The French Revolution - Part 1

• Take notes from the slides.
• Copy the notes in red.
• Write the notes in blue in your own words.
• The words in black are for your information.
• Questions in green are to be reflected upon briefly and shared as a class.
• Questions in orange are for written reflection in notes.
• **Old Regime (Ancien Regime)** –
  - socio-political system which existed in most of Europe during the 18th century

• **Countries were ruled by absolutism** – the monarch had absolute control over the government

• **Classes of people – privileged and unprivileged**
  - *Unprivileged people* – paid taxes and treated badly
  - *Privileged people* – did not pay taxes and treated well
The sedan chair, used by the upper classes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was carried by two "chairmen." It had side windows, a hinged door at the front, and a roof that opened to allow the occupant to stand. It took its name from the town of Sedan, France. This engraving, made in Paris in 1777, shows the elegant costumes worn by the nobility and their servants.
Society under the Old Regime

- In France, people were divided into three estates
  - **First Estate**
    - High-ranking members of the Church
    - Privileged class
  - **Second Estate**
    - Nobility
    - Privileged class
  - **Third Estate**
    - Everyone else – from peasants in the countryside to wealthy bourgeoisie merchants in the cities
    - Unprivileged class
# The Three Estates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estate</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Privileges</th>
<th>Exemptions</th>
<th>Burdens</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>• Circa 130,000 &lt;br&gt;• High-ranking clergy</td>
<td>• Collected the tithe &lt;br&gt;• Censorship of the press &lt;br&gt;• Control of education &lt;br&gt;• Kept records of births, deaths, marriages, etc. &lt;br&gt;• Catholic faith held honored position of being the state religion (practiced by monarch and nobility) &lt;br&gt;• Owned 20% of the land</td>
<td>• Paid no taxes &lt;br&gt;• Subject to Church law rather than civil law</td>
<td>• Moral obligation (rather than legal obligation) to assist the poor and needy &lt;br&gt;• Support the monarchy and Old Regime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>• Circa 110,000 &lt;br&gt;• Nobles</td>
<td>• Collected taxes in the form of feudal dues &lt;br&gt;• Monopolized military and state appointments &lt;br&gt;• Owned 20% of the land</td>
<td>• Paid no taxes</td>
<td>• Support the monarchy and Old Regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>• Circa 25,000,000 &lt;br&gt;• Everyone else: artisans, bourgeoisie, city workers, merchants, peasants, etc., along with many parish priests</td>
<td>• None</td>
<td>• None</td>
<td>• Paid all taxes &lt;br&gt;• Tithe (Church tax) &lt;br&gt;• Octrot (tax on goods brought into cities) &lt;br&gt;• Corvée (forced road work) &lt;br&gt;• Capitation (poll tax) &lt;br&gt;• Vingtième (income tax) &lt;br&gt;• Gabelle (salt tax) &lt;br&gt;• Taille (land tax) &lt;br&gt;• Feudal dues for use of local manor’s winepress, oven, etc.</td>
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</table>
What does this contemporary political cartoon say about conditions in France under the Old Regime?
Economic Conditions under the Old Regime

• France’s economy was based primarily on agriculture
• Peasant farmers of France bore the burden of taxation
• Poor harvests meant that peasants had trouble paying their regular taxes
  – Certainly could not afford to have their taxes raised
• Bourgeoisie often managed to gather wealth
  – But were upset that they paid taxes while nobles did not
France Is Bankrupt

- King Louis XVI lavished money on himself and residences like Versailles
- Queen Marie Antoinette was seen as a wasteful spender
- Government found its funds depleted as a result of war, including the funding of the American Revolution
- **Deficit spending** – a government spending more money than it takes in from tax revenues
- Privileged classes would not submit to being taxed
This side of the palace is almost 2000 feet long. The portion seen in this picture contains the Gallery of Mirrors, so named from the seventeen large mirrors which occupy the side of the room opposite the round arched windows on the second floor. It was in this great hall that the Treaty of 1919 with Germany, ending the World War, was signed by delegates representing nearly nine tenths of the population of the globe.
MARIE ANTOINETTE AND HER CHILDREN

