

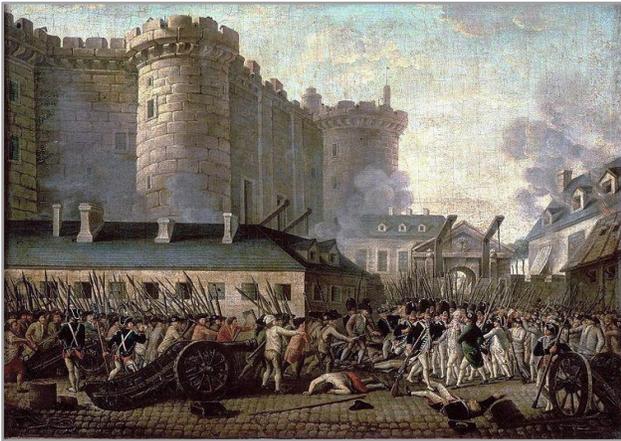
The Artios Home Companion Series

Unit 22: The French Revolution

Teacher Overview

“The eighteenth century closed with an upheaval of the French people which overturned the existing system of Europe. It again raised France from a position of weakness to one of power, and it spread abroad ideas which have shaped all subsequent history. The English Revolution of 1688, and the American Revolution of 1775, both brought to logical completion institutions of long and steady growth. The French Revolution, on the other hand, broke sharply with the past, and changed the direction of national development. It is the purpose of the present chapter to examine the facts in the general situation which made this revolution possible, and to sketch the new ideas which guided its progress...”

- Samuel Bannister Harding



The Storming of the Bastille

Reading and Assignments

In this unit, students will:

- Complete two lessons in which they will learn about **the events leading up to and occurring during the French Revolution**, journaling and answering discussion questions as they read.
- Read selected chapters from *A Tale of Two Cities*, journaling as they read.
- Write an outline for a character analysis essay on the character of their choice.
- Visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Key People and Events

Voltaire	Rousseau
Montesquieu	Louis XVI
Marie Antoinette	Mirabeau
The Reign of Terror	Robespierre
Storming of the Bastille	Danton

Leading Ideas

History is HIS Story.

God’s story of love, mercy, and redemption through Christ.

He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

— Ephesians 1:9-10

God’s providential hand governs and times all events and provides for his Creation according to His plan and purposes.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

— Acts 17:24-27

Godly leadership and servanthood are necessary for one to be a true reforming influence.

Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

— Matthew 20:26-28

God raises up and removes leaders.

He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.

— Daniel 2:21

L i t e r a t u r e a n d C o m p o s i t i o n

Unit 22: Character Study - Writing a Character Analysis

A Tale of Two Cities

by Charles Dickens

Literature for Units 19 - 23

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/98/98-h/98-h.htm>

Unit 22 – Assignments

- Read the assignment background information on **Character Analysis**, then read Chapters 1 – 6, “Book the Third” of *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- Using the character cards you have worked on in previous units, choose one character for deeper study.
- Write an outline for a character analysis essay on this character. Remember to use complete sentences; this will be helpful when you write your essay in Unit 23.

Unit 22 – Assignment Background

Character Analysis Essay

In this unit, you will learn about constructing an outline for a character analysis essay and will find the information needed to complete a character analysis.

A character analysis essay shows that you understand the characteristics and the motives of a specific character in the novel. In the essay, you will explain not only who the character is, but how the author reveals the character to the reader, how the character interacts with others, and how this character shapes the story.

A good way to organize your character analysis is to create an outline using complete sentences to express what information each paragraph will contain. As you create your outline, remember to include transitions between paragraphs.

Introduction (Paragraph 1): Your introduction should introduce the character you will be analyzing in the essay. Your introduction must include the name of your character, the title of the novel, and the author. Other information to add would include why you chose to analyze this character, whether or not you like the character, how you identify with the character, or if the character reminds you of someone you know. All of the information should help you compose your thesis statement.

Thesis statement: Your thesis statement should express how the character interacts with others, how the character overcomes obstacles or conflict in the story, and how the character changes or stays the same during the course of the story.

Body Paragraphs (Paragraphs 2 - 4)

The **First Body Paragraph** should discuss what your character is like in the beginning of the story. One way to do this is to show how the novel's characters interact with each other and explain how this interaction reveals information about your character. In this paragraph, you should use quotes from the novel to support your ideas about your character.

The **Second Body Paragraph** should discuss how your character is involved in the conflict: does he cause the conflict, does he help resolve the conflict, etc. Use quotes from the story to support your ideas. In this paragraph you should also include your understanding of your character's role in the conflict and whether or not you agree with your character's actions or inactions.

The **Third Body Paragraph** should discuss how your character changes (or remains unchanged) throughout the novel. Does your character learn a lesson from the events in the story? Does your character change for good? Use quotes from the novel to support your ideas. Explain in the paragraph how these changes affect your character and other characters in the story.

Conclusion (Paragraph 5): Begin the conclusion by restating your thesis. The next three sentences should be summaries of the each body paragraphs. The final sentence of your conclusion should be a thought provoking statement or question. You may choose to use a quote from the novel that you feel encompasses the message of your essay.

Lesson One

History Overview and Assignments The Eve of the French Revolution

The English Revolution of 1688, and the American Revolution of 1775, both brought to logical completion institutions of long and steady growth. The French Revolution, on the other hand, broke sharply with the past, and changed the direction of national development. It is the purpose of the present chapter to examine the facts in the general situation which made this revolution possible, and to sketch the new ideas which guided its progress..."

- Samuel Bannister Harding



Louis XVI

Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions, then read the article: *The Eve of the French Revolution*, pages 5-14.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Key People

Voltaire
Montesquieu
Marie Antoinette

Rousseau
Louis XVI

Discussion Questions

1. What was the obstacle to the complete removal of the feudal abuses which oppressed the peasants?
2. Why were the oppressive guild regulations not repealed?
3. From what two sources would objections come to the removal of the censorship of the press?
4. In your own words state the connection between the advance of natural science and the French Revolution.
5. In what ways did England help trigger the Revolution in France?
6. Is there any similarity of ideas between Rousseau's Social Contract and the American Declaration of Independence? If so, how do you account for it?

7. How did the aid which France gave the American colonies contribute to bring about the French Revolution?

Adapted from the book:

New Medieval and Modern History

by Samuel Bannister Harding

The Eve of the French Revolution

The Old Regime in Europe

The eighteenth century closed with an upheaval of the French people which overturned the existing system of Europe. It again raised France from a position of weakness to one of power, and it spread abroad ideas which have shaped all subsequent history. The English Revolution of 1688 and the American Revolution of 1775 both brought to logical completion institutions of long and steady growth. The French Revolution, on the other hand, broke sharply with the past, and changed the direction of national development. It is the purpose of the present chapter to examine the facts in the general situation which made this revolution possible, and to sketch the new ideas which guided its progress.

Throughout Europe, even before the eighteenth century, the medieval system in church and state had broken down. Its overthrow was the result of movements which have been described in earlier chapters, the growth of commerce and of the towns, the rise of national states, the Renaissance, and the Reformation. Nevertheless, in every country of Europe there still survived many relics of the old system, now becoming serious abuses. It is to this condition of half-overthrown medievalism that the name of Old Regime is given.

Though serfdom was extinct in England

and nearly so in France, it still prevailed in central, southern, and eastern Europe. In those lands the peasant was little better off than the African slave in America. He was still bound to the soil and compelled to work for his lord. He used the same crude tools as his ancestors, and lived in the same sort of wretched hovel as in the middle Ages. Conditions were probably blackest in Russia, Poland, Austria, and Hungary, where even today the lot of the peasant is exceedingly hard.

