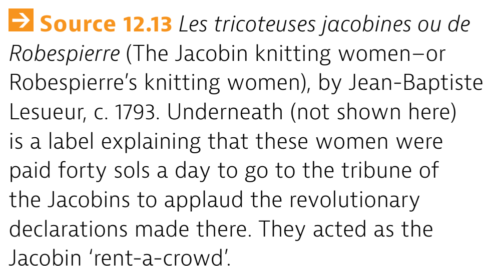
Write a paragraph on the following topic: To what extent did the Terror succeed in repressing the Federalist Revolt?

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

1. Discuss the economic challenges that remained in France by 1793–1794, and how they affected ordinary people.
2. From an economic perspective, was the state of France in 1793 better than it had been in 1788?

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 12.13 and your own knowledge, evaluate the extent to which the whole of French society was mobilised to service the revolution.



Source 12.13 *Les tricoteuses jacobines ou de Robespierre* (The Jacobin knitting women–or Robespierre's knitting women), by Jean-Baptiste Lesueur, c. 1793. Underneath (not shown here) is a label explaining that these women were paid forty sols a day to go to the tribune of the Jacobins to applaud the revolutionary declarations made there. They acted as the Jacobin 'rent-a-crowd'.

A REPUBLIC OF VIRTUE? (1793–1794)

The first six months of 1794 were the climax of both the application of Terror and the project to create a 'republic of virtue'.

The early months of 1794 saw conflict among the revolutionaries over the nature and continuation of the Terror. Robespierre purged two more factions from the National Convention. In March, he purged the Hébertists, who believed the Terror should continue with increased severity and who pursued a destructive campaign of de-Christianisation. Then, in April, he purged the Dantonists, who argued that it was possible to reduce the severity of the Terror because the war was going well.

Robespierre wanted the Terror to continue. He wanted to sweep away the very last traces of the ancien régime to create a new society of virtue, based on reason, tolerance, nature and love of the nation. An important part of this part of this regeneration of spirit and morals was to be the Cult of the Supreme Being.

KEY QUESTIONS

- How far did the revolutionaries stray from their ideals of 1789 with the measures taken in 1793–1794?
- What did the idea of a 'republic of virtue' mean? How was the Terror supposed to achieve this?
- How did French society change during the Terror?

'The crowds were vast: the promise of renewed harmony seemed to have struck a deep chord. An estimated half a million people—most of the population of Paris—turned out for the celebration, but the sneers and innuendos from some of them were audible.'[1]

Source 13.01 ***The Festival of the Supreme Being*, by Pierre-Antoine Demachy, 1794.**

CHAPTER 13

‘*What is the fundamental principle of democratic or popular government? It is virtue, that is high moral standards; these standards demonstrate themselves in citizens’ love of the homeland and its laws … the springs of popular government in time of revolution are at once virtue and Terror: virtue without Terror is fatal; Terror, without which, virtue is powerless.*’

—Robespierre

KEY EVENTS

10 November 1793
De-Christianisation campaign begins

4 December 1793
(14 Frimaire Year II) The Law of Frimaire—The Constitution of the Terror

24 March 1794
Hébertists executed

5 April 1794
Dantonists executed

8 June 1794
Festival of the Supreme Being

10 June 1794
Law of 22 Prairial enacted

28 July 1794
Robespierre executed

THE DE-CHRISTIANISATION CAMPAIGN

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Condorcet: ‘[Robespierre] has all the characteristics … of the leader of a sect: he has built up … a reputation for austerity [a severe manner of living] which borders on sainthood, … he says he is the friend of the poor and the weak and he attracts a following of women and the easily led.’

One of the strongest forces propelling the Terror was the ideology (or belief) of liberty. In the first place, it emphasised the love of the *patrie* (the nation) and the embracing of revolutionary *vertu* (loyal and patriotic citizenship). To achieve this level of liberty, the individual needed to:

- give up their personal freedom to the general will
- act at all times in the interests of the state.

However, the state also attempted to impose liberty by ‘de-Christianising’ France and replacing the old religious symbols with a new revolutionary iconography.

THE ATTACK ON CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

In October 1793, a republican calendar was issued to replace the old Gregorian calendar. It dated from the birth of the Republic in September 1792, with three ten-day weeks to the month, and twelve months to the year.

The months were given new names, based on natural elements such as frost (Frimaire) and heat (Thermidor). The old religious holidays were replaced by revolutionary celebrations such as the *Fête de la Federation*. Liberty was personified in the female figure named ‘Marianne’—meaning ‘of the people’—who was intended to ‘replace’ the Virgin Mary.[2]

The revolutionary armies became the means for attacking the old religious symbols. In the town of Clermont-Ferrand, soldiers invaded the cathedral and destroyed the statues of the saints:

> With vigorous blows they swooped on St. Peter, smashed Saints Paul, Luke and Matthew, … all the angels and the archangel Raphael himself, the winged fowl of the celestial band, the beautiful Mary, who bore three children while remaining a virgin.[3]

Cemeteries were stripped of their crosses, church doors were smashed and crucifixes were torn from their mounts and paraded for citizens to spit on. Donkeys were led through streets dressed in bishop's robes, and effigies of the pope were burnt. The gold and silver of the Church were melted down. Stained-glass windows and altarpieces were destroyed. The great Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris was rechristened the 'Temple of Reason', with a young woman in white portraying Liberty, bowing down to the flame representing Reason. In Lyons, a Jacobin named Grandmaison held up a chalice in parody of the communion service, proclaiming, 'Verily I say to you, my brothers, this is the blood of kings, the true substance of republican communion, take and drink this precious substance'.[4]

Jacques-René Hébert.

Thus, de-Christianisation borrowed its ceremonies from the religion it sought to abolish, while persecution of non-juring priests continued. De-Christianisation was supported by the radical 'Ultras', led by René Hébert, who were influential in the Paris Commune and the Cordeliers Club. The revolutionary armies—established by the demand of the *sans-culottes* after the *journées* of 4–5 September 1793—were enthusiastic in their destruction of provincial churches.

However, de-Christianisation alienated the general population, which remained Catholic in its fundamental beliefs. Local riots, with citizens shouting 'Long live the Catholic religion! We want our priests! We want mass on Sundays and Holy Days!' demonstrated how deeply people resented the program.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE TERROR: THE LAW OF 14 FRIMAIRE YEAR II

The Law of 14 Frimaire Year II (4 December 1793) has been called the 'Constitution of the Terror' because it consolidated the Terror in a legal sense.[5] The Law of 14 Frimaire clearly outlined the relationship between the Convention and the Committee of General Security and the Committee of Public Safety, as well as the powers of ministers, the Revolutionary Tribunal and watch committees in each district.

COMMITTEE OF GENERAL SECURITY

- Controlled the police and internal security
- Managed the operation of the Revolutionary Tribunal
- Supervised surveillance committees.

NATIONAL CONVENTION

The heart of government—both legislative and executive—delegated full executive powers to the two Great Committees.

COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

- Controlled the ministers
- Appointed the generals
- Conducted foreign policy
- Enforced policies from Paris through local government in the departments.

While the National Convention was identified as 'the sole motive centre of government',[6] the two 'Great Committees' received full executive powers. Following the Decree on Revolutionary Government (10 October), the Committee of General Security was made responsible for:

- police and internal security
- the Revolutionary Tribunal
- the local watch committees.

Meanwhile, the Committee of Public Safety:

- controlled the ministers
- appointed the generals
- conducted foreign policy
- had extensive powers over local government.

At the same time, the powers of departments and communes, including the Paris Commune, were limited to routine matters of administration. Power was consolidated in Paris and, in practice, into the hands of Maximilien Robespierre and his colleagues on the two 'Great Committees'.

CENTRALISATION OF POWER AND CONTROL OF ANARCHY

Historian Simon Schama disputes the idea that the Law of 14 Frimaire was a 'constitution' designed to entrench the practices of the Terror. Instead, he claims that it was 'aimed *against* all those who had exacted the most brutal retribution in the name of republican orthodoxy' and was intended to end the anarchy.[7]

The Law of 14 Frimaire applied severe penalties for officials who:

- failed in their duty to the state
- were negligent in their duties
- were excessive in applying laws.

The tone of the document clearly shows that there would be public accountability for infringements:

> **Law of 14 Frimaire**
>
> Every infraction of the law, … every abuse of public authority … shall be punished with five years' imprisonment and confiscation of one-half of the property of the condemned person; and for those not salaried … the penalty shall be deprivation of the rights of citizenship for six years and the confiscation of one-fourth of their incomes during the same time.

Source 13.02 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 490.

These penalties were particularly directed towards the representatives-on-mission, so that they could no longer take action against citizens without the specific authority of the Committee of Public Safety. Thus, the Law of 14 Frimaire Year II recognised the excesses of the Terror during the Vendée Rebellion and Federalist Revolts.

Historian William Doyle supports Schama's view that the Law of 14 Frimaire was intended to restrict the Terror, rather than entrench it, as it 'heralded the end of the anarchic Terror … the end of the depredations of the Revolutionary Armies, now reduced to a single force … and, by implication, of de-Christianisation'.[8]

The Terror would now be 'orderly' and contained, rather than spontaneous and brutal, and would be controlled by a strong central government. The Law of 14 Frimaire received a mixed reaction from the remaining factions in the National Convention:

- Hébert and his radical 'ultra-revolutionaries' within the Cordeliers Club, the Paris Commune and the sections protested against it
- Danton and his supporters—known as the 'Indulgents'—rejected it, as they wanted to bring a complete end to the Terror.

A REVERSAL OF THE PRINCIPLES OF 1789?

The Law of 14 Frimaire may have marked the end of anarchy and severely limited the power of the *sans-culottes* movement but, as historians Dylan Rees and Duncan Townson point out, 'It also marked the complete reversal of the principles of 1789 … and many of the characteristics of the ancien régime reappeared'.[9] Gone were the provisions of the 1791 and 1793 constitutions that had established:

- decentralisation
- elections to all positions
- separation of the legislative and executive powers
- non-political justice.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What did the concept of vertu mean for the government of France in late 1793?
2. How could the introduction of the new calendar be considered an attack on Christianity?
3. What was the significance and purpose of the legislation referred to as the Law of 14 Frimaire Year II?

Robespierre justified the measures of the Law of 14 Frimaire, claiming: 'We must organise the despotism of liberty to crush the despotism of kings'—but the measures were contrary to the democratic rights he had advocated while out of office.[10]

The Terror (1793–1794) became the government's response to the challenges that threatened the revolution both within France and beyond its borders. The policy was rigid and authoritarian, as it aimed to control all aspects of society. In essence, it used fear to ensure obedience of the population. The Terror strayed far from the original ideals of liberty expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (26 August 1789).

For example, the declaration stated that 'the aim of every political association [government] is the maintenance of natural and inalienable rights of liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression'. However, now property was under threat, as French citizens were not free to sell or withhold grain from market as:

- 'hoarders' were declared to be 'suspect' (Law of Suspects, 17 September 1793)
- prices that sellers could charge were set out in the Law of the Maximum (29 September 1793).

The state had also seized the property of emigrés and the Church. The citizens neither had any security, as the sectional watch committees were required to create lists to meet monthly quotas for denunciations of local suspects.

In the course of the national emergency, the key civil liberties were abandoned. Freedom of expression, freedom of worship and freedom of association became unattainable, with the revolutionary government prioritising the unity of the revolutionary Republic and concentrating on the war effort.

COMPROMISED IDEALS

Discuss Duncan Townson's view that the Law of 14 Frimaire marked 'the complete reversal of the principles of 1789'. To what extent do you agree?

The extreme Law of 22 Prairial (10 June 1794) abandoned the legal principles of evidence, with no defence permitted and verdicts to be reached 'by the conscience of the jurors' with either acquittal or death the only possible alternatives.

Camille Desmoulins, a prominent critic of the Terror, became one of the most visible casualties. His paper *le vieux Cordelier* was closed down on 31 March 1794, and he was sentenced to death by Revolutionary Tribunal and executed together with Danton on 5 April 1794.

THE END OF THE HÉBERTISTS—THE SECOND FACTIONAL PURGE

Jacques-René Hébert and his followers were the political force behind the de-Christianisation movement and the pressure to introduce a Maximum—a law to regulate wages and to regulate maximum prices on specified foods.

Hébert called for a *journée* on 4–5 September 1793. He wanted to force the National Convention to obey the 'general will' of the people. This placed him in direct conflict with Robespierre's desire for the centralising of power in the hands of the state. Although the *journée* forced the Convention to finally introduce a state-controlled economy—passing the Law of the Maximum on 29 September 1793—such challenges to the government invited retaliation.

Factionalism was no longer permissible, and this included attempts by the *sans-culottes* to bully the deputies. The 'general will' of the people had to be replaced by the 'single will' of

the state. Moreover, Robespierre was determined to end the religious Terror of the de-Christianisation campaign, and in this he was supported by the Dantonists.

The Hébertists were accused of being involved in a 'foreign plot', largely as a result of dubious 'evidence' given to the Convention by Danton's associate, Fabre d'Églantine.

In February 1794, Hébert called for a 'holy war' against an unnamed 'oppressive faction', which he said was worse than Brissot's. In the Cordeliers Club, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was covered with a black cloth to symbolise the death of public liberty and the rights of the people.[11] Finally, on 4 February, Hébert called for another popular uprising, but this time the *sans-culottes* did not respond. Likewise, Robespierre would not permit the resurgence of popular agitation.

Source 13.03 Jacques-Renée Hébert, publisher of the newspaper *Le Père Duchesne*. Drawing by Vivant Denon.

On 13 March 1794, under Robespierre's influence, the Convention passed the Decree on Conspiracies—and Hébert and his followers were placed under arrest, charged with planning a military coup, plotting against the security of the state and of being covert royalists.

On 24 March 1794, Hébert, Vincent, Momoro and General Ronsin were guillotined, followed in June and July 1794 by fourteen other members of Hébert's 'ultra-revolutionary' faction. Their executions were followed by the guillotining of all others who had opposed the policies of the Committee of Public Safety. In this way, the Committee of Public Safety was able to eliminate both:

- critics who felt that the revolution had not gone far enough
- critics who felt that the revolution had become too radical.

CALLS FOR MODERATION: DANTON AND THE 'INDULGENTS'—THE THIRD FACTIONAL PURGE

Danton and Desmoulins had wanted to bring an end to the Terror and restore government under the Constitution of 1793, as well as:

- reinstate the independence of local authorities
- remove government controls over the economy
- negotiate peace with the First Coalition.

Danton had argued that it was now time to be 'sparing of human blood', tolerant in terms of religion, and allow people to go back to their normal lives. In an attack on the excesses of the Hébertists, he said:

Danton on the Hébertists

> The people are sick to death of them. ... Perhaps the Terror once served a useful purpose, but it should not hurt innocent people. No one wants to see a person treated as a criminal, just because he happens not to have enough enthusiasm.

Source 13.04 Cited in Christopher Hibbert, *The French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1980), 235.

Danton's campaign had coincided with the fall of Lyons, the defeat of the Vendéan army at Granville, and victories on the border against the armies of the First Coalition. Thus, Danton's call fell on sympathetic ears: the Convention established the Committee of Clemency to examine the lists of those suspects held in the prisons. However, although internal and external threats were less intense, Robespierre's goal was now the achievement of the 'republic of virtue'.

(see p. 279)

Georges Danton.

The Dantonists had challenged both the Hébertists and the Committee of Public Safety. In November and December 1793, Dantonists had mounted attacks on the Committees and on the generals. In *le vieux Cordelier*, Camille Desmoulins had criticised Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety:

Desmoulins on Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety

> You want to remove all your enemies by means of the guillotine! Has there ever been greater folly? Can you make a single man perish on the scaffold, without making ten enemies for yourself from his family or his friends? … I think quite differently from those who tell you that Terror must remain the order of the day.

Source 13.05 Cited in John Hardman, ed., *French Revolution Documents*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), 127–128.

At first, Robespierre had been reluctant to move against the Indulgents: Danton was a popular and powerful figure, and Desmoulins was an old schoolfriend. Efforts to resolve the tension failed, even after personal meetings between Robespierre and Danton.

CAMILLE DESMOULINS, 1760–1794

Camille Desmoulins was a schoolfriend of Robespierre. He trained as a lawyer, but his stammer was a disadvantage when representing people in court. He practised as a journalist and was involved in the revolution from its beginning, urging crowds at the Palais Royal to take up arms in support of the revolution on 12 July 1789.

Desmoulins failed to get elected to the Estates-General, but was active in urging that Louis XVI be brought back to Paris on 5–6 October. He became a founding member of the Cordeliers Club and was active in the Champ de Mars protest in July 1791. He was elected to the National Convention and became a moderate Jacobin and a supporter of Danton—and a critic of Robespierre. He was arrested, along with Danton and the other Indulgents, in March 1794, and guillotined on 5 April 1794.

Source 13.06 *Camille Desmoulins, His Wife Lucile and Their Son Horace,* by Jacques-Louis David, 1792. Desmoulins (April 1794): 'I shall die in the belief that to make France free, republican and prosperous, a little ink would have sufficed—and only one guillotine.'[12]

Increasingly, Robespierre had become convinced that Danton's support for the destruction of the Hébertists was part of a wider plot to discredit the government and cause it to lose the support of the people.

As Danton's bid to end the Terror attracted more followers, it endangered Robespierre's own position and those of the other members of the Committee of Public Safety. Corruption charges against two Dantonists— Chabot and Fabre d'Églantine—had provided the excuse for bringing the Indulgents to trial. On 26 March 1794—two days after the execution of the Hébertists—Danton and his followers were arrested and tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal. In spite of Danton's demolition of the charges against them, the verdict had been decided in advance: on 5 April, Danton, Desmoulins and sixteen others were guillotined. Danton met his death with his usual theatricality; he said to the executioner, 'Don't forget to show my head to the people, it's worth it'.[13]

A week after Danton's execution, Lucile Desmoulins was sent to the guillotine as an accomplice of her husband, Camille Desmoulins. Lucile's mother wrote to Robespierre:

Letter to Robespierre

> It is not enough for you to have murdered your best friend. You must have his wife's blood as well. ... In less than two hours she will be dead. ... If Camille's blood has not driven you mad, if you can still remember the happy hours you once spent before our fire holding our little Horace, spare an innocent victim.

Source 13.07 Christopher Hibbert, *The French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1980), 245.

Danton's death moved the Terror one step further—and strengthened Robespierre's determination to create a 'virtuous' moral state. As historian François Furet explains, the purges of the Hébertists and Dantonists effectively reduced revolutionary Paris to silence and reinforced the absolute dictatorship of the Committee of Public Safety. The Revolutionary Commune of Paris now obeyed the Committee of Public Safety.

With its acceptance of the purges of the nation's representatives, the Convention itself became a prisoner of the Terror. It, too, obeyed the Committee of Public Safety, whose members it elected and re-elected. Thus, as Saint-Just would remark, 'The Revolution is frozen'.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Why was Danton popular with the Parisian crowd?
2. Why did Danton and Desmoulins want the restrictive legislation of the Terror to be repealed?
3. For what reasons were Danton and Desmoulins executed?

THE FROZEN REVOLUTION: THE LAW OF 22 PRAIRIAL

The executions of the Hébertists and the Dantonists—along with the continuing expansion of the killings—made the Terror seem increasingly arbitrary and barbaric, especially as the revolutionary armies were having victories over the First Coalition.

The war emergency had been used to justify the Terror, but now, as the threat of the overthrow of the Republic diminished, Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety widened the definition of 'counter-revolutionary'.

KEY DEVELOPMENT

The Law of 22 Prairial Year II (10 June 1794) was drafted by Couthon and Robespierre—and this turned alarm into panic, especially as the deputies to the Convention were now subject to its provisions:

The Law of 22 Prairial

> The following are deemed enemies of the people: those who have instigated the re-establishment of monarchy or have sought to disparage or dissolve the National Convention, ... have disseminated false news, ... have sought to mislead opinion ... [or] to impair the energy and purity of revolutionary and republican principles. ... Contractors of bad faith ... [and] squanderers of public fortune. ... The penalty provided for all offences ... is death. ... The proof needed ... comprises every kind of evidence, ... material or moral, oral or written ... the rule of judgements is the conscience of jurors, enlightened by love of the *Patrie*.

Source 13.08 John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1951), 528–529.

