

Chapter 9

The French Revolution

CHAPTER CONTENTS

A. How Do We Know about the French Revolution?	225
B. Causes of the French Revolution	226
C. Revolution in France	230
<i>Special Focus: The Jacobins</i>	236
D. Results of the French Revolution	239
Apply Your Learning	241

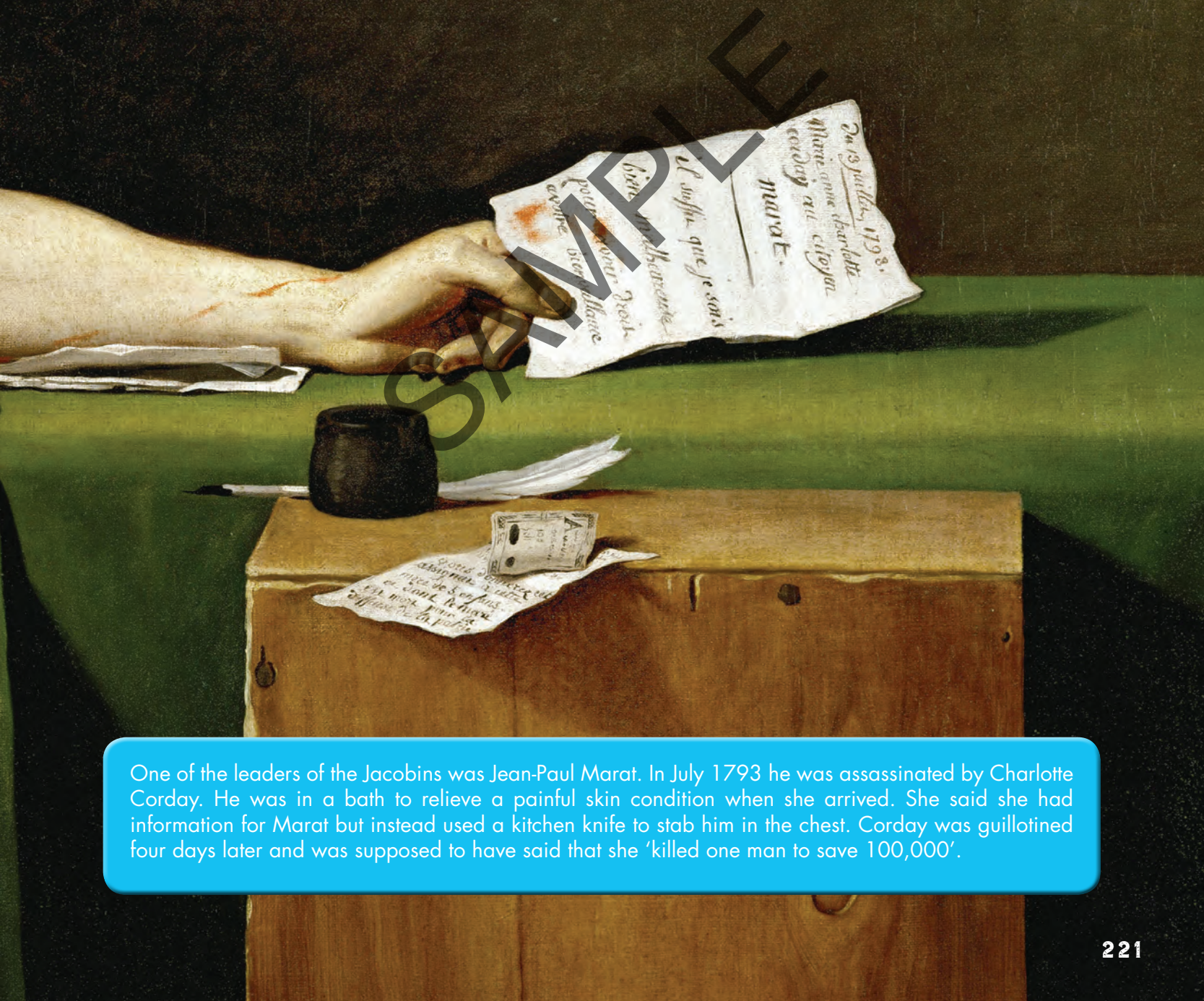
Europe in the eighteenth century

Europe in the eighteenth century was ruled by monarchies. Spain, Portugal, France and the Netherlands all had kings or queens who ruled their kingdoms as they wished. They had absolute control over the people and over the right to raise taxes. This kind of royal rule is known as an **absolute monarchy**.

Many European thinkers argued that the people of Europe should demand more freedoms. **John Locke** (1632–1704) and **Thomas Hobbes** (1588–1679) were known as **contractarians** as they both believed that a type of contract should be made between the ruler and the ruled, outlining the rights and the responsibilities of the population and the ruler. If members of the population abused these rights and responsibilities, then the ruler could punish the culprits. Likewise, if the ruler broke any part of the contract then revolution by the population was acceptable.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), a French writer and philosopher, believed that there was no such thing as the divine right of kings and argued that a parliament, elected by the people, was the only acceptable way in which to rule a country. Finally, **Voltaire** (1694–1788), another French writer, argued that the power of the Churches was too great. He felt there should be much greater religious freedom and that each individual had the right to believe what they liked without fear of persecution. While these ideas may seem quite logical to us now, these concepts were revolutionary in the eighteenth century. This chapter will look at how these ideas caused revolutions all over Europe and America and particularly in France.

9



One of the leaders of the Jacobins was Jean-Paul Marat. In July 1793 he was assassinated by Charlotte Corday. He was in a bath to relieve a painful skin condition when she arrived. She said she had information for Marat but instead used a kitchen knife to stab him in the chest. Corday was guillotined four days later and was supposed to have said that she 'killed one man to save 100,000'.

TIMELINE OF THE

1788

Aug
To organise a tax increase, King Louis XVI of France announces a meeting of the three groups or 'estates' that made up French society at the time. These estates were called the Estates-General.

1789

May
The Estates-General meet at Versailles, Louis's luxurious palace.

Jun

The Third Estate (the group in France who had to work for a living, unlike the First Estate {clergy} and the Second Estate {nobility}) form the National Assembly. The Tennis Court Oath was taken by the Third Estate, under which they vowed to create a constitution for France.

Jul

The fall of the Bastille Gaol.

Aug

Declaration of the Rights of Man passed by the National Assembly.

Oct

The women of Paris march Louis and Marie-Antoinette from Versailles to Paris.



1793

Jan

Louis XVI is found guilty of treason and executed.

Sep

Law of Suspects begins the Reign of terror.

Oct

Marie-Antoinette is executed.

