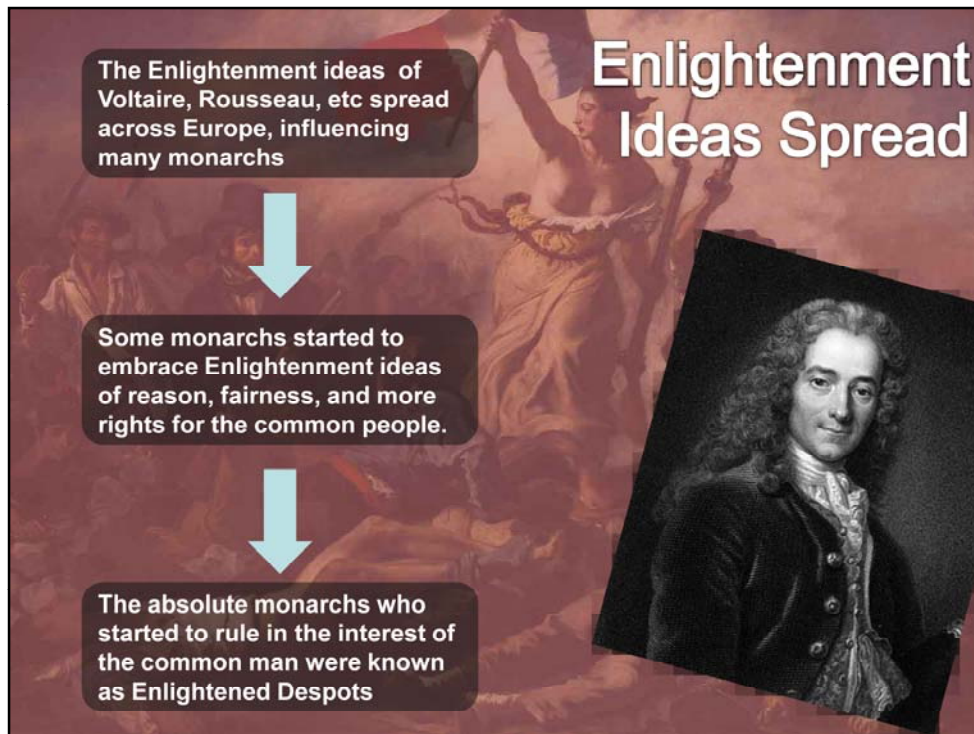




The colonists in North America were not the only people who were inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment. French thinkers were at the forefront of promoting new ideas about government and civil liberties. Starting in 1789, French citizens rose up against their monarch to create a new government which respected the rights that they felt they deserved.



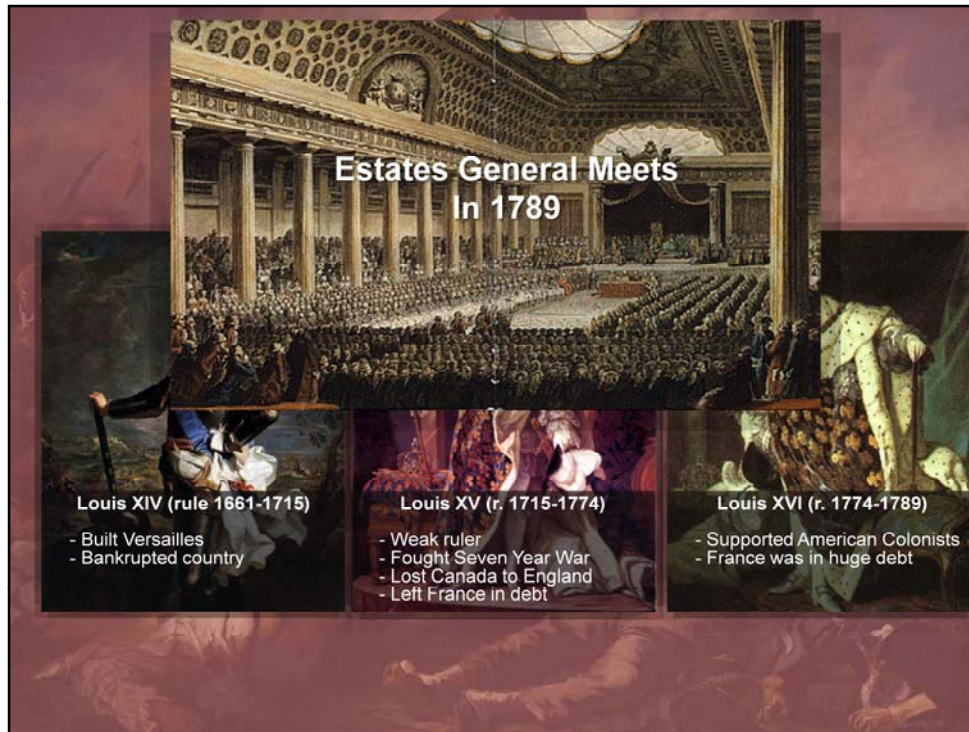
During the 1700s, many government and church officials felt that they had a duty to preserve the “old ways,” including the king's divine right, social classes with the church and nobles on top, and the concept of a heavenly reward for earthly suffering. This preservation of the “old ways” was becoming more and more difficult given the great number of new ideas being published everyday in books and pamphlets. The old powers tried to censor many of these materials, but could not stop people from acquiring and discussing works like Diderot's *Encyclopedia*, Voltaire's *Candide*, and Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*.

