

Causes of the French Revolution

The Enlightenment

- Government views different with new ideas
- Criticism with old regime
 - o Against Absolutism
 - o Against privileges for nobles
 - o Against clergy
- *Ancien Régime*
 - o “Old Regime”
 - o Before French Revolution

Social Structure

- System of classes
 - o Called ‘Estates’
 - **1st Estate – The Clergy**
 - Control religion
 - Control schools
 - Control charity
 - Censorship
 - Highly privileged
 - o 1% of population but controls 20% of best arable land
 - o No taxes
 - “free gift” to the king
 - Gift of money
 - Not much but paid instead of taxes
 - o Collect **tithe**
 - Everybody paid 10% of their income to the church
 - **Upper clergy**
 - o Archbishop
 - o Bishops
 - o Cardinals
 - o Closely connected to king
 - **Lower Clergy**
 - o Priests
 - o Took care of the daily lives of the people
 - o Fairly poor
 - Primogeniture
 - o Law that dates back to middle ages
 - o First son inherits everything
 - o Second son gets nothing
 - Becomes clergy or joins military
 - o Girls get dowry
 - **2nd Estate – The Nobles**
 - Aristocrats
 - o Two kinds of nobles
 - “Noble of the Sword”
 - Born into the nobility



- *“Noble of the robe”*
 - Made into nobles by promotion or buying titles
 - Equally privileged
 - 1.5% of population but controls 20% of arable land
 - Paid to taxes
 - Collected fees
 - Feudal dues
 - Did not pay **‘taille’**
 - Tax on land
 - Influenced government
 - Controlled army
 - Controlled courts
 - **Parlement**
 - Influenced church
- **3rd Estate – The Bourgeoisie and Commoners**
 - Everybody else
 - 98% of the population
 - Included bourgeoisie, peasants, urban workers, sailors, beggars, merchants, artisans, bankers
 - Could buy a title of nobility if you are lucky
 - All paid taxes
 - Tithe (church)
 - Taille (land)
 - Feudal dues (nobles)
 - Did all the work
 - Better off than most of the rest of the peasants in Europe

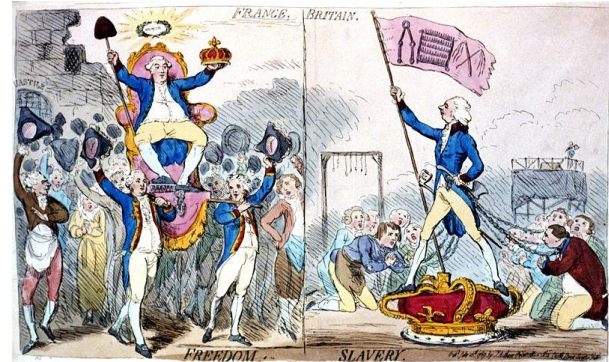
Incompetent and Unpopular Monarchy

- Louis XVI

- Socially awkward
 - Personality
 - Clumsy
 - Awkward
 - Difficult for him to make friends
 - Shy
 - Avoided people
- Oblivious
 - Indecisive
 - Did not want to hurt feelings people
 - Unaware of new ideas
 - Did not pay attention to Enlightenment
 - Well intentioned but not very smart
 - Did not know what was going on
 - Oblivious to needs and fears of the people
- Absolutist
 - Divine Right
- Narrow-minded
 - Incapable of compromising
 - Did not listen to advisors



- **Marie Antoinette**
 - o Hapsburg
 - Foreigner
 - o Equally clueless
 - “Let them eat cake” (?)
 - o Louis spent more time attending to her and children
 - Bored with government and state affairs
- Advisors
 - o Charles Alexandre de Calonne
 - Attempted reform
 - Wanted to do away tax exemptions for upper classes
 - Forced to leave the country
 - Returned in 1802
 - o Étienne Charles de Loménie de Brienne
 - Elected president of Assembly of notables
 - Served as finance minister
 - Fought with nobility and monarchy
 - o **Jacques Necker**
 - Finance minister
 - **‘Compte rendu au roi’**
 - “Report to the King”
 - Summary of government income and expenditures
 - Originally meant to show finances were not that bad
 - Cooked the books
 - Trying to hide £520 million debt
 - o Over \$7 Billion in today’s money
 - Mostly owed to pay off American Revolution
 - Advocated doubling representation of 3rd Estate
 - Did not matter for voting system



Earlier Revolutions

- Glorious Revolution
 - o 1688 England
 - o Successful rebellion of Parliament over monarchy
 - Gave French hope of similar revolt
 - Increased power of nobility
- American Revolution
 - o 1776 North America
 - o Successful rejection of monarchy
 - Complete removal of power of king
 - o French soldiers
 - Served in America throwing off one king in support of another
 - Brought revolutionary ideas back with them to France
 - o Very Expensive

Growth of the Bourgeoisie

- 3rd Estate

- Growing very fast
- 'Nouveau Riche'
- Educated
 - Well-read ideas of Philosophes
- Wanted reforms
 - Resented privileges of 1st and 2nd estates

Bad Harvests

- 1787, 1788, 1789
- Food shortages
 - Causes unrest in the population
 - Brought the poor into the discussion

Government Bankrupt

- Expenses exceeded revenues
 - Necker attempted to spin into good light
 - Deficit spending
- Revenue
 - Only 3rd estate paid taxes
 - Least able to pay
- High costs of war
 - Louis XIV and American Revolution
- Lead to meeting of Estates General

Meeting of the Estates General

- Opening of Pandora's Box
- Old legislative government
 - Had not been called in 175 years
- Louis XVI
 - Forced to call it because he needed money
- Traditional voting by house
 - Each house had one vote
 - 1st Estate - Clergy
 - 2nd Estate – Nobility
 - 3rd Estate – Commoners
 - Always 2 to 1