

The outbreak of the French Revolution stirred debate all over Europe and the United States. Supporters of the Enlightenment, such as Thomas Jefferson, saw the French experiment as the dawn of a new age for justice and equality. European rulers and nobles, however, denounced the French Revolution.



>> The September massacres lasted six days and resulted in more than 1,368 deaths.



Interactive Flipped Video

A Radical Phase

Radicals Gain Strength

Fear of the “French Plague” European rulers were horrified by the French Revolution, which threatened absolute monarchy. They increased border patrol to stop the spread of the “French plague.” Fueling those fears were the horror stories that were told by **émigrés** (EM ih grayz)—nobles, clergy, and others who had fled France. Émigrés reported attacks on their privileges, their property, their religion, and even their lives. Even “enlightened” rulers turned against France. Catherine the Great of Russia burned Voltaire’s letters and locked up critics.

Edmund Burke, a British statesman who earlier had defended the American Revolution, bitterly condemned revolutionaries in Paris. He predicted all too accurately that the revolution would become more violent. “When ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away,” he warned, “we have no compass to govern us.”

Threats from Abroad The failed escape of Louis XVI brought further hostile rumblings from abroad. In August 1791, the king of Prussia and the emperor of Austria—who was Marie Antoinette’s brother—issued the Declaration of Pilnitz. In this document, the two monarchs threatened to protect the French monarchy.

>> Objectives

Explain why the French Revolution entered a more radical phase.

Understand how radicals abolished the French monarchy.

Analyze the causes and course of the Reign of Terror.

Describe France under the Directory.

Identify how the French Revolution changed life in France.

>> Key Terms

émigré
sans-culottes
Jacobin
suffrage
Maximilien
Robespierre
Reign of Terror
guillotine
Napoleon Bonaparte
Nationalism
Marseilles



The declaration may have been mostly a bluff, but revolutionaries in France took the threat seriously and prepared for war. The revolution was about to enter a new, more radical phase.

Radicals Seek Power In October 1791, the newly elected Legislative Assembly took office. Faced with crises at home and abroad, it survived for less than a year. Economic problems fed renewed turmoil.

Assignats (AS ig nats), the revolutionary currency, dropped in value, causing prices to rise rapidly. Uncertainty about prices led to hoarding and caused additional food shortages.

In Paris and other cities, working-class men and women, called **sans-culottes** (sanz koo LAHTS), pushed the revolution into more radical action. Sans-culottes means "without breeches." Men wore long trousers instead of the fancy knee breeches that men of the upper class wore. By 1791, many sans-culottes demanded an end to the monarchy and the creation of a republic. They also wanted the government to guarantee them a living wage.

Within the Legislative Assembly, several hostile factions competed for power. The sans-culottes found support among radicals, especially the Jacobins. A revolutionary political club, the **Jacobins** were mostly middle-class lawyers or intellectuals. They used

pamphleteers and sympathetic newspaper editors to advance the republican cause.

Opposing the radicals were moderate reformers and officials who wanted no more reforms at all. The radicals soon held the upper hand in the Legislative Assembly.

War Breaks Out In April 1792, the war of words between French revolutionaries and European monarchs moved onto the battlefield. Eager to spread the revolution and destroy tyranny abroad, the Legislative Assembly declared war first on Austria and then on Prussia, Britain, and other states. The great powers expected to win an easy victory against France, a land divided by revolution. In fact, the fighting that began in 1792 lasted on and off until 1815.

The war abroad heightened tensions in Paris. Well-trained Prussian forces were cutting down raw French recruits. In addition, royalist officers were deserting the French army, joining émigrés and others hoping to restore the king's power.

? CITE EVIDENCE How did the monarchs of Europe react to the French Revolution?



>> Europe in the 1790s was dominated by monarchies. **Analyze Maps** Why do you suppose France's neighbors were afraid of the French Revolution?

The Monarchy Is Abolished

In 1793, the Revolution entered a radical phase. For a year, France experienced one of the bloodiest regimes in its long history as determined leaders sought to extend and preserve the Revolution.

New Outbreaks of Violence Battle disasters overseas quickly inflamed revolutionaries in Paris. They thought the king was in league with the enemies. On August 10, 1792, a crowd of Parisians stormed the royal palace of the Tuileries and slaughtered the king's guards. The royal family fled to the Legislative Assembly.

