

French Revolution

The French Revolution is considered an important event in world history. The storming of the Bastille prison on July 14, 1789 marked the beginning of the French Revolution.

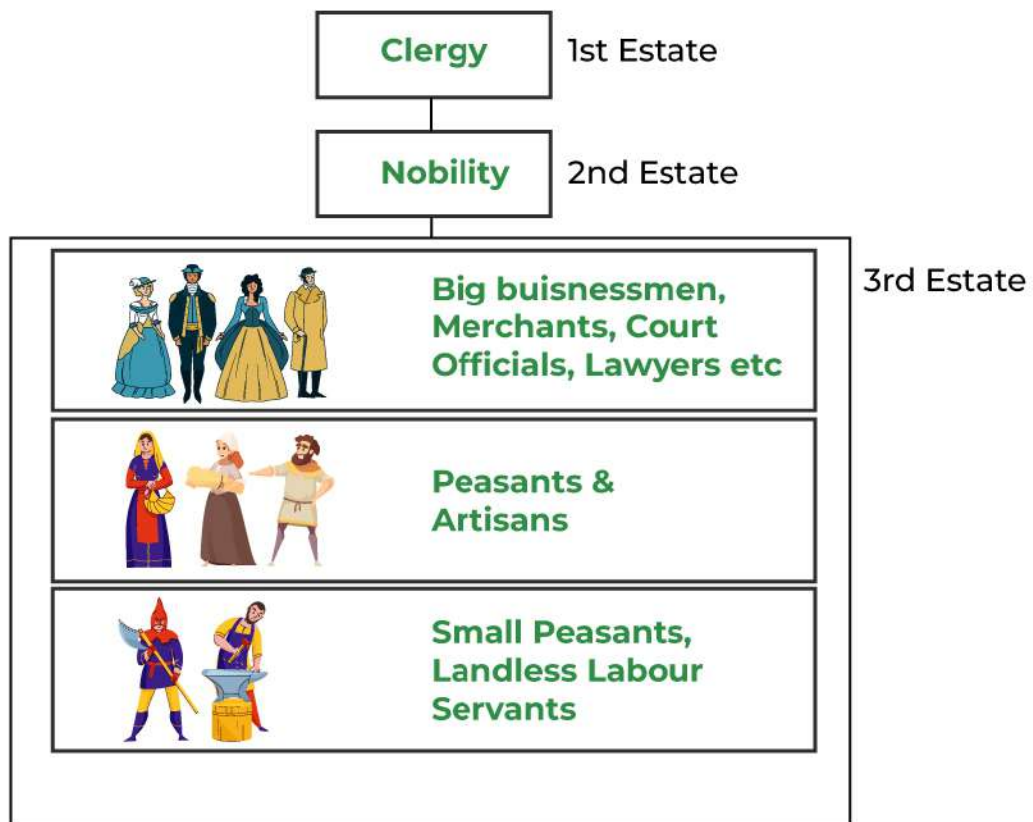
Causes of the French Revolution

Inequality in French society

- French society was divided into three states. The first estate consisted of the clergy, the second the nobles, and the third the common people, most of whom were farmers.
- Although peasants made up about 90% of France's population, very few owned land. 60% of the land belonged to the members of the first two estates.
- One of the many reasons why the revolution broke out was that only the third class paid taxes to the state. Members of the first and second manors were exempt from all taxes payable to the king.
- The nobility and clergy enjoyed many privileges in French society. The nobles demanded a feudal payment from the peasants. The latter also had to serve the nobles, working in their fields and houses. They also had to serve in the army.
- The church also collected religious taxes from the people, known as tithes. Members of the Third Estate had to pay a direct tax known as "taille" to the state. Indirect taxes were imposed on tobacco, salt and many other everyday goods. Thus, the third estate was full of financial difficulties.

The Rise of the Middle Class

- In 18th century France, many social groups rose and emerged. They were merchants, traders, lawyers and teachers. Merchants and traders gained wealth through foreign trade.
- Government officials, lawyers and teachers were educated and believed that no group should be given special rights simply on the basis of birth. They believed that members of the first two estates should also pay taxes to the state.
- The French middle class was inspired by the writings of social thinkers and philosophers. John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau were two such thinkers who rejected the idea of the divine right of the king. Rousseau proposed that the government should be based on a social contract between people and the government.



