

French Revolution (1789 - 1814)

- The French Revolution was a **POLITICAL** revolution
- France was ruled by an **Absolute Monarch, King Louis XVI**
Absolute Monarch/Autocratic Ruler = King/Queen who has TOTAL control
- The citizens of France wanted to *introduce democratic reforms* to their country that would take away the King's total control



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Indirect Causes of the French Revolution

1) Enlightenment

- Political reform movement in Europe during the 16th & 17th centuries
- Philosophes called for *democratic reforms* in their government
- Many of the Enlightenment philosophes lived in France in the years leading up to the French Revolution

2) American Revolution

- American colonies revolted against England to gain their independence
- After the American's won, they formed a government based on the principles that were being introduced by the Enlightenment
- The American Revolution proved to the world that Monarchies could be overthrown and a Democratic Government could take its place



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Causes of the French Revolution

Economic Causes

Government Debt:

- France fought a series of wars that drained the national treasury
- Marie Antoinette (Queen of France) spent the country's money on social events and personal wants

Unfair Distribution of Taxes

- The 1st and 2nd Estate did not have to pay taxes
- The 3rd Estate was responsible for paying all of the taxes in France

Crop Failure

- Bread was the main source of food for French peasants
- In 1789, there was a bad harvest and bread production decreased causing the price of bread to rise (supply & demand)



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Social Causes

The 3 Estates of France

- Since the Middle Ages, France's society was broken down into three groups called "ESTATES"

1st Estate

- Clergy members (religious officials)
- Made up 1% of France's population
- Owned 10% of the land in France

2nd Estate

- Nobility
- Made up 2% of France's population
- Owned 25% of the land in France

Third Estate

- Commoners & **Bourgeoisie**
- Made up 97% of the population
- Owned 65% of the land in France

Bourgeoisie = rich merchants, lawyers, doctors, etc...

- These people were educated, rich, owned land...but they did not have any political power
- This is the group of people who led the French Revolution !!!!



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Political Causes

King Louis XVI

- Weak King who was easily manipulated and controlled by clergy and the nobles
- Fought a series of wars that drained the economy & national pride of France
- Ruled by the Divine Right Theory = Did not share political power with the commoners



Political Power

- 3rd Estate members had no say in the government
- Bourgeoisie was the group of people who were upset about not having political power ... they led the French Revolution

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