In the towns the guilds, which had once done good service to the cause of liberty, had become burdensome and oppressive. In many places the master workmen alone were members of the guilds, and their chief object was to maintain a monopoly in the products of their manufacture. To this end the number of masters who might open shops, the number of apprentices whom each might train, the length of apprenticeship and the methods of manufacture, were minutely regulated; and these regulations were enforced by the authority of the state. A workman had to confine himself to the limits laid down for his craft. A barber was not permitted to curl hair, nor a baker to roast meat in his oven for a customer; for such acts infringed upon the monopolies of other guilds. If a journeyman attempted to set up a shop for himself without being admitted to the master's guild of that trade, he was liable to

fine, imprisonment, and confiscation of his tools and materials. The jealous and exclusive policy of the guilds developed bitter antagonism between the artisans and the well-to-do class of master workmen and traders, whom we call bourgeois (boorzhwa/). The strictness of guild regulations also greatly hampered progress. In Paris, for example, a hat-maker's stock was destroyed because he had improved the quality of his hats (and so increased his business) by mixing silk in their manufacture where the guild regulations called for the use of pure wool. Nor was this an isolated case. "Each week for a number of years," said an inspector of manufactures, "I have seen burned at Rouen eighty to one hundred pieces of goods, because some regulation concerning the weaving or dyeing had not been observed at every point." Similar medieval practices survived in the special privileges enjoyed by the two upper classes of society. The nobles of the eighteenth century were no longer the lawless robber knights of the Middle Ages. They were great landed proprietors, without any of the military duties which were the excuse for their noble rank in the feudal days. They retained, however, many class privileges and exemptions, which will be discussed later in connection with France.¹

The other great privileged order was the clergy. In Catholic countries churchmen still retained much of the power they had exercised throughout the Middle Ages. The upper clergy, drawn largely from the nobles, enjoyed enormous incomes from the church estates and from the tithes which the laity were still forced to pay. Many judicial causes were tried in church courts; and the clergy alone registered

births and deaths, and solemnized marriages. This made it impossible for Protestants in Catholic countries to marry legally and have legitimate children, or to inherit or to will property. Schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions were all under the control of the church. Persecution for nonconformity continued, though executions had become less frequent.² Strong efforts were made to suppress freedom of thought by means of a censorship of the press. The suppression of the books condemned by the church was usually enforced by the state, and such copies as could be seized were burned, and their authors and publishers (as far as discoverable) were imprisoned. The censorship, however, was not very effective. The spirit of reform was in the air, and there was an eager demand for books attacking the evils of church and state. Printers and authors were able to meet this demand by publishing their books and pamphlets secretly, or by printing them in England, Holland, and Geneva, where the press had more liberty.

In England, although personal and political liberty was most advanced and religious toleration was granted to Protestant dissenters, great intolerance was long shown to Roman Catholics.

¹ In Germany several hundred of the feudal nobles, because of their impregnable castles and other advantages, had been able to maintain their independence of the great princely states. They were under the authority of the Emperor alone, and are reckoned among the sovereign princes of Europe, though some of them ruled only a few square miles of territory.

² In Spain, however, one thousand heretics are said to have been burned between 1700 and 1746. Encyclopedia Britannica (nth ed.), XX, 714.

The Spirit of Reform

In the sixteenth century men applied the test of reasonableness, instead of tradition or authority, to matters of scholarship and religion. In the eighteenth century this test was extended to everyday

life and to government, and whatever was found unreasonable was relentlessly attacked.

In part, this wider application of reason to human affairs was due to the advance of science, which had continued steadily since the Renaissance. Newton in the seventeenth century had shown that the whole universe is bound together by the unseen force of gravitation. The invention of the telescope had proven that the planets are worlds like our own. The microscope had revealed a hitherto unsuspected realm of minute organic life all about us. The old Greek philosophers had taught that everything is reducible to four “elements,” earth, air, fire, and water; but Lavoisier (la-vwa-zya’), the founder of modern chemistry (died 1794), disproved this by decomposing air and water into the elements we know as gases, and showing that fire is really oxidation, a process in which the oxygen of the atmosphere rapidly combines with the substance burned.

Such discoveries as these inevitably broadened men’s conceptions of the universe and of God. They became less ready to accept the teachings of authority and tradition, since experience showed in so many instances that the old ideas were mistaken. Scholars now tended to rely in all matters on the knowledge gained through the application of reason to the facts of everyday life, as ascertained by observation and experiment. The ends sought by eighteenth-century philosophy were chiefly these: (1) greater knowledge of the material universe, and (2) various practical reforms, such as religious toleration, political liberty, economic and social equality, and natural education.

The revolt against tradition and authority originated in England, where there was more freedom of thought, of speech, and of action than elsewhere. English scientists and philosophers, of whom John Locke (1632-1704) was chief, became the teachers of a group of brilliant Frenchmen, who spread the new teachings throughout Europe. Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau were foremost in this work.



Voltaire

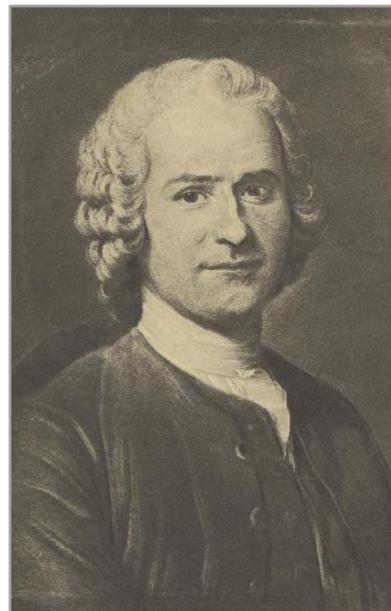
Voltaire (vol-tar’) was unsurpassed in his mocking wit and biting satire, his keen thought and vigorous style. He sprang from the middle class, and early felt the tyranny of the crown by being imprisoned for libel on a *lettre de cachet*, an arbitrary royal indictment that could not be appealed. He was taught the insolence of the nobility by a beating at the hands of hired ruffians employed by an arrogant and dissolute nobleman of Paris. He “learned to think” during three years of exile in England. After his return to France, he made untiring assaults upon superstition, fanaticism, intolerance, and injustice. He

was relentless in his attacks upon the church, which he believed to be an obstacle to human progress because it suppressed freedom of thought. In religion he was a deist, that is, he believed in God and in the immortality of the soul, but he refused to believe that God had revealed Himself to the Jewish people alone. Voltaire put Christianity on the same plane with Judaism, Mohammedanism, and Buddhism. He relied upon man's reason for the discovery of God's laws. He attacked religious intolerance especially, and perhaps did more than any other man to free the world of that curse. He exercised a tremendous influence on the thought of his time. A French historian says that "he filled the eighteenth century."

Voltaire, however, did not attack the political forms of the Old Regime. His famous contemporary, Montesquieu (mon-tes-ku'), extended the application of reason and experience to this field also. In an epoch-making work, entitled *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu drew the attention of his countrymen to the abuses in their government. He contrasted these with English political liberty and parliamentary government. But, faithful to his model, the English constitution, Montesquieu abhorred the idea of democracy as much as that opposite extreme, absolute government.

Rousseau (roo-so') was the apostle of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, the new gospel whose golden dream inspired men to hope for the immediate attainment of the social millennium. Rousseau looked upon civilization, especially the stilted, artificial civilization of the eighteenth century, as the cause of all the evils which mankind suffered. He sought, therefore, to

turn men "back to nature." He believed that in the "state of nature," before governments arose, all men were good and all men were equal. This belief led him to inquire into the origin and nature of governments. In his most celebrated work, *The Social Contract*, he begins as follows: "Man is born free, and yet is now everywhere in chains." The state, he taught, is the outcome of a compact, freely entered into, by which each man surrendered his individual liberty to the general will. The whole people, therefore, constitute the sovereign power. Though they may allow a single person, such as a king, to manage the government for them, the people always retain the right to depose their rulers and to change the constitution of their government. The teachings of Rousseau became immensely popular with all classes, for he voiced eloquently and passionately their discontent. The enthusiasts of the French Revolution drew their inspiration most of all from Rousseau. His *Social Contract* has been called "the gospel of modern democracy."



Rousseau

Similar ideas of freedom were stirring in the field of economics also. Against the minute regulation of industry and commerce, exercised by the guilds and by the government, was raised the doctrine of freedom of manufacture and freedom of transportation. This doctrine was embodied in the words, *Laissez faire, laissez passer* (lě-sa fâr', lě-sā pâ-sá). The new ideas originated with a group of French writers, who may be said to have founded political economy as a science. Upon the basis they laid, Adam Smith (a Scotchman) developed his great work, *The Wealth of Nations* (published 1776), which became the chief treatise of the new science. Its author maintained that it was unwise for governments to attempt to interfere with natural economic laws. He advocated especially a policy of "free trade," that is, the abolition of practically all import and export tariff duties—a policy which Great Britain adopted two generations later and still continues to follow.

In every department of thought, religion, morals, government, science, there was new activity. The old systems were vigorously assailed from countless points of view. To gather up and popularize the results of the new studies to advance knowledge and to arouse enthusiasm for reform, a great French *Encyclopedia* was developed. This work was written by a group of scholars, of whom the chief was Diderot (dēd-rō'). It was completed in thirty-seven volumes (in 1771), after much governmental interference. "The Encyclopedia was like a general rising, a battle array, of all the men of the new era, against all the powers of the past. It was the great effort of the eighteenth century."

