Chapter 19

A Revolution in Politics: The Era of the French Revolution and Napoleon

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, students will focus on:

- The causes and results of the American Revolution, and its impact on Europe
- The long-range and immediate causes of the French Revolution
- The main events of the French Revolution between 1789 and 1799
- The role of lawyers, peasants, women, the clergy, the Jacobins, the sans-culottes, the French Revolutionary Army, and the Committee of Public Safety in the French Revolution
- The aspects of the Revolution preserved by Napoleon, and those he destroyed
- The similarities, and differences between the French Revolution, the American Revolution, and the English revolution of the seventeenth century

Lecture Outline

I. The American Revolution
   A. Reorganization, Resistance, and Rebellion
      1. Britain’s victory in the Seven Years’ War
      2. 50% of adult male population can vote
      3. Indirect political representation in England
      4. “No taxation without representation”
      5. Boston Tea Party
   B. War for Independence
      1. Thomas Paine, Common Sense, 1776
      2. Declaration of Independence, 1776
      3. Battle of Saratoga, 1777
         a. Commitment of European aid
         1. Battle of Yorktown, 1781
         2. Peace of Paris, 1783
   II. The American Revolution (cont)
      A. Forming a New Nation
         1. Articles of Confederation, 1781-1789
         2. Constitution, 1789
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A. Bill of Rights, 1791

B. Impact of the American Revolution on Europe
   1. Concept of freedom
   2. Concept of rights

III. Background to the French Revolution
   1. Social Structure of the Old Regime
      a. First and Second Estates
         (1) First Estate = clergy (130,000)
         (2) Second Estate = nobility (350,000)
      2. The Third Estate
         a. Commoners
            (1) Peasants = 75-80% of the population
            (2) Peasants own 35-40% of the land
         b. Skilled artisans, shopkeepers, and wage earners
         c. Bourgeoisie (middle class)
            (1) Own 20-25% of the land
            (2) Similarities between wealthier bourgeoisie and nobility

IV. Other Problems Facing the French Monarchy
   A. Bad Harvests (1787 and 1788)
   B. Poverty
      1. One-third of the population was poor
   C. Ideas of the Philosophes
      1. Criticism of privileges of the clergy and nobility
   D. Failure to Reform
      1. Obstruction of reform by the French Parlements
   E. Financial Crisis
      1. Mounting debt
      2. Calonne’s “assembly of notables” (1787)
      3. Summoning of the Estates General (1789)

V. National Assembly
   A. 300 delegates each to the First and Second Estate
   B. 600 delegates to the Third Estate
      1. Strong legal and urban presence
   C. Cahiers de doléances
   D. Estates General meets May 5, 1789
      1. Question of voting by order or head
      2. Abbé Sieyès “What is the Third Estate?”
   E. National Assembly
      1. Constituted, June 17
      2. Tennis Court Oath, June 20
   F. Intervention of the Common People
      1. Attack on the Bastille, July 14
      2. Peasant rebellions, July 19-August 3
      3. Great Fear
VI. Destruction of the Old Regime
   A. Seigneurial rights abolished, August 4, 1789
   B. *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*
      1. August 26
      2. Does this include women?
      3. Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*, 1791
   C. The Women’s March to Versailles
      1. October 5, 1789
      2. Return of the king to Paris
   D. The Catholic Church
      1. Civil Constitution of the Clergy, July, 1790
   E. A New Constitution
      1. Establishment of a constitutional monarchy with real power residing in the Legislative Assembly
      2. Administrative restructuring
   F. Opposition from Within
      1. Growth of opposition to new order
         a. Clergy
         b. Peasants
         c. Radical political clubs
            (1) Jacobins
      2. Continuing financial pressure
      3. Composition of Legislative Assembly
   G. Opposition from Abroad
      1. Declaration of Pillnitz (1791)
      2. Declaration of war on Austria, April 20, 1792
      3. Early course of the war

VII. The Radical Revolution
   A. National Convention, September 1792
      1. Universal male suffrage
      2. Abolition of the monarchy, September 21
   B. Domestic Crisis
      1. Factions
         a. Girondins
         b. The Mountain
      2. Execution of Louis XVI, January 21, 1793
      3. Counterrevolution
   C. Foreign Crisis
      1. Military losses
   D. A Nation in Arms
      1. Mobilization of the nation

VIII. The Reign of Terror & Its Aftermath
   A. Committee of Public Safety and Reign of Terror
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French Revolution and Napoleon

I. July 1793-July 1794
II. Vendée
A. “Republic of Virtue”
   1. Price controls
   2. Women
B. Dechristianization and a New Calendar
   1. New calendar
C. Equality and Slavery
   1. Revolt in Saint Dominigue
D. Decline of the Committee of Public Safety
   1. Execution of Maximilien Robespierre, July 28, 1794

IX. Reaction and the Directory
A. Thermidorian Reaction and the Directory
B. Curtails much of the Terror’s policies
C. Conservative turn of the Revolution
D. Constitution of 1795
   1. Five person Directory
   2. Period of stagnation

