

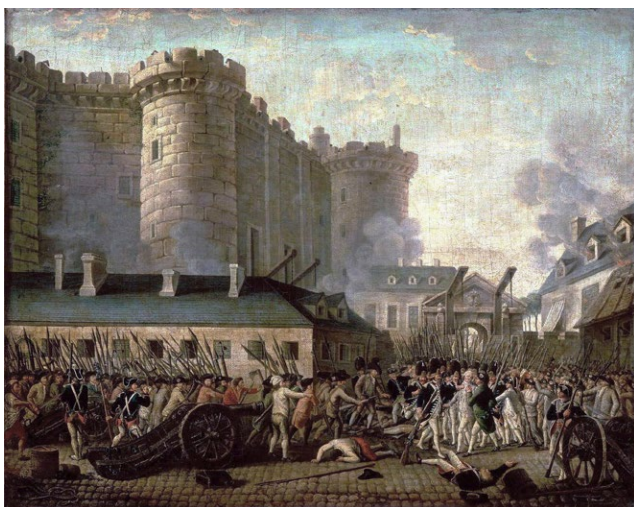
The French Revolution

Before the Revolution, French society was divided into three estates which were the nobility, the clergy and the Third Estate. The latter had to pay heavy taxes to the king and the tithe to the clergy. In the Third Estate were peasants, craftsmen, merchants and the bourgeoisie.

The absolute power of King Louis XVI and inequality were contested as new ideas of freedom and equality begun to rise. France's costly involvement in the war and the extravagant spendings by the king and his court had left the country in a deep financial crisis.

From 1787 to 1789, the country was severely impoverished. The terrible weather conditions affected the harvest and there was not enough food to feed the population who were struck by a food shortage.

On May 5th 1789, Louis XVI called a meeting of representatives from the three estates called the Estates-General in order to address the crisis. The clergy and the nobility favored keeping their privileges whereas the Third Estate formed a National Assembly to draft a new constitution.



The following summer, the people rebelled. The 14th July, Parisians stormed the Bastille and peasants rose up against the nobles. The 4th, August 1789, the Feudal system was abolished by the Assembly. The 26th August, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen was written.

1789 marked the beginning of the French Revolution and the end of

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absolute monarchy. Power was shared between the king and the Assembly and laws were voted upon.

However, Louis XVI fled the capital on June, 21st 1791 because he was not willing to accept the Revolution. The king was caught and brought back to Paris, this attempted escape shattered people's faith in the king. France found itself at war with other European countries which dread the revolutionary ideas.



The 10th, August 1792, the "sans-culotte" stormed the Tuileries Palace where the king and his family lived. The monarchy was overthrown and Louis XVI was publicly beheaded on January, 21st 1793.

On September 22nd 1792, the Republic was declared. From then on, representatives elected by the people formed the government.

