

Unit #9- French Revolution Reading Questions

Two Views of Napoleon

1. What does Madame de Stael say are Napoleon's only methods of persuasion?
2. What does Marshal Ney say about Napoleon's right to rule as opposed to that of the Bourbon kings?
3. Both these writers speak about Napoleon and people's liberty. How do their views compare?

Maximilien Robespierre

1. What was the general impression, good and bad, of Robespierre's personality?
2. What led to Robespierre's death?
3. Robespierre claimed that violence and dictatorship were necessary for the revolution to succeed. Was the violence of the Terror necessary?

The Royal Family in Prison

1. In what ways were various members of the royal family harassed by the prison guards?
2. In what ways was the young Dauphin treated worse than the others?
3. What picture does Marie-Therese try to give of her parents' and brother's behavior in prison?

On the Execution of a King

1. Which of the two viewpoints makes a better case for or against the execution of King Louis XVI? Examples for each!

Storming the Bastille

1. In Document B, Charles James Fox was mostly likely enthusiastic about the fall of the Bastille because
2. Which document attempts to give an objective view of the storming of the Bastille?
3. In Document C, which words best indicate which side the author is on?

Art of Revolution

1. What elements in each painting express the viewpoint of the artist? How are the elements different?
2. How do you think the ideology of the French Revolution led to the scene Goya portrays here?

Napoleon was a hero to many people in France, but others saw him as a tyrant. One writer who bitterly opposed him—and was exiled from France—was Madame Germaine Necker de Staël (1766–1817). Napoleon’s soldiers, on the other hand, admired him, as the speech made by one of his officers on his return to Paris in 1815 shows.

◆ As you read, think about what may have motivated each writer. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

Two Views of Napoleon

Madame de Staël What particularly characterizes Bonaparte’s government is his profound contempt for all the intellectual riches of human nature: virtue, dignity, religion, enthusiasm; in his eyes they are “the eternal enemies of the continent,” to use his favorite expression. He would like to persuade men by force and by cunning, and he considers all else to be stupidity or folly. . . .

I do not believe that when Bonaparte became head of the government he had yet formulated the plan for a universal monarchy, but I do believe what he himself said to one of my friends, a few days after the 18 Brumaire [the date Napoleon overthrew the Directory]. “It is necessary,” he said, “to do something new every three months, in order to captivate the imagination of the French nation, with whom anyone who stands still is lost.” His system was to encroach [intrude] daily upon France’s liberty and Europe’s independence. . . . By alternating between cunning and force he has subjugated [conquered] Europe.



ILLUSTRATION/PHOTO CREDIT: BETTMANN.

Marshal Michel Ney Officers, sub-officers, soldiers! The cause of the Bourbons is lost forever. The legitimate dynasty France has adopted is about to remount the throne.

To the emperor Napoleon, our sovereign, belongs alone the right to rule over our beautiful country. Whether the Bourbon nobility choose to return to exile or consent to live among us, what does it matter to us? The times are gone when the people were governed by suppressing their rights. Liberty triumphs in the end, and Napoleon, our august emperor, comes to confirm it. Soldiers, I have often led you to victory. Now I would escort you to join this immortal legion which the Emperor Napoleon conducts to Paris, and which in a few days will reach the capital.

Sources: (1) *Ten Years of Exile*, by Madame de Staël, trans. Doris Beik (Saturday Review Press, 1972); (2) *The French Revolution and Napoleon: An Eyewitness History*, by Joe H. Kirchberger (Facts on File, 1985).

Questions to Discuss

1. What does Madame de Staël say are Napoleon’s only methods of persuasion?
2. What does Marshal Ney say about Napoleon’s right to rule as opposed to that of the Bourbon kings?
3. **Making Comparisons** Both these writers speak about Napoleon and people’s liberty. How do their views compare?