Men of the "Third Estate" (commoners) led in these intellectual movements, but the new ideas were taken up by nobles, priests, and kings as well. Voltaire resided for several years as a guest at the court of Frederick the Great in Prussia; and Catherine II of Russia subscribed for the *Encyclopedia* and tried to bring its leading writers to her court. In France disgust with the court and ministers rendered a great part of the nobles "almost democrats." The spread of the liberal movement there was helped by the fact that many French nobles had served in the American War of Independence, and came back imbued with the spirit of liberty and admiration for republican ideas.

Reforms of the "Enlightened Despots"

It was natural that the first attempts at the practical application of the new reform ideas should come from the sovereigns who were influenced by the movement. They recognized that governments existed for the good of their subjects, though they rejected the ideas of the sovereignty of the people, of nationality as a necessary basis for the state, and of inviolable safeguards to individual liberty. The removal of the medieval survivals in industry, in religion, and in the state would promote prosperity among their peoples without (as they thought) limiting their own absolute power. Consequently, Frederick the Great of Prussia, Catherine II of Russia, and other enlightened rulers undertook many sweeping reforms in their territories. It is to such rulers of the eighteenth century that the name "enlightened despots" is applied. It is curious that some of the most striking attempts in this line came from the

sovereigns who were engaged in the crime of partitioning Poland. This fact shows the admixture in their policies of the ideas of the Old Regime along with those of the dawning new era.

The reform attempts of the Emperor Joseph II illustrate both the good and the evil sides of enlightened despotism. His scheme of domestic policy for the motley Hapsburg states was “no less than to consolidate all his dominions into one homogeneous whole; to abolish all privileges and exclusive rights; to obliterate the boundaries of nations, and substitute for them a mere administrative division of his whole empire; to merge all nationalities and establish a uniform code of justice; to raise the mass of the community to legal equality with their former masters; to constitute a uniform level of democratic simplicity under his own absolute sway.” These sweeping changes he tried to carry out within the short space of five years. He began by abolishing serfdom in Bohemia, Moravia, Galicia, and Hungary. He took away the privileges of the local Diets and imperial towns, and consolidated his dominions into a single state of thirteen districts, each division and subdivision of which was under his own officials. He sought to make German the official language for all districts. In 1781 he issued an edict of religious toleration, and undertook a radical reform of the Roman Catholic Church in his territories. He forbade money being sent to Rome; and he abolished over six hundred monasteries, using their revenues to establish schools and charitable institutions. He conferred a lasting benefit on Austria by his new code of law, in which torture was abolished and the death penalty reserved for cases of

rebellion alone. He was active in stimulating manufacturing and commerce; and he equalized taxation by depriving the nobles and clergy of their exemptions.

It is evident that each of these reforms, however desirable it was, affected the interests or prejudices of some powerful class or nation, and would arouse bitter opposition. The weakness of the whole scheme lay in the fact that no account was taken of such obstacles, and that everything was attempted at once. Most of the Emperor’s reforms, therefore, were overturned in his own lifetime, and he died (in 1790) sadly disappointed at his failure.

France on the Eve of the Revolution

To understand why France rather than any other European country took the lead in the revolution that overthrew the Old Regime, we must bear in mind that the existence of evils and oppression does not always produce revolt. To produce this effect, there must be enough liberty and enlightenment among the people to make them discontented with their condition, and to furnish them with leaders. As has been pointed out, the mass of the people in eastern and southern Europe were far more wretched than in France. Says a recent historian: “It was because the French peasant was more independent, wealthier, and better educated than the German serf that he resented the political and social privileges of his landlord, and the payment of rent, more than the serf objected to his bondage. It was because France possessed an enlightened middle class that the peasants and workmen found leaders. It was because Frenchmen had been in the possession of a great measure

of personal freedom that they were ready to strike a blow for political liberty, and eventually promulgated the idea of social equality.”

There were in France, however, grievances of a real and serious character. Society and government were founded upon a system of caste, in which the clergy, nobles, and Third Estate were widely separated in privileges and burdens. The first two Estates constituted the “privileged orders.” They numbered less than two per cent in a population of about twenty-five millions. The higher nobles, who resided at the king’s court, differed in manner of life and interests from the lesser ones, who resided on their lands. In like manner, the nobly born higher clergy had little in common with the hardworking and underpaid parish priests (*curés*), who sprang from the common people. Class inequalities, indeed, were increasing. By 1789 four generations of noble descent were necessary to secure a commission in the army, and to enter the charmed circle of the court it was necessary to prove nobility on the father’s side back to the year 1400. The offices of the church bishoprics, abbeys, and priories were regarded as a provision for the younger sons of noble families. In taxation the privileged orders had many exemptions, in which the wealthier citizens were able to share by purchasing offices from the crown. While the wealthy townsmen were thus raised above the mass of the Third Estate, there remained a great social gulf between them and the old nobility. Pride of class led the nobles to refrain from all labor; and extravagance, gambling, and the decline of their estates made them greedy seekers after pensions and corrupt gains.

Under Louis XV the government was more oppressive and less efficient than formerly. Abroad, French prestige was seriously impaired; at home, vexations increased. Letters passing through the post were systematically opened, and each morning Louis XV enjoyed the choice bits of scandal and family secrets gained in this way. A censorship of the press was enforced, so far as the government was able. Torture, mutilations, and an absence of safeguards to personal liberty (such as England possessed in its trial by jury and the writ of habeas corpus) characterized the administration of justice. One hundred and fifty thousand *lettres de cachet* are calculated to have been issued during this reign, many of which were sold for money to private individuals, who used them to be revenged upon personal enemies.

Perhaps the greatest cause of misgovernment was the confusion and diversity in all departments of government, due to the fact that France was a mere patchwork of territories, added piece by piece from the time of Hugh Capet to Louis XVI. Instead of a single code of law for the whole country, there were in force nearly three hundred different sets of local “customs.” Internal commerce was harassed by tolls and tariff duties on goods passing from province to province. A vessel descending the Saone and Rhone rivers had to stop and pay charges thirty times, the whole amounting to from twenty-five to thirty per cent of the value of the cargo.

Still worse were the inequalities in the levying of taxes. There was not only monstrous inequality between the privileged and unprivileged classes, but also between the various districts of France. The amount of the direct taxes was

arbitrarily assessed upon the different communities by the central government. Within each community the tax collector had the same arbitrary power in apportioning the burden among his neighbors. What one person did not or could not pay had to be made up by the rest. If a community or an individual showed evidence of prosperity, the usual result was an increase in the taxes. The burden of the indirect taxes likewise was very unequally distributed. Most of these taxes were “farmed out” to speculators (447), which increased the burden upon the people.

The condition of the peasant, though better than in Germany, Poland, and Russia, was still grievous. Perhaps one fourth of the soil of France was in the hands of peasant owners, but it was still burdened with many vexatious relics of feudal dues. If a peasant sold his land, part of the price usually had to be paid to the neighboring lord. In some places the peasant had to pay a toll to cross the bridge or ferry on his way to work or to drive his flock past the lord’s mansion. The obligation to use the lord’s mill and oven for grinding grain and baking bread was hateful because of the delays, fraud, and poor service to which it gave rise. Wild game of all sorts was protected for the lord’s hunting, under penalty of fine, imprisonment, and the galleys. For broken fences and hedges, and crops trampled in the chase, the peasant had no redress. Enormous dovecots were maintained by the nobles; and the damage done to crops by the pigeons kept therein found a prominent place in the complaints of most country districts.

These annoyances, however, were slight

compared to the burdens imposed by the state. The exemptions enjoyed by the wealthier classes threw almost the whole weight of taxation on the peasantry, the class least able to bear it. Innumerable taxes and forced labor on the roads crushed the peasant. The sale of salt was a government monopoly, and every household was obliged to buy each year a fixed quantity of that article. The surplus from the household supply could not be used for curing meats; a separate supply had to be purchased for that purpose. The price varied enormously, in some provinces the government charging thirty times what it did in other near-by districts. Over seventeen hundred persons were usually in prison, and three hundred in the galleys, for violation of the salt laws.

The number and uncertainty of the taxes discouraged all efforts at improved methods of cultivation. An Englishman named Arthur Young, who traveled extensively in France in 1787-1789, found agriculture there worse practiced, and the tillers of the soil much worse off, than they were in England. A crop failure in one province frequently caused a local famine. The bad roads, tolls, and absurd governmental regulations prevented grain being sent in from other provinces where it was abundant. Even where the peasant was best off, he concealed his prosperity for fear of new taxes. “I should be lost,” said one such, “if it were suspected that I am not dying of hunger.” It has been estimated that the average peasant could count on less than one fifth of the produce of his labor for the support of himself and his family. The other four fifths went to taxes, tithe, and feudal dues.

