

# The French Revolution

*An Age of Revolutions*  
(1750–1914)



The *ancien régime*

Reform and terror

Emperor Napoleon

## Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Religion and thought



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

**Icons:** For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will have learned about the progression of the French Revolution and know about the following key points:

- The reforms of the National Assembly
- Rising radicalism
- Key players
- Impacts of the Revolution.



# Liberty, equality, fraternity



In 1789, the **National Constituent Assembly** abolished the feudal dues peasants paid nobles, the **tithe**, and the privileges of the First and Second Estates. It declared that local officials would be elected instead of appointed by the king and also seized Church land and sold it.

All men were declared equal before the law, had the right to a fair trial, had freedom of speech, and could hold public office.



DÉCLARATION DES DROITS DE LA FEMME ET DE LA CITOYENNE,  
*Adoptée par l'Assemblée nationale dans ses dernières séances ou dans celle de la prochaine législature.*

P R É A M B U L E.

Les mères, les filles, les sœurs, représentantes de la nation, demandent d'être constituées en assemblée nationale. Considérant que l'ignorance, l'oubli ou le mépris des droits de la femme, sont les seules causes des maux publics et de la corruption des gouvernements, ont résolu d'exposer dans une déclaration solennelle, les droits naturels, inaliénables et sacrés de la femme, afin que cette déclaration, constamment présente à tous les membres du corps social, leur rappelle sans cesse leurs droits et leurs devoirs, afin que les actes du pouvoir des femmes, et ceux du pouvoir des hommes pouvant être à chaque instant comparés avec le but de toute institution politique, en soient plus respectés, afin que les réclamations des citoyennes, fondées désormais sur des principes simples et incontestables, tournent toujours au maintien de la constitution, des bonnes mœurs, et au bonheur de tous.

En conséquence, le sexe supérieur en beauté comme en courage, dans les souffrances maternelles, reconnaît et déclare, en présence

**Olympe de Gouges** wrote the **Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen**, but the all-male National Assembly refused to adopt her declaration.

To what extent were liberty and equality increased?



Several key individuals were responsible for causing and leading the French Revolution and the National Assembly. Can you match each revolutionary to his photograph and description?

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





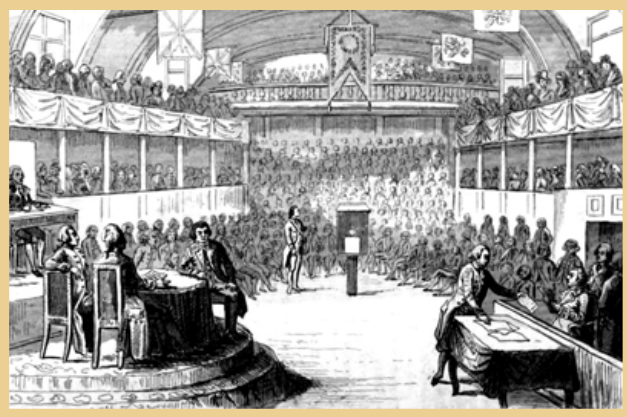


# Constitutional monarchy



In October 1789, the King was called back to Paris and his power became subject to law in July 1790 when he accepted the National Constituent Assembly's constitution and France became a **constitutional monarchy**.

At the same time, the **Civil Constitution of the Clergy** was adopted, which transformed the Roman Catholic Church in France into a secular branch of the French government.



In September 1792, the **National Convention**, the ruling legislative body in France, abolished the monarchy. They created the **French First Republic** in its place. This required the writing of a new constitution.

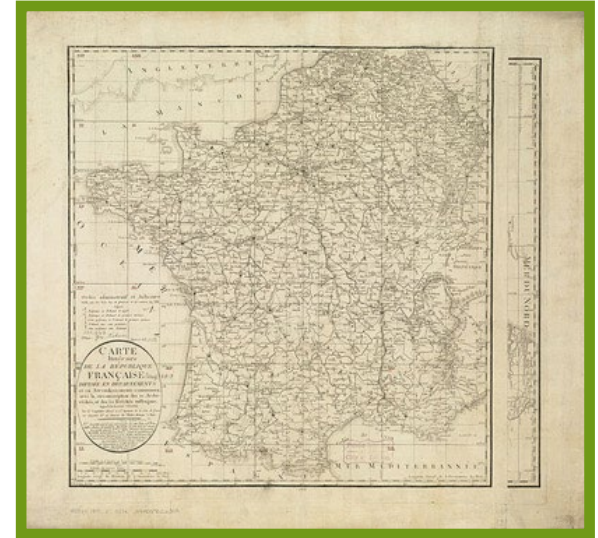




# The French Republic

After the establishment of the French Republic, there was still a great deal of instability in France. Problems included:

- political divisions within France
- fear of counter-revolution within the country
- religious division
- threats from other European countries.



This led to a new, more violent phase of the Revolution. Key events included wars with other nations and the Reign of Terror. The government executed many people, including the king, queen and ultimately many leaders of the revolution.





The **sans-culottes** were radical members of the lower and middle classes who supported the Revolution. They felt that the new government ignored the plight of the average citizen.

They wanted relief from food shortages, price controls and true equality in society and the law.

*Sans-culottes* made up the majority of the revolutionary army. They were keenly aware of their importance in this role and used this position to exert political power.



Do you know why they were called *sans-culottes*?





The Legislative Assembly, the ruling body before the National Convention, was divided into various political groups. Can you match the groups to their location in the Assembly?

More information about each of them can be found by pressing the orange information buttons.

Press **start** to begin.

start



How might these divisions have caused problems?



As well as changes to rule and government and individual rights and freedoms, many changes were made to French society and culture during the French Revolution. Press the buttons to find out about some of the social and cultural changes.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**



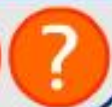


As the Revolution progressed, some of France's neighboring monarchs became worried that revolution would spread into their kingdoms.

Explore the map of Europe to find out how each country was affected by the French Revolution.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**



Why would other countries fear the Revolution?





The Legislative Assembly was replaced by the **National Convention** in September 1792. France faced invasion from foreign powers and many people feared that the nobles who had fled were plotting to overthrow the Revolution.



Due to the situation, the **Committee of Public Safety** was created. It was led by Robespierre and exercised executive power between 1793 and 1794 during the **Reign of Terror**.

This period of violence was marked by the mass execution of thousands of “enemies of the Revolution.”







# The guillotine

The method of execution employed throughout the Revolution and widely associated with it was the **guillotine**. This is a device with a very sharp blade used to decapitate its victims.

Estimates of the number of people executed in this way during the Reign of Terror range from 16,000 to 40,000.

Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and the Girondists were all executed, as were many other nobles, commoners, politicians and intellectuals on little or no grounds. In the end, even Robespierre was subject to its blade.





During the course of the French Revolution, various different government bodies held constitutional and legislative power.

Can you drag the government bodies into chronological order?

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





# The impact of the Revolution



The French Revolution was a landmark historic event in terms of people gaining new freedoms and democracy. However, it had a cost, chiefly that of thousands of lives.



Positions and power were now based on merit rather than birth. The Catholic Church never regained its influence on government. Land was divided more fairly and men had far more rights. Yet the position of women did not change and the price paid in blood was high. In the long term, the French Revolution served as a basis for other revolutions.

Were the gains of the Revolution worth the costs?