

# The French Revolution 1789-1815

1. Moderate Phase - National Assembly
2. Radical Phase - Reign of Terror
3. Reaction - Directory
4. Age of Napoleon

## **The Three Estates**

### **First Estate- CLERGY**

- considered highest on the social ladder
- possessed an enormous amount of power
- made up .5% of the population
- owned 10% of all the land in France
- \*Not required to pay taxes\***

### **Second Estate- NOBLES**

- made up 1.5% of the population
- the richest of the nobility held top jobs in government, army, courts
- \*Not required to pay taxes\***

Although the Second Estate was considered to be the nobility there were some that were poor, many had some wealth, and a few were filthy rich.

Both the First Estate and Second Estate did not want anything to change in France unless there was chance they could gain more political power.

### **Third Estate**

**98% of the population** → many different groups of people

**Top-BOURGEOISIE**-middle class

-bankers-merchants-lawyers-doctors-journalists-professors

**Middle-PEASANTS-9/10 people in class**

**Bottom-CITY WORKERS**

- overworked and underpaid
- objected the most to the living conditions & politics in Fr
- became known as the sans culottes because of the way they dressed and their support for the French Revolution

**\*\*REQUIRED TO PAY TAXES\*\***

## **ENLIGHTENMENT**

-people start to question the inequalities of Fr. society

Why should the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Estates enjoy privileges at the expense of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate?

**Doesn't meet the test of reason**

## ECONOMIC CRISIS

**Deficit spending**-government spending more than it takes in

→ debt

- war-American Revolution
- loans-need to be paid back with interest
- poor harvests → not enough food → prices soar → hunger
- extravagant spending
  - Louis XIV built the Palace at Versailles

## WEAK LEADERSHIP

-Louis XIV-responsible for most of France's debt

-Louis XV-only made debt worse

-Louis XVI-

- weak & indecisive
- wouldn't stand up to the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Estates

## FAILURE TO REFORM

-Louis XVI hires an advisor-Jacques Necker

- suggests a reduction in spending & taxing the First & Second Estate
  - fires advisor

-still under pressure to reform → Louis XVI calls a meeting of the Estates General

-all 3 Estates prepare **cahiers**-notebooks listing their grievances for the meeting in May 1789

-voting problem

- each estate would meet separately and vote as a group → each estate had one vote
  - the First & Second estate would always outvote the Third estate 2 to 1
  - the Third Estate wanted to meet together as a single body with votes counted by head
- new voting procedure rejected
  - claiming they represented the people of France the Third estate declared themselves the National Assembly
  - delegates from the First & Second estate are invited to join the National Assembly
- few days later the National Assembly finds its meeting hall locked
  - gather at a nearby tennis court instead
  - take the Tennis Court Oath
    - promise not to disband until they have a written constitution for France

The Third Estate had taken a peaceful first step in a revolution that would transform France!!

## Storming of the Bastille

-Louis brings troops to the palace at Versailles

- Many fear he plans to dissolve the National Assembly
- Commoners saw Louis's attempts to interfere with the National Assembly as a direct attack on their rights
  - attempt to seize arms at the Bastille
- commander killed and his head paraded through the streets on a pike

**July 14, 1789 marks the storming of the Bastille--now Bastille Day**

**Becomes the symbol of the French Revolution**

## Reforms Under the National Assembly

*1<sup>st</sup> step towards a constitution-* **A Declaration of the Rights of Man & Citizen**

*-similar to America's Declaration of Independence*

- *all men have natural rights*
- *it is the job of government to protect the natural rights of the people*
- *guarantees all male citizens equality under the law*
- *people are free to practice any religion they choose*
- *tax people according to what they could afford*

*\*\*principles of the declaration are summed up in the slogan of the revolution\*\**

***"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"***

**March on Versailles**-October 1789-crowd of women march to Versailles

- *angry over the price of bread*
- *concerned that the king & queen were secretly plotting against the National Assembly*
  - *they demand that the royal family return with them to Paris where they could be watched over*

**Religious Reforms**-1790-the Civil Constitution of the Clergy

*-The French government takes control over the Catholic Church*

*Need to raise \$ → government starts to sell church land*

*→ Catholics had supported the revolution but will now condemn it*