The definition of 'enemies of the people' was so broad that almost anybody could be accused of crimes against the state. The death penalty was almost inevitable, as the accused were not permitted to:

- have defence counsel represent them
- call witnesses
- produce evidence in their defence.

Thus, the number of executions increased. Of the 2639 people guillotined in Paris in the period March 1793–August 1794, over 50 per cent of them died in June–July 1794.[14] Many of them were aristocrats who had not been previously accused of any crimes.

Historians agree that Robespierre's overthrow was ultimately caused by the Law of 22 Prairial.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Identify two or more features of the Law of 22 Prairial.
2. How would the laws of 22 Prairial have affected suspects sent to trial?

KEY DEVELOPMENT

THE CULT OF THE SUPREME BEING

Source 13.09 'The French people recognise the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul', anonymous print published by Basset, Paris, 1794. The text replicates the actual wording of the decree.

Robespierre rejected the attempts at the de-Christianisation of public life in France. His attitude was pragmatic rather than religious: following Rosseau, he felt that every society needed a form of organised religion.

Robespierre had no personal desire to defend Catholicism. However, when the Commune sanctioned the closure of all Christian churches in Paris on 23 November 1793, Robespierre delivered 'a successful and impassioned speech to the Jacobins about the dangers'.[15] He argued that the priests denounced for saying mass would say it for even longer if they were prohibited from doing so.

McPhee tells us that there is 'no doubt' that Robespierre believed in God and the afterlife. However, he had practical political reasons for wanting to establish a form of spirituaty that might unite a wide spectrum of society. The Decree of 18 Floréal Year II (7 May 1794) established the Cult of the Supreme Being.

This decree would show the world that France had a new civic religion that worshipped the immortality of the soul and the existence of a higher being.

To honour this new 'religion', Robespierre, as president of the National Convention, ordered that the people should celebrate the Festival of the Supreme Being throughout France on 8 June.

In Paris, church bells, drums and cannon called people to the Tuileries Palace, where figures representing atheism, discord and selfishness were burned.

Had Robespierre lost his grip on reality? The deputy Thuriot muttered, 'It is not enough for him to be master. He has to be god.'[16]

In 1794, Gracchus Babeuf said the following of Maximilien Robespierre: 'There are two Robespierres, the one a genuine patriot and a man of principle, up to 31 May [1793] and since then, the man of ambition, the tyrant and deepest of villains.' How could Robespierre be both democrat and tyrant, both 'incorruptible' and the 'deepest of villains'?

Source 13.10 Depiction of the initial Festival of the Supreme Being.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 13.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Explain the meaning behind the symbols used in the Festival of the Supreme Being.
2. Outline the concepts Robespierre wished to impress on French people in the participation in this celebration and in the issuing of the Decree of 18 Floréal Year II.
3. Analyse the extent to which the Cult of the Supreme Being helped Robespierre achieve his revolutionary ideals. Use evidence to support your response.

ROBESPIERRE: DEMOCRAT OR TYRANT?

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Robespierre the democrat

In 1789, Robespierre was elected to the Estates-General as deputy for the Third Estate of Arras. He was a provincial lawyer, just twenty-nine years old. In the first years of the revolution, he was most notable for his:

- support for the principles of liberty and equality
- strong opposition to the death penalty, which he considered a barbaric form of punishment.

Historian Marisa Linton explains: 'From the outset Robespierre was a radical democrat. He protested against the distinction that the Assembly made between "active" and "passive" citizens, ... he declaimed against slavery in the French colonies; and he spoke passionately for liberty of the press.'[17] The following outline of Robespierre's speeches and ethical positions will reveal the many different radical positions he took to support the common people.

KEY INDIVIDUAL (see p. 282)

Maximilien Robespierre.

Robespierre the strategic politician

After Louis XVI's flight from Paris in the summer of 1791, Robespierre—although a republican in principle—stood apart from the petition supported by the Cordeliers and Jacobins that was aimed at deposing the king. He warned that the time was not yet right for France to become a republic.

During 1792, Robespierre became the dominant figure in the Jacobin Club, and emerged as the leader of the popular cause and the political hero of the *sans-culottes*. He was a lone voice arguing against Brissotin's policy of war, as he could see the problems war would bring to France. Robespierre's anti-war position increased the bitter personal animosity between Robespierre and Brissot.

Robespierre finally called for a republic on 1 August 1792. After 10 August 1792, he sat on the Revolutionary Commune, and swore his innocence when the Girondins and Federalists blamed him, Danton and Marat for planning the September Massacres.

In the elections for the National Convention in September 1792, Robespierre won the most votes of the twenty-four Jacobin deputies elected to represent Paris. On 29 October, the Girondins again attacked Robespierre in the Convention. They accused him of being responsible for the September Massacres and of wanting to be a dictator. Girondin deputy Louvet accused Robespierre of having secret ambitions: 'you [have] continually presented yourself as an object of idolatry ... that you are the only virtuous man in France, ... the only one who can save the *patrie* [nation]. ... I accuse you of working obviously toward supreme power.'[18]

On 5 November, Robespierre defended himself against these accusations in front of packed public galleries, which included about 800 women and 200 men who applauded him loudly.

On 28 July 1793, the Convention voted him onto the Committee of Public Safety. However, by July 1794, he was so widely feared that both the people and the deputies of the National Convention turned against him.

CONTINUED ...

The deputies in the Convention became suspicious of Robespierre's motives and feared that he intended to install himself as a dictator. In July 1794 a severe bout of illness kept Robespierre absent from the Committee of Public Safety and the Convention for a month at this critical time of the Terror, and probably affected his political judgement.

As deputies massed against him, he was abandoned by the *sans-culottes*. After a failed suicide attempt during the night of 27 July (9 Thermidor), Robespierre was arrested, tried and guillotined on 28 July 1794 (10 Thermidor). He is buried in an unmarked grave. There is only one monument to him in Paris—a statue erected in 1949 at Saint-Denis, inscribed, 'To Maximilien Robespierre: The Incorruptible.'

Robespierre the revolutionary

Source 13.11 Peter McPhee, *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* (London: Yale University Press, 2012), 138.

Condorcet on Robespierre, 1792

Robespierre preaches, ... censures [disapproves], ... thunders against the rich and the great; he lives frugally and feels no physical needs; he has but one mission, which is to speak, and he speaks almost all the time.

As historian David Jordan notes, Robespierre was not a key participant in the critical days of the revolution:

Source 13.12 David Jordan, *The Revolutionary Career of Maximilien Robespierre* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 7.

David Jordan on Robespierre

At no time was he able to present the kind of revolutionary credentials—attacked the Bastille, marched with the women to Versailles, petitioned in the Champ de Mars, attacked the Tuileries, purged the Convention—that many a street radical offered and demanded as a certificate of patriotism.

According to Jordan, Robespierre's presence was recorded at only two events, suggesting that he was less important than others and formed only part of the crowd of deputies. Robespierre features prominently in Jacques-Louis David's 1791 painting *The Tennis Court Oath*, even though Robespierre was only a humble Third Estate deputy in 1789.

Robespierre and the Enlightenment

Robespierre was an ardent admirer of Rousseau, and his speech of May 1793 echoes many of Rousseau's ideas:

Source 13.13 Cited in Mark Fielding and Margot Morecombe, *The Spirit of Change: France in Revolution* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 65.

Robespierre's speech, May 1793

Man is born for happiness and for liberty, and everywhere he is a slave and unhappy. The purpose of government is the conservation of his rights and the perfection of his being, and everywhere society degrades and oppresses him. ... The ills of society never come from the people, but from the government. ... Government is established to make the general will respected; but the men who govern have individual wills and seek to dominate.

'The Right to Vote', March 1791

Robespierre made several speeches to the National Assembly on the issue of voting rights, but it is not known when his major speech on 'The Right to Vote' was delivered. It was not reported in the official journal, *Le moniteur*, which may have reflected his relative obscurity at the time. It was printed sometime in March 1791 and presented at the Cordeliers Club on 20 April 1791.

After stating the key clauses of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, Robespierre stated that these rights should be for all, and that denying the right to vote to a large part of the nation was undermining the foundational principles of this declaration.

Robespierre, 'On the right to vote,' March 1791

1. Can the law be termed an expression of the general will when the greater number of those for whom it is made can have no hand in its making? NO. ...

2. Can men be said to enjoy equal rights when some are endowed with the exclusive right to be elected members of the legislative body or other public institutions, others merely with that of electing them, while the rest are deprived of all these rights at once? NO. ...

3. Are men admissible to all public posts, and is no distinction made except such as derive from their virtues and talents, when an inability to pay the required tax excludes them from every public office regardless of the virtues and talents that they may posses? NO. ...

4. Is the nation sovereign when the greater part of the persons composing it is deprived of the political rights from which sovereignty derives its essence? NO. ...

Source 13.14 Cited in George Rudé, ed., *Robespierre: Great Lives Observed* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 13–15.

On the death penalty

Robespierre was personally opposed to the death penalty and made a speech to that effect in 1791. However, as historian Georges Rudé has argued, Robespierre was a politician who held fast to his principles, but recognised the political imperatives that required him to modify his opinions.[19]

Robespierre initially argued that the death penalty was unjust:

Robespierre, 'On the Abolition of the Death Penalty,' 30 May 1791

First, that the death penalty is fundamentally unjust; and secondly, that it is not the most effective of penalties from preventing crimes—rather, it increases them.

...

A conqueror who puts his captured enemies to death is called a barbarian! A man who cuts the throat of a child so that he can disarm and chastise is thought to be a monster. ... So the scenes of death that society commands with so much ceremony are nothing but cowardly murders, solemn crimes committed according to legal procedures, not by individuals, but by the nation at large.

Source 13.15 Cited in George Rudé, ed., *Robespierre: Great Lives Observed* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 24, 26.

A second speech made to the Convention on 3 December 1792 related to the action to be taken against Louis XVI—or 'Citizen Capet', as the former king was addressed during his trial:

Robespierre on the reasons for the public trial of the former king, 3 December 1792

For myself, I abhor the death penalty lavishly imposed by your laws, and I feel neither love nor hatred for Louis; I hate only his crimes. ... I have asked for the abolition of the death penalty ... it can be justified only in cases where it is necessary to the safety of individuals or society. But Louis must die because the *patrie* [nation] must live.

Source 13.16 Cited in Peter McPhee, *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* (London: Yale University Press, 2012), 142.

After General Dumouriez deserted to the Austrians on 5 April 1793, Robespierre widened the parameters of the death penalty even further, claiming that capital punishment was the appropriate penalty for 'every attempt made against the security of the State or the liberty, equality, unity, and indivisibility of the Republic'.[20]

CONTINUED ...

'The people are never wrong'

Robespierre consistently argued for democratic government. He believed that the common people, as Rousseau had claimed, were the most oppressed by modern civilisation but the least corrupted, and, therefore, 'nearest to nature and less depraved'.[21]

One of Robespierre's earliest interventions on the people's behalf was on 28 June 1790. Camille Desmoulins presented a petition to the National Assembly in the name of the Bastille workers, which he claimed Robespierre had approved. The petition demanded subsistence as a citizen's right, and suggested that workshops be maintained from a portion of the profits from sales of the seized Church lands.[22]

In a 1791 speech to the Jacobin Club, Robespierre defended the right of all male citizens to vote: 'There is nothing so just or good as the people, whenever they are not stirred up by the excesses of oppression.'[23] In August 1792, he demanded that the Legislative Assembly be replaced by a National Convention, urging the Jacobins to go to the Paris sections to 'make sure the National Assembly … [admits] all citizens without distinction'.[24]

Robespierre was consistent in his belief, saying in December 1792 that the people are 'always guided by a purity of intention',[25] and, in February 1793, that 'I have maintained in the midst of persecutions and without support, that the people are never wrong'.[26]

Robespierre on Terror

For Robespierre, the Terror had a higher purpose than ridding France of traitors. It was the means of creating a new society: the 'republic of *vertu*' (the love of the nation). Terror separated the citizen of *vertu* from the counter-revolutionary traitors. 'Revolution,' said Robespierre in December 1793, 'is the war of liberty against its enemies. … The revolutionary government needs an extraordinary activity precisely because it is at war.'[27] The Terror was 'the law of self-preservation',[28] which symbolically acted for the people, replacing the *journées* that had become too savage and bloody.

Was there a contradiction between democracy and Terror? Not according to Robespierre:

> [The sword] that glistens in the hands of the heroes of liberty resembles the sword with which the satellites of tyranny are armed. … Conquer by Terror the enemies of liberty and you will be right as founders of the republic.[29]

By 1792, Robespierre had divided the population into:

- the citizens of *vertu* who fully supported the Republic, the National Convention, the Great Committees and the Terror
- the rest of the population, who were unsupportive or critical of the ruling group—meaning the Girondins, rebels in the Vendée and *fédéré* cities, Danton and the 'Indulgents', and Roux and the Enragés.

In May 1793, Robespierre identified the enemies of the Republic as 'those corrupt men who prefer their own interest to the general interest'.[30] These could not be citizens of 'virtue'.

Many historians say that the main cause of Robespierre's downfall was the brutal absoluteness of the Law of 22 Prairial —because it threatened even the deputies themselves. By July 1794, Robespierre had come to symbolise all of the threats the Terror presented, even though the danger of war that had brought the Terror into being had faded.

Robespierre's illnesses

In *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life*, Peter McPhee examines the evidence about Robespierre's illnesses, and analyses their occurrence in relation to political events. McPhee studied documentary evidence from Robespierre's doctor. It is clear that in 1794—when the great cultural project of the 'republic of virtue' was in full swing—Robespierre's health became increasingly frail, and most likely affected his judgement and mental sharpness.

McPhee speculates that Robespierre's relentless commitment to work, with its periods of great stress, may have made him susceptible to bouts of anaemia and some sort of psychosomatic disorder—which is when physical symptoms are caused by a mental state. According to McPhee, when Robespierre returned to public life, his speeches became more agitated and even apocalyptic: 'His personal and tactical judgement, once so acute, seems to have deserted him. From March [1794] his capacity for leadership was at odds with his status and respect.'[31]

KEY INDIVIDUAL

Create two lists of quotations to which you can refer when writing about Robespierre, covering:

1. the historical perspectives Robespierre had on a range of events and issues throughout the revolution
2. key historical interpretations on the actions and impact of Robespierre.

THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE—THE FINAL FACTIONAL PURGE

KEY DEVELOPMENT

While the Terror continued into 1794, Robespierre's own fall came about because the deputies had no immunity against the excesses of the Terror. Once Danton and his followers became victims, no one felt safe. In the end, Robespierre's passionate pursuit of *vertu* made him the victim of his own ideas.

Many of the moderate deputies who had supported emergency legislation as a necessary response to the war rejected Robespierre's belief that he could build a moral and just society through killing. The extremist deputies—particularly those who had been involved in the excesses of the Terror in the Federalist and Vendée revolts—feared that they might also be accused and executed.

The French victory in the Battle of Fleurus on 26 June 1794 and the full military withdrawal of First Coalition forces meant that there was no longer any justification for the Terror, as there was no longer a military threat. Increasingly, Robespierre was seen as a ruthless dictator. Historian Louis Madelin wrote:

> Fear was on every side, in the creak of a door, an exclamation, a breath. Drawing rooms were empty, wine shops deserted; even the courtesans stopped going to the Palais Royal where (extraordinary sight) virtue reigned supreme. The dreary city waited, under the burning summer sun.[32]

Illness had kept Robespierre away from the Convention since his appearance at the Festival of the Supreme Being. He reappeared at the National Convention on 26 July and claimed that:

> Every scoundrel insults me. Let them prepare hemlock [poison] for me. I will wait on these sacred seats. I have promised to leave a formidable testament to the oppressors of the people. I bequeath them the truth … and death.[33]

On 27 July 1794, as Robespierre tried to speak in the Convention, deputies cried, 'Down with the tyrant! To the guillotine!' As a list of accusations against him was read out, Robespierre rushed up and down the steps of the rostrum, shouting, 'Death! Death!' at each deputy he pointed to.

To Thuriot, chair of the Convention, Robespierre shouted, 'For the last time, will you give me time to speak, President of murderers?' His voice then broke; into the silence someone called, 'Ah! Danton's blood chokes you.' When he collapsed on a seat, Robespierre was told, 'How dare you? That was Vergniaud's seat.' The proposal for his impeachment was supported unanimously.[34]

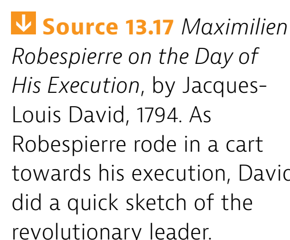
There was an attempt to arrest Robespierre, but along with Couthon, Hanriot and Saint-Just, he had set up a camp at the Hôtel de Ville. The *sans-culottes* did not rally around him; most of the Paris sections supported the Convention. The frightened deputies, aware that their own lives were at stake if Robespierre was not imprisoned, sent Revolutionary Guards to the Hôtel de Ville. As they entered the room, a shot rang out. A guardsman was to claim that he shattered Robespierre's jaw; other versions say it was an attempt at suicide.

From there, Robespierre was removed to the rooms of the Committee of Public Safety at the Tuileries Palace, where his jaw was bound by a surgeon. At 11.00 am., he was taken before the Revolutionary Tribunal, along with twenty-one others, and condemned to death. The verdict was based on 'a simple recognition of identity'.[35]

At 6.00 p.m. on 28 July 1794, he was put in place under the blade and decapitated.[36]

DID YOU KNOW?

The 'saddest place in Paris' is the park where the Chapelle Expiatoire stands. In the chapel are the bones of 1343 known victims of the Terror, including Charlotte Corday, Philippe-Egalité and members of the Swiss Guard.



Source 13.17 *Maximilien Robespierre on the Day of His Execution*, by Jacques-Louis David, 1794. As Robespierre rode in a cart towards his execution, David did a quick sketch of the revolutionary leader.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What events and actions by Robespierre made him appear a tyrant in the early summer of 1794?
2. What fateful error did he and his supporters make on 26 July 1794?
3. Why would the period between June and July 1794 often be called the 'High Terror'?

KEY PEOPLE

Write a paragraph explaining the contribution of Jean-Paul Marat, Georges Danton or Maximilien Robespierre to French society between late 1792 and 1794.

ASSESSING THE TERROR

Antoine-Claire Thibaudeau: 'The Terror … subjected the whole nation to its bloody sceptre. … No one was exempt; it hovered over everyone's head, striking them down indiscriminately; it was as arbitrary and swift as Death's scythe.'

The Terror was not a proportionate response to the counter-revolutionary threat. In the provinces, about 80 per cent of executions resulted from military charges, but in Paris over 30 per cent of executions were for political opinions.

In the fifteen months from 10 March 1793 to 10 June 1794, there were 1250 people executed in Paris. However, that number was exceeded in the six weeks from 10 June to 27 July 1794, when there were 1375 executions. The executions in June–July 1794 took place at a time of military success against the counter-revolution, when the Terror could have been disbanded,

HISTORIANS ASSESS THE POLICY OF TERROR AND ITS VIOLENCE

The word 'Terror' in its new revolutionary political sense was first used by Marat on 23 January 1793, two days after the execution of King Louis XVI. Marat argued that 'the execution of Louis XVI, far from troubling the peace of the state, will serve only to strengthen it, not only by restraining internal enemies by Terror, but also external ones'.[37]

The policy of Terror was to become the platform of the Committee of Public Safety, set up by the National Convention in April 1793.

Georges Lefebvre explains the Terror was caused by the need to defend the revolution.[38] The survival of the Republic required tough, uncompromising laws to terrorise the opposition into submission. The Terror became the means to mobilise the whole nation to support the government's efforts and to strike into the hearts of the enemies of the revolution, both outside and within France. Danton declared that the Convention had to be ruthless 'so the people will not have to be'.[39]

Also, the counter-revolutionaries needed to be cowed and the whole nation mobilised for war, because the public good was more important than individual freedoms—even though the revolutionaries had fought so hard for those liberties.

Peter McPhee has sounded a warning about the 'myths' of the Terror.[40] Most people consider the Terror begins and ends with Robespierre. However, Robespierre was one person on the twelve-member Committee of Public Safety, chosen from all the deputies of the National Convention, and signed fewer arrest warrants than other members of the Committee. Further, the National Convention decided it needed a war cabinet with emergency powers.