1785

1788

1790

1792

1790

The Civil Constitution of the Clergy was passed.

1791

Jun

The Royal family are caught at Varennes as they attempt to flee France.

1792

Apr

France declares war on Austria.

Sep

France is declared a Republic. 21 Sept is declared Day One of the new calendar.

1

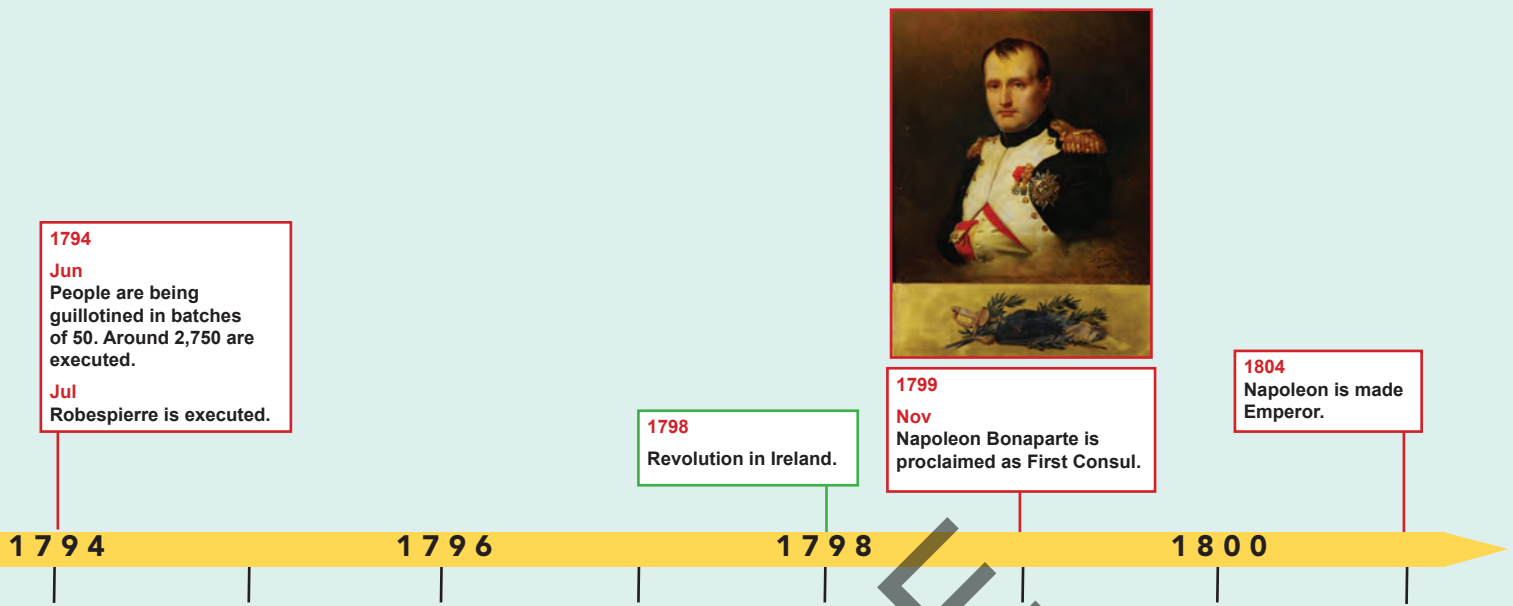
A new calendar was introduced by the French Revolutionaries in 1792. The 12 months were named after natural elements like Thermidor (the month of warmth – 19 July–17 August). Days were called after things like seeds and flowers.



As you work through this chapter, you will:

1. Identify the main causes of the French Revolution.
2. Explain how the ideas of the Enlightenment influenced the revolutions that took place in the eighteenth century.
3. Outline the main events and personalities involved in the French Revolution.
4. Explore the concepts and ideas that motivated the French Revolutionaries to take the actions they chose.
5. Examine and analyse the consequences of the French Revolution on French society and internationally.
6. Evaluate the importance of the French Revolution on European society.

FRENCH REVOLUTION



2

The metre and kilogram began to be used as units of measurement in the 1790s. It was even suggested that days be divided into 10 hours, hours into 100 minutes and minutes into 100 seconds.



CONSIDER THIS

Consider how the French Revolution impacted on the people who lived through that period.

1. How did the revolution change the lives of the poor and common people of Paris and France?
2. Reflect on whether the changes that were made during this time have influenced the society we live in now.
3. What changes that occurred during this time of huge upheaval do you think were worth keeping and which were not?



See Sources & Activity Book pages 104 – 112 for linked activities.

BEFORE YOU READ...

IMPORTANT TERMS TO KNOW: CHAPTER 9

Absolute monarchy	When a monarch (king or queen) has complete control of all aspects of the country including the right to increase taxes and sentence people to death.
Contractarians	Philosophers who believe there should be a 'contract' between the monarch and the people of the country outlining the rights and responsibilities of both.
Political philosophers	People who offer views and theories on questions of how politics and society should work.
Ancien régime	Literally means 'old system'. In France this term referred to the old political system under which the king ruled the country.
Bourgeoisie	French word for the middle-class or Third Estate.
Estates-General	The meeting of representatives of all three Estates to discuss the issue of taxation in France.
National Assembly	The alternative meeting of the Third Estate when they left the Estates-General.
The Bastille	The Parisian prison stormed on 14 July 1789.
Sans-culottes	Name given to the Parisian poor, tradesmen and workers who supported the revolution. Literally means 'without trousers' as they did not wear the silk knee-length stockings fashionable among the rich.
National Guard	An armed force of the ordinary people of Paris headed by the Marquis de Lafayette.
Tricolore	A flag with three colours. The French flag represents the blue and red of Paris and the white of the Bourbon (French) kings appears in the middle.
Republic	A form of government with an elected head of government rather than a monarch.
Legislative Assembly	The French parliament established in 1791.
Constitutional Monarchy	A form of government in which there is a monarch but he/she has no political power.
Émigrés	The name for the many French who fled France for other European countries out of fear for their lives.
September Massacres	Over 1,000 people were executed in September 1792 on suspicion of not supporting the revolution.
Jacobins	An important political party of radical politicians who believed it was necessary to execute anyone who opposed the revolution.
Committee of Public Safety	A 12-man group created to remove anyone who they thought opposed the revolution.
Reign of Terror	The period from 1793 to 1794 during which over 40,000 people were executed on suspicion of being enemies of the revolution.
The Directory	A five-member group set up in 1794 to rule France.
Conscription	When a government forces all able-bodied men of a certain age to join the army.