A month later, citizens attacked prisons that held nobles and priests accused of political offenses. More than 1,000 prisoners were killed, including many ordinary criminals.

Historians disagree about the people who carried out these "September massacres." Some call them bloodthirsty mobs. Others describe them as patriots defending France. In fact, most were ordinary citizens fired to fury by real and imagined grievances.

The National Convention Backed by Paris crowds, radicals then took control of the Assembly. Radicals 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. Deputies then drew up a new constitution. 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. All men and women were called "Citizen." Louis XVI became Citizen Capet, from the dynasty that ruled France during the Middle Ages.

Execution of a King and Queen 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,



» Marie Antoinette's lavish lifestyle and disregard for the masses contributed to her unpopularity and later execution.

however, showed great dignity as she went to her death. Her son, who might once have become Louis XVII, died of unknown causes in the dungeons of the Revolution.

? CONTRAST What was the main difference between earlier Assemblies and the National Convention, which met in September 1792?

The Reign of Terror

By early 1793, danger threatened France on all sides. The country was at war with much of Europe, including Britain, the Netherlands, Spain, and Prussia. In the Vendée (vahn DAY) region of France, royalists and priests led peasants in rebellion against the government.

In Paris, the *sans-culottes* demanded relief from food shortages and inflation. The Convention itself was bitterly divided between Jacobins and a rival group, the Girondins.

Committee of Public Safety To deal with the threats to France, the Convention created the Committee of Public Safety. The 12-member committee had almost absolute power. Preparing France for all-out war, it ordered all citizens to contribute to the war effort. They

urged young men to go into battle, women to make tents or serve in hospitals, and children to turn old lint into linen.

Spurred by revolutionary fervor, recruits marched off to defend the republic. Young officers developed effective tactics to win battles with masses of ill-trained but patriotic forces. Soon, French armies overran the Netherlands. They later invaded Italy. At home, they crushed peasant revolts. European monarchs shuddered as the revolutionaries carried "freedom fever" into conquered lands.

Robespierre, the Incorruptible At home, the government battled counterrevolutionaries under the guiding hand of **Maximilien Robespierre** (ROHBZ pyehr). Robespierre, a shrewd lawyer and politician, quickly rose to the leadership of the Committee of Public Safety. Among Jacobins, his selfless dedication to the revolution earned him the nickname "the incorruptible." His enemies called him a tyrant.

"Death to the Traitors" Robespierre was one of the chief architects of the **Reign of Terror**, which lasted from September 1793 to July 1794. Revolutionary courts conducted hasty trials. Spectators greeted death sentences with cries of "Hail the Republic!" or "Death to the traitors!" In a speech given on February 5, 1794,

Robespierre explained that the terror was necessary to protect the Revolution and achieve its goals.

During the Reign of Terror, about 300,000 citizens were arrested. About 17,000 were executed. They included nobles and clergy, peasants, and sans-culottes, along with middle-class citizens who had once supported the Revolution.

It is necessary to stifle the domestic and foreign enemies of the Republic or perish with them. . . . The first maxim of our politics ought to be to lead the people by means of reason and the enemies of the people by terror.

—Maximilien Robespierre

Many were victims of mistaken identity or were falsely accused by their neighbors. Many more were packed into hideous prisons, where deaths from disease were common.

The engine of the Terror was the **guillotine** (gee uh teen). Its fast-falling blade extinguished life instantly. A member of the legislature, Dr. Joseph Guillotin (gee oh TAN), had introduced it as a more humane method of beheading than the uncertain ax. Still, the guillotine quickly became a symbol of horror.

Within a year, the Terror consumed those who initiated it. Weary of bloodshed and fearing for their own lives, members of the Convention turned on the Committee of Public Safety. On the night of July 27, 1794, Robespierre was arrested. The next day he was executed. After the heads of Robespierre and other radicals fell, executions slowed dramatically.