Neither Robespierre nor the Committee of Public Safety had the powers of dictators, as the Committee had to report to the Convention each month to have its power renewed. The institutions of the Terror were regarded as temporary. The republican Constitution of 1793 was 'temporarily' suspended.

The guillotine.

When considering the bloodshed of the revolution, McPhee reminds us that the estimated number executed was 30,000 out of a population of about twenty-eight million. (Although historian Robert Darnton places the figure lower, at only 17,000.)[41]

In twentieth-century terms, the death toll of the Terror is small. The French executions are so shocking to us because they were carried out during a revolution that was being fought for the finest things in public life: liberty, humane treatment and tolerance. It is also worth noting that in the early months of 1794 the National Convention passed some of the most democratic and liberal reforms, including:

- state education for all children
- pensions for widows
- benefits for the ill
- abolition of slavery in the colonies.

However, it is the lack of fair trials and the summary executions of the Terror that seem inexcusable to us in a liberal society.

DISCUSSION

How terrible was the Terror? Have commentators and historians exaggerated the effect of the Terror and those that wielded power within it?

Source 13.18 *Robespierre guillotining the executioner after having guillotined all France*. This image appeared sometime in 1794. The anonymity of its creator suggests it was before the fall of Robespierre on 9–10 Thermidor, rather than being part of the general jubilation of the Thermidorian reaction. Simon Schama refers to the 'forest of guillotines' labelled alphabetically. The original graphic contains a list of all the social and political groups Robespierre was accused of purging.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 13.18 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Describe the message conveyed about Robespierre in this image.
2. Explain the symbolism of the pyramid, the chimney stack and the line of guillotines.
3. Explain how the Terror of 1793–1794 compared with the revolutionary ideals of 1789. Use evidence to support your response.

HISTORIANS DEBATE THE NATURE OF THE TERROR

The differing interpretations of the causes of violence are best demonstrated by the arguments of historians such as Robert Darnton. Darnton argues that the revolution was a great project, and he has captured the sense of excitement and idealism of this giant leap forward.[42] He has warned us that we need to be careful about looking back on the revolution through the dark lens of the Terror, even though 'It was the trauma that scarred modern history at its birth'.[43] However, in Darnton's view, the revolutionaries were in exceptional circumstances:

Source 13.19 Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourettea: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton., 1990), 20.

Darnton on the revolutionaries

> [The revolutionaries were] an assortment of unexceptional persons in exceptional circumstances ... [who], when things fell apart, responded to an overwhelming need to make sense of things according to new principles. Those principles still stand as an indictment of tyranny and injustice.

Darnton saw the Terror as 'releasing a utopian energy', creating a sense of 'possiblism [possibility]'.[44] It cleared the way for redesigning and rebuilding the revolution, and struck down old institutions with such force that it made anything seem possible.

Soboul and Rudé have no such hesitation about looking through a lense of terror: 'Unsavoury as the episode must appear in itself, the massacres were an event of historical importance: they completed the destruction of the internal enemy.'[45] For Soboul and Rudé, the massacres were an awful event, but explained as a reaction to the powerful threat of counter-revolution.

Schama's central proposition was that violence was 'the motor of the revolution'.[46] For him, the revolution was always about violence, from the fall of the Bastille, when the crowd hacked off Launay's head with a penknife. He argued that the September Massacres were an event 'which more than almost any other exposed a central truth of the French Revolution: its dependence on organised killing to accomplish its political ends'.[47] He views the Terror as centralised and organised violence that was the beginning of totalitarian justice. He demonises Robespierre and Marat, and views the revolution as a whole through the prism of violence:

Source 13.20 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), xv.

Schama on violence

> It was not merely an unfortunate by-product of politics, or the disagreeable instrument by which other more virtuous ends were accomplished or vicious ones thwarted. In some depressing unavoidable sense, violence was the Revolution itself.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

In a table, compare and contrast the views of historians in this section regarding the use of violence in the revolution. Then respond to this question:

- To what extent was violence needed to create significant change in French society?

CHAPTER 13 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- After the purge of the Hébertists and Dantonists, Robespierre was left in clear control of the Terror.
- The Terror was at its height and targeted various social groups in the period 10 June–27 July 1794.
- The legal provisions to enable the Terror were in opposition to the revolutionary aims of the Declarations of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.
- The state was run by two Committees reporting to the Convention: the Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of General Security.
- The Jacobins had a project to establish *vertu* as the core value of the Republic.
- Robespierre attempted to establish a civic religion with the Cult of the Supreme Being.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF ROBESPIERRE

Peter McPhee on Robespierre

As soon as he died at the age of thirty-six, people rushed to vilify [discredit] him as much as he had been lionized [idolised] while alive, and projected onto him actions and motives based on rumour or their own guilt. His entire life was read backwards and presented as an inexorable trajectory [unstoppable journey] leading to tyranny and the guillotine.

Source 13.21 Peter McPhee, *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), xvi.

Ruth Scurr on Robespierre

Robespierre has been cast [by some historians] primarily as the defender of the Republic and the ideal of social democracy: a passionate witness to the grievances of the poor … whom history betrays. … [But] Robespierre's self and the Revolution cannot be separated. … His identification with the Revolution grew only closer as the Terror intensified.

Source 13.22 Ruth Scurr, *Fatal Purity: Robespierre and the French Revolution* (London: Vintage, 2007), 6–7.

Marisa Linton on Robespierre:

One of the most interesting things about the five years Robespierre spent at the centre of revolutionary politics is what they reveal about the experience of the Revolution. … We cannot understand Robespierre or his choices without understanding the politics of the Revolution: a politics that were constantly shifting and inherently unstable and that were characterised by conflicting ideas and emotions, fervent idealism, hope, loyalty, wild excitement, suspicion, fear, betrayal, and horror. To think that Robespierre—or any other revolutionary leader—mastered the Revolution is to vastly underestimate the sheer scale of the forces that the Revolution unleashed. The Revolution made Robespierre, and the Revolution destroyed him, just as it did so many others.

Source 13.23 Marisa Linton, 'The Choices of Maximilien Robespierre', *H-France Salon* 7, no.14 (2015): 3.

Using Sources 13.21–13.23 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

1. Compare these three historical interpretations with others in this chapter. Draw an explosion chart using the key differences between historians, and annotate the diagram with quotations and dates.
2. Analyse the role of revolutionary leaders in the emergence of the Terror of 1793–1794.

DIAGRAM

Create a diagram about the Terror. In your diagram:

- choose four key events or elements of the Terror
- for each event or element, add a brief summary, a primary-source quotation and a historian's quotation
- try to include the experiences of a range of people.

Compare your diagram with those of other students. Then, as a class, discuss the extent to which the Terror was a compromise of the revolutionary ideals of 1789.

Additional resources: **www.htavshop.com.au/beyond-the-book**

'BACK ON TRACK': THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION (1794–1795)

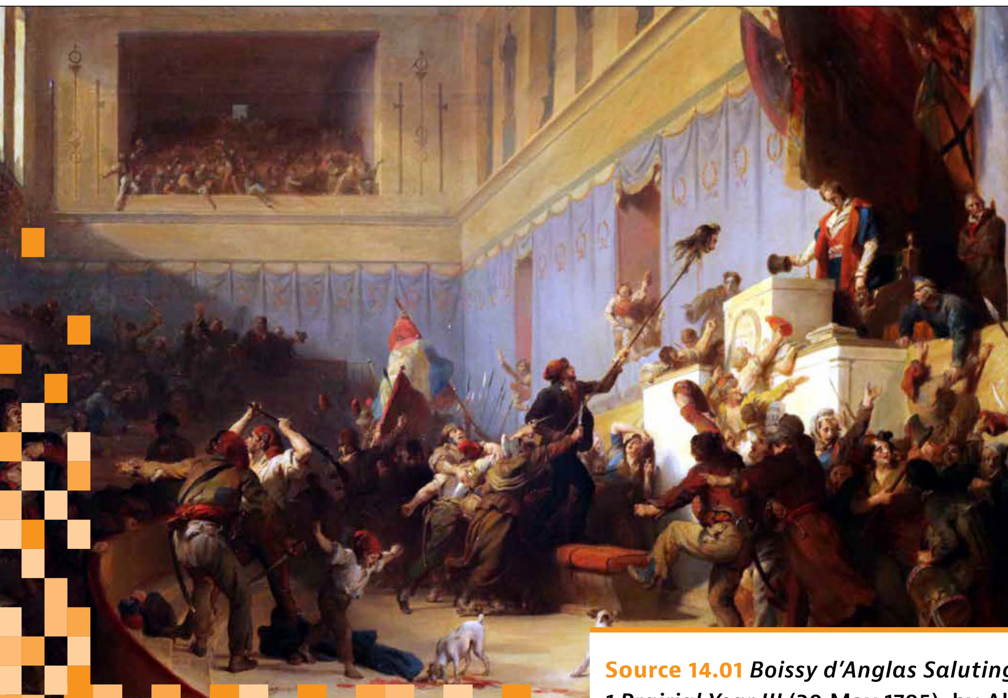
'We should be governed by the best amongst us; the best are the most highly educated, and those with the greatest interest in upholding the laws; save for the rarest exceptions, you will only find such men among those who, by reason of their owning property, are devoted to the land in which it is situated.'

—Boissy d'Anglas to National Convention, 5 Messidor Year III (23 June 1795)

The Thermidorian period ran from the death of Robespierre at the end of July 1794 until October 1795. It was primarily about reacting to the excesses of the Terror and reasserting conservative bourgeois control over the government and the population. It was also a period of retribution against the Jacobins and a time of opportunity for the counter-revolution.

After the execution of Robespierre and the fall of the Jacobins, members of the Convention who had applied the Terror were in a challenging position: they needed to distance themselves from the atrocities and crimes of their fellow deputies. One way they did this was to vilify Robespierre and attribute all responsibility for the Terror—and its excesses—on him. So, 'the dark legend' of Robespierre—as historian Peter McPhee calls it—was quickly established.

The remaining deputies at the Convention began dismantling the institutions and laws of the Terror, closing the Jacobin Club in November 1794 and putting on trial some of the most ferocious representatives-on-mission. Importantly, the Convention abolished the Revolutionary Commune and seized control of the National Guard by replacing Santerre and others with conservative leaders.



Source 14.01 ***Boissy d'Anglas Saluting the Head of Deputy Féraud, 1 Prairial Year III*** **(20 May 1795), by Alexandre-Évariste Fragonard, 1831.**

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the key issues confronting the 'Thermidorians'?
- What explanations can be given for the vilification of Robespierre?
- Why did the popular *journées* of Germinal and Prairial in Year III (1795) fail?
- What were the key features of the Constitution of Year III?
- To what extent did the revolution seek to return to the original aims of 1789?

CHAPTER 14

REGROUPING AFTER THE TERROR

Thibaudeau: 'It was a sort of resurrection of the dead.'

The first consequence of the execution of Robespierre and his colleagues was the ending of the Terror. On 10 Thermidor Year II (28 July 1794), the citizens of France awoke to a world where the crushing weight of fear was finally lifted. There were over 100 executions of 'Robespierrists' in the next three days. The moderate deputy Thibaudeau recalled the atmosphere in Paris, as he wrote in his *Mémoires*:

> Immediately after 9 Thermidor all hearts embraced the most joyful hopes. It was affecting to witness the zest of the citizens searching for each other, exchanging their experiences, good or bad, of the Terror. ... Among the victims, calm happiness had replaced inhibition and wretchedness. It was a sort of resurrection of the dead.[1]

In the Convention, the process of scapegoating the dead began immediately. Robespierre was held responsible for all the policies of the Terror. Songs circulated in the streets accusing him of slandering the French armies, while popular images showed him as the executioner of all France, with piles of skulls at his feet, or in the act of guillotining the executioner himself.

As Doyle has commented, 'The ninth of Thermidor marked not so much the overthrow of one man or a group of men as the rejection of a form of government'.[2] The Jacobins and Montagnards—who were held responsible for the worst excesses of the Terror—would be removed, along with the laws and institutions that supported the Terror.

DID YOU KNOW?
Although he was France's most distinguished artist, Jacques-Louis David was imprisoned for seven months from August 1794 because of his association with the Jacobin government. He was freed due to the efforts of his wife, Marguerite. David and Marguerite had separated in 1790, divorced in 1794, then remarried in 1796.

Self-portrait, by Jacques-Louis David, 1794.

DID YOU KNOW?
'Thermidor' derives from the Greek *thermos*, meaning 'heat'. The month of Thermidor was at the height of the French summer—mid-July to mid-August.

DID YOU KNOW?
After Robespierre's execution, people attended balls wearing a thread of blood-red silk around their neck and with their hair cut short, as if for execution. Some men buttoned their coats above their heads so they looked as if they had been beheaded.

KEY EVENTS

1 August 1794
Law of 22 Prairial repealed

12 November 1794
Jacobin Club closed

December 1794
White Terror begins

21 February 1795
Freedom of worship allowed

22 August 1795
Constitution of Year III and Two-Thirds Decree

26 October 1795
Final session of National Convention (4 Brumaire Year IV)

Royalists—including the émigrés in England and on the borders of France—hoped for the restoration of monarchy. In their view, the *sans-culottes* would be crushed in their attempt to reassert the democracy of the streets, as they had lost leaders such as Danton, Marat and Hébert. The challenge for the moderate deputies of the National Convention—who had either supported the Terror or been silent—was to retain the achievements of the revolution while distancing themselves from the immediate past.

As confidence grew that the Terror had ended, émigrés headed back to France. Prisoners awaiting execution were released, including some Girondin deputies, while persecuted Catholics emerged to take revenge on Jacobin officials who had denied them their faith. Those who had suffered under the Terror now came back into the political arena demanding retribution.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

THE TRIUMPH OF THE BOURGEOISIE

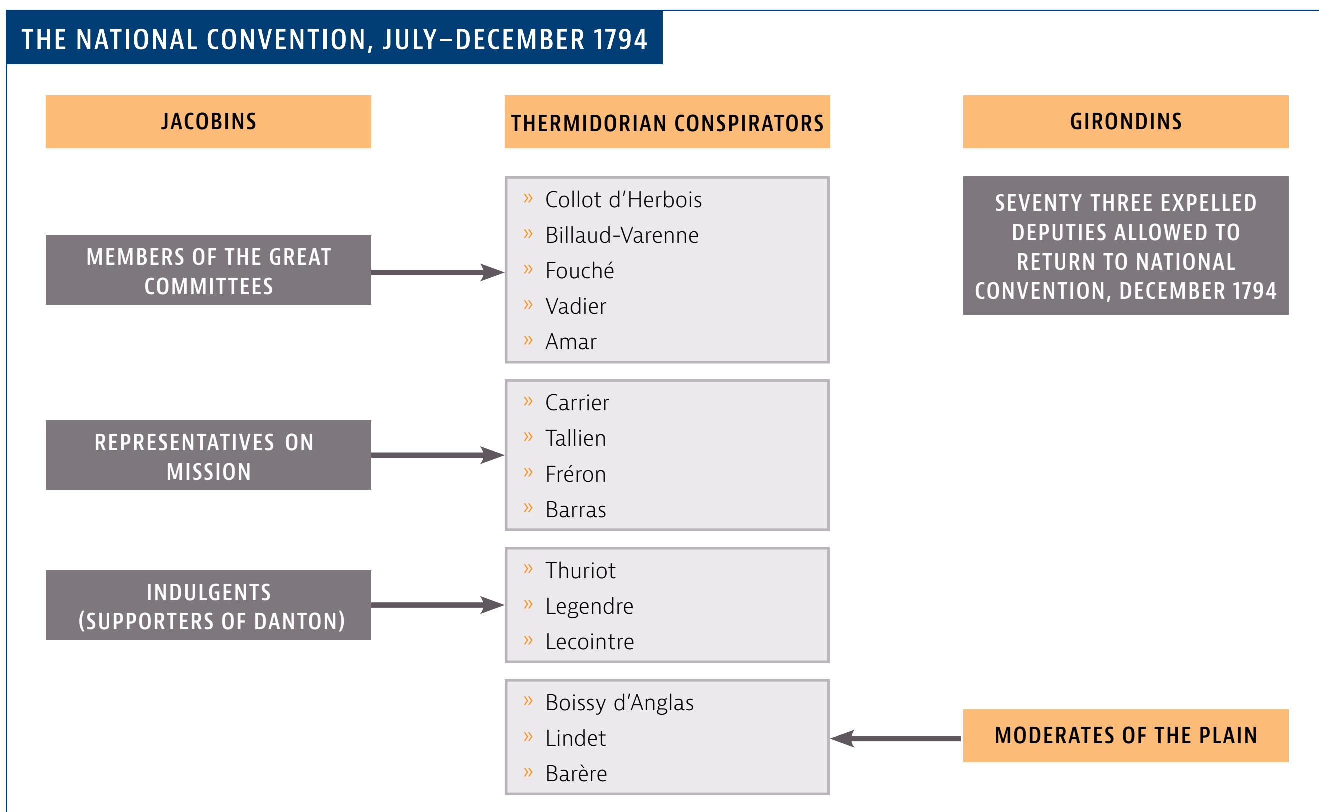
By December 1794, the seventy-three Girondin deputies who had been imprisoned for protesting against the judicial murder of their leaders were released and reinstated in the National Convention. They were soon followed by those who had fled the Convention and gone back to the provinces. Thus, the balance of power turned against the old Montagnards. The Girondins now joined with the Plain (moderates) to bring an end to the apparatus of the Terror.

Historians François Furet and Denis Richet state that this enlarged central group represented 'the very essence and logic of the bourgeois revolution',[3] as it had the same goals as the original revolutionaries of 1789—to bring stability and constitutional government back to France.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Do you agree with Furet and Richet? Did the Plain mirror the ideals of the men of 1789?

Discuss ways in which daily life changed after the death of Robespierre and the end of the Terror, giving three or more examples.



DISMANTLING THE MACHINERY OF THE TERROR

During the month after Robespierre's downfall, the institutions of the Terror were either rearranged or removed. The Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of General Security were both reorganised so that the membership rotated:

- One-quarter of the membership (six members) would be replaced each month.
- Outgoing Committee members were ineligible for re-election for the space of one month.

Both Committees were now also attached to parliamentary committees, to weaken them further.

The authority of the Committee of Public Safety was severely reduced, and now had jurisdiction only over foreign affairs and the army, after handing over:

- jurisdiction over police to the Committee of General Security
- administration of the interior and justice to the Legislative Committee—which now began to play a leading role by appointing local administrators.

With power now divided between three committees rather than two—and with a changing membership—the threat posed to the National Convention disappeared. Never again would a powerful group within a committee be able to assert dominance over the government.[4]

Popular opinion continued to mount against the remaining aspects of the Terror. On 12 Thermidor Year II (30 July 1794), relatives and friends of prisoners crowded into the sectional assemblies, attacking the watch committees and demanding the release of those who had been accused of ***aristocratisme***. With them were the remaining Hébertists, some nobles, and republican generals such as Kellermann, the hero of the Battle of Valmy in 1792 (and, less creditably, of the Vendée slaughter).

aristocratisme liking the ways of the ancien régime. Anyone suspected of a 'tendency to luxury' could be accused of aristocratisme and imprisoned or executed

On 14 Thermidor Year II (1 August), the Law of 22 Prairial—the Terror that had threatened the safety of the deputies themselves—was repealed.

On 18 Thermidor Year II (5 August 1794), the Convention ruled that:

- detainees who did not come under the jurisdiction of the Law of Suspects should be set free
- revolutionary committees and representatives-on-mission had to give grounds for arresting suspects.

This legislation allowed the release of 478 prisoners between 18 and 23 Thermidor (5 August–10 August), among them La Harpe and the actors of the *Théâtre Français*. By the end of the month, 3500 prisoners had been set free.[5] The newspaper *Le Sans-culottes* reported that:

> From the prison doors all the way back to their homes citizens who have been released from their chains are being warmly greeted by the people ... while their denouncers are left to feel only shame, remorse and dishonour.[6]

Among those who benefited was Jean-Lambert Tallien. He was now able to organise the release of his lover, the twenty-one-year-old Thérèse Cabarrus, who had met him after her arrest in Lyons. She had turned him against the Terror, and had saved so many victims before being arrested that she was nicknamed 'Our Lady of Thermidor'.

Jean-Lambert Tallien.

Thérèse Cabarrus.

