

FRENCH REVOLUTION

overview

1756-1783

- France builds up an enormous debt from the 7-Year War and American Revolution.
- Unfair taxation on the lower class and high spending of Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette created hard feelings.

Three Estates:

- 1st: 100,000 clergymen
- 2nd: 400,000 noblemen/women
- 3rd: 24.5 million lawyers, government officials, and peasants.

1783:

- Louis XVI appoints Charles de Calonne as controller of France's finances.
- Calonne learns that France's finances are in a shambles and something must be done quickly.
- Calonne knew the only way to solve the problem was through taxes and proposed those previously exempt start to pay taxes.
- The assembly fired him.

Who Started the Revolution?"

- It wasn't the peasants. It was the upper middle class who were well educated but didn't have titles of the noble class for special privilege.
- Most were better educated and had more money than those of nobility, but they lacked the title.
- They began fighting against the upper crust and soon the peasants followed.

1788 Estates-General Assembly

- The 3rd estate, the poorest and highest taxed was left out.
- Even though there were more people in the 3rd estate, they still only had one vote on anything proposed.
- The 1st and 2nd estates worked together and voted the same, which cancelled out the single vote of the 3rd estate, so the lower class didn't have a vote. Outvoted 2:1.

The 3rd Estate:

- There were huge differences between the types of people in the 3rd estate.
- Some were wealthy and educated people, while other were crude peasants.
- For years, they fought amongst themselves until they realized that if they united together, their massive numbers could make a difference.

The Cause of the Revolution:

- The 3rd estate broke away from the Estates-General and became the National Assembly.
- All the 3rd estate wanted was fair taxation.
- The other estates wouldn't accept their proposal and the revolution began.

June 1789 Tennis Court Oath:

- Three days after becoming the National Assembly, the 3rd estate found itself locked out of the Estates-General.
- The group pledged that they would stay united until a new constitution was written.

July 1789 Storming of the Bastille:

- After a second controller of finances was fired, the 3rd estate was enraged because they saw him as an ally.
- They stormed The Bastille, looking for weapons and eventually beheaded the governor and a few of his men.
- The 3rd estate became a force to be reckoned with and the king had to listen to them.

The Great Fear:

- Peasants began to openly revolt against country manors and estates, people who had treated them unfairly with labor through the feudal system.
- This revolt was probably the reason the author wrote the book.

1789 Food Crisis:

- Women decided to do something about the food crisis and took up arms and stormed city hall in Paris.
- The King was forced to accept the new constitution and leave Versailles to return to Paris.
- Monasteries and convents were dissolved.

1791 King Louis Imprisoned:

- King Louis XVI tried to escape to France in disguise. He was in peasant clothes and his son was in a dress, but he was caught and imprisoned.
- Because of this he lost the support of the people. They realized he really didn't support his people.
- Austria and Prussia threaten war if they harmed the king.

A Country at War

- April 1792: France declares war on Austria.
- September 1792: France is declared a republic.
- January 1793: Louis XVI is beheaded at the guillotine.
- April 1793: Maximilien Robespierre assumes leadership of the Committee of Public Safety. France's constitution is established.

Reign of Terror

- September 1793: The Reign of Terror begins and lasts more than 10 months.
- 40,000 people were executed.
- October 1793: Marie-Antoinette is executed.
- July 1794: Robespierre is overthrown.
- He lost his head at the guillotine the following day.

Public Backlash of Robespierre

- Robespierre's attempt to protect the sanctity of the Revolution had the opposite effect.
- The Reign of Terror accomplished almost nothing productive.
- Robespierre burned his bridges and killed many former allies.
- The final straw was his proposal of a new set of values. Do away with Sundays and any church holidays.