CAUSES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Vocabulary: political, economic, social, oath

The French Revolution of 1789, is one of the most important events in European history. It had a great effect on France, Europe and the rest of the world.

The chart below explains some of the causes of the French Revolution.

POLITICAL CAUSES: King Louis XVI was an absolute monarch who ruled by Divine Right. He placed hundreds of people in jail and killed others. Nobles had all the power. There was no democracy. In addition, Louis XVI’s wife, Marie Antoinette* as very unpopular with the French because she spent a lot of money and she was a German.

SOCIAL CAUSES: There were three (3) classes of people in France. The First Estate was the Church. Members of the Church paid no taxes. The Church owned 20% of the land. The Second Estate were the nobles. They had all the best jobs in the country and they owned most of the land. They also paid no taxes. The Third Estate was made up of 97% of the people (peasants, workers, middle class). They had no special rights. They did pay all the taxes.

ECONOMIC CAUSES: The Third Estate had to pay all the taxes, even though the nobles and the Church had most of the wealth. In addition, the country was broke because Louis XIV spent so much.

July 14, 1789. The French people capture the Bastille in Paris. The Bastille was a prison. The attack on the Bastille started the French Revolution.
Louis XVI asked the Estate General (French Legislature) for more money. Since each class was equal in the Estates-General, the First and the Second Estate joined together and voted 2-1 to tax the Third Estate. The Third estate refused to accept the vote. They left the Estates-General and went to a Tennis Court where they promised to change France and make it more democratic. Stories began that King Louis XVI was calling out the army to arrest the members of the Third Estate at the Tennis Court. Thousands of French attacked the Bastille and captured it. That date was July 14, 1789, and it is known as Bastille Day in France. It is the day the French Revolution started.

QUESTIONS:

1. Look at the cartoon to the right. It was printed in France in 1789. Who are the people in the cartoon? What are they doing? Who do you think drew the cartoon? Explain your answer.

2. List one Political, one Social and one Economic cause for the French Revolution?

3. Why did the Third Estate leave the Estates-General?

4. Why is Bastille Day a national holiday in France?
REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE 1789-1800

Vocabulary: republic, reign, terror, executed, national

When the Bastille fell on July 14, 1789, the Old Regime (the old way of life) in France fell also. The Third Estate took power. They made many changes in France. Some of the changes are listed below.

ECONOMIC CHANGES:
1. Everybody in the country had to pay taxes.
2. Land was taken from the Catholic Church and sold to farmers.

POLITICAL CHANGES:
1. France ended the monarchy and it became a REPUBLIC.
2. All men were treated equally. The estate system ended.
3. A REIGN OF TERROR started. In the Reign of Terror thousands of people were arrested because the government thought they might be against the revolution. Many were EXECUTED. The most famous executions were of Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette.

Louis XVI head is held so the crowd of people could see it.
SOCIAL CHANGES:
1. The new government stopped putting people into prison because they owed money.
2. Public schools were started for all children.

RELIGIOUS CHANGES:
1. The Catholic Church in France became the NATIONAL Church. This means that the French government controlled the Church.
2. All people were given freedom of religion.
3. French people no longer had to pay taxes to the Catholic Church.
4. The Pope lost all his power in the French Catholic Church.

Questions:
1. Listed below are five groups of people that lived at the time of the French Revolution. For each group explain how they felt about the French Revolution.
   A. Middle Class.    B. Bishops in the Catholic Church
   C. Nobles.      D. Poor people     E. Kings in other countries

2. What was the Reign of Terror?

3. Should Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette have been executed? Explain your answer.

Directions: On a separate piece of paper. Explain in detail the following.

An artist who watched the executions made this drawing of Marie Antoinette just before she was beheaded.

What do you think she was thinking about?
In 1792, the new lawmakers faced threats from outside France. Prussia and Austria went to war with France to aid the royal family. Later, Britain, Spain, and the Netherlands joined the fight against France.

Jacobins. A powerful extremist group called the Jacobins convinced the French people that King Louis XVI had plotted with Austria and Prussia. Their aim was to overthrow the revolutionaries and restore the king's rule. The Jacobins forced the Assembly to arrest the king and queen. (The queen was Marie Antoinette, the daughter of Maria Theresa of Austria and the sister of Emperor Joseph II) Then the Assembly called for new elections to choose representatives for a National Convention. (Almost all males over 21 were allowed to vote.) The Convention drew up a new constitution and created the First French Republic.

Patriotism. Although the Jacobins created a dictatorship and fostered great fear among the people, they did stimulate patriotism. The majority of people at last felt that the privileges of the aristocracy had ended. They were inspired by the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Pride was stirred by a song called "The Marseillaise," which became the French national anthem. The people stood together to save France from its enemies. By 1795, French armies had not only defended the nation but had also conquered parts of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany.

The Directory. In 1795, another constitution placed France under the control of the Directory, a five-member committee. The Directory proved to be corrupt and inefficient. It could not solve the serious financial problems of the country. Furthermore, in 1798, the enemies of France gained new strength. Britain, in control of the seas, persuaded other countries to join the fight against France. In 1799, French armies lost land battles in Italy, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. The future looked dark.

Directions: Answer the following question on separate paper.
1. Under Jacobin rule, did the French government put into practice the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity? Explain your answer in paragraph form.
French Revolution

I. Reign of Terror 1793-1794
   A. Led by radicals
      1. Robespierre, Danton, Marat
      2. resulted from concerns about traitors after the war began
   B. Terror in France
      1. the terror led to the executions of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette
         a) about 40,000 others were also killed
         b) on the “guillotine”

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<tr>
<th>French Society Before the Revolution</th>
<th>French Society After the Revolution</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Catholic Church is the largest landowner in France</td>
<td>1. Church lands are taken from Church and distributed to those who had been renting/working those lands.</td>
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<td>3. Most peasants were serfs (rented farmland in exchange for a percentage of their crops) who were often abused and swindled by wealthy landowners.</td>
<td>3. Serfs revolted against wealthy noble landowners and seized their property.</td>
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<td>4. French king, Louis XIV, rules with almost total control. French Congress (AKA Estates General) is controlled by the wealthy and powerful 1st and 2nd Estates Catholic Church is the largest landowner in France</td>
<td>4. Political power is mostly removed from the king. The Estates General, led by the 3rd Estate, now hold most of the political power.</td>
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