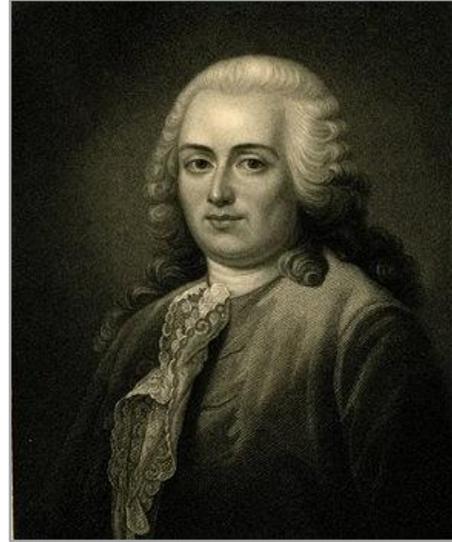
When Louis XVI, grandson of Louis XV,

came to the throne (in 1774), he found the finances in a serious condition. The young king was amiable and just, but lacked decision of character and ability to rule. His queen, Marie Antoinette (a'N-twa-net'), the young, sprightly, frivolous, imperious daughter of Maria Theresa of Austria, indulged in lavish expenditures and shortsighted intrigues in support of personal favorites. His own and his predecessor's costly wars piled up an enormous debt, which was increased by the extravagance and corruption of the court.

Louis began his reign well by appointing Turgot (tur-go'), an able and enlightened political economist, as minister of finance. Turgot's policy was stated in these words, "No bankruptcy, no increase of taxation, no loans." His edict establishing free trade in grain forced tolls on the roads abolished. These measures naturally aroused violent opposition from those who profited by the old abuses. The Parliament of Paris made itself the center of resistance, and Marie Antoinette joined the attack. The weak king thereupon dismissed Turgot (1776) and recalled the reform edicts. With this step the last chance to save the old monarchy passed away.

Turgot's successor as finance minister was Necker, a Swiss banker of slight ability. He sought to promote honesty and economy in the administration, and he carried out many small reforms. The American war, however, forced up the debt by leaps and bounds. Necker appealed to public opinion (now becoming an important force) by publishing an account of the finances. This revealed the enormous amount spent on "pensions" to the courtiers.¹ The outcry produced at court by

this act ended Necker's first ministry (1781).



Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, Baron de Laune

A rapid increase of financial difficulties followed, and in 1786 the government was unable to pay the interest on its loans. The state was practically bankrupt. In 1787 an Assembly of Notables (mainly members of the privileged orders) was held. But the selfish interests of its members, and the opposition of the Parliament of Paris, prevented any effective reforms.

¹The "pensions" amounted to \$5,600,000 in 1780 and \$6,400,000 a little later. "I doubt," wrote Necker, "if all the sovereigns of Europe together pay in pensions more than half this sum." The amount paid from the treasury for the expenses of the royal family was \$8,000,000, the three elderly sisters of the king receiving an allowance of \$120,000 a year for their food alone! It must be remembered that, owing to the rise of prices, these sums had a purchasing power many times that of today.

The Parliament of Paris opposed the levying of any new taxes. It was really defending the selfish privileges of the upper classes, but cloaked its dislike for reform under the assertion that "only the nation assembled in the *Estates General* can give the consent necessary to the establishing of a permanent tax." For more than a hundred and seventy years (since 1614) no Estates-General had been held in France; indeed that body had met only fifteen times since it was first called

together in 1302. Among those who now raised their voices on behalf of its revival was the marquis of Lafayette, who had so nobly aided the American colonists to secure their independence. “What, Monsieur,” cried the king’s brother, on hearing Lafayette make this demand, “do you ask the convocation of the Estates-General?” “Yes, my lord,” was the answer, “and even more than that.” The cry for a meeting of the Estates-General now arose from all sides. The utter helplessness of the French government made long resistance impossible. The king was forced to dismiss his unpopular ministers and to recall Necker to office. But it was too late for halfway measures. After a brief struggle, the vacillating king then agreed that the

Estates-General should meet early in 1789.

The Old Regime throughout Europe was about to be summoned to the bar, to give place to a new order. It was France that “held, and was about to sound, the trumpet of judgment.”

IMPORTANT DATES

- 1774 Accession of Louis XVI of France.
- 1776 Publication of Adam Smith’s “Wealth of Nations.”
Turgot dismissed from the French ministry.
- 1781 Necker reveals the amount of French “pensions.”
- 1787 The Assembly of Notables fails to find a remedy for the bankruptcy of France.

Lesson Two

History Overview and Assignments

The French Revolution

“Within seven years, France had experienced almost every form of government. The absolutism of the Old Regime had given way to a weak constitutional monarchy; this in turn had been followed by a republic in which practically all power was vested in an unwieldy Assembly (1792-1793); and following this came the executive despotism of the Committee of Public Safety, and the Reign of Terror (1793-1794). Leaders representing all shades of political liberty as Mirabeau, the Girondists, Danton, and Robespierre had succeeded one another. The excess of freedom had wrought its cure. France was now prepared to try a government that promised strength of executive, with reasonable liberty, fraternity, and equality. The mistakes and atrocities of the revolution, the mob violence, the Terror, the revolutionary propaganda, and the theatrical worship of Reason and of the Supreme Being were in part due to the emotional, volatile temperament of the French. In part, also, they were due to the lack of opportunity, under the Old Regime, to acquire experience in managing their own affairs...”

- Jean Duplessis Bertaux



The Storming of the Tuileries Palace

Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions, then read the article: *The French Revolution*, pages 16-30.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Key People and Events

Mirabeau	Danton	The Reign of Terror
Robespierre	Louis XVI	Marie Antoinette
Storming of the Bastille		

Discussion Questions

1. Was the transformation of the Estates-General into the National Assembly necessary for the reform of the abuses under which France suffered? Why?
2. What was the significance of the fall of the Bastille?

3. How did the organization of the National Guard contribute to the success of the French Revolution?
4. Did the nobles deserve much credit for their surrender of their feudal rights on August 4? Why?
5. To what extent are the principles of the Rights of Man now in force in the United States? Were any of them in force in France before the Revolution?
6. Was the Constitution of 1791 more or less radical than the constitution in Great Britain at that time? What was the chief difference in their constitutions?
7. What good did the Jacobin club do? What ill?
8. Sum up the things which contributed to the growth of a republican party in France.
9. How long was the Constitution of 1791 in force?
10. How did the wars contribute to its overthrow?
11. In your opinion, was the execution of the king justifiable? Was it expedient?
12. Was Fox or Burke more correct in his estimate of the French Revolution?
13. Why was the addition of Great Britain to the ranks of the enemies of France so significant?
14. What arguments might be used for and against the Reign of Terror?
15. What is your opinion of Robespierre?
16. In what ways does the establishing of the Directory mark a step in advance? In what ways was it a backward step?
17. Was the Revolution up to 1795 a success or failure? Why?

Adapted from the book:

New Modern and Medieval History

by Jean Duplessis Bertaux

The French Revolution (1789-1795)

The Estates-General of 1789

The decision to call together the Estates-General was followed by a flood of discussion as to how it should be constituted and what it should do. In previous sessions each of the three orders had an equal number of representatives, and each order voted by itself. This made it a legislature of three houses, in which the privileged orders—the nobles and clergy—always had two votes to one possessed by the Third Estate. Because of the great numbers and importance of the Third Estate, it was generally recognized that this

arrangement was no longer possible. In a famous pamphlet, Sieyes (sya-yes'), a political writer, asked: "What is the Third Estate? Everything. What has it hitherto been in the political order? Nothing. What does it ask? To become something."

Two demands especially were made on its behalf: (1) that it should be allowed double the number of representatives given to the nobles and to the clergy, that is, as many as the other two orders combined. (2) That the members of the Estates should vote "by head" and not as orders; in other words, that the three orders should sit

together in a single assembly, in which the members voted as individuals. In the directions for electing representatives, the request for double representation was granted. Nothing, however, was said about the second point, and without the “vote by head” the double representation of the Third Estate would be of little value.

Famine was abroad in the land, due to a failure of harvests in 1788, and an unusually severe winter; and the prevailing distress intensified the discontent. In due course, the elections were held.



Oath of the Tennis Court

The nobles and the clergy met in district assemblies and chose their representatives directly. For the Third Estate a more complicated plan was provided. Delegates were elected by the taxpayers in each village and town, and these delegates, assembled in district conventions, chose the representatives of the Third Estate in the Estates-General. In all the election meetings, lists of grievances, called *cahiers* (ka-ya'), were drawn up. Altogether some fifty thousand of these lists were prepared, some of them extending to hundreds of pages. They give us an enormous mass of information concerning the abuses of the Old Regime and the reforms desired. A moderate spirit pervaded them all. Those of the Third

Estate usually demanded the abolition of the vexatious remnants of feudalism that were described in the preceding chapter. All three orders alike, almost without exception, wished to put an end to absolute government, and to give France a constitution. The cahiers asked especially for the regular calling of the Estates-General, with power to vote taxes and to participate in the making of laws. They also asked that *lettres de cachet* and the censorship of the press should be abolished. The demand for Liberty was the keynote of the cahiers. They show little evidence, on the other hand, of a demand for Equality, that is, for the total abolition of the rights of the privileged classes and the reduction of all persons to a common level before the law.