- These thoughts of the philosophers were discussed everywhere - in cafes and salons - and spread among the common people. Inspired by these ideas, people began to oppose the special privileges of members of the first and second estates.
- The educated youth of France were inspired by the rights of freedom and equality that followed the American Revolution. When the people found out that the king was going to raise taxes even more, they rebelled.

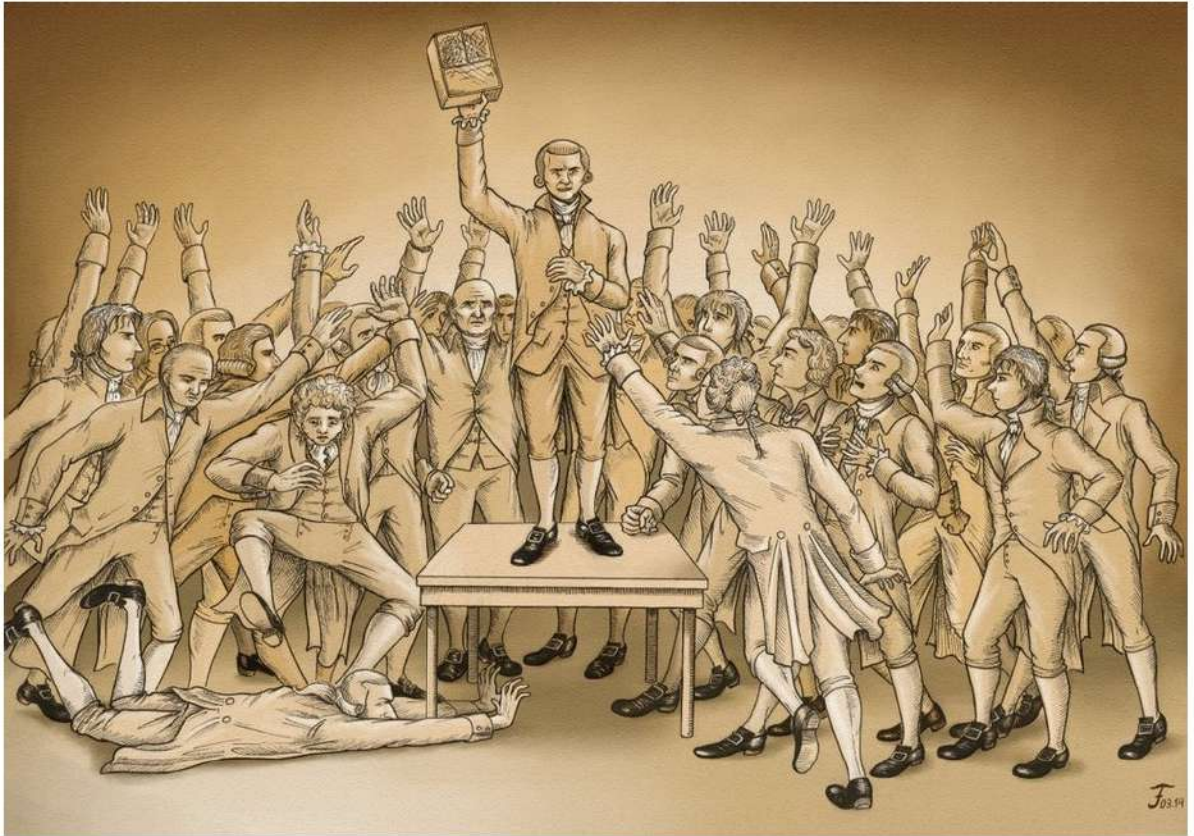
The Rebellion Disintegrates

- The wars have emptied the French treasury. The country was heavily in debt and had to pay high interest to creditors. In order to improve the economy of the country, the king decided to increase the taxes collected from the people.

- When the king called an assembly of generals to approve proposals for new taxes, members of the Third Estate left the assembly, demanding that each assembly member have one vote against the current practice. one voice in one room.