Some leaders tried to retain their power, while working for the good of their people at the same time. They became known as “enlightened despots” who embraced many ideals of the Enlightenment and imposed them on their citizens.



There were several examples of these enlightened despots.

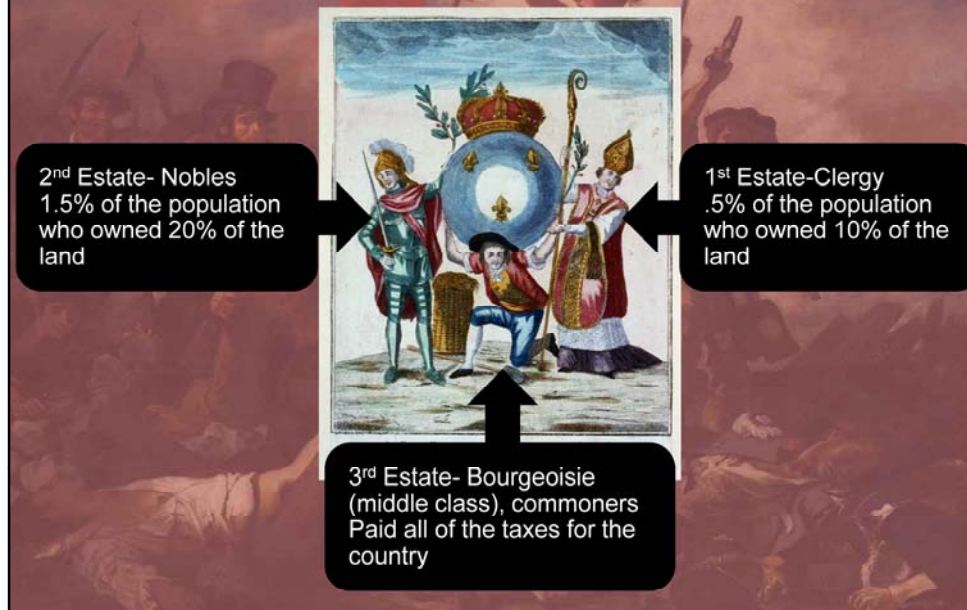
Frederick the Great of Prussia drained swamps and forced his people to farm potatoes. He also granted degrees of religious freedom. Catherine the Great of Russia corresponded with Montesquieu and Voltaire, and promoted education for the population. Maria Theresa's son Joseph II of The Hapsburg Empire of Austria abolished serfdom, practiced land reform, built hospitals, and used to disguise himself as a peasant in order to find out what kinds of problems ordinary people had so that he could try to solve them.



Unfortunately, the French monarchs either resisted Enlightenment ideas or were slow to accept them. Louis XIV was a strong, capable ruler, but he left France in debt from expensive wars and the high cost of building the Palace of Versailles. Louis the XV was not a strong ruler, nor interested in the ideas of the Enlightenment. He often censored the work of these thinkers, like the French philosopher Voltaire. Louis XVI was a very weak leader. By the time of his rule, France was in debt again because of its financial support for the American colonists in their fight for independence against Britain. As a result, Louis XVI imposed heavy taxes on the French people to try to pay back these debts.