The first session of the Estates-General was held on May 5, 1789. It met at Versailles, the king's favorite residence. More than half the representatives of the Third Estate were lawyers. A few were liberal nobles. Not more than ten belonged to the lower classes. Fully two thirds of the representatives of the clergy were underpaid parish priests, who sprang from the people and sympathized with them far more than with the higher clergy. “As a whole the Estates-General represented the well-to-do classes. It was not in the least an uncultured rabble, but was made up of the best blood of France.”

The speeches with which the king and his ministers opened the session made no mention of the proposal to give France a constitution, although the king had previously sanctioned it. It was evidently the intention to secure from the Estates the financial aid that was needed, and then dismiss that body. To avoid this outcome

the deputies of the Third Estate insisted upon the mode of voting which should give them full advantage of their increased numbers. They refused to organize themselves as an order, and demanded that the nobles and clergy should join them in a single body.

This the two privileged orders declined to do. After the deadlock had continued for six weeks, the members of the Third Estate took the daring step of declaring themselves the National Assembly. They claimed the right to grant all taxes and to give France the desired constitution. The fact that the Third Estate comprised practically ninety-eight per cent of the population of the kingdom was their warrant for this step. When they were excluded from their usual place of meeting, the deputies of the Third Estate took the famous “Oath of the Tennis Court” (June 20, 1789), pledging themselves not to separate until “the constitution of the realm was established and fixed upon solid foundations.” By this act, says an English historian, “they practically became rebels, and the French Revolution really commenced.”



Mirabeau

The resolute stand of the Third Estate brought to their side more than half the

deputies of the clergy, and some of the liberal nobles. Next day, at the close of a joint session over which Louis XVI presided in person, he commanded that each of the three orders should retire to its separate place, and that the vote be taken as formerly, by orders. Under the leadership of Count Mirabeau (me-ra-bo'), a man of extraordinary ability and courage but of dissolute life, the deputies of the Third Estate resolved to disobey.

“Go tell your master,” cried Mirabeau to the king’s officer, “that we are here by the will of the people, and that we will be removed only at the point of the bayonet.” The weak king dreaded civil war above all else. He therefore gave way, and ordered the other deputies join the Third Estate (June 27). The success of the revolution was thus assured.

Much of the credit for this success belongs to Mirabeau. He was a nobleman of Provence (born 1749, died 1791), who had quarreled with his hot-headed father, and was forced to earn his living by writing political pamphlets. He was three times imprisoned on *lettres de cachet* for his escapades. When the nobles of his district refused to elect him to the Estates-General, he procured an election from the Third Estate. His eloquence, his wide knowledge of history and government, and his great energy and decision of character easily made him the foremost leader of that body. He wished to set up in France a strong but limited monarchy, modeled on that of England, which he had studied at first hand during a short residence there. Unfortunately, Mirabeau was imprudent in many things that he said and did; and his influence in the National Assembly was never as great as it deserved to be.

The National Assembly (1789-1791)

The queen and the court party sympathized thoroughly with the partisans of the Old Regime, and were unwilling to accept defeat. Most unwisely they persuaded Louis to attempt to coerce the Assembly by gathering his German and Swiss troops about Paris and Versailles. This threat to the freedom of the Assembly called into action a new and fearful force, the Paris mob. "It is the signal for a St. Bartholomew of patriots!" cried a popular orator of the multitude. Rioting began, starving crowds broke into bakeshops to procure food, and gun shops were sacked. To get more arms with which to defend the Assembly, the mob, on July 14, 1789, proceeded to the Bastille (bas-tel'). This had long been the chief arsenal and royal prison of Paris, and was hated both because it embodied the abuses of the Old Regime and because its cannon threatened the city. Several hundred unarmed men succeeded in entering the outer court of the Bastille; but the drawbridge was raised behind them, and they were shot down in cold blood. This act roused the mob to fury. One by one, soldiers defected from the French Guard and joined the mob, directing their efforts in a formal attack. After five hours' fighting, the garrison surrendered. The victory was stained by the massacre of the commander of the Bastille and a few of the Swiss Guard. The prisoners whom it contained, numbering a half dozen, were set free. The walls of the Bastille were subsequently torn down, and only some rows of white stones now show where the frowning fortress once stood. When the king, at Versailles, was informed of what

had occurred at Paris, he exclaimed, "Why, this is a revolt." "No, sire," was the reply, "it is a revolution." The anniversary of the fall of the Bastille is still celebrated as the birthday of French liberty.



The Bastille (restored)

Erected 1371-1383, and afterward used as a state prison

The uprising of the people did not stop with the overthrow of the Bastille. The government of Paris now passed into the hands of a revolutionary committee of middle-class citizens, called the Commune. A national guard composed mainly of citizens was organized and placed under the command of the Marquis de Lafayette. In the face of these movements, the king again gave way. The Swiss and German troops were removed from the neighborhood of Paris; and Louis himself put on the tricolored cockade, the emblem of the revolution. The reactionaries of the court, however, were still irreconcilable. Some of them, the so-called *Émigrés* (a-me-gra; "emigrants"), already began to flee beyond the borders of the kingdom, to stir up foreign intervention and civil war.

In the provinces the news of the revolt of Paris led everywhere to the setting up of revolutionary governments. In many places the peasants rose and burned the castles of their lords, in order to destroy the rolls that contained the evidences of their lords' manorial rights. News of these disorders in the provinces stirred reaction within the National Assembly at Versailles.

On the night of August 4, some liberal nobles in the Assembly set the example of renouncing their feudal rights, and the contagion spread. Noble after noble arose to propose the surrender of this or that exclusive privilege. Game laws, dovecots, favoritism in taxation, the sole right of the nobles to military offices, were all surrendered. Finally, amid the wildest enthusiasm, a decree was passed declaring in detail that “the National Assembly hereby completely abolishes the feudal system.” A subsequent decree (1790) went so far as to declare hereditary nobility, with its titles of duke, marquis, count, etc., “abolished forever,” in France.

In October, 1789, a disorderly mob of women, near to rioting over the high price and scarcity of bread in Paris, spurred a demonstration of thousands. Together they ransacked the city armory for weapons and marched to Versailles to compel the royal family to return with them to the city. The action of the court could better be watched over in the capital, and the Assembly more easily protected by the National Guard. The palace of the Tuileries (twel-re’) in Paris was henceforth the royal residence, and near it the National Assembly was now established. Aside from this incident, the revolution proceeded quietly for the next year and a half. During this period the Assembly was busied with framing, slowly and bit by bit, the written constitution that it had promised in the Tennis Court Oath. Not until 1791 was the constitution ready in its final form.

Following precedents established in some American state constitutions, the Assembly prefixed to its constitution a Declaration of the Rights of Man. This document has exercised great influence on

the opinions of mankind, so its principal provisions must be noted. It declared:

1. Men are born free and remain free and equal in their rights.
2. The source of all sovereignty is in the nation.
3. All citizens have the right to take part, personally or through their representatives, in making the laws, and all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law.
4. No one shall be arrested or imprisoned except in cases provided by law, and according to its forms.
5. Every man shall be presumed innocent until he is adjudged guilty.
6. No one shall be molested on account of his religious or other opinions, unless their manifestation disturbs public order.
7. Every person may freely speak, write, and print his opinions, subject to such responsibility for the abuse of this freedom as shall be defined by law.
8. Taxes shall be equally apportioned among all citizens according to their means.

The constitution that accompanied the Declaration of Rights provided for a limited monarchy. Very few persons of consequence in France at that time believed in the practicability of a republic. The following are the chief features of the new constitution:

1. The king’s power was strictly limited, and he was given only a suspensive veto over laws; that is, measures passed by three successive legislatures became law even without his assent.
2. The legislature consisted of a single house, elected for two years, and might not be dissolved by the king.
3. The right to vote was given all men who paid direct taxes amounting to the

value of three days' labor a year.

4. The old division of the kingdom into provinces was abolished, replaced by the establishment of eighty-three departments, a step that greatly contributed to the unity of France.

Some laws passed while the constitution was being framed made almost equally important changes in the social and political organization. All guilds and similar exclusive corporations were abolished. The local government was placed in the hands of elected municipal bodies. A uniform system of law was projected, and sweeping judicial reforms were made.