- On June 20, 1789, members of the Third Estate met on an indoor tennis court and decided to draw up a constitution that would limit the power of the king.



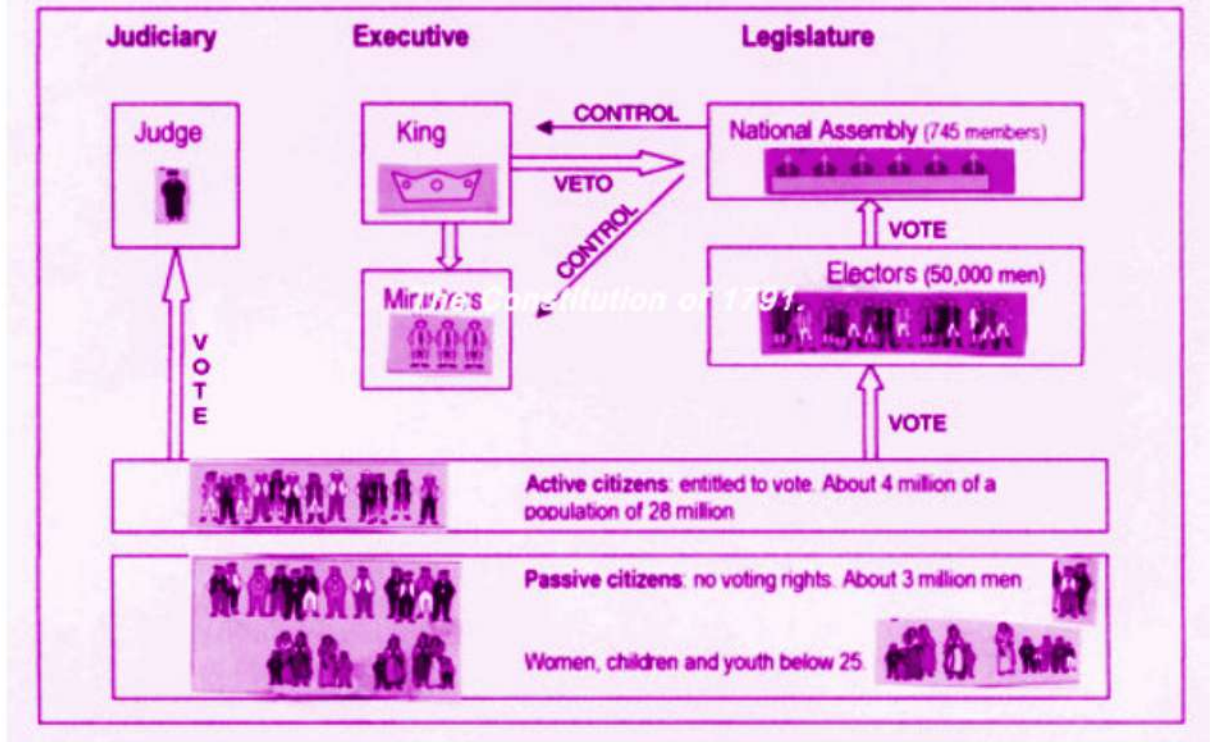
- During this time, bread prices rose in France and bakers began to stock up. People, including women, thronged shops in tension due to the lack of bread. When the king ordered his soldiers to move to Paris, an angry mob stormed the Bastille prison and freed its prisoners.

As the number of rebellions began to increase, the French monarch recognized the French General Assembly. His powers can now be constitutionally checked.

France becomes a constitutional monarchy

- The National Assembly, formed by members of a third country, created a constitution which limited the power of the king and gave executive, legislative and judicial power to different powers.
- The National Assembly had the power to make laws for the country. Members of the People's Assembly were elected by voters. This group of voters was chosen by citizens who paid taxes to the government and were called active citizens. Other men and all women did not have the right to vote.

The Constitution of 1791.



- The French constitution guaranteed the right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion and equality before the law.

