

# THE GIANT EHAP REVIEW OUTLINE!

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## The French Revolution

### The Origins of the Revolution

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- The Enlightenment provided the ideology for the Revolution. For decades the *philosophes* questioned accepted political and religious beliefs and advocated for freedom, liberty and reason. Although they neither predicted nor pushed for a revolution, the *philosophes* wished to make people aware that the traditional ways were not always best.
- Also, prior to the Revolution, several sensational lawsuits about the scandalous doings of high aristocrats occurred, and when the information about the trials got out to the reading public, it made the aristocracy and the monarchy appear to be ridiculous despots.
- The French government was undoubtedly corrupt and ineffective. Louis XVI was not suited to be an absolute monarch (he was stupid) and his queen, Marie Antoinette, was hated through the land for her lack of sympathy with the people.
- Although this did not directly lead to Revolution, the most French people were unhappy and oppressed, and did not get enough to eat. This was not directly attributed to the system of government, and the peasants weren't really involved with the Revolution, but the popular discontent did contribute to sparking the flames of Revolution among those who noted the injustice in French society.
- Long-term economic difficulties made it necessary for the king to try to tax the nobility, an act that pretty much set in motion the entire deal.

### The Prelude to the Revolution (1774 – 1789)

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- So, when Louis XVI took the throne in 1774, the monarchy was in a pretty bad shape economically. - **Turgot** (finance minister) tried to make reforms to fix the situation (like removing government restrictions on commerce, cutting down court expenses, and replacing the obligation of peasants to work on royal roads with a small tax on all landholders) but this made him unpopular with the nobles.
- So dumb Louis kicked Turgot out and replaced him with **Necker** who avoided new taxes, which made him popular, but took out huge loans instead, which was bad for the economy. After a while things were so screwed up that the new finance guy, **Calonne**, rightly stated that the monarchy was on the verge of bankruptcy. Calonne came up w/new taxes and proposed to convene provincial assemblies. To support his plan, he called an *Assembly of Notables* but they didn't end up supporting him! Instead (gasp) they denounced the court spending and wanted to audit the accounts.
- Naturally Louis got rid of Calonne and appointed **Archbishop Brienne** (one of the notables) in his place. Brienne submitted Calonne's ideas to the *Parlements*, but they rejected them. Then they demanded that Louis convene the Estates General. Louis responded by attempting to send the *Parlement* into exile, but was forced to back down.
- So, Louis recalled the Parlements and Necker and agreed to convene the EG in 1789...

### The Estates General Meet

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- As the word spread that the EG were going to meet, the liberal ideology began to take shape. People against tradition (they didn't need to be lower class, necessarily) came to be known as patriots.
- The first big issue was the method of voting for the EG. The Third Estate, representing 95% of population, asked to be doubled in size – the king said OK. But as the old method of voting (by order) made the upper chambers outweigh the Third Estate regardless of numbers, the Third Estate felt ripped off (how stupid do you think we are?) and asked for the voting to be conducted by head.
- Before the EG, the king invited the citizens to elect delegates to assemblies. All male taxpayers could vote for electors, who, in turn, chose reps for the Third Estate of the EG. Also, he asked citizens to write grievance petitions – cahiers. Most cahiers dealt with local issues, and gave no hint of the Revolution to come. Only some, from Paris, talked about natural rights and all that stuff. Still, the cahiers and local elections helped make citizens aware of politics.

### The National Assembly (1789 – 1791)

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- **May 5th, 1789** → the EG finally met, for the first time since 1614. But the king only spoke generally and didn't clear up the voting mess.

- **June 17th, 1789** → the Third Estate had enough and proclaimed itself the **National Assembly**. A few days later, most of the clergy joined. The king decided to support the dumb nobles and locked the Third Estate out of its meeting hall.
- **Tennis Court Oath** → on June 20th, the Revolutionaries went to a tennis court and swore that they wouldn't separate until they had given France a constitution.
- The king responded by promising equality in taxation, civil liberties, and regular meetings of the EG but voting would be by order. Then, he ordered the estates to go to their individual meeting halls, but the TE didn't go. Finally, he recognized the NA and (trying to act like it was all his idea) told all the estates to join it. But, he secretly was ordering 20,000 royal troops to the Paris region.
- At the same time as this political stuff, the ordinary citizens were getting mad over food shortages. When they heard rumors of the royal troops, they feared an aristocratic plot to overthrow the NA. And, when the king got rid of Necker (who was popular) on July 11 it was the last straw.
- **July 14th, 1789** → fearing counter-revolution Parisian crowds attacked the Bastille, the 20,000 troops joined (on Rev side), and the Revolutionaries won. At the same time, royal officials in Paris were ousted and were replaced w/a Revolutionary municipality, and a citizens' militia was formed.
- The NA was saved, but the hungry peasants were still hungry and consequently still angry. Starvation and rumors (that nobles were going to destroy the harvest) caused **The Great Fear** in which the peasants attacked nobles and revolted.
- **August 4th, 1789** → in response, the deputies of the clergy and nobility gave up their ancient privileges. In one night, feudalism and *seigneurialism* were abolished for good!
- **August 26th, 1789** → NA writes *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* as the constitution will take a long time to finish. The Declaration established natural rights like freedom of expression, religion, etc. It all comes from Locke and from Rousseau (a little).
- **Civil Constitution of the Clergy** → #1 mistake for Revolutionaries. In 1790, they passed this law that forced clergy to become state employees and take oaths of loyalty to state. 50% clergy obeyed, other 50% didn't, and the pope condemned the action, so many religious people were alienated.
- **Constitution of 1791** → finally, in 1791, the constitution was finished. It established a limited monarchy w/a clear separation of powers. There was a unicameral legislature elected by indirect voting. Every adult male w/minimal taxpaying requirements could vote, w/a higher qualification needed to serve public office.