Especially important were the laws that dealt with the church. Tithe requirements were abolished, monasteries were dissolved, and freedom of worship was established for all religions. To meet the pressing financial needs of the government, the property of the church was confiscated, and the state thenceforth undertook the support of the clergy. At the same time a "civil constitution" for the clergy was adopted, by which all, from bishops to parish priests, were to be elected by the people. The number of bishoprics was reduced more than one third, so that there should be only one for each department. By these arrangements the bishops were made, in practice, officers of the state. All clergymen who refused to take an oath to support this constitution were dismissed from their offices. Only four of the former bishops and about one third of the parish priests took the prescribed oath. Many glaring abuses in the church were remedied by this reorganization. Nevertheless, the measure proved a great mistake, since it shocked

religious sensibilities and alienated from the revolution many thousands who hitherto had supported it.

The use that was made of the confiscated church lands was also unwise. Along with crown lands and the confiscated estates of *Émigrés*, the church lands (aside from those immediately attached to cathedrals and other churches, which remain to this day the property of the nation) were ordered to be sold. Pending their sale, *assignats* (a-sen'ya), a form of legal-tender paper currency, were issued on the credit of these lands. The over issue of these *assignats*, however, caused their value to decline until they passed only at a hundred for one in silver. Ultimately they were repudiated.

Louis XVI accepted the above laws and solemnly swore to abide by the new order of things. Had he been allowed by those about him to keep this oath, the revolution might have been stopped at this point, and all would have been well. But the king was weak and vacillating. He was easily swayed by his frivolous and unreasoning queen, Marie Antoinette, and by members of the court who resented the loss of their privileges. Mirabeau was one of the few real statesmen that France possessed at that time. He sought to induce the king to abide loyally by the promises he had made, but to retire to some city in the interior of the country on the ground that he was not free in Paris, and there "throw himself into the arms of his people." Thus the growth of radicalism and mob activity which Mirabeau foresaw would be checked. The one thing Mirabeau urged the king not to do was to retire to the frontier, where the *Émigrés* were gathering armed forces and stirring up foreign intervention.

Unfortunately, Mirabeau had compromised his influence by living dissolutely in his youth, and by accepting a secret pension from the king to relieve him from his burden of debts. His advice went unheeded. If Lafayette had been willing to join his influence to that of Mirabeau, the views of the latter might have prevailed and the monarchy been saved. In April, 1791, Mirabeau died, worn out with overindulgence, hard work, and disappointments. His death removed the only counselor in these troubling times who could have guided the ship of state to a safe haven.

In June, 1791, Louis resolved to do the very thing which Mirabeau had urged him not to do. After secretly drawing up a declaration in which he disavowed the measures of the Assembly, Louis and the royal family fled by night from Paris. They directed their course toward the frontier of the Netherlands (Belgium), where a force of *Émigrés* and Austrians awaited them. Within a few hours' ride of the frontier, the royal carriage was stopped and turned back to Paris when Louis was recognized from his profile on paper money. France realized with a shock that Louis XVI had participated unwillingly in the work of reform, and planned to use foreign aid to overthrow the revolution. A few weeks later a disorderly crowd gathered at Paris to sign a petition for his dethronement. In dispersing the mob, the National Guard under Lafayette fired and killed several persons. These events completed a separation that had long been growing among the supporters of the revolution. From this time its supporters may be divided into constitutional royalists and democratic republicans.

In September, 1791, the National Assembly completed its labors. Louis formally ratified the constitution, and the Assembly was dissolved. So far the revolution was under the control of the upper middle classes. In spite of some threatening outbreaks of mob violence, liberal men in other countries applauded its results. But from three sources the stability of the new constitution was threatened: (1) from the emigrant nobles, who stirred up foreign intervention, (2) from the Democratic Party, who wanted more radical reform, and (3) from the continued weakness and indecision of the king.

A Republic Established (1791-1793)

An unwise law passed by the National Assembly excluded its members from the Legislative Assembly that was provided for in the newly adopted constitution. The latter body, when it met in October, 1791, was thus without experienced guides. It proved more radical than the former Assembly. The constitutional royalists at first controlled the government. But gradually the power passed to a group of theoretical republicans who were called "Girondists," from the region their principal orators came from. A still more radical party, called the "Mountain" from its elevated seats in the assembly hall, developed when foreign danger and internal disorders arose.

The power that the "Mountain" possessed in the Legislative Assembly was due to the organized support that it received outside that body. From the beginning of the revolution, the people of France had followed the proceedings at

Paris with great eagerness. Many newspapers had sprung up as a result of the new liberty of printing, and these represented the widest variety of opinions. The freedom of discussion also led to the formation of a number of political clubs of various sorts. The most important of these was the society of the “Jacobins.” It was formed by some provincial members of the Third Estate, who hired a hall in the disused monastery of the Jacobin monks, from which the club received its name. Leading men of Paris who were not members of the Legislative Assembly were taken into the society; and finally its meetings became public and anyone could attend. The policy of the Jacobins at first was merely to preserve and defend the work of the revolution against the attacks of the “aristocrats” who sought to overthrow it. To assist in this work, it organized a chain of daughter societies in the provinces. Through their aid it did much to form and organize public opinion, a much needed work in a land so new to political life and so long oppressed by despotism. Gradually, however, the views of the club grew more radical, and the name Jacobin became a synonym for extreme democratic views and mob violence. The leaders of the “Mountain” belonged to this club, and were able to bring to the support of their views in the Assembly the organized popular support which that club offered them.

The fact that the queen was related to the Austrian royal family and the intrigues of the *Émigrés*, made foreign intervention certain. Early in 1792 the Assembly declared war upon Austria, and this involved war with Prussia also, which was allied with Austria. The war opened badly

for France, because the zeal for liberty had disorganized and weakened the whole administration, and had destroyed the discipline of the army.

After the first reverses, a cry of “Treachery!” was raised. Because the king had begun to show open hostility to the revolution, the Jacobin leaders now began to plot his overthrow. On August 10, a Parisian mob aided by some volunteers from Marseilles (mar-say’), who raised enthusiasm to a white heat with the new revolutionary hymn, the *Marseillaise* (mar-se-yaz’), stormed the royal palace of the Tuileries. They massacred the Swiss guards of the king, and Louis and his family were forced to seek refuge in the hall of the Legislative Assembly.

This whole movement was organized and carried out in practical independence of the Assembly. Nevertheless, that body, when the insurrection was accomplished, accepted its results. It decreed the suspension of the king from his office, and ordered him and his family into confinement.

At the same time steps were taken to call a National Convention, which was to decide the question whether the monarchy should continue or France be declared a republic.¹

Before the new body met, Lafayette had abandoned the revolution. He was now in harmony with neither the radicals nor the royalists. He attempted to win over his army to the cause of the imprisoned king. Failing in this, he himself deserted to the Austrians, and was by them imprisoned for five years.

The executive government meanwhile was put in the hands of a provisional ministry, of which the able and patriotic

Danton was the heart and soul. He was the Second great leader of the revolution to arise. He combined the eloquence and ability of Mirabeau with a purer life and more radical political views. But his face was pitted by smallpox, and his personal appearance was repulsive. Under his direction great energy was shown in organizing the defense of France against its foreign invaders.² The fruits of this were soon seen in a French victory at Valmy (val-me'; September 20, 1792). Influenced partly by jealousy of Austria, the Prussians then retreated. The National Convention was thus enabled to deal with the question of the monarchy without the menacing presence of a foreign army on French soil.

¹ The demand for a republic came originally from the Parisian club of the Cordeliers, which in the beginning was more radical than the Jacobins. Its chief member was DANTON (1759-1794), a lawyer of Paris who possessed great eloquence, energy, and practical ability. The calling of the National Convention to end the monarchy came when the Girondists and Jacobins joined the Cordeliers in demanding a republic.

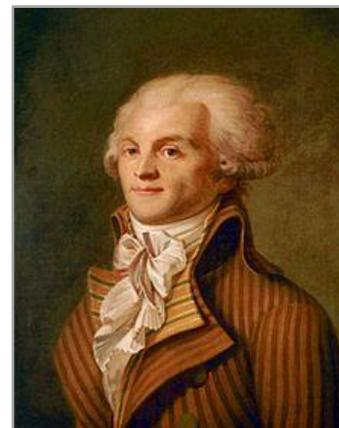
² The continued advance of the Prussians produced a frenzy of rage and fear at Paris. In September, bands of assassins entered the prisons and systematically massacred hundreds of royalists who had been arrested after the king's suspension (the "September Massacres"). The Commune looked on approvingly; the Legislative Assembly disapproved but was helpless.

