


# The French Revolution



Term	Definition
Absolute monarch	A political system in which the king or queen has sole power to decide the laws without the restriction of a government or constitution.
Ancien Régime	The political system in France before the 1789 Revolution.
Bastille	A medieval fortress in Paris that was used as a prison for enemies of the king.
Bourgeoisie	The middle class or wealthier members of the Third Estate.
Committee of Public Safety	A group of twelve men selected by the National Convention in 1793 to govern France. It was dominated by Mazimilien Robespierre.
Corvée	Peasants of the Third Estate were required to provide unpaid labour instead of tax payments.
Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen	Outlined basic rights that people were entitled to, e.g. freedom of religion and freedom of speech.
Democracy	‘rule by the people’; a form of government where the people decide how the country is run and who will represent them.
Émigré	A noble who fled France during the Revolution.
Jacobins	A group of politicians with extreme ideas who supported the Revolution.
Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité	Popular slogan during the French Revolution that promoted the idea that people should be free, treated equally and treat one another like brothers and sisters.
Reign of Terror	A period from 1793 to 1794 of harsh and violent measures that saw the execution of 16,000 counter-revolutionaries by the Committee of Public Safety.
Republic	A country where the people elect their leaders in free and fair elections. The head of state is an elected president rather than a king or queen.
Revolution	A rapid and significant change in society, politics, technology or the economy.
Sans-culottes	The people of Paris who supported the Revolution. It translates as 'without knee-length trousers' as they wore long trousers instead of the expensive silk breeches and stockings worn by the rich.
Tennis Court Oath	A solemn promise made by members of the National Assembly never to separate until a written constitution was created for France.
The Enlightenment	A period from the late 1600s to the early 1800s when writers and thinkers questioned traditional ideas such as the divine right of kings. Also known as the Age of Reason.
The Estates General	An assembly called by the king and made up of representatives from each of the three estates.
The Three Estates	The three social groups that existed in France before the Revolution: the First Estate (Clergy), the Second Estate (Nobles) and the Third Estate (Commoners).

Revolutionary Leader		
Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794)	Robespierre was a French lawyer, politician, and revolutionary. Once known as 'The Incorruptible', he became leader of the Committee of Public Safety, which oversaw the Reign of Terror. Robespierre's political opponents eventually turned on him, and he was arrested and executed by guillotine in 1794.	

## 3.3 EXAMINE the causes, course and consequences of one revolution in pre- twentieth century Europe and/or the wider world