A. How Do We Know about the French Revolution?

1. Written sources

Both the American and French Revolutions affected how people lived. The changes that occurred resulted in different opinions. The **political philosophers** (people who offer views on questions of how politics and society should work) who were mentioned at the start of the chapter inspired people to write down their thoughts about the revolutions. Many people wrote letters, articles and pamphlets either supporting or opposing the revolutions; for example the Irish-born British politician Edmund Burke wrote against the French Revolution. The Englishman Arthur Young travelled through France between 1787 and 1789 and wrote in great detail about what he saw. Some of the written sources are against the French Revolution and **propaganda** (information, often of a biased point of view, that is used to promote a particular cause) was often used.

During the revolution, many new laws were passed in France, for example the new constitution in 1791. It outlined how the revolutionaries wanted French society to be organised. Many other laws governing all aspects of life were enacted during this time. These laws allow historians to understand what the ideas of the revolutionaries were.

Other sources include songs that were written at this time. Today's French national anthem was originally written during this period and gives historians another way to examine what was going on.

2. Pictorial sources

As many people were unable to read, magazines and publications often used cartoons as propaganda. Look at the images on pages 237 and 238 and consider if they were supportive of the French revolution or not.

Source A

- ▶ Little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her [the Queen of France, Marie Antoinette] in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters [a person who uses clever but false arguments], economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever.

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

Looking at the evidence

1. This was written in 1790. Is this a primary or secondary source?
2. Does the author like the Queen of France? Give reasons for your answer based on the source.
3. What is meant by the sentence 'the age of chivalry is gone'?
4. Do you think that the author is a supporter of the French Revolution? Give reasons for your answer based on evidence from the source.
5. Edmund Burke was a wealthy Anglo-Irish politician. Do you think that he is objective or biased in his opinion?





B. Causes of the French Revolution

1. The American Revolution

The American Revolution against the British had resulted in independence for the American colonies in 1783. The success of the revolution in America and its independence had an enormous impact on the rest of the world.

By the end of the eighteenth century another revolution had broken out – this time in Europe. In 1789 the people of France revolted against their king and his government. This revolt provoked changes that influenced Europe for the next 200 years.

There were many reasons for this revolution.



Mentor Digital Resources

For more on the *American Revolution* go to mentorbooks.ie/resources

2. Erosion of the power of the monarchy

During the eighteenth century the power of the monarchies began to decline. People now wanted to have a say in the running of the country and no longer accepted paying huge taxes to fund the king's expensive tastes. With the creation of a democratically elected government in America which had overthrown British rule, many people across Europe began to question the 'divine right of kings'. Instead, they expected their monarchs to serve their populations. When this did not happen, as we will see in France, the idea of removing the king or queen became acceptable.



By the way

Democracy means 'rule by the people'. In Greek *demos* means people and *kratos* means to rule.

3. The spread of new ideas

The Enlightenment was a movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that believed humans had the power to understand the world around them by using reason and their own intelligence. The ideas of Locke, Voltaire and Rousseau, which inspired many of the revolutionaries, continued to spread. The idea of democracy, although a very ancient concept, encouraged the Americans and when they achieved independence they put it into practice. The creation of a free, democratic country that held the ideas of equality and liberty as important inspired others to believe in the same values. Many French fought alongside the Americans against the British. They learnt about the ideals that the Americans were fighting for and agreed with them. As we will see, on returning to France, these men began to push for similar reforms.



Fig 9.1 Voltaire believed the Church's power was too great.

4. Social divisions

France in the 1780s was a very unfair country in which to live. The feudal system we looked at in Chapter 4 still existed in France. The country was ruled by King Louis XVI and the nobility. The king and the nobles were very rich and the peasants and ordinary people were very poor. This political system was called the **ancien régime** or 'old system'. Louis XVI had absolute power over the country. There was no parliament and he could pass any law he wanted. He even had the power to have someone killed.



However, Louis was a rather weak man who took very little interest in the politics of France. He preferred to go hunting on the land around his beautiful palace in Versailles. He married Marie-Antoinette, the sister of the Emperor of Austria, France's traditional enemy. She was distrusted and disliked by the French people because she was Austrian. They also believed she spent too much money on clothes and jewellery.

Society in France in 1780 was divided into three different groups or 'estates'.

- (a) **The First Estate** was the clergy (bishops and priests) of the Catholic Church. They did not pay any tax to the king.
- (b) **The Second Estate** was the nobility. The nobility was made up of all the aristocrats in France. They were large landowners and they refused to pay tax.
- (c) **The Third Estate** was made up of all the other people of France. Anyone who had to work for a living was part of the Third Estate. Some of them were quite wealthy and worked as lawyers or bankers, while others like farm labourers or peasants were very poor.

First Estate	Second Estate	Third Estate
Clergy – Bishops/ Priests	Nobility (aristocracy – Lords, Dukes, Marquis, etc.)	Everyone else – lawyers, merchants, peasants
Didn't pay taxes and decided who had to pay taxes	Refused to pay taxes	Had to pay taxes, e.g. <i>tithe</i> , <i>taille</i> , <i>gabelle</i> , <i>corvée</i>
Approximately 100,000 men	Approximately 400,000 people	Approximately 25 million people
Owned 10% of land in France	Owned 60% of land in France	Most peasants still lived under feudal law

5. High taxes

The First and Second Estates did not have to pay much, if any, tax even though they were some of the richest people in France. It was left to the Third Estate to pay most of the taxes.

A variety of taxes were to be paid, including:

- (a) The ***taille*** – a land tax paid to the state.
- (b) The ***tithe*** – a tax of 10% of earnings or crops. This went to the Catholic Church.
- (c) The ***gabelle*** – a tax on salt that had to be paid by the Third Estate.
- (d) The ***corvée*** – members of the Third Estate had to work several days a year maintaining the roads across France without getting paid.

These taxes made many people in the Third Estate very unhappy. They believed that the First and Second Estates should have to pay taxes also. Some of the more educated and wealthy Third Estate (the middle class or **bourgeoisie**) believed they should also have some political power.



Fig 9.2 King Louis XVI of France.



Fig 9.3 Queen Marie-Antoinette was originally from Austria.



Fig 9.4 The Palace of Versailles where King Louis and Queen Marie-Antoinette lived.

By the way

Louis XVI seems to have disliked being King of France. When one of his ministers resigned, he was heard to remark, 'Why can't I resign too?'



Source B



Looking at the evidence

Source B is a political cartoon from 1789 entitled 'The game must end soon'.

1. Who are the three people depicted in the image? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What point is the artist making with this image?