In the National Convention, which met September 21, 1792, most of the members were men who had gained experience through sitting in one of the two preceding Assemblies. The Convention was more radical than the Legislative Assembly, just as that body had been more radical than the National Assembly. Almost its first act (in which all members united) was to decree that "royalty is abolished in France," and to proclaim a republic. Violent disputes arose, however, over further proceedings. The Girondists, who at first controlled the Convention, feared the dictation of Parisian mobs. They wished to reduce the influence of the capital until it should be no greater than that of any other "department." They also wished to carry on

the government in an orderly a way as if France were at peace. They were eloquent and patriotic men, but they did not understand the nature of the crisis that confronted France. They were "too full of vanity and exclusive party spirit, and too fastidious to strike hands with the vigorous and stormy Danton." On the other side stood the party of the Mountain, chief of whom were Danton, Robespierre, and Marat (ma-rat').³ They saw the need of a strong centralized government for national defense, and were willing to override the law to secure this. They accepted the dictation of Paris as long as the crisis lasted, and were ready to employ violent means to keep the royalists in subjection. The majority of the members of the Convention, however, adhered steadfastly to neither of these groups.



Danton



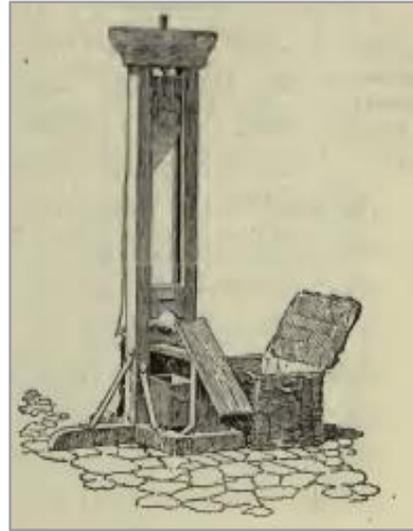
Robespierre

³ ROBESPIERRE (1758-1794) was a visionary provincial lawyer, who had sat in the Estates-General of 1789. He believed fanatically in the doctrines of Rousseau, and won many followers among the people by his sincerity and boasted honesty. He became a member of the Jacobin club, and was converted with that club to republicanism. The measure by which the members of the National Assembly excluded themselves from the Legislative Assembly was chiefly his work. His weak points were the impractical character of his views, and his extreme vanity. MARAT (1743-1793) was a noted physician and writer, who in 1789 began to publish a paper in Paris, called *The Friend of the People*. He was moved by sincere pity for the sufferings of the common people, but was half crazed by jealousy and suspicion of the "aristocrats." For a time he was forced to hide in cellars and sewers, where he contracted a loathsome and painful disease of the skin. Before Lafayette's desertion, he wrote that "could he but rally at his call two thousand determined men to save the country, he would proceed at their head to tear out the heart of the infernal Lafayette in the midst of his battalions of slaves. He would burn the monarch and his minions in his palace; and impale on their seats the infamous legislators who negotiated with him and bury them in the burning ruins of their lair." Marat preached assassination of the people's enemies, and was the chief agent in arousing the Parisian mob to action. He was stabbed to death in 1793 by a girl named Charlotte Corday, because of his part in overthrowing the Girondists. His memory was worshiped by the lower classes of Paris, and execrated by the upper classes.

The battle of Valmy was followed by a tide of French successes. French armies now carried the war into the lands of their enemies. Savoy was occupied; the principalities of the middle Rhine were overrun, and the Belgians were assisted in their efforts to expel the Austrian rulers. These successes intoxicated the Convention, and its members believed their armies to be invincible. A decree of November 19, 1792, promised "fraternity and assistance to all peoples who desire their liberty." "All governments are our enemies," cried an orator of the Convention, "all peoples are our friends. We shall be destroyed, or they shall be free." When democracy of the French sort proved unacceptable, it was forced upon the liberated peoples. Belgium (the Austrian Netherlands), Nice, and Savoy were annexed to France.

To complete the destructive work of the revolution, the Convention ordered that Louis XVI should be brought to trial. The charge was that he had intrigued with foreign courts for the invasion of France. By an almost unanimous vote, the Convention declared "Louis Capet" guilty, and by a small majority it passed sentence of death. Some of the Girondists wished to submit the judgment to the vote of the

people. But the leaders of the Mountain taunted their opponents with being concealed royalists, and caused this motion to be rejected. The next day Louis XVI was executed by means of the "guillotine." This was an instrument for beheading, named from a physician (Doctor Guillotin) whose recommendation brought it into use. The king met his fate with steadfast courage. But when he sought to address a few words to the crowd, his voice was drowned by the roll of drums.



The Guillotine

Opinion in England even among the Whigs, who favored liberty, had early shown signs of division over the events in France. Upon the fall of the Bastille, Charles James Fox, the most liberal of English Whig leaders, wrote, "How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world! And how much the best!" On the other hand, Edmund Burke, one of the greatest of British orators and political philosophers, in a widely read pamphlet (1790) characterized the French Revolution as a "strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies." Its probable end, he thought, would be a military despotism

under some popular general. The British government was now carried on by William Pitt (a younger son of the Great Commoner), who was prime minister almost continuously from 1783 until his death in 1806. He agreed with Burke rather than with Fox, but wished sincerely to maintain peace. Several factors, however, forced him into war with France. Among these were the French annexations of Belgium, the threatened conquest of Holland (England's ally), and the horror excited in England by the execution of the French king.

The actual declaration of war came in 1793 from France, whose leaders misunderstood British politics, and expected a democratic rising in their aid. Holland, Spain, Austria, Prussia and many smaller states, at about the same time, took up arms against the republic. Until the final downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte, Great Britain was thenceforth the head of the resistance to France, and the paymaster of the coalitions formed against her. The British fleet guarded the seas, and British subsidies enabled Prussia, Austria, and other countries to maintain the war by land. The contest, in one aspect, was the last stage of the war between France and England for colonial and maritime empire. In another aspect it was the struggle of two systems of political liberty, the orderly, conservative, practical system of England, against the tumultuous, democratic, theoretical system of revolutionary France.

The tide of success that followed the battle of Valmy was of short duration. By March, 1793, invasions of France had begun from the north, south, and east. The shock of these events rudely awakened the enthusiasts of the Convention. A call for

300,000 troops, to be raised if necessary by conscription, led to an insurrection in the district called La Vendee (vaN-da) in western France. This was directed at first against conscription, but was soon turned into a priestly and royalist reaction. In the Convention the quarrels between the Girondists and the Mountain grew ever more bitter. Paris suffered from constant scarcity of food and high prices; and the Girondists were loath to enact the stringent laws for governmental regulation that their opponents demanded. The populace of Paris, in patriotic frenzy, at last took the government of the city and the command of the civic troops entirely into its own hands. The stage was thus set for the next act in the drama of the French Revolution, the overthrow of the incompetent Girondists, and the establishing of the Reign of Terror.

The Reign Of Terror

The crisis in the quarrel between the Mountain and the Girondists came on June 2, 1793. On that day, the Parisian mob, supported by the National Guard, invaded the hall of the Convention and demanded the arrest of the Girondist leaders. The demand was perforce complied with, and the Girondists as a political party ceased to exist. Their fall was due to the conviction that they were impractical visionaries, and that their rule in the Convention was the chief obstacle to unity and efficiency in the government.⁴ The Convention, now entirely under the control of the Mountain, drew up a republican constitution and submitted it to the people for ratification. This constitution was adopted, but it never came into force. The military situation at the time was too critical for the Convention

to lay down its power; and when the crisis was past, new ideas of government prevailed.

As a result of the overthrow of the constitution of 1791, and the suspension of the one framed to take its place, the whole government was left in the hands of the Convention.⁵ To use this power there was created a new executive body, in the form of a secret Committee of Public Safety. The formation of this committee marks the beginning of a reaction to secure greater unity and strength in the government, which had been weakened in the earlier stages of the revolution. It was composed of twelve members of the Convention, who at first were to hold office for only a month at a time. Soon, however, they were continued from month to month. The creation of this body was largely the work of Danton, though he did not long continue a member. His work was chiefly in the Convention, whose members he aroused to energetic action. “We must dare,” he cried, “and dare again and ever dare, and France is saved!” Robespierre was the Committee’s most conspicuous member, because of his reputation for incorruptibility and his popularity in the Jacobin club. Its real work, however, was performed by others. Of these, the most notable person was Carnot (car-no’), who by his efficiency gained the enviable name of “Organizer of Victory.”

From September, 1793, to July, 1794, the Committee of Public Safety ruled France almost despotically. Practically all power passed into its hands, and the Convention became little more than its mouthpiece. The Committee organized and fed the armies, directed the military operations, and put down internal

disaffection with a stern hand.