Inspired by Enlightenment ideas, and the recent American Revolution, the French people began to resist. They refused to pay taxes until the king called a meeting of the Estates General, France's legislative body. In an event that hadn't happened in over 150 years, the Estates General met in 1789.

Estates General – Three Levels of Society



The French peoples' actions were partially inspired by the American Revolution, a dramatic upheaval started by the colonists who, like the French, felt they were being taxed unfairly. The Third Estate, which was made up of business people and other people from the middle class, began to question the French tax system under which they paid taxes, while the First and Second Estates paid none. Louis XVI let the people list their demands, which included freedom of the press, regular meetings of the Estates General, and fair taxes.

Meanwhile, bad weather led to poor harvests for the peasants between 1787 and 1789. This caused food shortages throughout France. As a result, out of work farmers and poor people flocked to Paris demanding bread. At the same time, the economy had been declining for many years. Conditions were desperate and the king had to act. Was it too late?

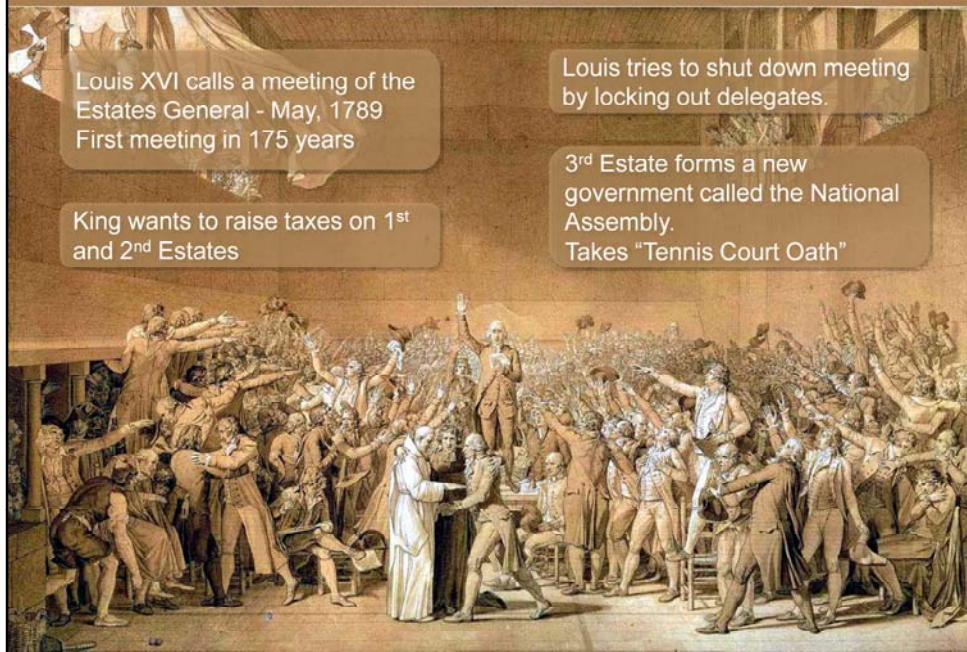
The Estates General Meets

Louis XVI calls a meeting of the Estates General - May, 1789
First meeting in 175 years

King wants to raise taxes on 1st and 2nd Estates

Louis tries to shut down meeting by locking out delegates.