DID YOU KNOW?
Thérèse Cabarrus was first married at fourteen. She divorced her husband in 1791, took her maiden name and relocated to Bordeaux, where she met Tallien in 1793. Later she became a leader of Thermidorian society, famous for promoting the neo-Grecian style of dress.

After her release, Tallien and Cabarrus married; she became the toast of Thermidorian Paris, taking charge, according to Thibaudeau, of 'the department of grace and mercy'.[7]

On 10 August (23 Thermidor Year II), the Revolutionary Tribunal was reorganised so that suspects could summon witnesses, and now had to be provided with a legal defence.

On 24 August 1794 (7 Fructidor Year II), the Revolutionary Commune of Paris was abolished, and administration of the city was put into the hands of an executive committee responsible to the National Convention.

The Convention also reduced the powers of the forty-eight sections in 1795 by regrouping them into twelve *arrondissements* (or districts) with one watch committee each. These were appointed by the Committee of General Security and were directly accountable to it for the arrest and release of suspects. Meetings were reduced to one in ten days, and the allowance of twenty sous per day for those without work was abolished.

THE END OF THE JACOBINS

Within days of the death of Robespierre and his associates, the Jacobin Club regained its radicalism, denouncing those who had plotted against Robespierre. The club's members tried to play an active role in the post-Thermidor politics by calling on the National Convention to maintain the harsh policies of the Terror.

However, the resurgence of the Jacobins was short-lived. In spite of another revolutionary *journée*, the National Convention refused to accept their petitions. On 12 November 1794 (22 Brumaire Year III), the Jacobin Club was closed.[8]

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Explain the key ethical and political dilemmas facing the Convention as it dismantled the machinery of the Terror.

RETRIBUTION FOR THE TERROR

By 1795, the families of those who had been targeted during the Terror were calling for retribution and vengeance. This is known as the Thermidorian reaction, named after the month in which it took place. The order of things during the Terror of 1793–1794 was reversed. This time:

- Jacobins and *sans-culottes* felt under threat, and were being arrested
- suspended Girondins were reinstated in the Convention.

Only the moderates felt safe.

There was a new mood afoot during the Thermidorian reaction, and the anti-Terrorism voiced in the press, the theatre and the streets gained a momentum of its own. Retribution took different forms in cities and provinces, and became known as the 'White Terror'.

THE GILDED YOUTH: THE MUSCADINS

In Paris, young men were encouraged to take arms against the Jacobins. Groups of young men called Muscadins—a reference to their musk perfume and highly theatrical costume—dressed up as victims of the Terror.

The Muscadins wore coats with exaggeratedly padded shoulders, high brown cravats—to signify Louis XVI's death by guillotine—and with their long hair caught up behind or in blond wigs. They are also known as 'gilded youth'.[9]

Historian Duval comments that the Muscadin movement 'attracted all the young people of the higher classes of Parisian society. It also included notaries' clerks, advocates' clerks, merchants' clerks—in short, everybody belonging to the respectable bourgeoisie.'[10] The Muscadins were joined by released prisoners, some *sans-culottes*, ex-Hébertists and even former Cordeliers who had been devoted to Marat and who were now savagely anti-Jacobin.

From their headquarters at the Palais Royal, these Muscadin gangs roamed the streets armed with lead-tipped clubs (called cudgels), which they used to beat up any Jacobin they could find, to wipe out the remnants of Robespierre's followers (who were known as 'Robespierre's tail').[11]

Actors were forced to sing a new song before performances, *Le réveil du peuple* (The People's Awakening), which attacked the 'monsters' of the Terror as 'drinkers of human blood'.[12] Busts of Marat were smashed—a sure sign that the radicalism of the past years was well and truly over. Marat's remains—which had been interred in the Panthéon, the resting place of the revolution's great men—were removed.[13] The Muscadins even attacked the Jacobin Club itself.

Muscadins.

THE WHITE TERROR

In the south-east of France, the execution of the Robespierrists almost immediately gave rise to retaliation against local Jacobins. This was known as the White Terror, after the white cockades the royalists wore in their hats, as white was the colour of the monarchy.

As the 'suspects' were released from prison and émigrés began to return, the local populations took revenge for the excesses of the Terror, the destruction of trade and the persecution of Catholics.

At Nîmes, Marseilles, Aix and Orange, bands of men calling themselves the Company of the Sun attacked and put to death anyone associated with carrying out the Terror. In Lyons, the Company of Jesus assassinated Jacobin officials and their women.

Rudé on the situation in Lyons

The Company of Jesus flung the bodies of their victims, men and women, into the Rhône [river], and prisoners were massacred wholesale in jail and on their way to prison; while in other southern cities, bands of the so-called Companies of [Jesus] and the Sun indiscriminately murdered 'Terrorists', 'patriots of 1789' and—most eagerly of all—purchasers of former Church properties.

Source 14.02 George Rudé, *Revolutionary Europe* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1964), 164.

After 1794, pressure had been placed on the Convention to allow the Catholic religion to be practised again, and churches reopened. Women often led the movement, demanding the keys to closed churches from local officials and reopening them for worship.

Catholics had been outraged by the attacks on the Church during the Terror and by the desecration practised during the military and economic crises of 1792–1793. Church bells had been cut down and melted into gunmetal, chalices (wine cups), monstrances (containers for displaying the blessed bread) and candelabra (ceremonial candlesticks) were seized, and statues and other religious symbols destroyed.[14]

The de-Christianisation campaign was a further affront to Catholics that united them against the government and, in some cases, against the Republic itself.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Why and when was the Jacobin Club closed?
2. Who were the Muscadins?
3. Why did the White Terror emerge?
4. What was the effect of the Thermidorean Reaction on Catholics?

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Compare the experiences of a range of different people in the period of retribution that followed the Terror.

Such was the pressure to restore public worship that the Convention was forced to allow religious liberty. In September 1794, freedom of religious practice was extended to Catholics, provided they worshipped privately.

Louis-Marie Fréron was sent by the Convention, as a representative-on-mission to the south of France, to put an end to the massacres. However, he was later accused of actually orchestrating massacres in Toulon and Marseilles. Fréron recorded his impressions of the massacres at Fort Jean in Marseilles—even though he was not present at the actual events and probably exaggerated them.

Louis-Marie Fréron on the massacres at Marseilles

> It was not hard to excite the people's minds to a fury against anyone who could be called a Terrorist. The image of the dangers Marseilles had just miraculously escaped obsessed everyone's thoughts. It was necessary in some way to turn the people into criminals. Popular hatred was directed against the ex-Terrorists held in Fort Jean in Marseilles. Some of the people joined the gangs of murderers who went by the name of the *compagnie de Jésus* or *compagnie du Soleil*. ... They rushed upon their defenceless and starving victims. Daggers and pistols, bayonets and stilettos were not enough—they loaded cannon with grapeshot and fired it point-blank into the prison yards. ... They killed, slaughtered, they sated themselves on murder. ... Knee-deep in blood, they could only tread upon corpses, and the last sighs of many a republican were breathed under the feet of the representatives of the people.

Source 14.03 Cited in Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution and Napoleon* (London: Routledge, 2002).

The slaughter continued from April to May 1795. Peter McPhee estimates that the death toll was around 2000.[15]

FREEDOM TO ALL RELIGIONS IN FRANCE

Religious issues had fuelled much of the violence during the Terror. After the brutal de-Christianisation campaign in December 1793, no one dared say they belonged to any religion. Refractory priests, or non-juring priests—those who had refused to take the oaths of allegiance imposed by government—were in hiding, imprisoned, or remained in exile. Among the juring clergy—the constitutional Catholic clergy and Protestant ministers—many left organised religion altogether.

On 2 Jour Complémentaire Year II (18 September 1794), a new decree cut off the salaries paid to the constitutional priests, making the separation of the Church and the state complete. While public worship remained restricted, private religious gatherings were allowed.

This state of affairs was endorsed by the law of 3 Ventôse Year III (21 February 1795), which allowed all private religious observances of all religions equally. The French state accepted religious diversity of its citizens.

Among the Catholic communities, regular worship resumed relatively quickly. French women emerged as the largest social group to support the return of the refractory priests.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES: INFLATION AND THE FOOD CRISIS

In December 1794, the Law of the Maximum was abolished. This meant there was no longer a price control to protect poor people against inflated food prices.

To make things worse, the harvest of 1794 had been particularly poor, 'arguably the worst harvest of the century',[16] and the army had priority over the civilian population for food. The winter had been long and severe, and there was a shortage of horses and wagons because of the demands of the army.

As a result, food shortages in Paris became severe, and the value of the assignat declined further. Candles, oil and sugar became almost impossible to buy, while farmers hoarded the little grain they had to sell for cash to those who came calling. The meat ration in Paris was one-quarter-pound (around 125 grams) per citizen every ten days.[17]

DID YOU KNOW?

Historian Richard Cobb calls 1795 'the great murder year', as many people took revenge on the Jacobins who had instigated the Terror. In the department of the Vaucluse, two villages were set on fire and 300 people massacred. In Fleurigné, the 'patriot' Jean Chalmel was forced to climb to the top of the church steeple, wave a white flag and shout 'Long Live Louis XVIII!'

Between August and December 1794, the value of the assignat fell even further. One hundred livres in assignats were worth only twenty livres in coins—just 20 per cent of their face value. The abolition of the Maximum in December 1794 led only to a huge increase in prices and an increase in the number of desperate people.

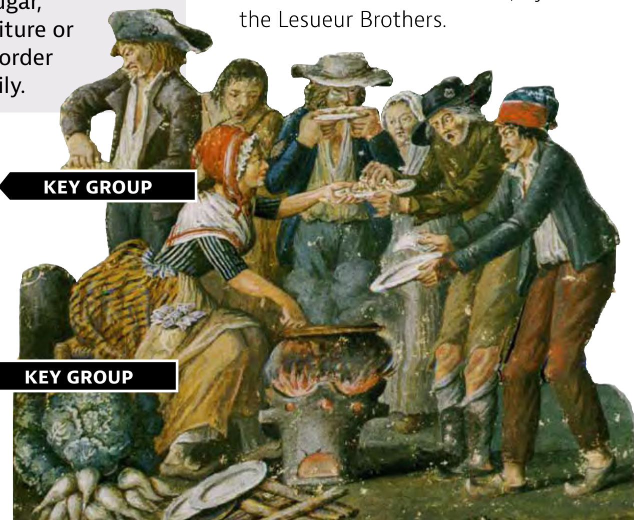
During the harsh winter of 1794–1795, the government imported grain from Africa, but bread had to be rationed and subsidised in both Paris and the provinces. The government even produced a 'national loaf' to replace flour, using a mixture of bran and beans.

By March 1795, the price of meat had risen 300 per cent and butter by 100 per cent, while the assignat declined to 8 per cent of its face value.[18] Six months later, in September 1795, a visitor from Switzerland, named Henri Meister, was appalled by what he saw. In Paris, he said, 'almost all the house frontages and the broad alleys have become so many stores in which furniture, clothes, pictures and prints are being sold. … The capital of the world looks like an old clothes shop.'[19] He watched the desperate trade in the markets as individuals struggled to save themselves and their families:

Source 14.04 Cited in Georges Pernoud and Sabine Flaissier, *The French Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961).

Henri Meister

> At every step you meet men and women of all ages and every condition carrying parcels under their arms. These contain samples of coffee, sugar, cheese, oil, soap or whatnot. Or sometimes it is the last piece of furniture or the last garment that an unfortunate individual has to dispose of, in order to get enough money to buy food for himself or his unfortunate family.



Source 14.05 *The Bread Famine and the Pawnbroker*, by the Lesueur Brothers.

In the countryside, conditions were more variable. With so many men away at war, peasants could bargain at harvest time for higher wages. Those who had borrowed to buy an extra plot during the sale of émigré land in 1793–1794 could now take advantage of the rampant inflation to pay back loans. Larger tenant farmers profited from high prices paid for their produce to pay off taxes and leases and to buy land.

KEY GROUP

However, in the towns, even the wealthier citizens found it difficult to survive that winter. Hunger was common among those who returned, and the lack of good white bread the worst of all hardships. One Parisian noted that 'It was impossible at any dinner table to find a topic among the newly liberated, other than the white flour one

KEY GROUP

had found or the meal one had nearly eaten'.[20] Historian Peter McPhee estimates that by April 1795 prices had risen 750 per cent above 1790 levels. This led to the final uprisings of the *sans-culottes* in Germinal and Prairial Year III (April and May 1795).[21]

KEY GROUP

THE *JOURNÉE* OF 12 GERMINAL YEAR III (1 APRIL 1795)

DID YOU KNOW?

Some émigrés did not object to the hunger and high prices, because at least they were back in France. One returned émigré, Baron de Frénilly, wrote, 'It is impossible to die of hunger with more gaiety', such was his joy on returning to Paris.

The impact of the food crisis led the *sans-culottes* onto the streets with the aim of forcing the government to act. Hungry men and women attacked bakeries in the desperate search for bread, and public disturbances grew. It was, says Rudé, 'essentially a social protest, inspired by hunger and hatred of the new rich'.[22]

On 12 Germinal Year III (1 April 1795), the crowd broke into the Convention holding placards and crying out 'Bread and the Constitution of 1793'—a reference to the Jacobin Constitution that granted universal male suffrage. They also demanded:

- the gilded youth be suppressed
- the imprisoned Jacobins and *sans-culottes* be released
- the Revolutionary Government itself be abolished
- the end of food shortages.

Speakers shouted at the deputies, attempting once more to influence the government policies through the old 'direct democracy' of intimidation.[23]

However, the Convention would not be bullied, and called in the National Guard, which it now controlled. The National Guard was largely loyal to the Convention, and dispersed the crowd. Paris was declared to be in a state of siege. The army was called up to defend Paris, and it too proved to be reliable. Twenty-six Montagnard deputies were arrested, accused of inciting the demonstration, along with 4000 Jacobins and *sans-culottes*.[24]

Among the arrested deputies were Barère, Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois and Vadier. As they had resigned from the Committee of Public Safety in August 1794, they were now sent for trial for their part in the Terror—and, in particular, for the atrocities they committed during the pacification of Lyons during the Federalist Revolt.

The four deputies were found guilty. Vadier fled into hiding before he could be arrested, but the other three were sent into exile on the island of Oléron, off the French Atlantic coast. Barère managed to escape, but Collot d'Herbois and Billaud-Varenne were shipped to French Guiana in South America, where Collot d'Herbois died of yellow fever.[25]

For the Convention, it was one more step away from the radical Republic and one step back towards a more conservative rule. However, the hunger continued and, with it, the desperation of the people.

TURNING POINT

THE *JOURNÉE* OF 1–4 PRAIRIAL YEAR III (20–23 MAY 1795): THE 'MAINSPRING OF THE REVOLUTION BROKEN'

The failure of the Germinal uprising led directly to the last *journée* of the *sans-culottes*, and was another turning point in the French Revolution.

The uprising of 1–4 Prairial Year III (20–23 May 1795) was begun by the market women, but their numbers were rapidly increased by workers from the central districts and neighbourhoods. Once again, they invaded the Tuileries Palace where the Convention met, and pushed past the deputies, insisting that they be heard.

A young deputy named Féraud attempted to stop them. He was killed and his head mounted on a pike. This was waved in front of the president of the Convention, Boissy d'Anglas, who was Féraud's father-in-law.

However, the crowd lacked the leadership to make its protests effective, and the demonstration was ended when the National Guard was called in. Historian Georges Rudé estimates that over 10,000 people were exiled 'to prison camps established in the Seychelles and Guiana'. Any Montagnard deputies who had encouraged the mobs were arrested.[26] Another 1700 people were stripped of their civil rights.[27] A volunteer army was sent into the Saint-Antoine district where the protest had originated, to seize all arms, including cannon.[28]

The uprising of 1–4 Prairial marked an end to the political influence of the poor. Historian Georges Lefebvre suggests that 'This date should mark the end of the revolution; its mainspring had been broken.'[29] Historian Dylan Rees has identified a number of reasons why the uprisings of Germinal and Prairial failed:

1. The workers of Paris were divided, and the National Guard units in several sections remained loyal to the Convention.
2. After the abolition of the Revolutionary Commune on 24 August 1794, there was nobody to centrally coordinate the uprisings.
3. The protesters lacked experienced leadership and made tactical errors. When they had the opportunity to surround the Convention they let the moment slip, which allowed the army and National Guard to disperse them.
4. The *sans-culottes* had lost the support of the radical bourgeoisie that they had enjoyed between 1789–1793.
5. The key factor was the role played by the army. This was the first time the regular army had been used against the citizens of Paris since the Réveillon Riots of April 1789. The intervention by the army was decisive, and showed the extent to which the Convention was reliant on the military.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 How did the price of food affect the lives of the *sans-culottes*?

2 Why were the uprisings of Germinal and Priarial unsuccessful?

3 How did the deputies react to the *sans-culotte* challenge?

THE CONSTITUTION OF YEAR III: A LIBERAL TRIUMPH, 5 FRUCTIDOR YEAR III (22 SEPTEMBER 1795)

Boissy d'Anglas: 'We should be ruled by the best citizens. … With very few exceptions, you will find such men only among those who own some property.'

Against the background of continued food crises and the violent days of Germinal and Prairial, with their demands for the implementation of the Jacobin Constitution of 1793, the National Convention's constitutional committee, led by Boissy d'Anglas, pursued its work on a new conservative constitution.

Source 14.06 Constitution of the French Republic of 5 Fructidor Year III (22 August 1795). Déclaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and Citizen.

This new constitution would bypass the radical popularism of Robespierre's 1793 document, and would:

- return the revolution to the moderate ground of 1789
- ensure that radical *sans-culottes* would never sit on the benches of government.

NO PROMISES OF POLITICAL EQUALITY OR EQUALITY OF RIGHTS

There was to be no return to the broad democracy promised by Robespierre. While the 1793 Jacobin Constitution had given the vote to all French males, regardless of income or status, the Constitution of Year III looked back to the Constitution of 1791, where suffrage was granted only to 'active citizens'—which meant taxpayers.

The new Constitution of Year III would be even narrower in its prescription of who could vote than the Constitution of 1791. Thus, there were no promises of political equality or equality of rights. The people of France would not be denied representation, but that did not entitle them to equal citizenship.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

THE VOTING SYSTEM

The Constitution of Year III set up a system of indirect voting for a new National Assembly. All French citizens could vote in primary assemblies, composed of all the citizens of the canton. (Each department was divided into districts, which were further divided into cantons.) Each canton would elect five members, who were then responsible for conducting annual elections for that area. The primary assembly could then choose one elector for every 200 citizens.

To qualify as an elector, a citizen had to be:

- male
- at least twenty-five years old
- own or lease a property valued at a rental equivalent of 150–200 days' labour.

These qualifications meant that the power to choose deputies lay in the hands of the wealthier citizens—'the rich *rentier* bourgeoisie, rich tenant farmers and former nobility, who were eligible provided that none of their relatives were émigrés'.[30] It excluded most of the bourgeoisie, the peasants and the urban workers.

Electoral assemblies would then choose deputies to a two-house National Assembly, first to the Council of Five Hundred, then to the Council of Elders (*Anciens*).

THE COUNCIL OF FIVE HUNDRED	THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS (*ANCIENS*)
» Membership of 500. » A member had to be thirty years old or more, and have lived within the French Republic for the last ten years. » Legislation was proposed in this house, read three times, voted on and, if passed, sent to the Council of Elders.	» Membership of 250. » An Elder had to be forty years old or more, and either married or a widower. » One-third of members were elected annually. » Elders could not initiate legislation, and had no power to amend legislation, but could return it to the lower house.

THE EXECUTIVE: THE DIRECTORY

Finally, there was to be an executive branch of government, called the Directory, made up of five members, one of whom had to retire each year. It had no role in legislation, but could suggest issues to be discussed by the Council of Five Hundred.

The Directors were chosen by the Elders from a list drawn up by the Five Hundred. The Directors controlled:

- the military
- the police
- foreign affairs and diplomacy.

The Directors also made appointments to office and administered the laws. They acted independently of the two houses—although they could ultimately be charged with crimes by them.

The decisions of the Directory and the assemblies were carried out through a group of six to eight ministers, who were drawn from a list made up by Council of Five Hundred. Finally, there were appointed commissioners, whose role was to supervise the administration of laws and executive decisions. This gave them a large degree of power over the elected administrators of cantons and departments.