Representatives of the Committee (called “Deputies on mission”) accompanied the armies to watch over the generals, thus guarding against disloyalty and infusing greater zeal into their efforts. By the same means, the elected local governments throughout France were practically suspended, everything being managed by these agents of the Committee. During the time that the Committee of Public Safety was in full power, it put fourteen armies in the field, and expelled from France its foreign invaders.

The chief means used to break resistance at home was the Reign of Terror. The menace of the guillotine fell upon all who incurred the popular wrath, or whom policy or ambition found in the way. Two laws, passed in September, 1793, constituted the basis of the system. By the Law of the Suspects, all persons might be accused who, “by their conduct, by their relations, or by their conversation or writings, have shown themselves partisans of tyranny or federalism (i.e. of the Girondists) and enemies of liberty.” The only safety for former nobles or royalists, and their families, lay in attachment to the revolution. The Law of the Maximum, in defiance of the teachings of political economy, fixed the prices in paper money at which provisions, clothing, firewood, tobacco, etc., must be sold. The possibility of prosecution under this law extended the Terror to the petty tradesmen. To judge persons accused under these acts, as well as those accused of other political offenses, a Revolutionary Tribunal was set up, whose almost invariable sentence was death. Through the “Deputies on mission” the Terror was extended into every part of

France. In some places (as at Nantes, where prisoners were drowned wholesale) the deputies abused their powers. But revolt was suppressed, and internal peace restored.

At Paris the number of executions by the Revolutionary Tribunal increased rapidly. It became the established custom to send batches of prisoners to the guillotine each day. At first the average was only three victims a week. Then it rose to thirty-two. In June and July, 1794, the number of victims reached one hundred and ninety-six a week. Among the early victims of the Terror were the queen (Marie Antoinette), together with twenty-one of the fallen Girondist leaders. The total number who perished by the guillotine at Paris was over 2,500. To these must be added about 12,000 who perished, with or without the semblance of a trial, in the provinces.

Two points concerning the Terror should be noted, (1) It was in no sense the work of a mob, but was a government policy gradually adopted. Designed at first to crush the enemies of the republic, it was perverted to party and personal ends. (2) Outside of the Vendee, rural France suffered very little. Even at Paris the great majority of the people was unaffected, and went about their occupations and amusements as usual.

At the height of the Terror, there were twenty-three theaters open nightly, and some sixty places for dancing.

From two quarters in the Mountain itself, the Committee of Public Safety met with opposition, (1) the extreme radicals of the Commune of Paris under the leadership of Hebert (a-bar'), the editor of a coarse and violent journal, clamored for

more bloodshed. They attacked the rich as the enemies of the people, closed the churches, and set up with wild orgies the worship of "the goddess Reason." These excesses led Robespierre (who was a deist) to denounce the Hebertists as atheists. When they attempted an insurrection of the city, they were seized, condemned, and guillotined (March, 1794). (2) Danton, on the other hand, soon opposed the Committee because he believed the Terror had accomplished its work, had gone too far, and now (thanks to French victories) was no longer needed. Robespierre seized this opportunity to strike down his rival in popularity. The Committee as a whole aided him, because it wished to insure its power by extending the Terror over the Convention itself. Danton and his chief adherents were therefore arrested, accused of conspiracy, and after the mockery of a trial were hurried to execution (April, 1794).⁴

⁴ Danton was warned of his danger, but declined to use force or to flee. "Better to be guillotined than to guillotine," he said; and also: "Where should I go that I shall not be thought guilty? If France, when she is at last free, casts me from her bosom, what country will give me an asylum?" Probably he was overconfident of his ability to outmatch Robespierre, whom he despised. At his trial he cried out: "Let the cowards who calumniate me confront me. My life! I am weary of it; I long to be quit of it. Men of my stamp have no price. On their foreheads are stamped in ineffaceable characters the seal of liberty, the genius of republicanism." At his execution he said, thinking of his newly wedded wife: "My darling, shall I no more behold thee?" Then he added: "Come, Danton, no weakness." And to the executioner he said: "Show my head to the people. It is worthwhile; they do not see the like every day." Beesly, *Life of Danton*, ch. xxix.

Freed from competitors for public favor, Robespierre proposed to set up a Reign of Virtue, founded upon the teachings of Rousseau. In this new system he himself was to be the principal figure. In order to check atheism, the worship of "the Supreme Being" was established, and Robespierre presided at a great festival of the new cult. He was now at the height of his power, but a reaction was preparing. "Robespierre will follow me: I drag down Robespierre," Danton had predicted. So it

was to prove. Robespierre's colleagues had little sympathy with his fine-spun ideas, and they felt themselves menaced by his ascendancy. On July 27, 1794 his opponents, after a stormy scene, arrested him on the floor of the Convention. He was rescued by the Jacobin club; but his enemies, now rendered desperate, recaptured him. The next day he and his adherents met the fate that they had inflicted upon the Hebertists and the Dantonists. "Not only had his enemies but his colleagues thrown upon him the responsibility for all the atrocities included under the name of the Terror." But the blame, as well as the credit, for its rule belongs chiefly to men of more obscure name.

With the fall of Robespierre, the Terror came to an end. New members were gradually added to the Committee of Public Safety, and the moderate policy for which Danton had pleaded was adopted. The club of the Jacobins was closed, the Law of the Maximum was repealed, and imprisoned deputies were restored to their seats. The four living persons who were chiefly responsible for the Terror were ordered to be deported to French Guiana (April, 1795). In May occurred a revolt, in which the famished Parisian mob broke into the Convention, crying, "Bread, and the Constitution of 1793." Victory over these rioters was followed by new condemnations of Terrorists, and the Mountain as a party was broken up. The middle classes, enriched by the spoils of the revolution, now came to the front; and concealed royalists emerged from their hiding places to take vengeance on their enemies.

While order was restored at home, the

number of France's enemies abroad was reduced. The visionary attempt to establish democracies everywhere was given up, and this broke the league of her foes. In 1795, Prussia and Spain made peace with France at Basel, and recognized the republic. Holland, conquered in 1794-1795, was organized as the Batavian Republic, and brought into close alliance. With Great Britain and Austria, however, the war still continued.

The Directory Established

The leaders of the Convention saw the continued necessity of a permanent executive power possessed of sufficient force and unity to cope with disorder. To secure this, they prepared the "Constitution of the Year III." This was the third constitution to be adopted, and was the second to go into force. Its chief provisions were:

1. The executive power was entrusted to a Directory of five members, chosen by the legislature.
2. The legislature was to consist of two houses, the members of which were elected for three years.
3. Only those citizens who paid direct taxes and had a fixed residence were allowed to vote.

The new constitution sought to guard at the same time against mob rule and against the despotism of an individual. "There should never be another Robespierre; almost every line of the Constitution emits that cry."

To guard themselves against proscription, and to check royalist intrigues, the Convention decreed that two thirds of the first members of the legislature must be elected from among

their own ranks. This provision provoked what was practically the last of the revolutionary revolts of Paris, the rising of October 5, 1795. It was an insurrection of the middle classes and royalist sympathizers. The defense of the Convention was placed in the hands of a young artillery officer, Napoleon Bonaparte, who had lately been dismissed from employment because of his refusal to accept an unsatisfactory appointment. Bonaparte's cannon did terrible execution on the advancing columns of the mob, and the revolt was put down. This "whiff of grapeshot" taught Paris that the day of riot and mob rule was a thing of the past.

The Convention then made the necessary arrangements for the new government, and quietly disbanded. Its last act was an amnesty for political offenses committed since the beginning of the republic. The new government was entirely in the hands of men of moderate opinions. The Directors chosen had all been members of the Convention, and had voted for the execution of the king. Only one of them (Carnot) had been a member of the Committee of Public Safety.

Within seven years, France had experienced almost every form of government. The absolutism of the Old Regime had given way to a weak

constitutional monarchy; this in turn had been followed by a republic in which practically all power was vested in an unwieldy Assembly (1792-1793); and following this came the executive despotism of the Committee of Public Safety, and the Reign of Terror (1793-1794). Leaders representing all shades of political liberty as Mirabeau, the Girondists, Danton, and Robespierre had succeeded one another. The excess of freedom had wrought its cure. France was now prepared to try a government that promised strength of executive, with reasonable liberty, fraternity, and equality. The mistakes and atrocities of the revolution, the mob violence, the Terror, the revolutionary propaganda, and the theatrical worship of Reason and of the Supreme Being were in part due to the emotional, volatile temperament of the French. In part, also, they were due to the lack of opportunity, under the Old Regime, to acquire experience in managing their own affairs.

It remained for the future to show whether the new government would be strong enough to maintain order at home and secure peace abroad; or whether, upon the ruins of its policies, there should arise a new monarchy based on military power, successful intrigue, and the will of the people.