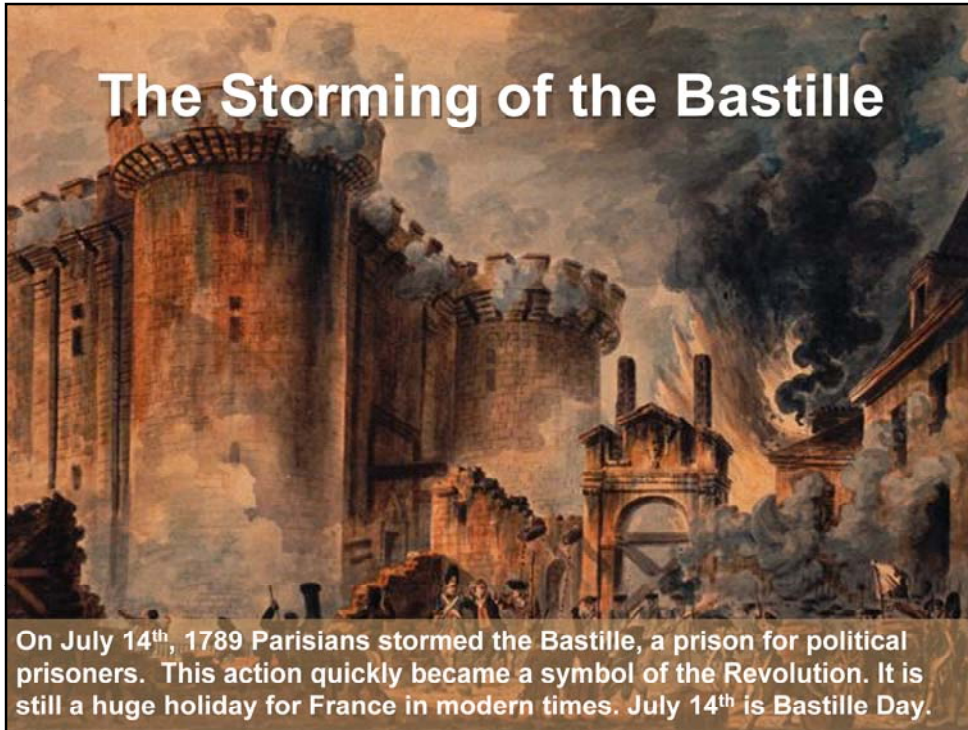
3rd Estate forms a new government called the National Assembly.
Takes "Tennis Court Oath"



Due to heavy debt and growing discontent among the social classes, King Louis XVI was forced to call a meeting of the Estates General, the legislative body made up of members from the Three Estates. It had been 175 years since the king had called a meeting of this institution. The king needed to raise taxes and the only way he could do that was to tax the 1st and 2nd Estates. In May of 1789, the delegates of the Three Estates came together at the Palace of Versailles. The 1st and 2nd Estates refused to pay taxes and often disagreed with the 3rd Estate on many issues. Each estate could cast only one vote, so the 3rd Estate was often outvoted by the other two, which angered its members. The king was too weak and indecisive to get any of his reforms passed. The meeting got out of control and Louis XVI tried to shut it down.

On June 20th, the delegates showed up to find the doors of the meeting room locked. Upset with what they thought was unfair treatment, the 3rd Estate formed the National Assembly as the true government of the French people. As shown in this painting, the National Assembly's first act was to take the "Tennis Court Oath," which was a vow to create a new constitution. This event marked the beginning of the French Revolution, however, it was only a paper victory for the 3rd Estate. Initially, Louis XVI tried to make peace by yielding to their demands, but he was also calling his army and foreign mercenaries back to Paris.

The Storming of the Bastille



While the National Assembly tried to write a new constitution for the country, crowds began rioting in Paris in support of the revolution. The rioters feared that the foreign troops, which Louis XVI had summoned, were surrounding Paris.

On July 14, 1789 the rioters stormed the Bastille prison, where the government held political prisoners and conducted torture. Also, the military stored rifles and gunpowder there. The rioters killed the guards and freed the political prisoners. They seized muskets and the gunpowder supply in the most symbolic act of the French Revolution.

Every year, French citizens celebrate Bastille Day in remembrance of the event that began the revolution, much in the same way that Americans celebrate the Fourth of July to commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Revolutionary Reforms

August 1789
Declaration of the Rights of Man
Eliminates the three Estates

Civil Constitution of the Clergy
French Government takes
Catholic Church's lands and
makes it subordinate to the state

1791
National Assembly establishes a
new constitution with a limited
monarchy



Declaration of the Rights of Man
rights for the common people.

In its first efforts to pass a constitution, the National Assembly set forth the Declaration of the Rights of Man. This document established many individual and collective rights for French citizens, including the natural rights of liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression. In addition, it abolished feudalism and demanded an end to the Estates system.

The National Assembly also passed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which confiscated land held by the Catholic Church and made the church subordinate to the government's authority. The Pope condemned these acts. The Assembly passed the Constitution of 1791, which established a limited monarchy and encouraged free trade.

Conflict

Factions form within France

Radicals – more reforms

Moderates – supported National Assembly

Conservatives - Nobles and clergy who support the king

Foreign countries (Austria and Prussia) feared the violence of the Revolution and went to war with France.