A RETURN TO ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES

Historian Peter McPhee sees the Constitution as:

> a return to the provisions of '91. ... France was again to be governed by representative, parliamentary government based on a property qualification and the safeguarding of economic and social liberties. ... Now ... a declaration of duties ... [was added] to the Constitution, exhorting respect for the law, the family and property.

McPhee argues that in this sense, 'the Constitution marks the end of the Revolution'.[31]

THE TWO-THIRDS DECREE

However, there was still one concern for the outgoing National Convention. Even though they had restricted who could became a deputy, there was still the risk of royalists or republicans regaining power because they had limited the right to vote (the franchise) to the wealthy.

So on 13 Fructidor Year III (30 August 1795), the Convention issued the 'Two-Thirds Decree'.[32] This decree stated that all of the deputies currently in the Convention were eligible for re-election, and that two-thirds of the new deputies had to be chosen from the old deputies—excluding the seventy-three Montagnard deputies in prison because of the Germinal and Prairial demonstrations.

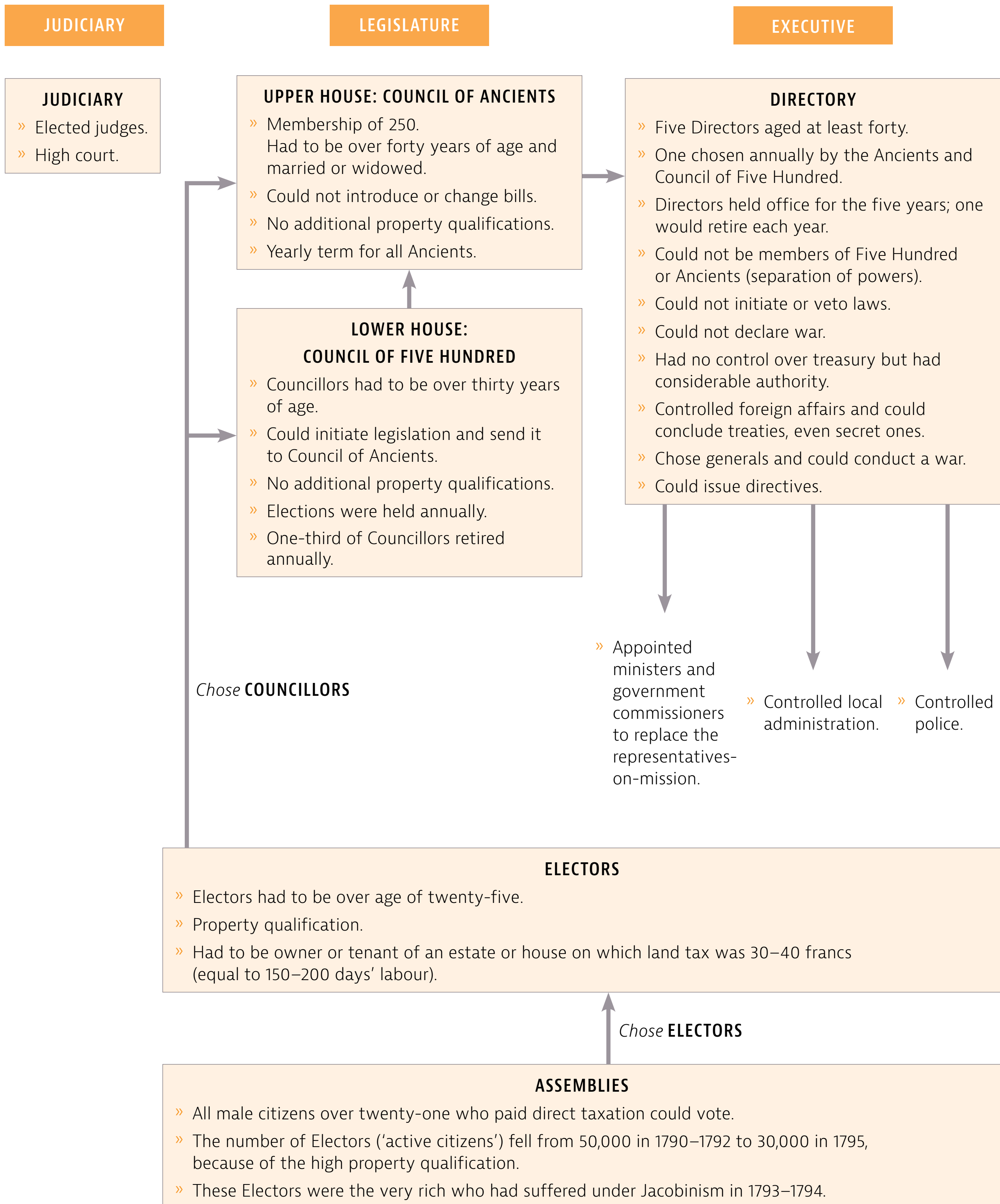
The Convention hoped that the Two-Thirds Decree would:

- allow them to continue their own power indefinitely
- guarantee the stability that was needed to bring an end to the revolution.

However, for the many French citizens who were yearning to put the bad years behind them, the Two-Thirds Decree was simply a means of keeping in power the men associated with the dark days of the Terror and of 9–10 Thermidor Year II.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

1. What were the key values underlying the Constitution of Year III? To what extent was it a response to the excesses of the *sans-culottes* period (1793–1794)?
2. How were voting rights limited under the Constitution of Year III? How did the suffrage differ from that granted under the Jacobin Constitution of 1793? What similarities and differences were there to the suffrage rights granted by the Constitution of 1791?
3. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the political system under the Constitution of Year III.
4. Why was the Constitution of Year III not entirely successful in stabilising the revolution?
5. In what sense did the Constitution of Year III suggest a return to the representative government imagined in 1791?


REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF YEAR III
Constitutional authorities were independent of each other, with each body keeping a check on the power of the others.
JUDICIARY
LEGISLATURE
EXECUTIVE
JUDICIARY
» Elected judges.
» High court.
UPPER HOUSE: COUNCIL OF ANCIENTS
» Membership of 250. Had to be over forty years of age and married or widowed.
» Could not introduce or change bills.
» No additional property qualifications.
» Yearly term for all Ancients.
LOWER HOUSE: COUNCIL OF FIVE HUNDRED
» Councillors had to be over thirty years of age.
» Could initiate legislation and send it to Council of Ancients.
» No additional property qualifications.
» Elections were held annually.
» One-third of Councillors retired annually.
DIRECTORY
» Five Directors aged at least forty.
» One chosen annually by the Ancients and Council of Five Hundred.
» Directors held office for the five years; one would retire each year.
» Could not be members of Five Hundred or Ancients (separation of powers).
» Could not initiate or veto laws.
» Could not declare war.
» Had no control over treasury but had considerable authority.
» Controlled foreign affairs and could conclude treaties, even secret ones.
» Chose generals and could conduct a war.
» Could issue directives.
» Appointed ministers and government commissioners to replace the representatives-on-mission.
» Controlled local administration.
» Controlled police.
Chose COUNCILLORS
ELECTORS
» Electors had to be over age of twenty-five.
» Property qualification.
» Had to be owner or tenant of an estate or house on which land tax was 30–40 francs (equal to 150–200 days' labour).
Chose ELECTORS
ASSEMBLIES
» All male citizens over twenty-one who paid direct taxation could vote.
» The number of Electors ('active citizens') fell from 50,000 in 1790–1792 to 30,000 in 1795, because of the high property qualification.
» These Electors were the very rich who had suffered under Jacobinism in 1793–1794.

BOURGEOIS LIFE RETURNS

KEY GROUP

Napoleon Bonaparte: 'The memory of the Terror is no more than a nightmare.'

Paris in May 1795 was a pleasant place for people with money, in spite of the food riots of the lower classes and the poverty of many émigrés. An ambitious young officer named Napoleon Bonaparte—later to become emperor of France—wrote home to his brother, Joseph:

> The memory of the Terror is no more than a nightmare here. Everyone appears determined to make up for what they have suffered; determined too, because of the uncertain future, not to miss a single pleasure of the present.[33]

In the streets, prostitutes once more solicited their clients at the Palais Royal. Novels reappeared, mainly mysteries and love stories, while political songs largely disappeared. Wealthy women paraded in their costumes, almost transparent Grecian tunics split up to the thigh and down to the navel, and even dipped in scented oil so that they clung to the body.[34] Napoleon was enchanted:

> Everywhere in Paris, you see beautiful women. Here, alone of all places on earth, they appear to hold the reins of government, and the men make fools of themselves over them, think only of them and live for them. ... A woman needs to come to Paris for six months to learn what is her due, and to understand her own power. Here only, they deserve such influence.[35]

The terms 'citizen' and 'citizeness' gave way once more to 'monsieur' and 'madame'.[36] Restaurants and gambling halls opened again, while thirty-two theatres and a circus provided entertainment for the wealthy.[37] 'No-one,' wrote Swiss observer Mallet du Pan, 'thinks of anything now but eating and drinking and pleasure'.[38]

Source 14.07 *The New Rich Replace the Old Noblesse: Paris Revives.*

A FINAL ROYALIST REBELLION: 13 VENDÉMIAIRE YEAR IV (5 OCTOBER 1795)

Source 14.08 *Napoleon Bonaparte on the Bridge at Arcole*, by Antoine-Jean Gros, 1796..

In the first week of Vendémiaire Year IV (October 1795), posters appeared around Paris that urged citizens to 'take their religion and their king back into their hearts in order to have bread and peace'.[39]

On 12 Vendémiaire (4 October), the moderate sections of Paris rose in revolution. Drums beat and city bells rang out in the section of Lepeletier, calling the citizens to rise up against their government. Some 30,000 royalists turned up to follow the leadership of General Danican. Danican had served in the Vendée, but was dismissed after exhibiting 'royalist tendencies'.[40]

In the Convention, a Committee of Defence was established to sit in permanent session until the crisis was over. General Menou was called on to organise the defence, but was sacked when he negotiated with the rebels, then withdrew, leaving the Tuileries Palace undefended. Menou had also left the artillery at a camp outside Paris, so that when he brought his troops up, they had no cannon to defend the Convention.

Menou was replaced with Paul Barras. However, Barras had little battle experience, so at nine in the evening he called on a young officer named Napoleon Bonaparte, who had played a prominent role in the attack on Toulon during the Federalist Revolt. Barras gave Bonaparte three minutes to accept command of the army.[41]

Napoleon acted quickly. He sent a cavalry officer, Joachim Murat, to retrieve the artillery. Murat and his men galloped through the rebel groups, then harnessed the gun carriages to the horses and brought them back.

Napoleon had far fewer troops than the rebels. He had 5000 regular soldiers, another 1500 police and National Guardsmen, and 1500 'Terrorists'—men who had been expelled from the rebel sections for supporting the government. Napoleon also had some men who had been released from prison.

Napoleon ordered his troops to surround the Tuileries Palace and direct their guns at the streets. The cannon were charged. The remaining deputies inside the Tuileries Palace were supplied with guns in case the mobs penetrated the building.

However, the rebels did not attack that morning, but waited until almost four o'clock in the afternoon to begin their assault. Their plan was simple, but poorly thought out: they marched in columns up the streets leading to the Tuileries Palace, and then attacked. As the noise of drums, marching feet and musket fire was heard, the Convention's troops steadied themselves. When the rebels came into sight, the troops opened fire. Then Barras gave Napoleon the command to fire the cannon.

DID YOU KNOW?

Contrary to popular myth, Napoleon was not particularly short for a man of his era, and is believed to have been 1.69 metres tall. It was said of him, 'His smile is friendly and winning, his eyes wonderful'.

Hibbert on Napoleon's defence

> Immediately the gunners responded. The shots tore into the advancing ranks, mowing many of them down and blasting chunks of masonry from the walls of the church. The rebels faltered, then came on again, wavered as the shot tore into them and finally fell back as the guns were wheeled to the right and left and fired down the Rue St. Honoré from top to bottom. The *sectionnaires* [members of the section], scattered now, fled backwards towards Lepeletier.

Source 14.09 Christopher Hibbert, *The French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1980), 287.

A second attack was launched, and was again repelled by cannon and musket fire. By six o'clock, the rebellion was over. Napoleon described the day to his brother:

Napoleon to his brother

> At last, it is all over. My first impulse is ... to tell you my news. The Convention ordered the Section Lepeletier to be disarmed. ... We made our disposition [position]; the enemy marched to attack us in the Tuileries. We killed many of them; they killed thirty of our men and wounded sixty. We have the Sections all quiet. As usual, I was not wounded.

Source 14.10 Cited in Patrice Gueniffey, trans. Steven Rendall, *Bonaparte: 1769–1802* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2015), 177–178.

It is unclear how many rebels died as a result of Napoleon's 'whiff of grapeshot', as Thomas Carlyle described it. Historian Evangeline Bruce tells of 400 bodies piled up in the Church of St Roche, and 'about a thousand others left in the rain-soaked streets'.[42] Hibbert is more conservative, estimating only 200–300 dead from both sides.[43]

Historian Dylan Rees regards the uprising in Vendémiaire as 'rather mysterious'.[44] He believes the divisions among the royalists made such an uprising unlikely. Instead, Rees argues, the uprising had economic origins, and was not just about opposition to the Two-Thirds Decree.

Rees maintains that the largest group of rebels were artisans and apprentices, with a third of those arrested belonging to the working class. The rampant inflation of Year III (1795) had hit the workers badly, but had also affected landlords, small proprietors and government employees.

The repression that followed 13 Vendémiaire was light, with only two people executed. The National Guard was then put directly under the control of the new general of the Army of the Interior: Napoleon Bonaparte.

The events of 13 Vendémiaire Year III (5 October 1795) marked a new stage in the French Revolution. For the second time, the army had been turned against the people.

Real power would now lie with the French army and its generals, not with the unpopular new government of the Directory, which would be installed three weeks later. This was a measure of things to come. In the future, the army would often interfere in France's internal politics, and would ultimately allow Bonaparte to seize power in 1799 as first consul of France, together with Sieyès and a deputy named Ducos, in the Coup of 18 Brumaire Year VIII (9 November 1799).

DID YOU KNOW?

It wasn't until 1795 that the king and queen's eldest child, Marie-Thérèse, heard that her parents had been executed. She had been kept in solitary confinement in the Temple prison since 1792. Unlike her parents and three siblings, she died peacefully in her old age.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 What drove the moderate sections of Paris to revolt, once again, in October of 1795?

2 How did the young Napoleon prove his leadership credentials in the short rebellion that ensued?

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Write a paragraph analysing the significance of the insurrection of 13 Vendémiaire Year IV. How did it change the power dynamic in France?

THERMIDOR PERIOD: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

The Thermidor period marked an end to the Terror, and was the triumph of conservatism over radicalism. The Thermidorian government turned the revolution back to its roots.

George Rudé argues that the Thermidorian leaders tried to turn the clock back to 1789:

Source 14.11 George Rudé, *Revolutionary Europe* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1964), 160.

George Rudé

The fall of Robespierre led to something of an anti-climax. The Revolution continued, though at a slackened pace; and the Republic—a new 'republic of proprietors'—lingered on through a series of crises until Napoleon's grenadiers swept them away ... The *sans-culottes* were once more disarmed and disenfranchised; and the rulers of 1795, after a period of hesitation, tried to revert to the 'principles of 1789'.

Albert Soboul has come to a similar conclusion to Rudé:

Source 14.12 Albert Soboul, *A Short History of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 156.

Albert Soboul

[The revolution] destroyed the state structure of the old regime, sweeping away the vestiges of separatism, abolishing local privileges and provincial autonomies. It thus made possible the establishment of a modern state under the Directory ... corresponding to the need and interests of the bourgeoisie.

Simon Schama argues that the Thermidorian leaders did set out councils that worked, in theory:

Source 14.13 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1989), 858.

Simon Schama

The framers of the Constitution of the Year III obviously learned something from [the Terror]. A two-chamber legislature was introduced ... in which property was the criterion for membership. A governing council was, in theory, accountable to the legislature ... In practice, however, the experiment remained darkened by the long shadow of the Revolution itself, so that factions crystallised ... plans for the overthrow of the state, hatched either by royalists or neo-Jacobins. With the separate organs of the Constitution in paralysing conflict with each other, violence continued to determine the political direction of the state, far more than did elections.

Furet and Richet argue that the Thermidorian period was a time of republican decline:

Source 14.14 François Furet and Denis Richet, *The French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 215.

Furet and Richet

The Thermidorean period has come to be regarded as a rather mournful phase in the history of France. Politically, it brought only failure, for the regime to which it gave birth was soon to crumble undramatically and ingloriously under the mild assault of Bonaparte's troops.

According to William Doyle, the revolution accelerated some trends that already existed:

Source 14.15 William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 423–424.

William Doyle

Before 1789, there were plenty of signs that the structure of French society was evolving towards domination by a single élite in which property counted for more than birth. The century-long expansion of the bourgeoisie which underlay this trend looked irreversible; and greater participation by men of property in government ... seemed bound to come. Meanwhile many of the reforms the revolution brought in were already being tried or thought about by the absolute monarchy—law codification, fiscal rationalisation, diminution of venality, free trade, religious toleration. ... In all these fields, the effect [of the revolution] was to accelerate or retard certain trends, not to change their general drift.

CHAPTER 14 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The Thermidorian period (August 1794–October 795) was primarily a reaction to the excesses of the Terror, and reasserting conservative bourgeois control over the government and the population.
- It was also a period of retribution against the Jacobins.
- The remaining deputies at the National Convention began dismantling the institutions and laws of the Terror, including closing the Jacobin Club in 1794 and putting some of the most culpable representatives-on-mission on trial.
- The Paris Commune was abolished.
- The radical leaders of the National Guard were replaced with conservatives. In this way, the National Convention hoped to control the rebellious sections that had played such a destabilising role since the summer of 1792.
- Managing the economy continued to be a problem, and rampant inflation had set in by 1795.
- The failure and rigid suppression of the *journées* of Germinal and Prairial broke the *sans-culottes* movement. The Germinal uprising had been dispersed by the National Guard; the Prairial uprising had been put down by regular army troops, used against citizens of Paris for the first time since 1789.
- France ended this revolutionary period with reassertion of the values and direction of 1789 in a new conservative constitution, the Constitution of Year III, which was skewed towards favouring wealthy bourgeoisie and people who owned property.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- In what sense did Thermidor constitute a 'reaction'? To what extent was the government reactive rather than proactive after the Terror?
- 'Whenever the new regime was confronted with a challenge, they gave up their principles to retain power.' To what extent do you agree? Use evidence to support your answer.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Discuss the economic challenges that remained in France by 1793–1795, and how they affected ordinary people.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Write a 600–800-word essay on the topic below. Your essay should have an introduction, paragraphs supported by evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, a conclusion and a bibliography.

- 'The French Revolution must be deemed a failure, as it neither changed society nor met the goals of the revolutionaries of 1789.' Discuss.

MEASURING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN SOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF THE REVOLUTION

'No French adult alive in 1804 was in any doubt that they had lived through a revolutionary upheaval. … Life could never be the same again.'

—Peter McPhee

***A Republican Meal*, by Jean-Baptiste Lesueur, 1974.**
Citizens of the Republic celebrate fraternity in a communal meal.

KEY QUESTIONS

- How did the French Revolution affect the experiences of those who lived through it?
- To what extent was society changed and revolutionary ideas achieved?

REVOLUTIONARY UPHEAVAL

Between 1789 and 1795, French people endured revolutionary upheavals in every aspect of their lives.

In the early months of 1789, French people were the subjects of a hereditary divine-right absolute monarch. They were drawing up respectful requests for changes to the way in which the kingdom was governed, and reflecting on new ideas of natural rights of liberty, equality and citizenship.

However, the very foundations of French society—its governance and administration—would be reformed in the years that followed, as:

- three constitutions would be written
- the king would be executed
- a republic would be declared
- war would be declared on much of Europe.

To win the war, the French government would turn on its own people by:

- purging certain factions of deputies from the legislature
- conducting a reign of Terror on the population.

In the sixteen months between March 1793 and July 1794, the National Convention purged 144 of its 749 deputies; another 67 deputies were executed, died by suicide or died in prison.[1]

Estimates of executions during the Terror vary: McPhee places the figure at 30,000 people. He also cites up to 280,000 dead in the crisis year of 1793–1794, comprising:

- up to 200,000 in the military, Vendée and other parts of the west
- at least 40,000 executed after trials
- perhaps 50,000 dying in the external wars.