X. Age of Napoleon
A. Rise of Napoleon
   1. Born in Corsica, 1769
   2. Commissioned a lieutenant, 1785
   3. Promoted to brigadier general, 1794
   4. Victory in Italy, 1797
   5. Defeat in Egypt, 1799
   6. Coup d’état

XI. The Republic and the Empire
A. Republic of France proclaimed, 1799
   1. First Consul
   2. First Consul for life, 1802
   3. Crowned Emperor Napoleon I, 1804
B. Domestic Policies of Emperor Napoleon
   1. Napoleon and the Catholic Church
      a. Concordat of 1801
   2. A New Code of Laws
      a. Code Napoleon (Civil Code)
   3. The French Bureaucracy
      a. Centralization of administration
   4. Growing despotism

XII. Napoleon’s Empire and the European Response
A. Peace of Amiens, 1802
B. Renewal of war, 1803
C. Military victories, 1805-1807
D. Napoleon’s Grand Empire
1. Failure of the Grand Empire
   a. Problems: Great Britain and Nationalism
      (1) Survival of Britain
      (2) Seapower
      (3) Continental System, 1806-1807
      (4) Nationalism

XIII. The Fall of Napoleon
   A. Invasion of Russia, 1812
   B. Defeat of Napoleon, April 1814
   C. Exiled to Elba
   D. Escape, 1815
   E. Battle of Waterloo, June 18, 1815
   F. Exiled to St. Helena

Lesson Plan

AP Standards
1. Intellectual and Cultural History
   - Changes in religious thought and institutions
   - Secularization of learning and culture
   - Relationship to social values and political events
   - Developments in social, economic, and political thought, including ideologies characterized as “-isms,” such as socialism, liberalism, and nationalism
   - The diffusion of new intellectual concepts among different groups
   - Developments in elite and popular culture: religion, family, work, and ritual

2. Political and Diplomatic History
   - The rise and functioning of the modern state
   - Relations between Europe and the world: colonialism
   - Political elites, and the development and ideologies of political parties
   - The extension and limitation of rights and liberties
   - Forms of political protest, reform, and revolution
   - Relationship between domestic and foreign policies
   - Efforts to restrain conflict: treaties, diplomacy, international organizations
   - War and conflict: origins, developments, technology, and consequences

3. Social and Economic History
   - The shift in social structures, and changing distribution of wealth and poverty
Changing definitions and attitudes toward social groups, classes, races, and ethnicities within and outside Europe

**Suggested Time**
2 traditional classes or 1 block — The entire chapter covers AP material.

**Assessment**
See Tutorial Quiz for Chapter 19 at www.thomsonedu.com/history/spielvogel.

**Glossary**

**Bicameral legislature:** a legislature with two houses.

**Civil rights:** the basic rights of citizens including equality before the law, freedom of speech and press, and freedom from arbitrary arrest.

**Continental System:** Napoleon’s effort to bar British goods from the Continent in the hope of weakening Britain’s economy and destroying its capacity to wage war.

**Direct representation:** a system of choosing delegates to a representative assembly in which citizens vote directly for the delegates who will represent them.

**Nation in arms:** the people’s army raised by universal mobilization to repel the foreign enemies of the French Revolution.

**Natural rights:** certain inalienable rights to which all people are entitled; include the right to life, liberty, and property, freedom of speech and religion, and equality before the law.

**Old regime/old order:** the political and social system of France in the eighteenth century before the Revolution.

**Philosophes:** intellectuals of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment who believed in applying a spirit of rational criticism to all things, including religion and politics, and who focused on improving and enjoying this world, rather than on the afterlife.

**Revolution:** a fundamental change in the political and social organization of a state.

**Sans-culottes:** the common people who did not wear the fine clothes of the upper classes (sans-culottes means “without breeches”) and played an important role in the radical phase of the French Revolution.

See interactive Flashcards for Chapter 19 at www.thomsonedu.com/history/spielvogel.
Lecture and Discussion Topics

2. Personalities and Politics: The Role of Individuals in the French Revolution.
4. The Origins of Total War in the Era of the French Revolution and Napoleon.
5. Napoleon: The Man, the General, the Leader, and the Myth.
6. Which Is It to Be? The American Revolution as Culmination of Enlightenment or Prelude to Radical Upheaval in Europe.

Group Work Suggestions and Possible Projects

1. Have students write an essay comparing and contrasting the American Revolution with the French Revolution.
2. Have students debate the issue of whether the American Revolution was a necessary precondition for the French Revolution.
3. Have students research the ideas and principles that were birthed by the French Revolution. Which of these ideas do we hold dear to us today (i.e., egalitarian democracy, women's rights, etc.)?
4. Have students investigate the role of women in the French Revolution, especially mass female public protests and “the march to Versailles.”
5. Suggest students debate the issue of whether Napoleon was a great man or a great villain.
6. Have students analyze the defeats of Napoleon. Could he have succeeded? How? What would Europe be like had he been victorious?
7. Ask student to look at the causes and effects of the French Revolution from 1789 through the fall of Napoleon to determine which of the causes were addressed, what issues were not dealt with, and if, on balance, the revolution was “worth it.” The American Revolution might be considered to give an additional comparative perspective.
See online simulations and At the Movies activities in the Western Civilization Resource Center at www.wadsworth.com/history.