### *The Legislative Assembly (1791 – 1792)*

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- After the constitution was finished, the NA gave way to the **Legislative Assembly**. B/c of the *Self Denying Ordinance*, no NA members could be in the LA.
- Just as the first LA is about to go into effect, the king escapes! In his unsuccessful **Flight to Varennes** he tries to escape, but is captured. LA decides to keep him anyway, and they go on as if nothing had happened even though everything is messed up.
- Then, the LA makes the dumb decision to go to war w/Austria and Prussia b/c of the **Declaration of Pillnitz** (which wasn't intended as serious anyway). The Girondins feel this will somehow unite the nation, the Royalists hope that they lose (king goes back), and Jacobins want to lose then win.
- **August 10th, 1792** → then, b/c of the **Brunswick Manifesto** the Parisian militants decided to storm the royal palace at the Tuileries. They drove the king from the throne, the LA declared him suspended, and then half the LA escaped as well. Now, without the king, the LA was also illegitimate.

### *The Radical Phase (1792 – 1794)*

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- So, a new government had to be established, as the constitutional monarchy, w/out a monarch, had lost its legitimacy. Temporarily, a **Paris Commune** or city government was created. But this was not enough to maintain order, and in September, hysteria spread by the radical journalists resulted in the **September Massacres**, in which popular tribunals summarily executed thousands of prisoners, who were feared to be counter-revolutionaries.
- The hysteria began to fade when the French won at the **Battle of Valmy** on September 20th. Then, France was declared a Republic, and a National Convention met for the first time.
- **January 21st, 1793** → Louis XVI was guillotined after lengthy deliberations.
- Now, the Convention was being threatened from many different sides (see debate) – including internal rebellions, foreign invasions, economic crisis, factionalism, popular pressure, etc. So, they decided to purge the Girondins and establish a program for public safety.
- **Constitution of 1793** → although this constitution was never put into effect because of the military crisis, in addition to confirming the individual rights laid out in the last constitution (plus the rights of public assistance, education, and even of rebellion to resist oppression), it provided for a legislature elected by the people (men only though) that would also elect the executive.

- The Jacobins swept aside the new constitution, declaring the government “revolutionary until the peace” and instituting the **Reign of Terror**. A twelve-man committee, the **Committee for Public Safety**, was in charge, and the main leaders of the Committee were **Robespierre**, **Danton**, and the ultra radical **Hébert**.
- During the ROT, the French were fighting the foreign wars, and, soon enough, with the strict discipline of the ROT, they began to win.
- But, finally, the ROT culminated in the execution of its own leaders – Danton and Robespierre executed Hébert, Robespierre executed Danton, and then Robespierre himself was overthrown.

### *The Thermidorian Reaction (1794 – 1795) and The Directory (1795 – 1799)*

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- After the fall of Robespierre, the revolutionary committees that had led the ROT were destroyed, the Paris Jacobin Club was closed, and the Convention offered an amnesty to the remaining Girondins. The term **Thermidorian Reaction** refers to the return of conservatism after the ultra-radical phase in the FR and is now applied to any such pattern in other revolutions.
- The anti-Jacobin sentiment grew so strong, in fact, that a **White Terror** erupted against anyone connected with the Jacobins. The social austerity of the old calendar was back, the fancy titles, and all that stuff made their return.
- The last revolutionary uprising occurred in 1795, when the sans-culottes launched a poorly organized revolt (calling for “bread and the constitution of 1793”) and, after two days of street fighting, were overwhelmed by the government.
- In 1795, a new constitution was drafted. It proclaimed a general amnesty and set up a five man executive committee known as the Directory. It also had a two-house legislature. The Directory attempted to stay on the moderate side of everything, and it became incredibly corrupt! It had to overthrow itself after the first general election because a royalist majority won, and things only got worse. By 1799 any semblance of legitimacy was gone, making way for Napoleon...