This death toll represents about 1 per cent of France's population at the time.[2]

France would make huge strides in modernising the administration of the nation following the principles of reason, equity and democracy.

However, the decision by the revolutionaries to restructure the Church and to replace the spiritual authority of the pope with oaths of loyalty to a secular national government drove a great wedge into the revolutionary project. The restructuring alienated faithful Catholics and much of the clergy. Alienated nobles, clergy and others who grieved for the loss of their way of life threatened the revolution both inside France and externally, as counter-revolutionaries or anti-revolutionaries.

The revolution began with the defiance of the nobility—but in 1789 it had been largely the bourgeoisie and some liberal nobles who had driven the ideas and reforms of the revolution. In the radical years 1792–1794, the *sans-culottes* movement—which had protected the early revolutionary reforms with violent demonstrations—started to demand its own agenda of radical popularism, with price controls and direct democracy.

Ultimately, by 1795, the bourgeoisie gained control over the revolution and enshrined its values of respect for the law, property, education and family. For France the revolution represented one of the most significant upheavals in its history. The repercussions of the fundamental changes in the way France was organised were keenly felt by its population, and were further recognised across the world. According to Darius von Güttner, the revolution heralded the adoption of new ideas of rights, new forms of expression, and new civic culture centred on secular rather than religious principles.[3]

The impact of the revolution continues to be studied and debated today, and many of the questions related continue to be asked. What were the greatest changes to occur during this first period of revolution? What elements of the ancien régime in France endured? Who had benefited from the revolution thus far? Who had suffered and lost?

HOW REVOLUTIONARY WERE THE YEARS 1789–1795?

Historians are still debating just how revolutionary the years 1789–1795 actually were. Most historians agree that the revolution—for better or worse—profoundly altered most aspects of life in France. No one doubted that there had been a revolution in political culture.

However, some historians—such as William Doyle, François Furet and Roger Price—argue that the revolution's consequences were 'minimal' in matters of real social change and that, economically, the revolution actually held back France's transition to a modern capitalist, industrialised country. Furet argues that socially, France remained much as it had been under the monarchy, and that patterns of daily life and work did not alter until France eventually industrialised in the 1830s after the development of its railway system.

Other historians—such as Albert Soboul, Gwynne Lewis and George Rudé—disagree. They argue that the revolution was profoundly transforming. They acknowledge the continuities to French life, but argue that the revolution ushered in major changes that had 'maximum' short-term and long-term effects. Albert Soboul wrote of these effects:

> A classic bourgeois revolution, its uncompromising abolition of the feudal system and the seigneurial regime make it the starting-point for capitalist society and the liberal representative system in the history of France.[4]

The elected deputies who gathered at Versailles in May 1789 did not intend to create a full-scale revolution. However, propelled by the force of events, these deputies found themselves launching a revolution that was to have profound consequences both for France itself, and for European ideas of freedom.

The fundamental principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen provide the foundational elements of similar international declarations of the twentieth and twenty-first century. The wide-ranging reforms of the early years of the revolution have been some of the revolution's most enduring results, and can still be observed in the fabric of modern-day France.

Although the revolutionaries were faced with desperate challenges, ranging from economic breakdown, internal resistance to external interference, they persisted in their vision of a better post-revolutionary society. Their vision was for a society in which a man might find himself:

- equal before the law
- free from excessive interference by the government
- living in brotherhood with his fellow citizens.

Attaining these ideals during the revolution may not have been perfect, but they provided noble aspirations for those who have followed. The legacies of the French Revolution remain critically relevant today.

EXPERIENCES OF THE REVOLUTION

A REVOLUTION IN POLITICAL CULTURE

The revolution in political culture experienced in France in the years 1789–1795 was transformational. The country moved from being a kingdom of subjects under an absolute hereditary monarch through a constitutional monarchy, to being a republic with its changes underpinned by the participation—to varying degrees—of adult men in the democratic process.

Historian Peter McPhee claims that the 'electoral system of revolutionary France (although limited by sex and property) marks the beginning of history of modern representative democracy'.[5] He lists the electoral and official participation of men during the revolution, which are examined in detail below.

SIZE OF FRANCHISE

- 1790: an estimated 1.2 million elective public offices had been created—for example, local councillors, justices of peace and officers in the National Guard.
- 1791: 4.3 million men out of a population of twenty-eight million were eligible to vote; this was about 60 per cent of the adult males.
- 1793: about six million men were granted the vote.

McPhee argues that this 'seismic shift from subject to citizens occurred in [a] number of ways, voting only [being] one of them'.[6]

OTHER IMPORTANT EXPERIENCES

- Peaceful demonstrations, petitions, banquets and mass meetings were far more common than 'violent mobs'.
- Only 12 per cent of an estimated 750 protests in Paris by *sans-culottes* resulted in physical violence.
- Mass direct involvement occurred through membership of political clubs.
- Participation varied across regions: in the south-east as many as one commune in three had a political club during the revolution; in the department of Yonne in Burgundy (east-central) one in eight communes had a political club.[7]

The major feature of revolutionary political culture was the involvement of people from all social groups in society at every phase. The working people of Paris closely followed the political events taking place in the national legislature, often entering the assembly hall and sitting in the galleries—and even sitting among the deputies. The common people of Paris believed this was their right, as they had formed the movement that took to the streets in armed action to defend the legislature.

Both men and women of Paris could voice their opinions directly through the revolutionary clubs, section meetings and publications. Millions of people had the opportunity to participate in local government through the 44,000 communes throughout the nation.

In town and country alike, the popular action of crowds—often spurred on by women—addressed issues of subsistence, and gave support by acclaim to revolutionary leaders. War was the great revolutionary experience for many men, either as a volunteer or conscript in one of the many revolutionary or frontier armies, or at home in the National Guard.

Historian Malcolm Crook estimates that during the period 1789–1815, over three million men had been involved in voting.[8] McPhee argues that from the revolutionary period onwards, all governments of France have understood the need to seek some sort of popular endorsement.[9] For example:

- when Napoleon declared himself first consul, with dictatorial powers, in the Coup of 18 Brumaire Year VIII (9 November 1799), he presented the Constitution of the Year VIII to the French electorate for endorsement. This at least gave the impression of democracy.
- when the Bourbon monarchy was restored in 1814—and again in 1815 after Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo—the monarchy was bound by the Royal Charter of 1814, which set out limitations on its power as a constitutional monarchy.

In all cases, the principle of some sort of 'democratic' consultation with the people remained.

THE ECONOMY: A MOVEMENT TOWARDS CAPITALISM?

Historians disagree about whether the revolution was economically disastrous for France. The revolution was either:

- disastrous because it set back development towards capitalism and an industrial revolution
- beneficial because the economic reforms of 1789–1795 actually improved economic conditions.

There is broad agreement, sums up Darius von Güttner, that experience of the revolution was diverse and affected its participants and bystanders differently.[10] What is certain is that it affected all spheres of life: political, economic and social.

Those who regard the revolution as economically disastrous for France—such as economic historian Roger Price—argue that although some of the reforms made it easier to develop a national market, high prices and the fall in the value of the assignat led to 'galloping inflation'.[11] Also, war put the economy under great strain, which delayed an agricultural revolution and an industrial revolution—both of which were underway in Britain by the 1790s.

FACTORS THAT DELAYED AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC GROWTH

There are many factors that delayed agricultural economic growth in France:

- *Dislocation of war and uncertainties of revolution* brought economic disaster for France, and made the lives of the majority of people more precarious.
- Production methods and distribution patterns of goods remained largely unchanged.
- *Status patterns changed:* The hierarchy of privilege was destroyed, but was replaced by a new hierarchy of wealth.
- *Rising rents* meant nobles lost income from *banalités* (taxes paid by peasants) and seigneurial dues, and relied more on rents, which they increased. This made life much harder for people such as tenant farmers or *sans-culottes* who did not own property.
- *Land sales:* At first, the sale of nationalised Church land and properties confiscated from émigrés meant a massive transfer of property. However, as the land was sold in large lots, it was mainly bought by wealthy bourgeoisie, nobles and possibly wealthy farmers. Despite the 1793 abolition of compensating nobles to replace feudal dues—as well as a bid to make émigrés' land available in small plots at low rates of repayment—nobles and bourgeoisie were still the dominant landowners by the nineteenth century, while the overall share of small peasant landholders was about the same.
- *Economic dislocation of war and revolution* reinforced the tendency to 'shelter' money by buying land; rampant inflation encouraged those who could to buy land or to pay out leases. The idea of investing in entrepreneurial industrial projects—which some of the wealthiest nobles had done prior to the revolution—now seemed too risky.
- Peasant owners of land benefited from the abolition of tithes and feudal dues. However, life for the majority of peasantry, tenants and sharecroppers became worse, because rents and taxes were higher even though seigneurial dues were eliminated.
- The 1790 partible inheritance laws—equal rights of inheritance for sons and daughters—seemed to promote equality, but actually created problems. Dividing landholdings into even smaller lots restricted the development of efficient farming practices; food production in many areas did not increase beyond subsistence level.
- The revolution increased the number of the poorest, who barely survived in the rural economy and the tendency of the poorest was to cling to collective rights—for example, the right to the Commons; the right to collect acorns and firewood.

FACTORS THAT DELAYED AN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

There are many factors that delayed the arrival of the Industrial Revolution in France:

- Inflation disrupted economic relations and consumed capital (money). As assignats lost their value, wages were undercut and could not keep up with the cost of living. Wealthy people 'banked' their money by buying land.
- The effects of poor financial management during the revolution lasted for years. They bred distrust of paper money, and halted public works such as building roads and canals.
- Economic policies of the revolution did not serve the interests of *sans-culottes*. Unemployment rose and, by 1798, one-tenth of the population of Paris was out of work.
- The biggest economic loss was destruction of overseas trade, which ruined many traders in Atlantic ports and coastal towns. Trade with French colonies was destroyed. Colonial trade did not reach pre-1789 levels until 1830.
- War industries, such as production of armaments, uniforms, boots and other military supplies, prospered—but this was only temporary, and did not offset other economic losses.
- Innovation and transfer of technology were slowed by French protectionist legislation during the revolutionary era, and by a British blockade of the Channel from 1793.
- Long-term industrial development was wiped out by the revolution. Industrial production declined, then fell further behind Great Britain; in turn, this reinforced the agrarian nature of French society.

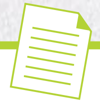
DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL MARKET

The revolution did help the development of a national market:

- The revolution removed some barriers to economic development and growth of national market—for example, monopolies, local tolls, regional tariffs, internal customs and the restrictive practices of guilds.
- The government adopted a standard currency, and implemented a uniform system of weights and measures, called the metric system, based on the metre and the gram.
- The economy was now under state regulation. the 1791 Le Chapelier Law strengthened the powers of employers, and weakened labour organisations. Collective bargaining and strikes became illegal.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

SOCIAL GROUP	GAINS BY 1795	LOSSES BY 1795	EVIDENCE KNOWLEDGE LEGISLATION HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS	OVERALL GAINS/LOSSES BY 1795 CHANGE OR CONTINUITY? WERE REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS ACHIEVED OR ABANDONED?
KEY GROUP Priests and clergy				
KEY GROUP Nobles and émigrés				
KEY GROUP The bourgeoisie				
KEY GROUP Urban workers				
KEY GROUP Peasants				
KEY GROUP Women				



CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION: BALANCE SHEET

Having read about the French Revolution, how would you describe your own viewpoint about the experiences of the revolution for a range of people?

Do you believe that the revolution brought about major political, social and economic change? Conversely, do you take an alternative view, that despite all the upheavals, death and suffering, the same people ended up holding the wealth and power? What aspects of French life changed? What remained the same? What level of continuity was there? Who benefited from the revolution? Who was disadvantaged by it?

To assess the gains and losses to different groups, draw up a balance sheet like the one shown on p. 268 and fill it in. Use the research prompts below as guidance. For each research prompt, include useful facts, references to any relevant legislation, views of the people who experienced the revolution and historians' opinions so that you can use these as a basis for assessment tasks and exam preparation.

You might like to divide the table among the class and compile a master list at the end.

RESEARCH PROMPTS: These prompts are not definitive, but are intended to stimulate your thinking and give you some guidance in your research.

PRIESTS AND OTHER CLERGY

Social/cultural

- What were the effects of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the de-Christianisation campaign?
- To what extent was French society made more secular?
- What kinds of social and physical harm did church members sustain?

Economic

- What economic effect did the nationalisation of Church lands have on the Church?

Political

- How much power did the Church wield politically by 1795?

NOBLES AND ÉMIGRÉS

Social/cultural

- What happened to the privilege and status of the nobility?
- Did nobles suffer in other ways?
- How many of them were executed during the Terror?

Economic

- What effect did the abolition of seigneurialism have on nobles?
- What happened to the estates of nobles?
- Did they make economic gains in other areas?
- What happened to the property of émigrés?

Political

- Did the nobility gain any power from the revolution?
- What was the fate of émigrés?

THE BOURGEOISIE

Social/cultural

- How did daily life change for the bourgeoisie?

Economic

- What were the economic gains or losses for the bourgeoisie?

Political

- Did the French Revolution bring the bourgeoisie greater access to the political system?

URBAN WORKERS IN PARIS

Social/cultural

- Did urban workers gain better living and working conditions?
- Did the social identity of workers change during the revolution?
- What did urban workers sacrifice for the revolution? (e.g., in street action; revolutionary armies inside France or on the borders)

Economic

- Was there full employment?
- Were workers able to provide for themselves?
- What taxes did they pay?
- What was the effect of the plummeting value of the assignat?

Political

- Did urban workers end up with the vote?

PEASANTS

Social/cultural

- How did peasants feel about the treatment of the Church after the revolution?
- Did they support non-juring priests or the de-Christianisation campaign?
- Were peasants treated harshly by representatives-on-mission?

Economic

- Did peasants still have to pay feudal dues?
- What sort of taxes did they pay?
- How did labour shortages due to conscription affect peasants' work lives?
- Was there forced grain requisitioning?
- What happened to grain prices, especially under the Law of the Maximum?
- Were peasants able to buy land once the government sold Church land off in smaller lots?

Political

- What voting rights did peasants acquire throughout the revolution?
- Did peasants have a chance at local government?

WOMEN

Social/cultural

- What was the significance of the Divorce Law (20 September 1792)?
- What was the effect of the change in inheritance laws (March 1790)?
- What role did women play in the intellectual life of the revolution?

Economic

- What role did women play in food riots and the imposition of the so-called 'taxation *populaire*'?
- Did women agitate for the General Maximum in 1793?

Political

- What role did *sans-culottes* women play during the revolutionary *journées*?
- Which *journées* were most important for women? (Research the 'Society of Revolutionary Republican Women', set up in February 1793.)
- What role did rural women play in leading protests in the countryside?
- Could women belong to political clubs and bear arms for the cause?
- What actions did the Jacobins take against women?
- What role did women play in the counter-revolutionary movements?

THE ECONOMY

Social/cultural

- Who was fed first, the army or the general population?
- Could farmers keep their grain?
- What was the effect of bad harvests and severe winters?

Economic

- Did the war and labour shortages give peasants better bargaining power?
- How did the value of the assignat affect urban and rural people?
- Did the British blockade from 1793 affect colonial trade?
- Could raw materials get through easily?
- Did war create demand in some industries?
- How did the value of the assignat change throughout the revolution? (See Section B Timeline.)

Political

- How was the economy affected by the deaths of 1.5–2 million people in revolutionary wars?

THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

Social/cultural

- Which social groups joined the counter-revolution?
- Why?
- Who were the leaders of the counter-revolution?

Economic

- What happened to the property of counter-revolutionaries?

Political

- In the revolutionary period 1789–1795, what were the major events associated with the counter-revolution?

HISTORIANS ASSESS THE SHORT-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

A halt to economic modernisation

On the whole, the revolution and the wars that ensued halted the modernisation of France. In the economic maelstrom some benefited: landowners, bureaucrats, military contractors and speculators. Who lost? Some noble families, many of the clergy, creditors, those on fixed incomes, the destitute, the workers and tenant farmers.

Source 1 Linda S. Frey and Marsha L. Frey, *The French Revolution* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 76.

An acceleration of economic changes

Even though many entrepreneurs, particularly in the seaports, actually suffered in the revolution, in a more general sense, fundamental changes to the nature of the economy were accelerated by the Revolution, changes which were to facilitate capitalist practices. ... The free enterprise and free trade ... legislation of the Revolution guaranteed that manufacturers, farmers and merchants could commit themselves to the market economy secure in the knowledge that they could trade without the impediments of internal customs and tolls, differing systems of measurement and a multitude of law codes.

Source 2 Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution 1789–1799* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 190–191.

Little change to daily life

In political and ideological terms the Revolution was no doubt of crucial importance, but humanity was not transformed thereby. Most of the population continued to be subject to the age-old constraints of their environment. At the end of all the political upheavals of the Revolution ... little had changed in the daily life of most Frenchmen.

Source 3 Roger Price, *An Economic History of Modern France, 1730–1914* (London: Macmillan, 1975), xi.

Social changes endured

Ultimately, the social changes wrought by the revolution endured because they corresponded to some of the deepest grievances of the bourgeoisie and peasantry in 1789: popular sovereignty, civil equality, careers open to talent and the abolition of the seigneurial system. Whatever the popular resentments expressed towards conscription and the church, there was never a serious possibility of mass support for a return to the ancien régime.

Source 4 Peter McPhee, *A Society History of France 1780–1914*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 106–107.

Ideological change

It transformed men's outlook. The writers of the Enlightenment, so revered by the intelligentsia who made the Revolution, had always believed it could be done if men dared to seize control of their own destiny. The men of 1789 did so, in a rare moment of courage, altruism and idealism which took away the breath of educated Europe.

Source 5 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 425.

OPINIONS REMAIN DIVIDED

In every sense a tragedy ...

What the men of 1789 failed to see was that good intentions were not enough by themselves to transform the lot of their fellow men. Mistakes would be made when the accumulated experience of generations was pushed aside as ... routine, prejudice, fanaticism and superstition. The generation forced to live through the upheavals of the next twenty-six years paid the price. Already by 1802 a million French citizens lay dead; a million more would perish under Napoleon and untold more abroad. How many millions more still had their lives ruined? Inspiring and ennobling, the prospect of the French Revolution is also moving and appalling: in every sense a tragedy.

Source 6 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 425.

A bequest of traditions and myths

The Revolution not only left tangible bequests such as flags, institutions, the Civil Code and new modes of social organization. It also left ... its traditions and myths. These too ... may exercise a powerful influence on the historical record. Nor did the legends and myths all derive from the social classes such as the bourgeoisie or prosperous peasants, who gained more than their share from the balance sheet of the Revolution. The *sans-culottes* and small cultivators ... gained little in the way of material benefits, but they left memories that were not forgotten in the generations that followed ... the tradition of popular revolution. ... Violence, heroism and passionate idealism ... were re-enacted by similar crowds ... throughout Europe.

Source 7 George Rudé, *The French Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 181.

SECTION C

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

MARIE ANTOINETTE, 1755–1793

Archduchess Maria Antonia of Austria was fourteen when she married fifteen-year-old Louis-August, heir to the French throne (the dauphin). Their marriage was arranged to strengthen political ties between France and Austria. She was stripped of her Austrian possessions at the French border, and her ladies-in-waiting were dismissed. Fourteen-year-old Marie Antoinette, as she was renamed, was alone in the French court with no familiar person to advise her.

In 1778 she gave birth to her first child, a girl. Two sons followed, in 1781 and 1785, but the long wait for a male heir made the royal family the butt of jokes. The French public turned against Marie Antoinette, disliking her Austrian birth and her rumoured ambition, promiscuity and extravagance. In 1785–1786, there was the 'Affair of the Diamond Necklace': it was rumoured that she had tried to purchase a famously expensive piece of jewellery. She was commonly known as 'Madame Déficit' and 'the Austrian whore'.

Marie Antoinette was accused of having affairs with male and female courtiers, and it was rumoured that these affairs had led to Louis XVI becoming impotent. There were thousands of pamphlets (called ***libelles***) published that contained smutty images and attacked every aspect of Marie Antoinette's character and behaviour. This intensified in the lead-up to the revolution.