The French Revolution reached its peak of violence during the Reign of Terror, when no one felt safe from being arrested and sent to the guillotine to be beheaded. The man in charge of this bloody period was a dedicated revolutionary leader whose tactics finally were his own undoing. ♦ *As you read, think about the motives of those who lead radical political movements. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

1. What was the general impression, good and bad, of Robespierre's personality?

Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794)

Although Robespierre led the bloody Reign of Terror, in the end he was also its victim. Many people admired him for strictly following his ideals of liberty and equality to make France a republic. Many later thought he was a monster.

Robespierre came from northern France and became a brilliant lawyer, who often defended the poor. He entered politics at the age of 30, when he was elected a deputy to the Estates General. He was not a great orator but was evidently a very persuasive speaker in small groups and soon became a leader of the Jacobin Club, which promoted the Revolution. Still, many people found his personality cold, vain, and distant. One said, "I have talked to Robespierre twice. He had something uncanny, never looked into my face, his eyes had a constant, unpleasant twinkle."

In 1792 he became leader of the "Mountain party," the Montagnards; the most radical group in the National Convention. He voted for the execution of the king and attacked more moderate policies like those of the Gironde. In 1793 he tried to overthrow the Girondists and, as riots broke out in Paris, the Reign of Terror began. As head of the Committee of

Public Safety, which was set up to keep the peace, he believed "one will" was needed to achieve the goals of equality. The Committee could accuse anyone it considered a "suspect" and send them to the guillotine. By 1794, with the power to get rid of anyone who opposed him, Robespierre was almost in control of the Revolution.



But things had gone too far for many. To stop the Terror—and to stop Robespierre—a group of his former allies who realized they were next to be eliminated conspired against him. One of them wrote, "He was but one step from becoming the absolute master of the revolution. . . and I had the honor of being on his deathlist."

Violence broke out at a session of the Convention on 9th Thermidor (July 27, 1794). Robespierre angrily tried to regain control, calling those who opposed him scoundrels, but many members shouted, "Down

with the tyrant!" The convention then ordered Robespierre's arrest, crying "Long live the Republic!" As he resisted arrest, he was shot. His younger brother leaped out the window, trying to escape. Both brothers went to the guillotine the following day.

ILLUSTRATION/PHOTO CREDIT: GIRAUDON/ART RESOURCE, NY.

Questions to Think About

2. What led to Robespierre's death?

3. **Using Reasoned Judgment** Robespierre claimed that violence and dictatorship were necessary for the revolution to succeed. Was the violence of the Terror necessary?

Chapter 19

Primary Source Activity

Chapter 2

MODERN ERA
EDITION

The only member of the French royal family to survive the Revolution was the young Marie-Therese Charlotte de France, called "Madame Royale," the daughter of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Along with her parents and her younger brother the Dauphin (1785–1795), she was imprisoned in 1792. The excerpts below are from her memoirs.

◆ As you read, consider the many different ways of viewing the events of French Revolution. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

The Royal Family in Prison

[August 1792]

Because of my brother's health, we went for walks in the garden every day, and almost every time my father was insulted by the guards. Rocher [the doorkeeper] tried to molest my father in every way: he sang the "Carmagnole" [a street song] and other horrors, and in passing blew smoke into his face, knowing that my father was bothered by the smoke. My father suffered all this very gently.

One other day, they sounded alarm during dinner; one thought the foreigners [the Allied army] were coming; this awful Rocher seized his big sabre and told my father: If they come, I will kill you! . . . Simon [her brother's caretaker] abused my brother when he wept because of the separation from us; the child became disturbed and no longer dared to shed any tears. Simon put a red cap on his head and put a Jacobin's coat on him. . . . Several soldiers. . . appeared and. . . insisted that my father should show himself at the window. . . . When my father asked what was going on, one young officer told him: "Well, Monsieur, if you want to know, they want to show you the head of the Princess de Lamballe." My mother [Marie Antoinette] was petrified with horror.



ILLUSTRATION/PHOTO CREDIT: BETTMANN.

On August 2 [1793] they woke us up at two in the morning to read a decree of the Convention to my mother. . . she was brought to the Conciergerie to be put on trial. . . . When she arrived, they put her in the dirtiest, dampest, unhealthiest room of the whole building. She was being watched constantly by a gendarme. . . . Her answer to all these shameful accusations was: "I appeal to all mothers."