6. Bankrupt state

France's military assistance to the colonists in the American War of Independence cost a lot of money. This left the French state almost **bankrupt** (had no money left). This meant that King Louis had to increase taxes on the three Estates. However, the First and Second Estates refused to pay any taxes. Louis would therefore have to put pressure on the Third Estate to pay even more tax.

7. The Estates-General

To organise this tax increase, Louis called a meeting of the three Estates. This meeting was called the **Estates-General**. It was like a large parliament as it had representatives of each of the Estates. This was the first time in 175 years that the King of France had called an Estates-General. On 5 May 1789 all the representatives met in Versailles. The First and Second Estates hoped they would gain more privileges, while the Third Estate was determined to gain some concessions and maybe even get the other Estates to pay some tax. Immediately there were problems.

The Third Estate was more numerous than the other two Estates in France and so had 621 representatives. The First Estate had 308 and the Second Estate had 285. This meant that the Third Estate could out-vote the other two. Therefore the First and Second Estates believed that just one vote should be given to each Estate so that they could out-vote the Third by 2:1. The Third Estate decided they would create a separate **National Assembly** if it was given only one vote. The next day, when they were locked out of the Estates-General in Versailles, the representatives of the Third Estate went instead to the Royal Tennis Court where they took an oath. They promised each other that they would not break up the National Assembly until a constitution was created for France that took into account all of their grievances. This oath became known as the **Tennis Court Oath**.

Louis did not want to give in to the Third Estate, but there were rumours that 30,000 angry Parisians were ready to storm his palace, so he gave in and forced the First and Second Estates to join the National Assembly.

The tensions between the Estates and also between the king and the poor people of Paris meant that more dramatic events were about to unfold.

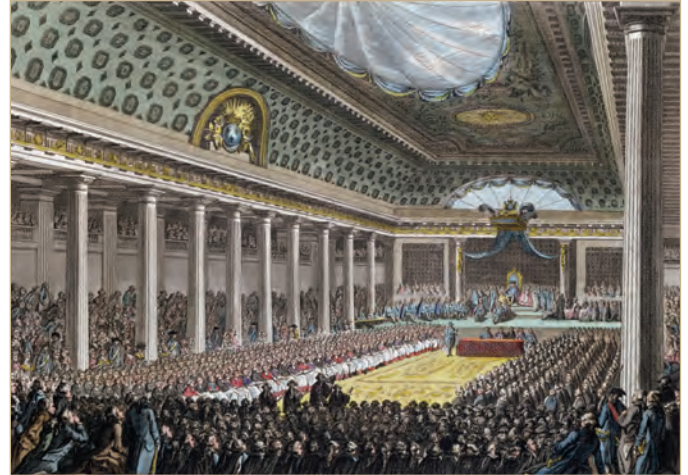


Fig 9.5 The meeting of the Estates-General in Versailles, 1789.



Fig 9.6 The Third Estate swears the Tennis Court Oath.

RECALL

1. Explain in one or two sentences the following terms:
(a) Ancien régime (b) Estates-General (c) Bourgeoisie
2. What were typical professions of the First, Second and Third Estates?
3. Name and explain two taxes that the Third Estate had to pay.
4. Why did Louis XVI need to raise more money through taxes?
5. Outline the voting problems faced by the Estates-General.
6. Why did the Third Estate meet in the palace's tennis court?
7. What did the Third Estate decide to do in the tennis court?



C. Revolution in France

The people in Paris were worried that King Louis might use the army to defeat the Third Estate or dissolve the National Assembly. Therefore, a mob of Parisians went in search of guns and ammunition with which to protect themselves from any attack. So on 14 July 1789 the mob turned its attention to the **Bastille**.

The Bastille was a huge prison in Paris to which many French people had been sent without trial. It symbolised everything that was wrong with the ancien régime. Over 100 people died in the attack on the prison. When they succeeded in breaking in, they found only seven prisoners, all of whom were set free. Nevertheless, the fall of the Bastille was of great symbolic importance to the poor of Paris. It is still celebrated every year on the French National holiday of Bastille Day on 14 July.

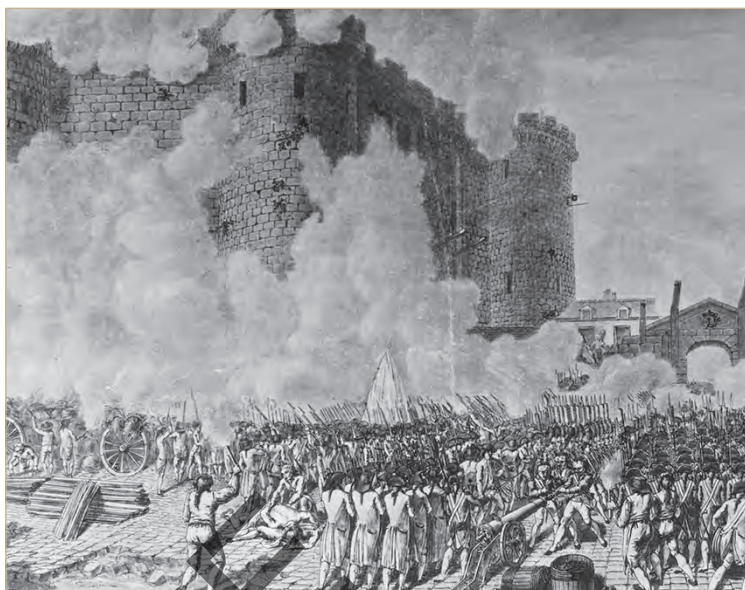


Fig 9.7 The storming of the Bastille in 1789.

Who was this mob?



Fig 9.8 The sans-culottes played a very important role in the success of the French Revolution.

The Parisian mob was made up of tradesmen, workers, shopkeepers and the poor of Paris who hoped that change would make their lives easier. They wanted to reduce their taxes and they also wanted the price of bread to be kept as low as possible so they could afford to feed their families. They were known as the **sans-culottes** (without trousers). They were called this because they could not afford the silk knee-length stockings that were fashionable among the rich. The sans-culottes supported change and were a very important part of the success of the revolution.

With the triumph of the sans-culottes at the Bastille a new **National Guard** (an armed force made up of the ordinary people of Paris) was formed under the leadership of **Marquis de Lafayette** – a noble who had fought in America and who supported the Third Estate. This National Guard was formed to ensure King Louis would be reluctant to use force against the revolutionaries.

By the way

One of the men released from the Bastille had been put there by his family because he was insane. When he was released he travelled all the way home whereupon his family put him straight back into prison.