From a painting by Madame Lebrun, in the Versailles Palace. Marie Antoinette was unpopular both at the French court and with the people almost from the time of her marriage. The ladies of the court disliked her because she made fun of their grand manners. The people considered her frivolous and extravagant. They declared that she was nothing but a “foreigner,” and generally called her “the Austrian.” She had four children—two daughters and two sons. The younger daughter died in infancy, in 1787; and the older son died at the age of seven, in 1789. The younger son, who survived his parents, is shown in the picture as the baby on the queen’s lap.
Long- and Short-term Causes

• Long-term causes
  – Also known as underlying causes
  – Causes which can stem back many years

• Short-term causes
  – Also known as immediate causes
  – Causes which happen close to the moment the change or action happens

• Example: A person is fired from his or her job.
  – Long-term cause(s): You’re typically late working the banana stand and aren’t very productive when you’re there.
  – Short-term cause(s): You fail to show up and don’t notify the Banana Man.

• One typically does not happen without the other. Events which bring important change (or action) need both long-term and short-term causes.
Long-term Causes

1. Absolutism
2. Unjust socio-political system (Old Regime)
3. Poor harvests which left peasant farmers with little money for taxes
4. Influence of Enlightenment
5. System of mercantilism which restricted trade
6. Influence of other successful revolutions
   - IE: American Revolution
Short-term Causes

1. Bankruptcy caused by deficit spending
2. worst famine in history
3. Hungry, impoverished peasants feared that nobles at Estates General were seeking greater privileges
4. Louis XIV calls for the Estates General to resolve problems
   Sets in motion the events that lead to the abolition of the monarchy and new socio-political system for France
Preparing for the *Estates-General*

- **Winter of 1788-1789**
  - Members of the estates elected representatives

- **Cahiers**
  - Traditional lists of grievances written by the people
  - Nothing out of the ordinary
    - Asked for only moderate changes
THE THREE ESTATES

A contemporary cartoon, showing the Third Estate welcoming the nobles and the clergy to the ranks of the National Assembly, June 30, 1789.
Meeting of the *Estates-General*: May 5, 1789

- Voting was conducted by estate
  - Each estate had one vote
  - First and Second Estates could operate as a **bloc** to stop the Third Estate from having its way

◊ First Estate + ◊ Second Estate - vs. - ◊ Third Estate

- Representatives from the Third Estate demanded that voting be by population
  - This would give the Third Estate a great advantage

- Deadlock resulted
First Estate = 1 Vote or 130,000 Votes

Third Estate = 1 Vote or 25,000,000 Votes

Second Estate = 1 Vote or 110,000 Votes
Tennis Court Oath

The Third Estate declared itself to be the National Assembly.

Louis XVI responded by locking the Third Estate out of the meeting.

The Third Estate relocated to a nearby tennis court where its members vowed to stay together and create a written constitution for France.

On June 23, 1789, Louis XVI relented. He ordered the three estates to meet together as the National Assembly and vote, by population, on a constitution for France.
Tennis Court Oath by Jacques Louis David
The Tennis Court Oath

“The National Assembly, considering that it has been summoned to establish the constitution of the kingdom, to effect the regeneration of the public order, and to maintain the true principles of monarchy; that nothing can prevent it from continuing its deliberations in whatever place it may be forced to establish itself; and, finally, that wheresoever its members are assembled, there is the National Assembly;

“Decrees that all members of this Assembly shall immediately take a solemn oath not to separate, and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the kingdom is established and consolidated upon firm foundations; and that, the said oath taken, all members and each one of them individually shall ratify this steadfast resolution by signature.”
Trivial

• When grain was scarce peasants often ate grain infected with ergot, a fungus with LSD-like hallucinogenic qualities. This may have fuelled some of the unrest of the Great Fear in 1789.

• When the Legislative Assembly met, those with radical views sat in the benches on the left while those with more moderate views sat on the right. Led to modern political descriptions.

• According to legend, Robespierre was laid on the guillotine face-up so that he could see the blade falling.

• Since the revolution in France, ‘Thermidor’ has been used to describe a period in a revolution where power reverts to those whose values are more in line with the old regime than the new.