



CLASS 9 SOCIAL SCIENCE · 2026-27

The French Revolution

History

23

QUESTIONS

30

MINUTES

3

EXERCISES

This belongs to _____ Date _____

WHAT YOU'LL GET GOOD AT

- States the social structure of the three estates and who paid what
- Explains the economic conditions that produced the crisis
- Places the main events of 1789 in order
- Explains what the Revolution changed and what it did not

Take your time, and have a go at every one. If you get stuck, look at the orange box — Ollie has already done one for you.

The French Revolution

History · 23 questions · tick each box as you finish

Exercise 1 of 3 · 9 questions Who belonged to each estate, and what did they pay?



WRITE THE ANSWER

HERE'S ONE DONE FOR YOU

The whole social structure is one sentence: the two estates that owned most of the land paid no tax to the state, and the estate that owned least paid all of it. That single fact explains more of this chapter than any date does - it explains the resentment, the demand for voting by head rather than by order, and why the Revolution began over money.

1) The First Estate

2) The Second Estate

3) The Third Estate

4) The taille

5) The tithe

6) The clergy's position after 1789

7) The sans-culottes

8) The Jacobins

9) The National Assembly

Exercise 2 of 3 · 7 questions Explain how each contributed to the crisis. Two sentences each.



WRITE THE ANSWER

HERE'S ONE DONE FOR YOU

Notice that the four causes are of different kinds - financial, immediate and economic, social, and intellectual - and that the Revolution needed all four. An empty treasury alone produces a tax rise, not a revolution. Hungry people alone produce a riot. It took money, hunger, a class with arguments and a set of ideas to propose instead. Answers that name only one kind of cause are why this chapter is often marked lower than expected.

1) The empty treasury

2) The rising price of bread

3) The growth of the middle class

4) The ideas of philosophers like Rousseau and Montesquieu

5) The system of privileges by birth

6) France's involvement in the American war

7) The Estates General's voting system

Exercise 3 of 3 · 7 questions Answer in three or four sentences.

WRITE THE ANSWER

HERE'S ONE DONE FOR YOU

The last question is the one worth spending time on, because it is the kind Class 9 History increasingly asks. It does not want an attack on the Revolution or a defence of it - it wants the gap between what was declared and what was delivered, stated with evidence. That is a historian's question rather than a memory one, and it appears in some form in every paper.

1) Why did the Third Estate form the National Assembly?

2) What was significant about the storming of the Bastille?

3) What did the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen establish?

4) In what sense did the Revolution not fulfil its own promise?

5) Why was the Constitution of 1791 not the end of the Revolution?

6) What was the Reign of Terror, and why did it come about?

7) How did Napoleon's rise change what the Revolution had achieved?

**All done? How did that feel?**

Colour in a star. Three stars means you could teach it to someone else.



Tricky · Getting there · Easy now



Answer key

For grown-ups

The French Revolution · keep this page back until your child has finished.

1. Who belonged to each estate, and what did they pay?

- 1) The clergy. They were exempt from paying taxes to the state.
- 2) The nobility. They too were exempt from the direct tax, and enjoyed feudal privileges over peasants.
- 3) Everyone else - big businessmen, merchants, lawyers, peasants, artisans and servants. They alone paid taxes to the state.
- 4) A direct tax paid to the state, and paid only by the Third Estate.
- 5) A tax paid to the Church, amounting to about one-tenth of agricultural produce.
- 6) Church lands were confiscated and the clergy lost their tithes and privileges, so the First Estate ceased to be a separate order with its own rights.
- 7) The poorer working people of Paris, so called because they wore trousers rather than the knee breeches of the rich. They provided the crowds that drove several turning points of the Revolution.
- 8) A political club of the more radical revolutionaries, drawing support from small shopkeepers and artisans. Under Robespierre they dominated the period of the Terror.
- 9) The body the Third Estate formed after being blocked in the Estates General. It claimed to represent the nation rather than one order, which was itself a revolutionary claim.

2. Explain how each contributed to the crisis. Two sentences each.

- 1) Long wars and the cost of maintaining the court at Versailles had drained the treasury, and France had also helped the American colonies in their war of independence. To meet the debt the state needed new taxes, which meant confronting the privileged estates or squeezing the Third Estate further.
- 2) The population had grown, so demand for grain rose faster than production, and a bad harvest made it worse. Wages did not rise with prices, so a labouring family could spend most of its income on bread alone - which made the crisis immediate rather than abstract.
- 3) Educated and prosperous professionals had wealth but no privilege, and believed position should come from merit rather than birth. They provided the leadership and the arguments that a purely hungry crowd could not have supplied.
- 4) Rousseau argued for a government based on a social contract between people and their representatives, and Montesquieu for the division of power between the legislature, executive and judiciary. These ideas gave the discontent a language and an alternative to propose.
- 5) The first two estates were exempt from most taxes and held the best posts, however able a commoner might be. That made the resentment of a growing, educated middle class a political force rather than a private grievance.
- 6) It added enormously to a debt already crippling the treasury. Paying the interest pushed the king towards new taxes, and it was the attempt to raise them that forced him to call the Estates General.
- 7) Voting was by order rather than by head, so the two privileged estates could always outvote the Third. That guaranteed deadlock and pushed the Third Estate to break away and form its own assembly.

3. Answer in three or four sentences.

- 1) Louis XVI called the Estates General in 1789 to pass new taxes, but voting was by order rather than by head, which meant the two privileged estates could always outvote the Third. The Third Estate demanded voting by head, was refused, and walked out to declare itself a National Assembly representing the whole nation.
- 2) The Bastille was a state prison and a symbol of the king's arbitrary power to imprison without trial. Its fall on 14 July 1789 showed that royal authority could be defied successfully, and it turned a political dispute into a popular revolution.
- 3) That certain rights - to life, to freedom of speech and opinion, to equality before the law - were natural and inalienable, belonging to every person from birth and not granted by any ruler. It made the state the protector of those rights rather than their source.
- 4) Because the rights it declared were not extended equally. Voting was initially restricted to men above a certain property qualification, women were denied political rights despite active participation, and slavery in the French colonies was not abolished until 1794 - and was reintroduced by Napoleon soon after.
- 5) It made France a constitutional monarchy but left the king in place and gave the vote only to men above a property qualification. Those excluded, and those who distrusted the king, both had reason to keep pushing, and within two years the monarchy was gone.
- 6) The period from 1793 to 1794 when Robespierre's government executed anyone judged an enemy of the republic. It came from a real siege - foreign armies, internal revolt, food shortages - and from a conviction that the republic could be saved only by force, which turned into rule by fear.
- 7) He kept some of it and destroyed the rest. His legal code, and the ending of feudal privilege, spread across Europe with his armies; but he crowned himself emperor, censored the press and ended the republic, so the political liberty was lost even as the civil reforms survived.

WHILE YOUR CHILD WORKS

- Ask 'what were the conditions?' before any date. This chapter reconstructs from four or five conditions.
- Causes come in kinds - financial, economic, social, intellectual. An answer naming only one kind is incomplete.
- The 'what did it not achieve' questions are the modern style. Practise them rather than avoiding them.

**Spotted a gap while marking?**

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