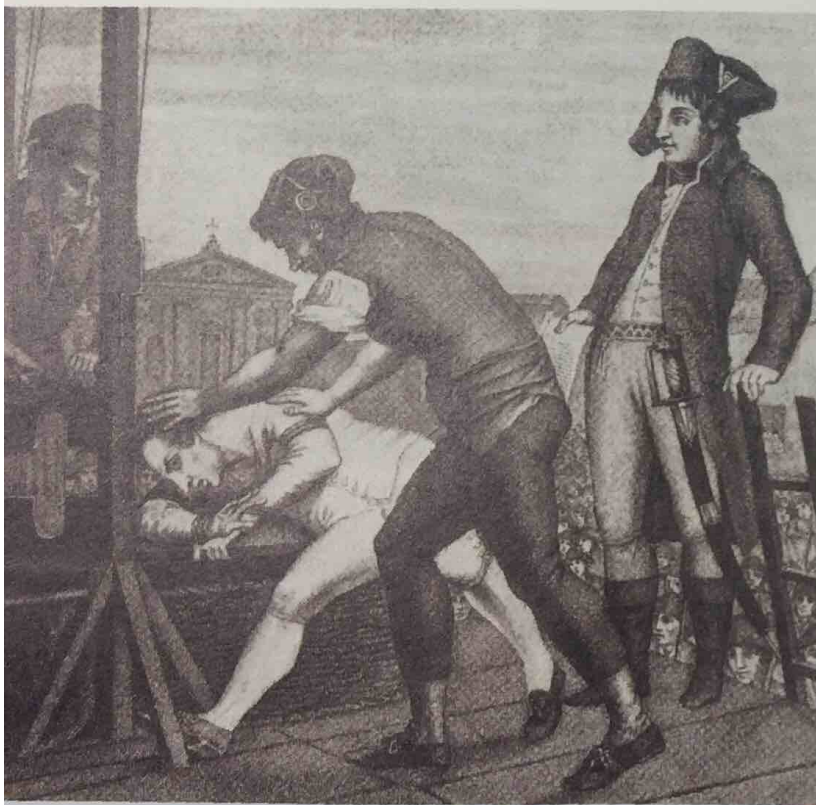
? DRAW CONCLUSIONS How did radicals such as Robespierre justify the use of terror?

Reaction and the Directory

In reaction to the Terror, the Revolution entered a third stage. Middle class and professional people dominated this stage of the Revolution.

Moving away from the excesses of the Convention, moderates produced another constitution, the third since 1789. The Constitution of 1795 set up a five-man Directory and a two-house legislature elected by male citizens of property. The Directory held power from 1795 to 1799.

Weak, but willing to use force against its enemies, the Directory faced many challenges. Although France made peace with Prussia and Spain, the war continued with Austria and Great Britain. Corrupt leaders lined






>> Robespierre was beheaded on July 28, 1794, a victim of the Terror he helped create.



A REVOLUTIONARY REVOLUTION

Born out of the ideas of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution changed the country's political and social landscape. It uprooted centuries-old institutions, created a new social order, and put into practice the idea that governments are formed by the will of the people.



- **ABOLISHED THE MONARCHY** 
- **CURTAILED THE POWER OF THE FRENCH ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**
- **ABOLISHED THE FEUDAL SYSTEM**
- **CREATED EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW** 
- **GAVE TALENTED PEOPLE GREATER ACCESS TO JOBS**
- **CREATED A SENSE OF NATIONAL PRIDE**
- **CREATED POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY** 

>> **Analyze Charts** The French Revolution changed the country's political and social landscape. How did the Revolution change the social order?

 **Interactive Timeline**

their own pockets but failed to solve pressing problems. When rising bread prices stirred hungry sans-culottes to riot, the Directory quickly suppressed them.

Another threat to the Directory was the revival of royalist feeling. Many émigrés were returning to France, and devout Catholics, who resented measures that had been taken against the Church, were welcoming them. In the election of 1797, supporters of a constitutional monarchy won the majority of seats in the legislature.

Despite its failings, the Directory consolidated many reforms of the National Convention. It set up a system of elite schools and helped the French economy to recover from the upheavals of the Terror. During the Directory, France had strengthened its armies and won several important battles.

As chaos threatened, politicians turned to **Napoleon Bonaparte**, a popular military hero who had won a series of brilliant victories against the Austrians in Italy. The politicians planned to use him to advance their own goals. To their dismay, however, before long Napoleon would outwit them all to become ruler of France.

? IDENTIFY CAUSE AND EFFECT Why did Catholics welcome the return of the émigrés?

