

World History - Revolutions Test Study Guide

A. America Revolution

1. Causes of the American Revolution

a) Enlightenment thinkers were widely read and circulated by

- (1) John Locke - *wrote that governments exist to protect the "natural" and "God-given" rights of its citizens. If governments fail to protect those rights, its citizens have a right to overthrow that government and create a new government.*
- (2) Jean Jaques Rousseau - *wrote that governments should be formed by the people it governs. By the people, for the people.*
- (3) Voltaire - *wrote about the importance of freedom of speech, freedom of protest, freedom of religion, freedom to criticize the government*
- (4) Montesquieu - *wrote about the need for a government to be divided into multiple branches so that they can check each other's power. Separation of power. Checks and balances.*

b) British Policies on the British citizens living in the North American colonies created pockets of resistance, especially in Boston, MA. Eventually this resistance became violent, which turned into full-fledged revolution.

- (1) Taxes and representation - *before calls for independence from American's founding fathers, they protested taxes placed on them by the British government that effected American businesses. These taxes were necessary for Great Britain to pay of debts it had taken on from fighting the French and Indian War (AKA the Seven Years War which was being fought in Europe.) Though the taxes were not very high, some colonists were upset that they were being forced to pay them even though they had no representation in the British Parliament, the legislative body that wrote English laws.*
- (2) British military presence - *following the French and Indian War, Great Britain left thousands of British troops behind in the American colonies to keep order. As protests from the colonists became louder and events such as the Boston Massacre and Boston Tea Party turned violent, Great Britain increased the troop presence in the colonies. This was unpopular with many colonists who began viewing the British soldiers as a threat.*
- (3) Declaration of Independence - *on July 4, 1776, Thomas Jefferson finished a letter to the British government declaring the colonists intention to form their own country, separate from the British empire.*

2. the American Revolution

a) Fought from 1775-1783

b) George Washington was made commander of American military by the Congress

c) American Strategy was not to win the war, but to not lose the war

- (1) *The Americans understood that Great Britain could not afford to fight a war for an extended period of time. Great Britain was already heavily in debt from fighting the French and Indian War (AKA Seven Years War)*
- (2) *Therefore, American strategy focused on making the war last for as long as they could.*
- (3) *The Americans also knew they would depend on help from France, a long time enemy of England, and their opponent in the French and Indian War.*
- (4) *France did help the Americans in the American Revolution. Their military support was crucial in Great Britain finally accepting the United States' independence.*

3. Importance of the American Revolution.

- a) the American Revolution inspired the French Revolution which began six years after the American Revolution ended.

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- b) the American Revolution, which was based on the Enlightenment ideas of democracy, equality, and liberty, became a symbol followed by many modern democracies throughout the world.

B. French Revolution

1. **Causes** - there was not one cause, but many

a) **Taxes**

- (1) France was badly in debt because...
 - (a) it had fought several wars recently, including the French and Indian War and the American Revolution
 - (b) King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were very irresponsible with France's money, using it to buy luxury items for the Palace at Versailles, throw parties, build monuments, etc.
- (2) the wealthiest people in France were not required to pay taxes. There were actually laws that **prevented** the richest, who had the most money, from paying any taxes at all.

b) **The Estate System** in 1789, France's legal system called **The Old Regime** was still based on the feudalism of the middle ages in which the Catholic Church and French Nobility were extremely powerful, but the bulk of the population had virtually no rights. The social classes of France were divided into three estates.

- (1) the **1st Estate** was the Catholic Clergy
 - (a) this included only 1% of the French population
 - (b) they paid no taxes and owned 10% of the land
- (2) the **2nd Estate** was the French nobility
 - (a) they made up only 1.5% of the French population
 - (b) they owned 20-30% of the land and paid no taxes
- (3) the **3rd Estate** was everyone else
 - (a) it consisted of the French middle class and lower class
 - (b) it was the only estate to be taxed by the king
 - i) it also had to pay taxes to the first and second estate

c) **Food Shortage** - at the outbreak of the French Revolution there was a food shortage in France, which meant that not only were members of the third estate poor, but that were also in danger of starvation

d) **Enlightenment Thinkers (same as American Revolution)**

2. **Key Events**

- a) to deal with France's **tax problem**, **King Louis XVI** called together the **Estates General**, the law-making body of the French government.
 - (1) at this meeting of the Estates General, the third estate broke away from the other two estates and started its own government called the **National Assembly**.
 - (2) The National Assembly was unable to enter France's government buildings, so its members met in an indoor tennis court.
 - (a) while inside the tennis court, they took the **Tennis Court Oath** in which they promised not to leave the tennis court until they had written a new constitution for France.
 - (b) this constitution was called **The Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen**
 - i) to a greater degree than the United States constitution, the Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen focused on equality
 - (1) it did away with nobility
 - (2) it decreased the power of the Catholic church
- b) King Louis XVI did not like the new constitution. When news of his plan to use military force against the National Assembly reached Paris on July 14, 1789, people stormed the **Bastille**.

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- (1) the Bastille was a middle ages castle being used to house weapons. People stormed the Bastille, took weapons, and killed the guards. This is considered the first event of the French Revolution.
 - (a) After the storming of the Bastille, violence spread throughout France. Many nobles were killed, others fled the country.
- c) King Louis XVI was rumored to have plans for asking other European monarchs to send their militaries to stop the Revolution.
 - (1) So they arrested King Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette and imprisoned them for several
- d) A new government called the **Convention** was formed in 1792. This made the French government a republic. (before it had been a monarchy)
 - (1) as long as King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette (the French monarchs) were alive, there was a chance that they could return to power.
 - (2) Therefore the decision was made for them to be killed, and they were both executed with the **guillotine** in 1793
- e) Also in 1793, **The Committee of Public Safety** was formed
 - (1) led by **Maximilien Robespierre**, the Committee of Public Safety searched for people who were “enemies of the revolution” and executed them with the guillotine.
 - (2) This happened during a period of the French Revolution called **The Reign of Terror** 1793 and 1794.
 - (a) In this time, over 15,000 people were executed
- f) the Revolution against the Coalition
 - (1) other countries began to use their armies against the revolution to prevent it from spreading.
 - (2) **Napoleon Bonaparte** was given control of the French military in its fight against the coalition (coalition means “alliance”) of other countries.
- g) **The Convention** only lasted for 1792-1795 and was replaced by a new government called **The Directory** which lasted from 1795-1799.
 - (1) the Directory was weak and corrupt, it was also unpopular.
 - (2) **Napoleon Bonaparte**, who had been successful in several military campaigns, overthrew the French government and became military dictator of the country.
- h) **Napoleon's reign**
 - (1) After seizing political power in France in a 1799 **coup d'état**, he crowned himself emperor in 1804.
 - (2) Napoleon successfully waged war against various coalitions of European nations and expanded his empire.
 - (3) However, after a disastrous French invasion of Russia in 1812, Napoleon abdicated the throne two years later and was exiled to the island of Elba.