Media Menu


Handout Masters & Black Line Transparency Masters

See Multimedia Manager and Instructor’s Resource CD-ROM with ExamView® Computerized Testing.

Test Bank

For an online Test Bank, see Chapter 19 in Instructor Resources at www.thomsonedu.com/history/spielvogel.

Suggested Readings

See comprehensive list of suggested readings at the end of Chapter 19.

Web Exercises

See Internet Exercises for Chapter 19 at www.thomsonedu.com/history/spielvogel.

Document Based Questions

Directions: The following question is based on the listed documents, available on the corresponding pages in your textbook. Some of the documents have been edited or excerpted. You will be graded based upon the Advanced Placement European History standards for Document Based Questions (DBQs). According to the College Board, DBQs are designed to test your ability to:

…understand some of the principal themes in modern European history, analyze historical evidence and historical interpretation, and express historical understanding in writing.
Part A: Answer the questions that pertain to each document. The questions are designed to help build your understanding of the documents and develop your ability to analyze documents during the beginning of the course. Some of the questions ask you to utilize knowledge outside of the documents. Although you are not required to use outside knowledge on the exam, outside historical context may earn you a higher score. The Advanced Placement examination and DBQs in later chapters will not contain these questions.

Part B: The Advanced Placement examination will require you to write an essay based on a series of documents. You will see the following instructions on the examination:

Write an essay that:
- Has a relevant thesis and supports that thesis with evidence from the documents.
- Uses a majority of the documents.
- Analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible.
- Does not simply summarize the documents individually.
- Takes into account both the sources of the documents and the authors’ points of view.

You may refer to relevant historical information not mentioned in the documents.

Question: Using the documents and illustrations, assess the effectiveness of the French Revolution in achieving its goals. What were the causes of the French Revolution? To what extent did the Revolution address these causes?

Background: Through most of the 18th century, the old absolutist regime held power in France. The Enlightenment, an intellectual movement of rationalism and secularism, challenged this order. Although the Enlightenment was centered in France, it first sparked the American Revolution. As the 18th century drew to a close, however, the French monarchs could no longer contain the forces of change and France exploded into revolution.

Part A Questions

A. Document: The Argument for Independence
- What arguments does Jefferson make for independence?
- To what extent did Enlightenment ideas influence the Declaration of Independence?
- What role did the French play in the American Revolution?
- How did the American Revolution contribute to the French Revolution?

B. Illustration: The Three Estates
• What are the three estates of France?
• What is happening in this illustration?
• What is the artist saying about the socio-economic conditions in France?

C. Illustrations: The Tennis Court Oath
• How was representation determined in the National Assembly?
• Why did the Third Estate meet in the tennis court?
• What did they vow there?
• How does Jacques-Louis David represent the Tennis Court Oath?

D. Document: The Fall of the Bastille
• Why was the Bastille attacked?
• How did the royal troops trick the people?
• What role did women and children play in the attack?
• What did the people do once they took the Bastille?

E. Document: Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen
• What “natural rights” does this document proclaim?
• To what extent was this document influenced by the writings of the philosophes?
• What role did this document play in the French Revolution?
• How does this document compare to the American Declaration of Independence?

F. Document: Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen
• What rights for women are identified in this document?
• Why did the author believe there existed a need to enunciate these rights separately from the “Rights of Man?”

G. Illustration: The Women’s March to Versailles
• What roles did women play in the French Revolution?
• What rights did the French Revolution bring to women?

H. Document: Justice in the Reign of Terror
• In what way were the condemned brought to the executioner?
• How were people executed? Why?
• To what extent did the Reign of Terror reflect or reject Enlightenment ideas?

I. Document: Robespierre and Revolutionary Government
• What is the purpose of revolutionary government, according to Robespierre?
• What differences between revolutionary and constitutional government does Robespierre identify?
• How does Robespierre justify the use of violence in revolutionary government?
• To what extent would Enlightenment philosophes agree or disagree with these principles?
J. Napoleon and Psychological Warfare
   • What Enlightenment themes did Napoleon use to play upon the emotions of his troops and inspire them to greater efforts?
   • To what extent of his use of Enlightenment themes genuine and to what extent is it hypocritical?

K. The Man of Destiny
   • What conditions existed in France before his rule, according to Napoleon?
   • How does Napoleon describe himself?
   • To what extent is Napoleon’s theory of the “Great Man” a rejection of revolutionary ideals?
   • In what ways did Napoleon fulfill or break the promises of the Revolution?