The Revolution Transforms France

By 1799, the 10-year-old French Revolution had dramatically changed France. It had dislodged the old social order, overthrown the monarchy, and brought the Church under state control.

New symbols such as the red "liberty caps" and the tricolor confirmed the liberty and equality of all male citizens. The new title "citizen" applied to people of all social classes. Elaborate fashions and powdered wigs gave way to the practical clothes and simple haircuts of the sans-culottes.

Nationalism Spreads Revolution and war gave the French people a strong sense of national identity. In earlier times, people had felt loyalty to local authorities. As monarchs centralized power, loyalty shifted to the king or queen. Instead, the government rallied sons and daughters of the Revolution to defend the nation itself.

Nationalism, a strong feeling of pride in and devotion to one's country, spread throughout France. The French people attended civic festivals that celebrated the nation and the Revolution. A variety of dances and songs on themes of the Revolution became immensely popular.

By 1793, France was a nation in arms. From the port city of **Marseilles** (mahr say), troops marched to a rousing new song. It urged the "children of the fatherland" to march against the "bloody banner of tyranny." This song, "La Marseillaise" (mahr say ez), would later become the French national anthem.

Social Reform Revolutionaries pushed for social reform and religious toleration. They set up state schools to replace religious ones and organized systems to help the poor, old soldiers, and war widows. With a major slave revolt raging in the colony of St. Domingue (Haiti), the government also abolished slavery in France's Caribbean colonies.

Religion and the Revolution During the Revolution, different governments pursued different policies toward religion. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy put the Catholic Church under state control. Unlike the United States whose Constitution forbade the establishment of any official state church, France supported the French Catholic Church by paying the salaries of the clergy.

Many revolutionaries embraced the ideas of religious toleration. Yet this Enlightenment ideal often fell victim to politics. During the radical phase, leaders banned

public religious worship and removed the names of saints from streets and buildings. Any who opposed these moves faced persecution or death. This effort to de-Christianize France had little popular support. In the end, the Catholic Church was restored with limited rights.

Comparison with the American Revolution The French Revolution came on the heels of the American Revolution. The two revolutions had both similarities and differences.

Both grew out of Enlightenment ideals such as liberty, freedom, and the rights of citizens. Both began with calls for reform, but ended up with a complete change of government. In the colonies and in France, people rose up against oppressive monarchies and high taxes. Each revolution broke out after years of increasing discontent with powerful rulers who imposed their will on the people.

Historians have compared the causes of the American and French Revolutions, and emphasized the role of the ideas behind the Glorious Revolution in helping to inspire both later events. Although the political traditions and social climate of France and the colonies differed, both the French and American colonists wanted a government that was responsible to its people. The colonists saw themselves as citizens of Britain, entitled to the same rights. The British people had won these rights by limiting the power of their monarch through the Magna Carta in 1215 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The violation of these rights by Parliament, over 70 years later, was one cause of the American Revolution.

France was an absolute monarchy, but here too the ideas behind the Glorious Revolution played a role. The Glorious Revolution had confirmed the supremacy of Parliament over the monarch in Britain. French revolutionary leaders were influenced by this political development, as well as by the ideals behind the American Revolution and the U.S. Constitution.

In both countries, the people set up a republican form of government. In France, the first republic did not last, but in the United States, it has lasted until the present.

In both England and pre-revolutionary France, the state supported an official church. In America, although many of the leaders of the Revolution were deeply religious, the First Amendment to the Constitution forbade the establishment of any state-supported church. In France, a state-supported Catholic Church remained a powerful force for more than a century.

? ANALYZE INFORMATION Describe several ways the Revolution changed French society.



>> During the radical phase of the French Revolution, many Christian churches were renamed Temples of Reason. Religious symbols were covered. On some churches, the revolutionary motto "Liberté, égalité, fraternité" was inscribed on the stone facade.

ASSESSMENT

1. **Compare and Contrast** Compare and contrast the views of France's radical revolutionaries to the views of its moderates.
2. **Check Understanding** Why was the Committee of Public Safety allowed to terrorize France during the Reign of Terror?
3. **Describe** How did the Directory's actions ultimately lead to the rise of Napoleon?
4. **Describe** What actions did the French take after the Revolution to show their patriotism?
5. **Identify Cause and Effect** What was it about the nature of the French Revolution that led to political and social reform?