The people were touched. The judges. . . hurried to send her to her death. My mother listened to the sentence with great composure.

. . . The young prince was left to the brutal treatment of that monster Simon, a former shoemaker and drunkard. . . . Simon asked him one day: "Capet, if those Vendéens free you, what will you do?" The young king replied: "I shall pardon you." During the winter, my brother suffered several attacks of fever; he was always close to the fire. . . . He grew weaker and weaker and died in agony. . . . I do not believe he was poisoned.

Source: *Memoirs of the Captivity* (1892), in *The French Revolution and Napoleon: An Eyewitness History*, by Joe H. Kirchberger (Facts on File, 1989).

Questions to Think About

1. In what ways were various members of the royal family harassed by the prison guards?
2. In what ways was the young Dauphin treated worse than the others?
3. **Identifying Bias** What picture does Marie-Therese try to give of her parents' and brother's behavior in prison?
4. **Activity** Write a short letter to the editor in which you defend or object to the treatment of the royal family in prison, on the basis of humanitarian views or of the need for revolution.

Vocabulary Builder

radical—(RAD ih kul) *adj.* extreme; departure from the usual or traditional

called for the election of a new legislative body called the National Convention. **Suffrage**, the right to vote, was to be extended to all male citizens, not just to property owners.

The Convention that met in September 1792 was a more **radical** body than earlier assemblies. It voted to abolish the monarchy and establish a republic—the French Republic. Deputies then drew up a new constitution for France. The Jacobins, who controlled the Convention, set out to erase all traces of the old order. They seized lands of nobles and abolished titles of nobility.

During the early months of the Republic, the Convention also put Louis XVI on trial as a traitor to France. The king was convicted by a single vote and sentenced to death. On a foggy morning in January 1793, Louis mounted a scaffold in a public square in Paris. He started to speak, “Frenchmen, I die innocent. I pardon the authors of my death. I pray God that the blood about to be spilt will never fall upon the head of France. . . .” Then a roll of drums drowned out his words. Moments later, the king was beheaded. The executioner lifted the king’s head by its hair and held it before the crowd.

In October, Marie Antoinette was also executed. The popular press celebrated her death. The queen, however, showed great dignity as she went to her death.

✓ **Checkpoint** What occurred after radicals took control of the Assembly?

■ COMPARING VIEWPOINTS

On the Execution of a King

On January 21, 1793, King Louis XVI of France was executed by order of the National Convention. Reaction to this event was both loud and varied throughout Europe. The excerpts below present two different views on this event. **Critical Thinking** Which of the two viewpoints makes a better case for or against the execution of King Louis XVI? Cite examples from both statements to support your argument.



For the Execution

The crimes of Louis XVI are unhappily all too real; they are consistent; they are notorious. Do we even have to ask the question of whether a nation has the right to judge, and execute, its highest ranking public official . . . when, to more securely plot against the nation, he concealed himself behind a mask of hypocrisy? Or when, instead of using the authority confided to him to protect his countrymen, he used it to oppress them? Or when he turned the laws into an instrument of violence to crush the supporters of the Revolution? Or when he robbed the citizens of their gold in order to subsidize their foes, and robbed them of their subsistence in order to feed the barbarian hordes who came to slaughter them? Or when he created monopolies in order to create famine by drying up the sources of abundance so that the people might die in misery and hunger?

—Jean-Paul Marat

Against the Execution

The Republican tyrants of France have now carried their bloody purposes to the uttermost diabolical stretch of savage cruelty. They have murdered their King without even the shadow of justice, and of course they cannot expect friendship nor intercourse with any civilized part of the world. The vengeance of Europe will now rapidly fall on them, and, in process of time, make them the veriest wretches on the face of the earth. The name of Frenchman will be considered as the appellation of savage, and their presence shunned as a poison, deadly destructive to the peace and happiness of Mankind. It appears evident, that the majority of the National Convention, and the Executive Government of that truly despotic country, are comprised of the most execrable villains upon the face of the earth.