By the way

Louis XVI had such little interest in politics that on 14 July 1789 he wrote in his diary that nothing important had happened that day!

**RECALL**

1. Who stormed the Bastille and why?
2. On what date was the Bastille stormed?
3. From which city were the sans-culottes?
4. How did the sans-culottes get their name?
5. Who led the National Guard and why were they established?

The Rights of Man

On 26 August 1789, the National Assembly passed a new law outlining the main beliefs of the revolution. This was called the **Declaration of the Rights of Man**. Many ideals of freedom and equality were enshrined in this law. The three main ideals of the French Revolution were summed up in the slogan *Liberté, Égalité et Fraternité* (Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood).

- Liberty meant that all people should be free from slavery and oppression.
- Equality was the right of all to be treated equally regardless of how much you owned or who you were.
- Fraternity was the belief that all French men and women were as connected to each other as brothers or sisters.

Reform continues

By this point many thought that the revolution had been successful and that its objectives had been achieved. However others were still suspicious of the king and queen. In October 1789 Louis and Marie-Antoinette were forced to leave Versailles by the women of Paris in what is known as the Women's March on Versailles. They were moved to Paris where they could be more easily controlled by the National Assembly. The flag of France dates from this time. The blue and red traditional colours of Paris were placed on either side of the white of the Bourbons (the French royal family) to illustrate this point. The flag was known as the **tricolore** and it inspired many other flags including Ireland's.



Fig 9.9 The Cap of Liberty worn by the sans-culottes. It is a hat traditionally from an area in Asia Minor called Phrygia, near where the legendary city of Troy was located and became a symbol of liberty and freedom. As a result, it is often seen in images of revolutionaries. This photograph is of a hat from the time of the French Revolution and has a cockade, or rosette, of red, white and blue.



Fig 9.10 The French Tricolore and the Bourbon flag of the French royal family.

The Civil Constitution of the Clergy

Further laws were then introduced. In December 1790, the **Civil Constitution of the Clergy** was passed. This law held that: (1) the pope could no longer appoint priests or bishops in France. Instead local assemblies would 'elect' the clergy; (2) all members of the clergy had to take an oath of loyalty to the revolution; (3) all the Church's land could be seized by the National Assembly and sold. With this law, the Assembly hoped to make all clergy loyal to the revolution.



Pope Pius VI condemned the law, leading to deep divisions throughout France. About half of the clergy refused to take the oath and so were fired from their posts. Some were either exiled or imprisoned while others were even executed. The Civil Constitution had created as many problems as it had solved and the result was the Catholic Church was now willing to support any attempts to destroy the revolution.

Source C



Looking at the evidence

This image depicts the Women's March on Versailles in October 1789.

1. Can you identify Marie-Antoinette in the image?
2. How do you know that it is her?
3. What weapons are the women holding?

The flight to Varennes

With the knowledge that he would find support from Marie-Antoinette's brother, Emperor Leopold of Austria, and the Catholic Church, King Louis decided to try to escape from France. On the night of 20 June 1791 he and the queen began their journey to the Netherlands in a carriage. Although they were dressed in disguise as servants of a baroness, they were caught near the border at a town called **Varennes**. They were brought back to Paris and placed under guard. Many people now thought that Louis must be in secret contact with foreign powers who wanted to crush the revolution.

Those in the Assembly who believed that there was no need for a king at all used Louis's attempt to flee as an excuse to push for the creation of a **republic** (a form of government without a monarch).

In September 1791 a new written French constitution was passed that limited the power of the king. The most he could do was delay for two years any law that the new parliament – called the **Legislative Assembly** – passed. France was now a **constitutional monarchy** (a type of government in which the monarch is the symbolic head of the state but has no power). This was a great step towards democracy, just like in America. However, voting was limited to males over the age of thirty who owned property. This limit on who could and could not vote did not fit in with the idea of fraternity enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

After the royal family tried to flee, the Revolutionaries began to worry that the monarchies of nearby countries, in particular Austria and Prussia, might invade France. These countries feared that the revolution could spread and endanger their thrones. Many aristocrats from France had fled abroad and were trying to organise an invasion to restore their positions. For this reason the National Assembly wanted to declare war on Austria to protect the changes that had occurred in France. Some also wanted to bring the new freedoms of the revolution to other people in Europe. On 20 April 1792, the National Assembly declared war on Austria.



Fig 9.11 The Royal family's capture at Varennes, north-eastern France during their attempted flight to the Netherlands in 1791.

RECALL

1. Name the three main ideals of the French Revolution and explain what each means.
2. Give two reasons why you think the Pope was unhappy with the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1790.
3. Why did Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette try to flee France?
4. Explain the following terms:
 - (a) Monarchy
 - (b) Constitutional monarchy
 - (c) Republic
5. What do the colours on the French flag stand for?



By the way

In May 1791, black French citizens in French colonies were also recognised as having equal rights.



Source D



Looking at the evidence

Examine the political cartoon on the left from 1789 celebrating the removal of the privileges for the first and second Estates. Working in pairs, discuss and answer the following questions:

1. Who are the three people depicted in the image? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What do you think the artist is saying in this image?
3. Examine Source B on page 228 and compare it with this source. What are the differences between the two?
4. What do the two people on the left of the picture have in their hats and what is the significance of that?
5. What is written on the paper in the scales on the right of the image? Why is it important?
6. Looking at both pictures, do you think the artist supports the revolution or not? Give reasons for your answer.

Outbreak of war against Austria

While some in France thought the revolutionary soldiers would quickly win the war, their lack of experienced leadership and poor equipment meant that instead they suffered huge losses. Very quickly the war turned into a disaster as the Austrians, aided by the Prussians, closed in on Paris.

As French hopes of winning the war deteriorated, there was increasing anger towards King Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, both of whom, it was suspected, were hoping for an Austrian victory. People also feared that the French nobles would take action. Many of these nobles opposed the revolution as it had taken away their land and property. Some had already fled the country and were known as **émigrés**.



Many émigrés had been leaders in the French army and were now assisting the invading armies. As the Austrians and the Prussians got closer to Paris, fear began to spread among the sans-culottes. This fear soon resulted in the most violent and bloody period of the revolution.

On 10 August 1792 the Parisian sans-culottes began to riot in Paris and demanded the right to vote and the dethronement of King Louis. The mob attacked the Tuileries Palace where the royal family was staying and there was a very bloody battle. They eventually found and imprisoned Louis and Marie-Antoinette. The members of the Assembly agreed to the mob's demands to create a republic. A new assembly was set up called the **National Convention** and, on 21 September, France was declared a republic. However, the mob did not stop at that. During the month of September anyone suspected of not supporting the revolution was executed. Over 1,000 people died in these **September Massacres**.