Women's March on Versailles

Louis and Marie Antoinette try to escape France, but are captured and put on trial for treason



Liberty holding the tricolor

Various factions took to the streets of Paris and the provinces. One group of radicals wanted more reforms. Moderates looked to Marquis de Lafayette who had helped the American revolution. Lafayette headed the National Guard, a middle class army which was formed in response to the arrival of government troops in Paris. They fought under the banner of the tricolor, the new flag of France.

The last faction was the conservatives, which was composed mainly of nobles and clergy who wanted to restore the monarchy. They left France to plot against the revolution, telling horror stories of the events that were happening in France. They hoped to convince the leading enlightened despots to condemn the revolution and lead armies against a possible French threat. Austria and Prussia responded to the conservatives' pleas and declared war on France in an attempt to restore the monarchy.

Meanwhile, thousands of women marched on Versailles in protest of high bread prices. They demanded to see Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette. The mob stormed the palace and forced the two monarchs to return to the capital to help the people. Louis agreed to return to Paris where he was virtually a prisoner. Eventually, Louis and Marie Antoinette tried to leave the country, but were captured a few miles from the border. They were brought back to Paris and tried for treason, or crimes against the state.

The Execution of Louis XVI and Robespierre's Reign of Terror

Radical Jacobins take control of the Legislative Assembly

Behead the king and queen.

Form the Committee of Public Safety to defend the revolution.

Robespierre and the Reign of Terror



*Journée du 21 Janvier 1793.
la mort de Louis Capet sur la Place de la Révolution
Présentée à la Convention Nationale
le 20 Germinal par Schwan*

Faced with intervention from Prussia, Austria, and other nations, a radical group called the Jacobins took control of the government. They wanted to establish a French Republic, but before they could do that, they had to eliminate the monarchy. After putting the king and queen on trial and finding them guilty of treason, they had them beheaded by the guillotine, a device that was invented during the French Revolution for faster, more humane executions.

The Jacobins then formed the Committee of Public Safety to defend the revolution and to defend France from Austria and Prussia by raising a citizen's army. Eventually, a Jacobin leader by the name of Maximilien Robespierre became the most powerful man in France as head of the Committee of Public Safety. His rule is called the Reign of Terror because he executed anyone who opposed him or anyone he believed was not radical enough. Many of the people who he had executed were his former allies.

Robespierre was responsible for as many as 40,000 deaths during his Reign of Terror, including the death of Louis XVI. The French people eventually resisted Robespierre, and he too was executed by the guillotine in 1794.

The Rise of Napoleon



The Directory

Five man counsel selected to rule the country

Napoleon became general of the army

1799

Napoleon takes control in a coup d'état, a quick overthrow of the government by someone who is in power

The people hated the chaos associated with Robespierre's rule and turned to the conservative upper class to rule France. Five people, known as The Directory, were selected to rule France together with a two-house legislature. The Directory put Napoleon Bonaparte in charge of the army and he proved to be a military genius, crushing France's enemies.

Napoleon was not satisfied with just leading the army and, in 1799, he seized control of the government in a coup d'état, putting France under military control with himself as its military dictator.

Impacts of the French Revolution

- Under Napoleon, France takes over much of Europe
- The revolutions in America and France inspired people around the world to form their own revolutions and independence movements

Although the French Revolution was inspired by Enlightenment ideas, it took a turn towards radicalism eventually. These radicals executed the king and queen and instituted the Reign of Terror as a way to keep power and to control the population. Robespierre [robes pea air], the chief architect of the Reign of Terror, was executed himself, leading the way for a strong ruler to take over France and restore power. Napoleon Bonaparte brought France out of chaos to become one of the most powerful nations in Europe.

The French and American revolutions, and the Enlightenment ideas that spawned them, inspired many people around the world to form their own revolutions and independence movements.

Review

Question 1 of 5

Point Value: 10

Which of the following was the main cause of the French Revolution?

- War with its neighbors.
- Financial crises and debt brought on by mismanagement which forced the king to raise taxes.
- Conflict with the Catholic Church over religious policy.
- Unhappiness with Robespierre's Reign of Terror.

PROPERTIES

On passing, 'Finish' button:

On failing, 'Finish' button:

Allow user to leave quiz:

User may view slides after quiz:

User may attempt quiz:

Goes to Next Slide

Goes to Next Slide

After user has completed quiz

At any time

Unlimited times