It was true that Marie Antoinette did try to influence political events. She was supported by a circle of sympathisers—sometimes referred to as the 'Austrian Committee'—and she used her influence so that people she liked were given court positions. She intervened in 1776 to secure the dismissal of Turgot. She strongly disliked Calonne, and pressured the king for his removal during the Assembly of Notables, so that Brienne, her favourite, could be promoted.

Marie Antoinette did not passively accept the revolution, and she urged Louis XVI to stand firm against demands for reform of procedures during the Estates-General.

After 1789, as the revolution progressed, Marie Antoinette corresponded, negotiated and tried to stop it.

Marie Antoinette supported the call for war in 1792 in the hope that Austrian forces would invade France, quell the revolution and restore Louis XVI to power. However, public opinion was against Marie Antoinette, and she was branded a traitor to France. She was executed on 16 October 1793, nine months after Louis XVI.

A copy of the diamond necklace exhibited at the Château de Breteuil.

A Miniature of Marie Antoinette, by Louis Marie Sicard, 1787.

libelle a political pamphlet aimed at attacking the reputation of a public figure

KEY POINTS

- Marie Antoinette was married to Louis when she was fourteen; they did not have children for eight years.
- She developed a reputation for gaiety, gambling and extravagant spending. She was nicknamed 'Madame Déficit'.
- By the 1780s, *libelles* containing slander and political pornography were used to demean Marie Antoinette and attack the king and the monarchy.
- Marie Antoinette had strong political opinions. She and her supporters pressured Louis XVI, especially about policy and political appointments.
- After 1789 Marie Antoinette often acted against the revolutionary reforms. She promoted the 1791 flight of the royal family from Paris and corresponded with the Austrian court in 1792 while France was at war.

LOUIS XVI, 1754–1793

Louis XVI, King of France and Navarre, by Joseph-Siffred Duplessis, c. 1774–1776.

On 10 May 1774, Louis XVI ascended to the French throne. He was nineteen years old. The young king was aware of the need to restrain spending of his government, but his lack of political experience and judgement—and his weakness in facing down opposition from privileged groups within the court—made him a weak leader.

Four years earlier, in 1770, fifteen-year-old Louis had married the Austrian archduchess, Marie Antoinette, who was then aged fourteen. Their first child was not born until 1778, which led to the public questioning the queen's fertility.

By 1778, the young king had committed France to supporting the American colonists in their war of independence against Britain. This support of the American war cost France around 1.3 billion livres, and added substantially to the monarchy's debt.

One of Louis XVI's mistakes was that he never fully supported the reform initiatives of his finance ministers. Each of the four ministers attempted to reduce the national deficit, suggesting a variety of methods of reform in charging taxes, collecting taxes, and other administrative measures.

However, in each case, the proposed reforms ran into opposition from privileged groups and individuals—including Marie Antoinette—and Louis bowed to political pressure and dismissed his finance ministers.

However, in 1788, Louis XVI agreed to the calling of an Estates-General, which meant that groups from every estate throughout the land were writing grievances (collected into books called *cahiers de doléances*). They all began with expressions of loyalty to the king. There was a general belief in the king's good intentions, and people blamed his weaknesses on poor ministerial advice. Louis XVI was still regarded as the chief *père nourricier* (father of his subjects) and the *cahiers* made respectful requests for reform.

With the calling of the Estates-General, Louis XVI's poor judgement and failure to lead created a revolutionary situation out of evolving financial and deepening fiscal crises.

In the opening session of the Estates-General, Louis XVI did not give a directive for all estates to deliberate and vote together. This created a stand-off that led to the Third Estate—after inviting the other estates to join it—declaring itself to be the National Assembly on 17 June 1789. The deputies of the Third Estate were further provoked by the closure of their meeting hall in preparation for the Royal Session, which led to the Tennis Court Oath on 20 June 1789. On 23 June in the Royal Session, Louis XVI negated all decrees made by the 'so-called National Assembly' and ordered the estates to meet separately, but his instructions were ignored by the defiant deputies of the Third Estate.

By early July 1789, Louis XVI had decided to respond to the defiance from the Third Estate by using military strength, and in the early weeks of July assembled 30,000 troops around Paris. His decision to sack his finance minister, Necker, led to immediate popular action in Paris, and culminated in the Parisian crowd taking control of the Bastille prison on 14 July 1789.

Louis XVI was forced to accept the National Assembly, and entered Paris on 17 July 1789 to meet with the new city officials. In his public appearance, the king accepted the red and blue cockade of the National Guard of Paris for his hat, which he added to his white Bourbon cockade. Accepting the cockade signified that Louis XVI had accepted the new National Assembly, as well as the implications of a constitutional monarchy.

Then, in October 1789—after Louis XVI refused to give assent to both the August Decrees and Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen—the Parisian market women and their supporters invaded Versailles Palace and forced the king and his family to move to Paris.

On 14 July 1790, the king acted as a unifying figure at the Festival of the Federation, publicly taking the civic oath of allegiance to the nation and the Constitution in front of 14,000 National Guardsmen and an estimated 300,000 Parisians.

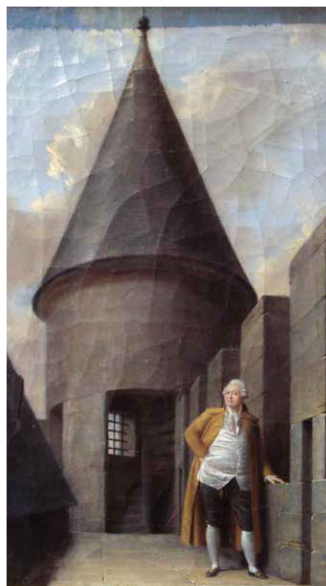
However, the breaking point with the revolutionary forces came with the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and Clerical Oath. Louis was forced to sign the oath, but he could not accept it. On 20 June 1791, the royal family made an attempt to escape the revolution, but were recaptured at Varennes and returned to Paris, escorted by thousands of provincial National Guards.

Back in the Tuileries Palace, and now under virtual house arrest, the royal family felt at the mercy of the popular movement, which was increasingly calling for a republic. Under duress, Louis XVI accepted the Constitution in September 1791 and publicly swore allegiance to it.

Under the next government—the Legislative Assembly—the push for war against France's external enemies intensified. The king and queen supported the war. Louis XVI knew the French army was not prepared for war and hoped that France would be defeated so that he could go back to ruling a monarchy. To make sure of this, he used his constitutional power of suspensive veto four times in 1791–1792 to block important security legislation put forward by the Legislative Assembly. This angered the common people so much that they invaded the Tuileries Palace on 20 June 1792 and demanded that he recall his vetos.

The next invasion of the Tuileries Palace by the crowd took place on 10 August 1792—and it proved to be Louis XVI's downfall. The king and his family tried to take refuge in the Legislative Assembly; 600 of the king's Swiss Guard were slaughtered by the crowd, along with any royal servants to be found. The royal family was handed over to the head of the National Guards and imprisoned in Temple prison.

The king's trial for treason in December 1792–January 1793 found him guilty of treason and condemned him to death. Louis bore his afflictions with dignity and courage and was guillotined on 21 January 1793.



Louis XVI at the Tour du Temple, by Jean-François Garneray, 1814.

KEY POINTS

- Louis XVI ascended the throne at a very young age and sincerely wanted to serve his subjects.
- He was aware of the need for action but lacked the political judgement to overcome opposition to the suggested reforms of his four ministers for finance.
- The public dislike of his wife Marie Antoinette and their initial failure to produce heirs undermined the perception of Louis XVI's power as a monarch.
- Louis's mismanagement of events at the Estates-General triggered the declaration of the National Assembly (17 June 1789) and the Tennis Court Oath (20 June 1789).
- Louis's dismissal of finance minister Necker on 11 July 1789 acted as a trigger for the Paris crowd, who seized control of the Bastille on 14 July 1789.
- While the king appeared to act as a symbol of unity at the first Festival of the Federation in 1790, he opposed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which offended him on religious grounds.
- In June 1791 the royal family attempted to flee France but was intercepted at Varennes. They were returned to Paris, humiliated and under heavily armed escort.
- In 1792, Louis XVI supported the declaration of war against Austria and Prussia, hoping that France would be defeated and his powers as monarch would be restored. To achieve this, he vetoed security legislation proposed by the Legislative Assembly.
- By mid-1792, after serious defeats in the war, the calls for a republic became more insistent. On 10 August, *sans-culottes* stormed the Tuileries Palace and deposed the king, thus, clearing the way for the creation of a republic.
- Louis was tried for treason by the National Convention in December 1792–January 1793. He was found guilty, and executed by guillotine on 21 January 1793.

JACQUES NECKER, 1732–1804

Jacques Necker, by Joseph-Siffred Duplessis, c. 1781.

Jacques Necker was a Protestant and citizen of Geneva who lived in France, and made his fortune from banking. He was regarded as a brilliant banker who was particularly successful in negotiating large loans.

In 1776, Necker was appointed to succeed Turgot, and he remained director of finances until 1781. At first, he won favour as he financed French support for the American War of Independence by borrowing money rather than increasing taxes. Necker's intention was to balance the cost of the interest on loans by reforming the French financial system. He:

- introduced central accounting procedures—the first steps towards establishing a central treasury
- commissioned a survey of venal offices—aiming to replace them with salaried officials accountable to the king
- began the process of setting up provincial assemblies of landowners—with the aim of weakening the power of the *parlements*.

In 1781, Necker persuaded the king to allow him to publish a public account of France's finances—the *Compte rendu au roi*. This had never been done before, as France's financial arrangements were considered the king's private business. However, Necker knew that publicity would make it easier to get loans, and he wanted to reassure investors and bankers that France could repay the loans it was seeking.

Following the publication of the *Compte rendu* and its enthusiastic reception, Necker asked the king for an appointment to the king's Council. When the king refused, Necker resigned.

Necker kept himself in the public eye while he was out of office by writing a series of letters that stirred up public opinion and attacked the reform proposals of his successor, Calonne. Necker was recalled in 1788, after France had reached a state of bankruptcy and the finance minister Brienne resigned. Brienne believed that Necker was the only one who could restore the government's credit and raise new loans.

In 1789, during the opening session of the Estates-General, the deputies were disappointed with Necker's speech, as he did not announce any new reforms. As the Estates-General continued, Louis XVI became furious with Necker, and blamed him for mismanaging royal strategy.

However, the French public believed in Necker's independence and integrity, and that he had kept away from the court factions at Versailles. On 11 July, Necker's carriage was seen leaving Paris. On 12 July, the news of Necker's dismissal was generally known on the streets. This acted as a major trigger for the storming of the Bastille on 14 July.

On 17 July, Louis XVI recognised the legitimacy of the Paris Commune, and announced that Necker was being recalled. Necker entered Paris in triumph, and then tried to accelerate tax reform, but faced with opposition from the National Assembly—which had its own ideas about tax reform—Necker resigned in September 1790 and returned to Geneva.

KEY POINTS

- Necker had a brilliant reputation as a banker who was expert in raising loans, and was director-general of finances from 1776–1781.
- Financed the American war through loans, rather than raising taxes. He introduced a series of reforms to meet interest payments.
- Dismissed in 1781 because of unpopularity with the court and royal ministers.
- Mounted public attacks on Calonne's reforms in 1787 during the Assembly of Notables.
- Reappointed by Louis XVI when bankruptcy was declared in 1788, and advised the king about the running procedure for the Estates-General. Did not announce any reforms in his opening speech at the Estates-General.
- Dismissed on 11 July 1789, which triggered the storming of the Bastille. He was later reappointed.
- Worked with the National Assembly. Attempted to push through tax reform and borrow further money. Resigned in September 1790.

EMMANUEL-JOSEPH SIEYÈS, 1748–1836

Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès—best known as Abbé Sieyès—was born into the Third Estate. In November 1788, he joined Duport's Society of Thirty. In the society, he polished his political theories and wrote his highly influential pamphlet *What Is the Third Estate?* Sieyès's pamphlet contributed substantially to the intellectual ferment of the months leading up to the Estates-General.

Paris elected twenty deputies to represent the Third Estate at the Estates-General, with Sieyès as the twentieth choice. By the time Sieyès arrived at Versailles, the Third Estate had already refused to register credentials separately from the other estates. Sieyès provided a solution, suggesting that the Third Estate invite the other estates to join it in common deliberation. Sieyès's plan was successful, and on 17 June 1789 led to the formation of the National Assembly. Sieyès both guided the choice of name and drafted the text of the declaration announcing its formation. He was also present for the Tennis Court Oath.

On 7 July, Sieyès was elected to the Constitutional Committee of the National Assembly—and it was in this role that he argued for creating a difference between 'active' and 'passive' citizens (see pp. 130–131). During this period Sieyès also joined with the Constitutional Committee in drafting the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

Supporting the ideas of democracy and the general will, Sieyès opposed the idea of an absolute veto for the king and supported the argument that the legislature should comprise only one chamber, as an upper chamber would suggest a privileged group. Sieyès supported the August Decrees but opposed both the abolition of the tithe and the nationalisation of Church property.

↑ *Abbé Sieyès*, by Jacques-Louis David, 1817.

KEY POINTS

- Sieyès was a cleric (a priest) but was more interested in philosophy and Enlightenment ideas than theology.
- He resented the need to have a noble patron to gain promotion in the Church.
- Sieyès honed his political ideas in the Society of Thirty, publishing his influential pamphlet *What Is the Third Estate?* in January 1789.
- Sieyès was a Third Estate deputy at the Estates-General, where he provided intellectual and strategic leadership during the constitutional revolution of June, and drafted the 17 June Declaration of the National Assembly.
- Sieyès also proposed the distinction between active and passive citizens, and worked on the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.
- He supported democratic ideas and opposed the idea of the king having an absolute veto over legislation.

THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE, 1757–1834

General Lafayette, by Samuel Morse, 1825. The year-long visit of General Lafayette to America in 1824–1825 led to celebrations unmatched in American history. Several wonderful portraits of Lafayette were painted by American artists at this time.

During the October Days of 1789, Lafayette's qualities as a commander and negotiator were tested when 6000 angry working women, followed by 15,000 members of the National Guard, marched to Versailles. Pulling victory out of potential disaster, Lafayette was able to reason with the mutinous elements in the National Guard and negotiate the safety of the royal family, once again encouraging Louis XVI, and the even more reluctant Marie Antoinette, onto a balcony before the assembled crowd.

Lafayette's position within the 1789 National Assembly had been as a member of the moderate patriot group, giving strong support to the principles of constitutional monarchy. However, by 1791, he was losing popularity in Paris and losing authority over the National Guard, as people became increasingly hostile about his continued support of the royal family.

After the failed flight of the royal family and their humiliating return to Paris in June 1791, the Cordeliers and Jacobin clubs joined together to organise petitions to the National Assembly requesting the removal of the king and the declaration of a republic.

Lafayette—at this time a member of the Jacobins—refused to be associated with the petitions, and joined a breakaway group to form a new club, the Feuillants, which was still prepared to support a constitutional monarchy.

On 17 July 1791, crowds summoned by the Jacobins and Cordeliers massed on the Champ de Mars to sign a petition requesting the removal of the king. Lafayette was sent by the mayor of Paris, Bailly, to disperse the crowds. He arrived with the National Guard. Violence broke out, with the National Guard firing on an unarmed crowd, killing twelve people and injuring fifty. As a result, Lafayette lost all his authority over the crowds of Paris and lost the loyalty of the National Guard.

By 1792 France had declared war on Austria and Prussia. Lafayette was away from Paris in command of the Army of the North. However, this did not prevent him from writing letters from his army camp in an attempt to influence political affairs in the Legislative Assembly and at court:

- In May he wrote to the Austrian ambassador seeking support for his plans to support the monarchy.
- In June he wrote to the Legislative Assembly demanding the closure of the political clubs.

Lafayette even deserted his command post without permission later in June to speak in person at the Assembly, demanding the closure of the political clubs, as well as further restrictions on the press and on the right of petition.

Lafayette's overall plan had been to gather his army troops to march on Paris, where he would be joined by loyal members of the National Guard. Then he would force a royalist constitution through the Assembly to entrench royal power and safeguard the throne.

Lafayette deserted to the Austrians on 17 August 1792, seven days after Louis XVI was deposed. He was imprisoned variously in Prussia and Austria, with Napoleon securing his release in 1797.

KEY POINTS

- During the 5 October 1789 invasion of Versailles by a crowd of 6000 working women, Lafayette persuaded the crowd not to hurt the royal family. He accompanied the protesters and the royal carriage safely back to Paris the next day.
- Throughout 1791, Lafayette's popularity declined His actions as commander, ordering the National Guard to fire on the crowd at the Champ de Mars on 17 July 1791, irretrievably damaged his position.
- In 1792, during a time of war, Lafayette commanded the Army of the North. Unable to intervene to preserve the monarchy, he chose to leave France and surrendered to the Austrians.

GEORGES DANTON, 1759–1794

Georges Danton was a lawyer who joined the National Guard in 1789. In January 1790, he formed the Cordeliers Club, along with Camille Desmoulins and Jean-Paul Marat. Danton was a gifted speaker, and popular with the Paris crowd. As a Cordelier, he was one of those responsible for initiating the popular petitions for a republic after Louis XVI's flight to Varennes in 1791—which ultimately led to the Champ de Mars massacre on 17 July 1791.

A section leader in Paris, Danton helped plan the *journée* of 10 August 1792, when Louis XVI and his family were forced to flee the Tuileries Palace. After that, he became minister for justice.

The Girondins suspected that Danton and Marat were behind the 1792 September Massacres. Historian Simon Schama has accused Danton—as radical leader, Minister for Justice and member of the Revolutionary Commune—of 'turning a blind eye to the violence he clearly knew was about to take place in Paris'.[1]

As a deputy in the National Convention, Danton was at first a strong supporter of adopting a policy of Terror. In March 1793, he argued that it was better that the government organised strong measures of security to prevent the people resorting to the ad hoc justice of the September Massacres. To this end, Danton proposed a Revolutionary Tribunal, which was established on 10 March 1793.

On 6 April 1793, Danton supported the creation of the Committee of Public Safety. Historians François Furet and Mona Ozouf conclude that he was 'a man who sought to stabilise the revolution by strengthening the government, establishing the Revolutionary Tribunal, centralising administration, relying on military justice [but] devoting little thought to the problem of creating enduring institutions'.[2]

In late 1793, Danton changed his opinion and argued that it was possible to wind back the Terror. Also, he disagreed with Hébert's radical de-Christianisation. However, Danton's opinions clashed with those of Robespierre, who felt the Terror should now be turned to the task of purging every last enemy in society, and moulding a 'republic of virtue'.

On 5 April 1794, Danton and his followers were executed by order of the Committee of Public Safety.

Georges Danton Led To His Execution, by Pierre Wille, 1794.

KEY POINTS

- Danton was a gifted speaker, and popular with the *sans-culottes*.
- He was one of the founders of the Cordeliers Club in 1790, and supported the petitions for a republic after the king's flight from Paris.
- He helped plan the *journée* of 10 August 1792, becoming a member of the Revolutionary Commune. He was appointed minister of justice by the remnants of the Legislative Assembly in an attempt to appease the *sans-culottes*, facilitating the arrest of over 1000 suspects in Paris, many non-juring priests.
- Along with Marat, Danton was accused by the Girondin deputies of being responsible for the September Massacres. It is accepted that he did nothing to stop the violence.
- In the National Convention, Danton supported the policy of Terror and designed the workings of the Revolutionary Tribunal. He urged the French to fight both internal and external enemies.
- By December 1793, Danton and his followers felt that the Terror could be wound back following French military victories, but his view clashed with Robespierre's view. As a result, Danton and his followers—named 'the Indulgents'—were executed on 5 April 1794.

JEAN-PAUL MARAT, 1743–1793

Jean-Paul Marat, by Joseph Boze, 1793.

From 1789 Jean-Paul Marat was best known as a political theorist, radical journalist and editor of the popular newspaper *L'ami du peuple*. He routinely criminalised politicians as 'bloodsucking' and contributed to the climate of violence that fed the crowds. Marat was one of the founders of the Cordeliers Club and a vigorous defender of the *sans-culottes*. He agitated for a republic after the flight to Varennes in 1791.