France becomes a republic

As the revolution took this more violent turn, it wasn't long before there were calls for Louis and Marie-Antoinette to be tried as enemies of the revolution. In December 1792, Louis stood trial and on 14 January 1793 he was found guilty of treason by 387 votes to 334 and was sentenced to be executed. King Louis XVI of France was executed seven days later. This event caused great shock throughout Europe. Many monarchies feared that the revolution would spread to their countries. In February 1793 England and the Netherlands joined Austria in the war against France. During this difficult time for the revolution, a group of very determined French men and women came to the fore.

Source E

Paris, 23 January 1793, Wednesday morning.
My dearest mother, I commend to you the spirit of the late lamented Louis XVI. To the very last he maintained the greatest possible courage. He wished to speak to the people from the scaffold, but was interrupted by a drum-roll and was seized by the executioners, who were following their orders, and who pushed him straight under the fatal blade. He was able to speak only these words, in a very strong voice: "I forgive my enemies; I trust that my death will be for the happiness of my people, but I grieve for France and I fear that she may suffer the anger of the Lord."

From *The French Revolution; voices from a momentous epoch, 1789–1795*,
edited by Richard Cobb, Colin Jones

Looking at the evidence

1. What happened when Louis XVI tried to speak to the people?
2. Why did Louis 'grieve for France'?
3. Do you think that Louis met his death bravely? Give one piece of evidence from the letter to support your answer.
4. What was the attitude of the writer to the execution of the king? Give one example of evidence from the text that supports your answer.
5. Explain briefly why Louis XVI was executed during the French Revolution.
6. As a class, discuss the question: Did King Louis XVI deserve to be executed?



THE JACOBINS

The Jacobins and Maximilien Robespierre

A group of radical politicians was supported by the sans-culottes. These people were known as the **Jacobins** after the church where their first meeting took place. The Jacobins believed that their new freedoms could only be ensured by the killing of all people who were opposed to the revolution, inside and outside France. They were led by a lawyer from Arras in northern France. His name was Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794). He became president of the Parisian Jacobin club in April 1790 and was strongly opposed to the war with Austria. He believed the French army was not adequately prepared and that the revolution was not yet strong enough to be at war. He had been elected as a delegate for the Third Estate in 1789 and was very active in all political affairs. His honesty and dedication to the cause of the revolution earned him the nickname ‘The Incorruptible’. His opposition to the king, the nobles and the clergy and his attempts to get lower food prices meant he was very popular with the sans-culottes: thus he had great power. In April 1793 the National Convention voted to create a 12-man group called the **Committee of Public Safety** to remove all counter-revolutionaries (i.e. those who opposed the revolution). Robespierre became its most influential member.



Fig 9.12 Maximilien Robespierre, nicknamed ‘The Incorruptible’.

The Reign of Terror

The Committee of Public Safety immediately introduced laws to ensure the safety of the revolution.

They passed the **Law of Maximum** which placed strict controls on the price of bread. This law was very popular with the sans-culottes and the poor of France. They then passed the **Law of Suspects** which allowed them to arrest and even execute anyone believed to be a counter-revolutionary. The number of prisoners was huge, totalling more than 4,500 by the end of 1793. The Committee also executed over 3,000 people using a method called the **guillotine** (named after Dr Joseph Guillotine) which cut off the prisoner’s head. It was thought that this method was the most efficient and humane method of execution. In October 1793 Marie-Antoinette was one of the people sent to the guillotine.

Over the next year it is estimated that over 40,000 people were executed. This period became known as the **Reign of Terror**. Some of those executed were against the revolution but many others supported its ideals. For example, some were revolutionary leaders who simply believed the numbers being killed were too high. After a particularly



Fig 9.13 The guillotine was widely used by Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety.



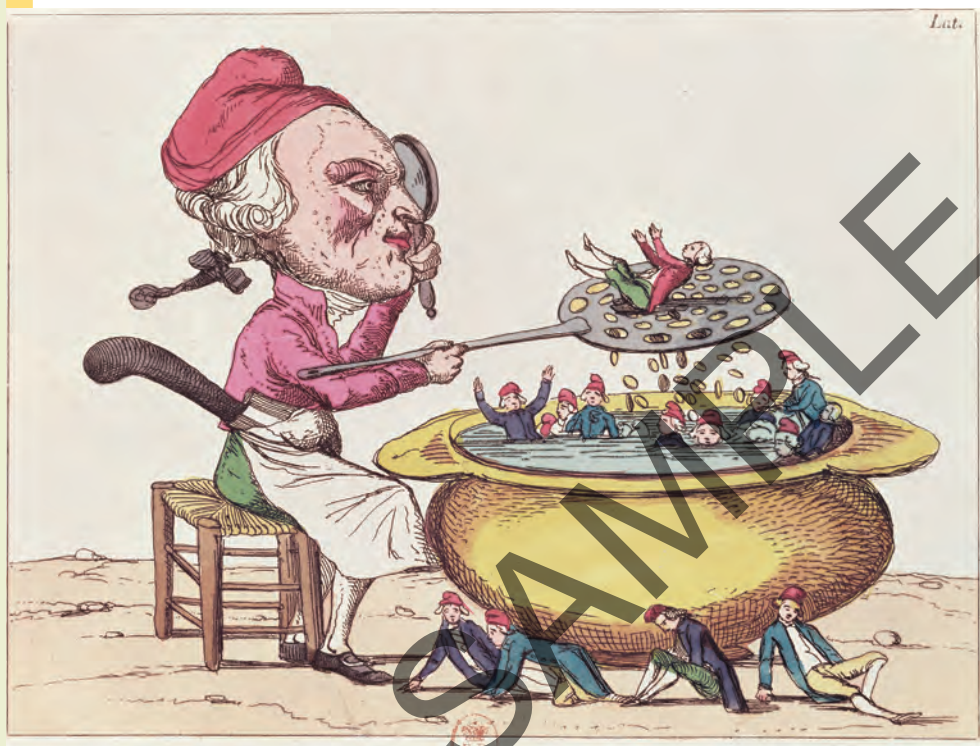
By the way

Sometimes killing people with the guillotine was too slow, so barges (boats) full of prisoners were sunk on the River Loire, drowning all on board.

vicious attack on the Catholic peasants of a region in France called La Vendée, some in the National Convention thought Robespierre had gone too far. When he attempted to increase the power of the Committee and allow for even more executions, some of the Convention knew they had to act.