—*London Times*, January 25, 1793

Document-Based Assessment

storming the Bastille

One of the most famous and dramatic moments of the French Revolution was the storming of the Bastille. This prison fortress with 90-foot-high walls symbolized the injustices of absolute monarchy. The following documents describe the event from different viewpoints.

Document A

"Shouts of 'Give us the Bastille' were heard, and nine hundred had pressed into the undefended outer courtyard, becoming angrier by the minute. . . . At about half past three in the afternoon the crowd was reinforced by companies of *gardes françaises* [French guards] and by defecting soldiers, including a number who were veterans of the American campaign. Two in particular, Second-Lieutenant Jacob Elie, the standard-bearer of the Infantry of the Queen, and Pierre-Augustin Hulin, the director of the Queen's laundry, were crucial in turning the incoherent assault into an organized siege."

—From *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, (1989) by Simon Schama

Document B

"How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world! and how much the best!"

—Letter, July 30, 1789, by Charles James Fox (1749–1806), British politician, on the fall of the Bastille

Document C

"The mob came closer and the governor declared his willingness to capitulate [give up]. . . . The streets and houses, even the roofs were filled with people abusing and cursing me. Daggers, bayonets, pistols were constantly pointed at me. I did not know how I would be killed but was sure my last hour had come. Those who had no arms were throwing stones at me, the women wrenched their teeth and threatened me with their fists. Two soldiers behind me had already been killed by the furious mob and I am convinced I could not have reached City Hall had not one officer . . . escorted me."

—"Reports of the Taking of the Bastille, July 14, 1789, by One of Its Defenders" (1834) by Ludwig von der Fluhe (Swiss officer)

Document D

▼ Demolition of the Bastille, 1789



Analyzing Documents

Use your knowledge of the storming of the Bastille and Documents A, B, C, and D to answer questions 1–4.

1. In Document B, Charles James Fox was mostly likely enthusiastic about the fall of the Bastille because
 - A he had a personal grudge against prison guards.
 - B the people stood up to authority.
 - C he supported King Louis XVI.
 - D he was anxious to see what the people of France would do next.
2. Which document attempts to give an objective view of the storming of the Bastille?
 - A Document B
 - B Document A
 - C Document C
 - D Document D
3. In Document C, which words best indicate which side the author is on?
 - A the governor declared his willingness to capitulate
 - B daggers, bayonets, pistols
 - C even the roofs were filled with people
 - D furious mob
4. **Writing Task** Compare the four documents. Which lasting document best conveys the significance of the event? Use your knowledge of this event and specific evidence from the documents to support your opinion.

Art of Revolution

Revolutions have visual chronicles as well as written ones, and in the days before photography, these depictions were often rendered with paint. The French artist Jacques-Louis David (ZHAHK loo EE dah VEED) and the Spanish artist Francisco Goya both portrayed aspects of revolution on canvas, but they had differing viewpoints. David supported the early French Revolution and embraced the revolutionary spirit in his work. Goya, however, was a realist who showed human suffering and the horrors of war in his paintings.



▲ *Napoleon Crossing Mont Saint Bernard*, Jacques-Louis David, 1801

Imprisoned after moderates turned against the Reign of Terror, David barely escaped with his life. When Napoleon rose to power, David deftly switched his political allegiance to the new Emperor of France and became one of Bonaparte's chief portraitists. Notice the names carved into the rocks. David included these names of great past rulers to show Napoleon's level of greatness. David's depictions of Napoleon helped cement him as a strong and heroic leader.



▲ *The Third of May, 1808*, Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, 1814

One of the consequences of the French Revolution and Napoleon's rise was that France soon found itself at war with the rest of Europe. Francisco Goya saw firsthand the impact of these wars. Born in northern Spain, he rose to become the official painter of the Spanish court. When Napoleon invaded Spain and deposed its king, Goya chronicled the horrors of the resulting guerrilla warfare.

Thinking Critically

1. **Compare Points of View** What elements in each painting express the viewpoint of the artist? How are the elements different?
2. **Recognize Ideologies** How do you think the ideology of the French Revolution led to the scene Goya portrays here?