Causes	Course	Consequences
<p>The French Revolution was the result of a combination of factors that had been brewing in France for decades:</p> <p><b>France's absolute monarchy:</b> The French monarchy was an absolute monarchy, meaning that the king had complete and unlimited power as it was believed he had the divine right to rule. The monarchy was characterized by corruption and inefficiency, and the royal court was known for its extravagance and extravagance, which heavily taxed the people to finance its wars and lavish lifestyle.</p> <p><b>The Enlightenment:</b> The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that emphasized reason, science, and individual liberty. Enlightenment thinkers challenged the traditional authority of the monarchy and the Church, promoting the ideals of democracy, equality, and human rights. French philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu criticized the monarchy and advocated for the rights of the people, inspired the French people to demand greater political representation and freedom from the monarchy.</p> <p><b>Social divisions:</b> French society in the 18th century was deeply divided into three estates. The First Estate consisted of the clergy, the Second Estate of the nobility, and the Third Estate of the common people. The Third Estate made up the vast majority of the population, but had no political power and was burdened with heavy taxes. The First and Second Estates enjoyed numerous privileges, including exemption from most taxes.</p> <p><b>The Impact of the American Revolution:</b> The American colonists' struggle for independence inspired French thinkers with ideas of democracy, liberty, and popular sovereignty. The French also provided significant military and financial support to the Americans, which added to France's already significant financial burden.</p> <p><b>The economic crisis:</b> France was experiencing an economic crisis in the late 18th century due to the country's involvement in expensive wars, high levels of debt, and a series of poor harvests that led to food shortages and inflation. The burden of these economic problems was borne mostly by the Third Estate, which was already struggling under heavy taxation. The monarchy's attempts to address the economic crisis were often too little, too late, and failed to address the underlying causes of the crisis.</p>	<p><b>Estates General:</b> In 1789, King Louis XVI called the Estates-General, a legislative body made up of representatives from the three estates (clergy, nobility, and commoners), to address France's financial crisis. This was the first meeting of the Estates-General since 1614.</p> <p><b>National Assembly:</b> Disagreements between the estates led to the Third Estate establishing the National Assembly, with the goal of creating a new constitution for France that would limit the power of the monarchy and increase the rights of the people. When the National Assembly was locked out of its usual meeting place, they took the Tennis Court Oath, pledging to continue meeting until a new constitution was established.</p> <p><b>Storming of the Bastille:</b> On 14th July 1789, angry crowds stormed the Bastille in search of weapons and gunpowder. The fall of the Bastille marked a turning point in the Revolution, sparking widespread uprisings and protests throughout France. To this day, Bastille Day is celebrated as a symbol of crushing of the old system.</p> <p><b>Reforms of the National Assembly:</b> In 1789, the National Assembly began implementing a series of major reforms, including the abolition of feudalism and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. These reforms marked a significant departure from the traditional social order and paved the way for further change.</p> <p><b>Symbols of the Revolution:</b> During the Revolution, new symbols and iconography emerged, including the tricolor flag, the national anthem "La Marseillaise," the phrase "Liberté, égalité, fraternité", the guillotine and the red "liberty cap" worn by revolutionaries. These symbols represented the ideals of the Revolution and helped to galvanize support for change.</p> <p><b>The Flight to Varennes:</b> In 1791, King Louis XVI and his family attempted to flee Paris and escape to Austria, but they were caught and returned to the city. This event marked a turning point in the Revolution, as many people began to see the king as an enemy of the Revolution.</p> <p><b>War with Austria:</b> In 1792, France declared war on Austria and Prussia, which led to a series of military conflicts that lasted for several years. The war contributed to the radicalization of the Revolution and helped to spread revolutionary ideals throughout Europe.</p> <p><b>The First French Republic:</b> In 1792, the National Convention abolished the monarchy and established the First French Republic, which was based on democratic principles and marked a significant break with the past.</p> <p><b>The End of the French Monarchy:</b> In 1793, King Louis XVI was executed by guillotine, marking the end of the Bourbon dynasty and the beginning of a new era in French history. The execution of the king was a symbolic moment that signaled the triumph of the Revolution over the old regime.</p> <p><b>The Reign of Terror:</b> In 1793-94, the radical government led by Robespierre implemented a brutal campaign of repression and violence known as the Reign of Terror, in which thousands of people were executed for political crimes or suspected opposition to the Revolution.</p>	<p><b>Rise of nationalism and democracy:</b> The French Revolution sparked a wave of nationalism and democracy throughout Europe, leading to the establishment of constitutional monarchies and democracies in many countries.</p> <p><b>End of the Ancien Régime:</b> The French Revolution marked the end of the Ancien Régime, the traditional social and political order that had been in place for centuries. Feudalism, aristocracy, and the monarchy were abolished.</p> <p><b>Spread of revolutionary ideas:</b> The ideals of 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' spread to other countries, such as Ireland as some Irishmen to fight for the liberty of Ireland which resulted in the 1798 United Irishmen Rebellion. The <b>metric system</b> of weights and measurements (meters and kilos) and decimalisation of currency were invented and used in all but three countries around the world.</p> <p><b>Consolidation of modern nation-state:</b> The French Revolution marked the idea of nationalism ("the Birth of a Nation") as more people desired to rule their own country by sovereign, democratic means rather than imperial powers.</p> <p><b>Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte:</b> The French Revolution paved the way for the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, who emerged as a military and political leader in the wake of the Revolution. Napoleon's conquests and reforms transformed Europe and helped to spread the principles of the Revolution across the continent.</p>
		 
		
		