On the night of 28 July 1794, Robespierre and many of his supporters were arrested and sent to the guillotine. With the death of Robespierre the bloodiest period of the revolution came to an end and a new five-member committee called the **Directory** was set up to rule France.

Source F



Looking at the evidence

This is a French caricature of Robespierre from 1793.

1. What do you think the artist is saying in this image? Give reasons for your answer.
2. There are two types of people in the soup. Name both and give reasons for your answer.
3. Do you think the artist supports or opposes Robespierre? Give reasons for your answer.

RECALL

1. How did the Jacobin political club get its name?
2. What was Robespierre's nickname and how did he get it?
3. Name two laws that the Committee of Public Safety passed and explain what these allowed the Committee to do.
4. For what reason do you think Robespierre was executed?
5. Outline how the Directory came into power.

HISTORICAL EMPATHY

6. Write about Robespierre using the following headings as guidelines:
 - Biographical background
 - Involvement in the revolution
 - Organisations or groups with whom he was associated
 - Main events of his life



Source G



Looking at the evidence

The English cartoon above from the time of the sans-culottes shows them relaxing after 'a day's work'.

1. Who are the people sitting at the table supposed to represent? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Who are they supposed to be eating? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Was the artist pro or anti revolution? Give three reasons to support your answer.
4. Is this a good cartoon, in your opinion?

Women in the French Revolution

Women were involved in the early parts of the revolution. Women's political groups were created and the women of Paris forced the royal family back to Paris in 1789. Many people hoped to see some changes for women but they were disappointed. Despite the ideals of liberty and equality, women still did not gain equal rights with men. Women still could not vote, own property or make a will. In response to the Declaration of the Rights of Man, a woman named Olympe de Gouges wrote the Declaration of the Rights of Woman in 1791. It was not taken up by the revolutionaries and she was later tried for treason and executed. Even though the ideals of the French Revolution seemed to support equality, it was not for another 150 years that French women were allowed to vote!

D. Results of the French Revolution

1. Across Europe there was an increased belief in the ideals of France. The political concepts of republicanism and democracy, the personal beliefs of liberty, equality before the law and national brotherhood all became commonplace.
2. These ideals also meant that other nations around Europe were inspired to achieve similar freedoms. Minorities in countries that had not been allowed to vote now demanded it as their natural right. As we will see, one of these countries was Ireland.
3. The French offered to militarily assist any nation that wanted to follow their lead. Ireland, among others, took up this offer in the 1790s.
4. The bourgeoisie (middle class) had gained a lot of power. Before the revolution all the power in France had been with the king and the rich but afterwards the bourgeoisie were far more important in politics.
5. Through the use of **conscription** (forcing all able-bodied men over the age of 18 into the army) a huge French army was created and won significant victories across Europe. As a result of these victories, a young general called Napoleon Bonaparte became very popular and eventually dissolved the Directory in 1799 and became France's new leader. In 1804 he crowned himself Emperor of France. Napoleon ruled over France's expansion throughout most of Europe. He was finally defeated at Waterloo, Belgium by the combined forces of Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia and the Netherlands. Napoleon was captured and imprisoned on the island of St Helena where he remained until his death in 1821.



Fig 9.14 Napoleon Bonaparte became Emperor of France (1804) and oversaw France's expansion throughout most of Europe until the Battle of Waterloo.



Fig 9.15 French-controlled Europe at the height of Napoleon's expansion in 1812.



Women in History

Women and the Enlightenment

During the eighteenth century, there was a dramatic shift in thinking. Sometimes called 'the age of reason', the Enlightenment was a broad intellectual movement that encompassed sciences, philosophy and literature. New ideas about the natural world and about society trickled down from the scientists and philosophers to permeate daily life. Women were involved at all levels of the Enlightenment. Some were active as scientists and philosophers, while others happily embraced new everyday activities inspired by Enlightenment ideas.

While it is often men like Voltaire and Isaac Newton that receive the most attention, women like Émilie du Châtelet and Caroline Herschel made significant contributions to the climate of Enlightenment. Émilie du Châtelet (1706–1749) is most famous for her French

translation of and commentary on Isaac Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, which is still in use as the primary French translation today. She also wrote on physics and philosophy. Caroline Herschel (1750–1848) was one of the most widely recognised astronomers of her time and is best known for her discovery of several comets, one of which is named after her. Herschel is unusual among these women in that she actually received a salary for her work, being awarded a royal pension of £50 a year in 1787. She also received many accolades, including being made an honorary member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1846.

These scientific and intellectual pursuits also became pastimes of women not professionally involved in sciences or philosophy. One part of Enlightenment scientific endeavour was the project of categorising the world. This can be seen in the development of the Linnaean classification system for plants and in the popularity of building collections during the eighteenth century. Collecting and then categorising the objects within the collection was one of the prime pastimes for women who could afford it. Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, Duchess of Portland (1715–1785) was famous for her huge collection of art and natural history, as well as her interest in botany. Activities such as collecting and botany filtered down into more decorative female pastimes, such as shellwork (ornamenting objects or walls by attaching shells) and the drawing or embroidering of botanically accurate flowers. The most famous example of this can be seen in Mary Delany's collection of 'paper mosaiks', or cut paper flowers, which are made with a high degree of botanical accuracy.



Fig 9.16 Émilie du Châtelet

Kristina Decker, PhD Candidate
University College Cork

Women's History Association of Ireland



APPLY YOUR LEARNING

LOOKING AT THE EVIDENCE



1. This is the view of the French Revolution from an English publication in 1793. Examine the images and text and answer the following questions:
 - (a) Which liberty does the artist think is the best? Give reasons for your answer.
 - (b) What are pictures or cartoons that present a one-sided opinion like this an example of?
 - (c) Is this image objective or subjective? Give reasons for your answer.
 - (d) List three things in the source that show the British liberty in a positive light.
 - (e) List three things in the source that show the French liberty in a negative light.
 - (f) Why do you think the artist believes that the French liberty will result in misery?
 - (g) Using evidence from the source, suggest what event(s) in France might have been a cause for this picture to be drawn?
 - (h) Why do you think that an English publication would publish this image?

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

2. Below are the first five articles from The Declaration of the Rights of Man, written in August 1789. Read the source and answer the questions that follow.

Therefore the National Assembly recognises and proclaims the following:

1. Men are born free and equal in rights.
2. The purpose of all political association is the preservation of the natural rights of man. These rights are liberty, property and resistance to oppression.
3. Liberty consists in being able to do whatever does not harm others. No man ought to be uneasy about his opinions even his religious beliefs, provided that these actions do not interfere with the public order established by law.
4. The free communication of thought and opinion is one of the most precious rights of man: every citizen can therefore talk, write and publish freely.