With other Cordeliers, Marat organised the petition on the Champ de Mars on 17 July 1791, which was closed down by the National Guard. He went into hiding in the sewers of Paris, where he lived with the very poorest of the poor. The experience aggravated his chronic skin disease and from then on he had to wear bandages and spent considerable time soaking in his bath, working from there—and even receiving visitors there.

Marat was accused of being one of the influences behind the September Massacres, after inciting violence through his newspaper. In July 1790 he had published a pamphlet against conservative politicians, 'We are done for!' in which he suggested that 'Five or six hundred heads cut off would ... assure your [the people's] repose, freedom and happiness'.[3] In the Revolutionary Commune established on 9–10 August 1792, Marat served on the Committee of Vigilance.

From January to May 1793, Marat was in constant conflict with the Girondins. He believed that they:

- were not fully committed to the Republic
- were too sympathetic to the king.

The Girondins counterattacked, calling for Marat's impeachment in front of the newly created Revolutionary Tribunal. He was tried on 24 May 1793 and acquitted, then carried triumphantly on the shoulders of his *sans-culottes* supporters back into the National Assembly to be paraded and then returned to his seat. That was Marat's last triumph.

Debilitated by his worsening skin disease, Marat was forced to retire from the National Convention. Now that he was no longer needed, Robespierre and other leading Montagnards began to distance themselves from him, and the Convention paid little attention to his letters.

On 13 July, a young woman from Caen, a supporter of the Girondins, visited Marat at his home. Marat received her in his bath, much against his wife's wishes. After fifteen minutes of conversation, the young woman, Charlotte Corday, leaned forward and stabbed him with a knife. Marat bled to death in his bath.

In a time of extreme revolutionary tension and war, the Jacobin government needed its martyrs. The painter Jacques-Louis David, himself a Montagnard, was commissioned to paint what historian Simon Schama describes as 'an enduring image of a revolutionary martyr',[4] and to design an elaborate public funeral that would create a vehicle for great public patriotic devotion. Busts of Marat appeared in every Jacobin Club in the country to perpetuate his martyrdom.

Marat was buried in the Panthéon alongside other heroes of the revolution.

THE DEATH OF MARAT

Marat's death created the most powerful symbol of the French Revolution. The painter, Jacques-Louis David, drew on Christian symbolism, depicting Marat lying in his bath, bathed in a golden light, his wound bleeding onto the white sheet. He is caught in the moment of death, his right hand still grasping his pen and his left hand holding the letter from Charlotte Corday that gave her access to him.

The painting deliberately portrays Marat as a kind and charitable man, his last moments spent in ministering to the needs of the people.

However, Corday had murdered Marat because he represented the bloody excesses of the Terror. She was a Girondin supporter from Caen. On 13 July, she gained entry to Marat's home at seven o'clock at night by promising to identify traitors to the Republic. Corday found Marat in his bath, where he often worked to relieve the itch caused by his skin condition. She sat on a chair next to him, then took out a knife and swiftly stabbed him on the right side of his bare chest.

After killing Marat, Corday made no effort to escape, but gave herself up calmly to the authorities. She explained to police commissioner Guellard that 'having seen the civil war was on the point of exploding throughout France and persuaded that Marat was the chief cause of this disaster, she had wished to sacrifice her life for her country'.[5]

Corday was tried on 17 July 1793 and went to the guillotine the same day without showing fear or repentance. Marat was buried in the Panthéon and David's portrait was hung in the National Convention, above the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, where it served as a symbol of republican values, and reminded the deputies of the choice they must make: 'Liberty or Death'.

The Death of Marat, by Jacques-Louis David, 1793.

DID YOU KNOW?

When David presented the portrait to the Convention, he told the deputies, 'Citizens, the people were again calling for their friend; their desolate voice was heard: David, take up your brushes. ... Avenge Marat. I heard the voice of the people. I obeyed.'

KEY POINTS

- Marat was a radical politician, journalist and editor of the popular newspaper, *L'ami du peuple* (The Friend of the People).
- He was a great supporter of the *sans-culottes* and advocated violence to push their demands.
- He was a co-founder of the radical Cordeliers Club and supported petitions for a republic after the king's flight from Paris. The presentation of these petitions culminated in the massacre on the Champ de Mars on 17 July 1792.
- Marat became a member of the radical Revolutionary Commune that took power in a coup on the night of 9–10 August 1792, and was responsible for the action the *sans-culottes* took to depose the king.
- He used his newspaper *L'ami du peuple* to urge violence against 'counter-revolutionaries', and was a member of the Vigilance Committee of the Paris Commune, and, thus, implicated in the organisation of the September Massacres.
- Elected to the National Convention, Marat supported the Montagnards and pursued an aggressive policy of attack against the rival Girondin faction. The Girondins managed to impeach Marat, but the Revolutionary Tribunal acquitted him, which led to him being led back into the National Convention in triumph. The Girondins' efforts to impeach Marat were a major factor in them being purged from the National Convention on 2 June 1793.
- On 13 July 1793, Marat was assassinated in his bath by Girondin supporter Charlotte Corday.
- The Montagnards exploited Marat's death by celebrating him as a revolutionary martyr.

MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE, 1758–1794

Portrait of Maximilien Robespierre, c. 1790.

The son of a barrister, Maximilien Robespierre was born in Arras in 1758. He became a lawyer known for his defence of the poor and, in 1789, as a Third Estate deputy. He was a founding member of the Jacobin Club. He was involved with enrolling new Parisian members and corresponding with provincial Jacobin Clubs, which enabled him to build an extensive political network.

Robespierre did not support the calls for a republic after Louis XVI's flight from Paris in 1791; he was not opposed to the idea, but felt that it was too soon in the revolution to establish it. He was also one of the very few deputies who opposed the idea of France declaring war in 1792, as he believed that it was necessary to deal with enemies within France before meeting enemies abroad. He mistrusted the motives of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette and the generals when they supported the war—and he was right on all counts.

In September 1792, Robespierre was elected to the National Convention. He opposed the idea of a trial for the king, arguing that the people had given their judgement on 10 August 1792 when they stormed the Tuileries Palace, and that the people were never wrong.

In early 1793 Robespierre supported proposals by Barère and Danton to institute a policy of Terror, and by July he had been elected to the Committee of Public Safety. He became the Committee's most powerful member—and the predominant architect of the Terror.

Robespierre was the proponent of *vertu* (a high moral standard expressed by citizens through their love of the nation), which he wanted to become the predominant value of the new regime. He also opposed the de-Christianisation of the radical Hébertists.

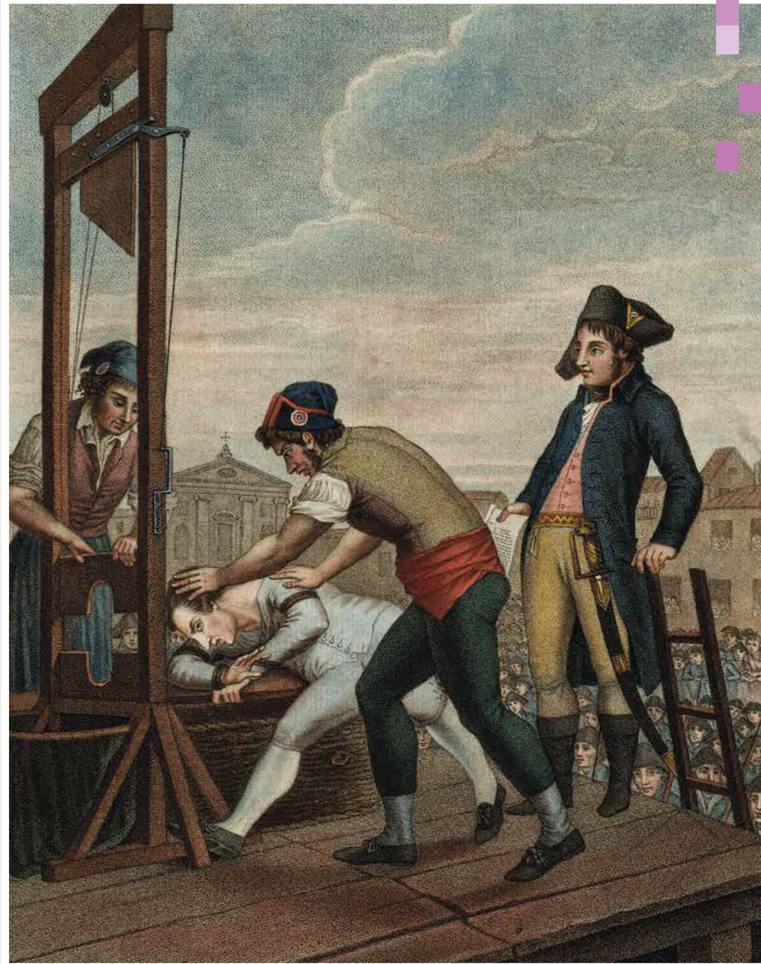
By 24 March 1794, Robespierre had pushed the Committee of Public Safety to authorise the execution of Hébert's Ultra faction. This was quickly followed in April 1794 with the execution of Danton's Indulgents faction.

On 5 February 1794, Robespierre gave a key address in the National Convention on 'Principles of Political Morality', in which he laid out the principles of virtue and Terror. Robespierre proposed a new secular religion based around notions of deism and patriotism, which he called the Cult of the Supreme Being. On 8 June 1794, the Festival of the Supreme Being drew up to 300,000 spectators, but also gave rise to fears that Robespierre intended to set himself up as a despot—especially as he had chosen to play the role of the high priest.

The passing of the Law of 22 Prairial Year II (10 June 1794) frightened the deputies of the National Convention further, as they were not exempt from its provisions. Anti-Robespierrist forces began to rally. When Robespierre tried to speak to the Convention on 27 July, he was drowned out by cries of 'Down with the tyrant!' On the evening of 9–10 Thermidor (27–28 July) Robespierre, aware that he was about to be arrested, attempted to shoot himself, but only broke his jaw. He was guillotined on 10 Thermidor Year II (28 July 1794), which marked the end of the Terror.

KEY POINTS

- Robespierre was unknown in Paris when he arrived at the Estates-General in May 1789. He took part in the foundation of the National Assembly on 17 June 1789 and the Tennis Court Oath on 20 June 1789, although he did not take a prominent role.
- Robespierre established himself through the Jacobin Club and built his political networks by taking the role of secretary in 1791. He was president of the Jacobin Club in 1792.
- He was in favour of a republic, but did not support the calls and petitions immediately after Louis XVI's return from Varennes.
- As a member of the National Convention, Robespierre dismissed the necessity of a trial for the king, Louis Capet, arguing that the people had spoken by their actions on 10 August when they deposed the king.
- He supported the policy of Terror adopted by the Convention and was elected to the Committee of Public Safety every month from July 1793 to July 1794. He became the Committee's most powerful member.
- By late 1793, Robespierre had become the chief architect of the Terror. He opposed de-Christianisation and had very clear ideas about the role Terror should play in shaping society. He moved against extremists, purging both Hébert's Ultra faction and Danton's Indulgent faction.
- Robespierre initiated the Cult of the Supreme Being on 8 June 1794, which gave rise to fears that he intended to install himself as dictator.
- He and his followers were arrested on the night of 9–10 Thermidor Year II (27–28 July 1794) and were tried, convicted and guillotined on 10 Thermidor Year II (28 July 1794).



↑ *The Death of Robespierre*, painted by J. Beys and engraved by James Idnarpila, c. 1799.

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5 Schama, *Citizens,* 737.

GLOSSARY

A

absolute monarch
A monarch who holds absolute authority over all aspects of society, and is not restricted by written laws or constitutions. Absolute monarchs are usually born into their position, and often rule by divine right.

absolutism
System in which all power is vested in a monarch or dictator; absolute monarchy.

agency
initiative, activity of an individual or group to shape events and gain results

ancien régime
'Old regime'; the way France was run prior to 1789.

arbitrary
Using unlimited personal power; based on chance or whim, rather than reason.

aristocratisme
Liking the ways of the ancien régime. Anyone suspected of a 'tendency to luxury' could be accused of aristocratisme and imprisoned or executed.

assignats
Paper money issued from 19 December 1789 against capital raised from the sale of church lands.

B

biens nationaux
Wealth or goods of the nation.

bonnet rouge
The red cap, a symbol of the freed slaves of ancient Rome; also known as a Phrygian bonnet.

bourgeois
Originally meant a town-dweller, from bourg, meaning a small market town.

bourgeoisie
The collective noun for a group of town-dwellers.

C

cahiers de doléances
Books of grievances written by 60,000 villages, seigneurial estates, towns and cities; they were to be submitted for the king's consideration at the Estates-General.

capitation
A tax per person, as counted by a census.

coalition
Combination or alliance.

Commission of Twelve
(18 May–31 May 1793) Formed by the National Convention and was largely made up of Girondins. It sought to break the power of the Revolutionary Commune and the Paris sections.

constitution
A document that lays out the responsibilities and powers of each part of a government, and the way in which they relate to each other.

convocation
Summoning, calling together.

corporate
To combine into one body or organisation. In eighteenth-century France, institutions such as the Church, army, parlements and guilds were regarded as 'corporations', as were social groups such as the estates and subgroups within them—the nobles of the sword or robe, or the upper or lower clergy.

corvée
Compulsory, unpaid labour for the feudal lord, usually spent on the roads.

Court Party
Also sometimes called 'the Austrian Faction'; comprised Marie Antoinette and a number of courtiers who were either Austrian or personally loyal to the monarchy, who viewed an Austrian invasion as a desirable event.

critique
Detailed evaluation; review.

Crown
One of the key symbols of the monarchy used to refer to the king and his government.

curé
Priest.

customs barriers
Obstacles put in place by governments to limit free trade between regions or countries.

D

dauphin
Heir to the throne.

depose
To remove from a throne or other high position.

despotism
The exercise of absolute power, especially in a cruel and oppressive way.

direct taxes
Taxes imposed on individuals and collected by royal officials.

divine right
The political doctrine that monarchs receive the right to rule directly from God and not from the people, and that they are accountable only to God.

don gratuit
Voluntary gift to the monarch.

E

ecclesiastical
Relating to the Church.

émigrés
People who fled France because of the revolution; many of them were nobles.

Enlightenment
The flowering of thought in eighteenth-century Europe—particularly in politics, science and philosophy—which advocated a rational approach rather than tradition and religion.

ennoblement
Noble status could be awarded to an individual by decision of the king or by appointment to a specific office.

Enragés
Literally 'furious ones'; a group of extreme revolutionaries led by a former priest, Jacques Roux, who advocated social and economic measures in favour of the underprivileged.

F

faction
A group of dissenters within a larger group.

fédérés
Volunteer National Guards from the provinces.

Feuillants
Political faction that split from the Jacobins; monarchists.

financiers
Tax agents who paid for the right to collect tax for the king.

fiscal
Taxation and its collection; government revenue.

Freemasonry
A secular organisation devoted to the understanding of the world by reason and rather than religion.

frugality
Careful, economical.

G

généralité
The administrative divisions of France under the old regime.

guild
Association of craftsmen.

I

impeachment
A trial for misconduct while in public office.

impoverished
Made poor.

imprescriptible
Cannot legally be taken away.

inalienable
Not removable, cannot be taken away.

indigent
Poor; needy.

indirect taxes
Taxes imposed on goods and collected by 'tax farmers'.

infraction
Infringement, breaking a rule or custom.

intendant
A public official appointed by the king to govern a *généralité*.

inviolable
Never to be broken, infringed or dishonoured.

J

journée
A day of violent crowd action that achieves political change

journeymen
A craftsman who had finished his apprenticeship and was paid a daily wage.

judiciary
The branch of a government responsible for laws and the legal system.

jurisdictions
Territories or areas over which the legal power of a court or institution extends.

L

laboureur
The upper level of the peasantry; they usually hired labour and owned a plough.

legitimising and sanctifying property rights
Regarding ownership of property as legally and morally right and holy.

lettre de cachet
A royal order committing a noble to prison or exile indefinitely, without trial.

libelle
A political pamphlet aimed at attacking the reputation of a public figure.

lit de justice
Literally, a 'bed of justice', used to describe a king's visit to *parlement* to demand it comply with his will.

livre
A unit of French currency.

M

magistrates
Lawyers, or officials of the law.

menu peuple
The ordinary people of Paris.

merchant
A person who engages in buying, selling, importing and exporting goods for profit.

monarchical
Relating to a monarch or monarchy.

monarchiens
Group of conservative deputies in the National Assembly who wanted a hereditary upper house and to give the king absolute veto over legislation. They continued to support the idea of a constitutional monarchy even after the king's flight from Paris in June 1791. *See also* Feuillants.

monopolies
Domination of a commercial market in a particular region by one supplier.

Montagnards or Mountain
Radical deputies of the Legislative Assembly, they were members of the Jacobin and Cordeliers clubs who sat on the high benches to the left of the president of the Assembly.

N

nobility
The privileged class in society.

nobility of the robe (noblesse de robe)
Those who had been made noble or who had purchased nobility.

nobility of the sword (noblesse d'épée)
Those who had been born noble.

O

outworkers
People working from home (usually women).

P

parish
A church district.

parishioners
Members of a parish.

parlements
Law courts, responsible for registering, administering or remonstrating (objecting to aspects of) laws passed by the king.

pays d'état
Provinces at border areas acquired through conquest, inheritance or marriage. They had their own parlements, rights and privileges and were exempt from some taxes.

peasant
Derived from the French word *païsant*, meaning someone from the 'pays' (countryside).

peerage
Literally 'group of peers'; peer was another name for a noble.

philosophes
A group of philosophers (writers and thinkers) of the eighteenth century that criticised many aspects of the ancien régime. They debated ideas based on reason rather than tradition and upheld individual liberties: freedom of speech and religion and equality before the law.

physiocratic
The economic theory that 'natural order' governed society; that land was the basis of wealth and taxation; and that free trade was the most beneficial system.

prerogative
An exclusive right or privilege.

privilege
Special rights and advantages that are granted to some people but not all.

probity
Honesty and decency in financial dealings.

protégés
Preferred candidates for appointments.

prudent
Showing care and thought for the future.

purge
An abrupt or violent removal of a group of people.

R

radicalised
Take up an extreme position on a political or social issue.

ratified
An official agreement.

referendum
A direct vote of an entire electorate on a particular proposal.

regicide
Killing the king.

remonstrating
To reject, issue a request for correction, or reproach the king.

revenue
The total amount of income received.

right of remonstrance
The *parlement's* right to refuse to issue a decree.

S

salons
Social and intellectual gatherings in private houses.

sanction
Permission.

sans-culottes
Originally a derogatory term aristocrats used to describe for working people who wore trousers rather than breeches. Soon the term was used to describe urban workers, shopkeepers or artisans who supported the revolution. After the Champ de Mars massacre, *sans-culottes* clothing became symbolic of the revolution.

secular
Worldly things that are not regarded as religious, spiritual or sacred.

seditious
Inciting discontent or rebellion against government.

seigneur
Lord.

seigneurial or feudal system
System where the lord (or seigneur) provided land and military protection to peasants; in return, the peasants farmed his landholdings and paid rent in cash, produce or service.

sovereignty
The right of a people, or a government acting on its behalf, to make decisions, form laws and exercise power within its own borders.

subsistence farming
Farm work that produced enough to support a peasant's family and obligations to their lord, without any leftover for trade.

surplus
More than what is needed; an amount left over.

T

taille
The major tax on all French subjects, based on how much land they held.

tithe
A compulsory tax of about one-tenth (or 10 per cent) of income, paid to the Church in cash or grain, farm stock, etc.

tricolour cockade
A rosette or cockade in the colours of the revolution: blue, white and red

tyrannical
Laws made at the personal will of a single ruler, but not governed by any controls.

U

universal manhood suffrage

The right to vote held by all adult male citizens, regardless of income, property, religion, race or any other qualification.

V

venal position

An office or position, usually in the legal system, sold by the state to raise money.

veto

An *absolute veto* would give the king the power to immediately and permanently block any legislation that he did not like. A *suspensive veto* would allow the king to hold up particular legislation for three successive two-year terms (making six years altogether). This veto was eventually accepted on the second ballot.

vingtième

An income tax of about 5 per cent on goods produced, levied by the government when extra income was needed (usually in wartime).

X

XVI

The roman numerals after a monarch's name are known as regnal numbers. They are used to differentiate that monarch from others who had used the same name and held the same office.

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