Source: *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*

- (a) What are the 'natural rights of man'?
 - (b) From the declaration, identify two freedoms enjoyed by the citizens of France.
 - (c) Why do you think that stating 'men are born free and equal in rights' was controversial at that time?
 - (d) According to this declaration, is everyone born free and equal in rights? Give a reason for your answer. If not, who is not included in this declaration?
 - (e) The declaration was influenced by the ideas of Enlightenment writers. Name one famous Enlightenment writer.
3. Shown here are the first three articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was proclaimed in 1948.
- (a) In what ways are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of Man similar?
 - (b) In what ways are these two declarations different?
 - (c) The Declaration of the Rights of Man was made in 1789. From your knowledge of history, were the French Revolutionaries successful in achieving these rights of man?
 - (d) Why do you think it was necessary to have another Declaration of Human Rights one hundred and fifty years later?

1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.
3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

- (e) Do you agree that there should be universal human rights?
 - (f) Does Ireland have a declaration of rights for its population? If so, what is it called?
 - (g) As a class, decide on five rights that you think should exist for everyone.
4. Research the following international treaties and declarations:

Linking History

Also ask your CSPE teacher about the topic of Human Rights.

- The UN Declaration of Human Rights
- The European Convention on Human Rights
- The Irish Constitution/Bunreacht na hÉireann
- Women's rights are human rights
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

EVALUATE

5. Evaluate the importance of the French Revolution on society today under the following headings:
- (a) The ideals of democracy versus monarchy
 - (b) Rights for individuals
6. Evaluate how the French Revolution that removed Louis XVI as king resulted in the coronation of Napoleon Bonaparte as Emperor in 1804.
7. A Chinese Communist leader named Zhou Enlai was reported to have said in 1972, when asked what he thought was the impact of the French Revolution, that it was too early to say. As a class, discuss and evaluate what he was thought to mean by this.

HISTORICAL EMPATHY

8. Write about the impact and changes that the French Revolution had on the common people of Paris. Use the following headings to guide your answer:
- Daily life
 - Political life
 - Economic life

FURTHER RESEARCH

9. (a) Choose an important personality from this period and create a project about him or her. Some interesting individuals could be:
- Olympe de Gouges (revolutionary and author of the *Declaration of the Rights of Women, 1791*)
 - Louis Antoine de Saint-Just (known as the 'Angel of Death' because of his role in the Reign of Terror)
 - Marquis de Lafayette (French general involved in the American and French Revolutions)
 - Charlotte Corday (the assassin of Jacobin leader Jean-Paul Marat)
- (b) With a partner, research and create a project about one of the following groups:
- The sans-culottes
 - The Jacobins
 - The Reign of Terror

JOB OF A HISTORIAN

Not all historians start with a qualification in history. Marie Grosholtz was born in Strasburg in 1761 before moving to Berne in Switzerland when she was very young. Her mother worked as a housekeeper for Philippe Curtius, a doctor with an interest in making wax models and busts. He moved to Paris and soon Marie and her mother followed. Marie began to work for Curtius, eventually becoming his assistant. During her time in Paris during the late 1700s, Marie met and modelled both Rousseau and Voltaire. During the French Revolution, Grosholtz modelled many death masks including Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette and Robespierre. Curtius died in 1794 leaving Marie his waxwork collection. Marie married Francois Tussaud a year later and had two sons. She left her husband and took her sons and the waxwork collection to London in 1802. Over the next couple of decades, Marie travelled around Britain and Ireland before setting up in London in 1835. She created many waxwork models of famous people including Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington. She had a room in which she kept one of the blades from the guillotine used during the French Revolution and other items connected to Napoleon. In a time when there were no films or photographs, these wax models offered people a chance to see real history.



Marie Grosholtz (Tussaud) 1761–1850 created many waxwork models of famous people.

10. Do you think that wax models are a good source for historians?
11. Look at the death mask of Theobald Wolfe Tone on page 261. Is this a primary or secondary source?
12. Is a death mask from the eighteenth century a valuable piece of historical evidence? Give reasons for your answer.
13. Do you consider people who make wax models of people historians? Give reasons to support your answer.

VIEWPOINTS AND OBJECTIVITY

14. The French Revolution has been a cause of great debate. Opinions are divided about the common people of Paris and the *sans-culottes*.

Here are some views about the women who brought the Royal family back from Versailles to Paris:

- (i) All the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abased shape of the vilest women.

Source: Edmund Burke (Anglo-Irish politician who lived between 1729 and 1797)
in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

(ii)

Eyewitness accounts and visual documentation of the procession depict women seated astride a cannon – the world turned upside down . . . women marching with swords in hand, women waving the branches of trees, women threatening the captured royal bodyguards and fraternizing [being friendly] with the National Guardsmen who carried loaves of bread on the tips of their pikes; women shouting and chanting as they marched: ‘Courage my friends, we won’t lack bread any longer, we are bringing you the baker, the baker’s wife, and the baker’s boy’.

Source: Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris
by Darline Gay Levy & Harriet Applewhite (two university lecturers
from America who wrote this in a book published in 1993)

(iii)

The witness now seized a drum at the entrance to the City Hall, where the women were already assembled in very large numbers; detachments went off into different districts to recruit other women, who were instructed to meet them at the Place Louis XV . . . But as the people were assembled in great numbers, and this square was no longer suited as a place of meeting, they decided to proceed to the Place d’Armes, in the middle of the Champs Elysées, whence he saw detachments of women coming up from every direction, armed with broomsticks, lances, pitchforks, swords, pistols, and muskets. As they had no ammunition, they wanted to compel him to go with a detachment of them to the arsenal to fetch powder, but . . . now by means of prayers and protestations he succeeded in persuading the women to lay down their arms, with the exception of a few who refused, but whom wiser heads among them compelled to yield.

*Stanislas-Marie Maillard who was a National Guardsman who participated
in the storming of the Bastille and was present at the Women’s March on Versailles
in October 1789. He testified before a commission in 1790.*

Working in pairs or small groups, evaluate the three sources above and answer the questions that follow:

- Which of these sources are primary and which are secondary sources? Give reasons for your answer.
- Is there any evidence in one source that is confirmed in another?
- Which of these three sources, if any, are favourable to the women of Paris? Give reasons for your answer for each of the sources.
- Who are the baker, the baker’s wife and the baker’s boy mentioned in the second source?
- Why do you think that there were different views about how the women of Paris acted that day?
- Examine the sources and evaluate if each is objective.



Mentor Digital Resources

For more information on **The French Revolution** go to mentorbooks.ie/resources