The Abolition of the Monarchy in France

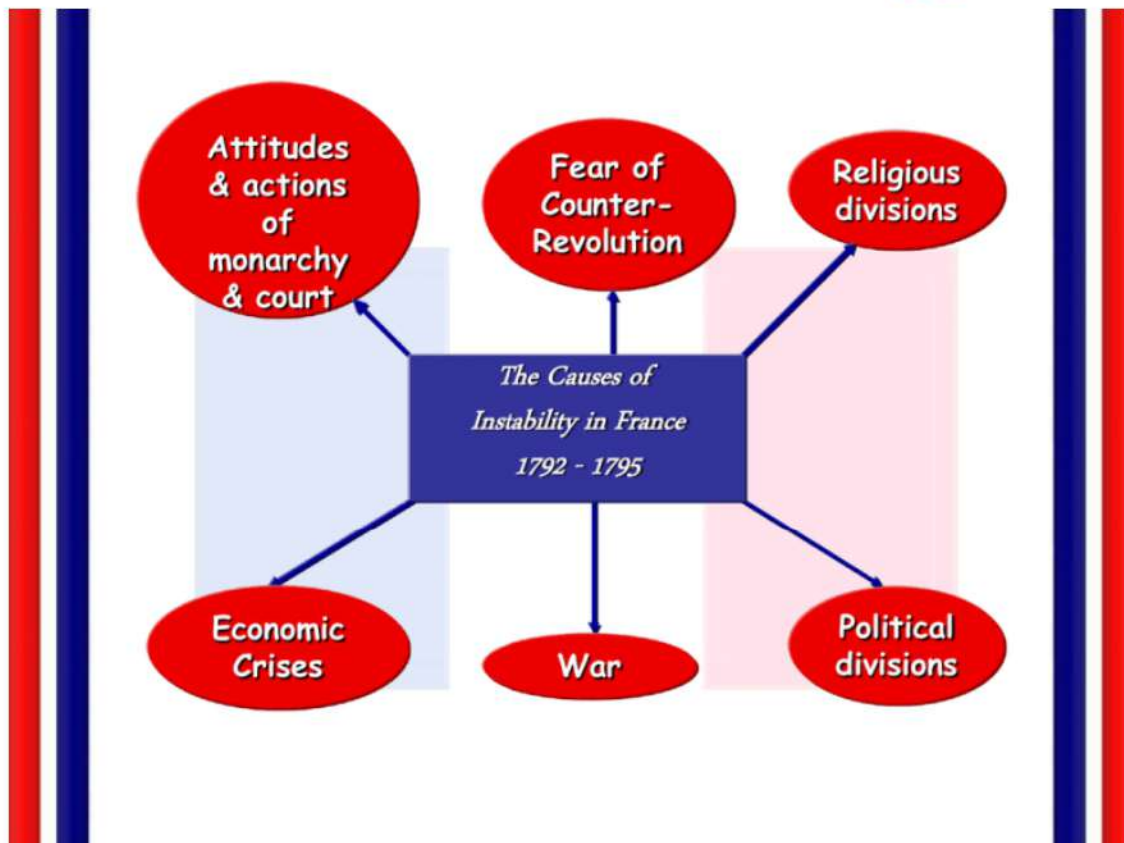
- As the power of King Louis XVI was reduced, he sought help from the Prussian and Austrian monarchies. However, the French revolutionaries raised a large army and declared war against Prussia and Austria.
- The French Jacobin Club was founded by the revolutionary forces of the country. It included small merchants, watchmakers, confectioners, printers, day laborers and servants.
- In 1792, with bread supplies dwindling, the Jacobins and the mob attacked the Tuileries Palace and imprisoned the French royal family.
- This development led to constitutional changes. Elections were held and everyone over 21 was given the right to vote. The monarchy was abolished and France became a republic.

- King Louis XVI was publicly executed on January 21, 1793, on charges of treason. Later, his queen, Mary Antoinette, was also executed.



Reign of Terror

- The years 1793-1794 are called Reign of Terror. Robespierre, head of the Jacobin Club, followed a policy of strict control and punishment. Clergy, nobles, and people considered enemies of the republic were guillotined. He even ordered the killing of his own followers who did not accept his methods and ways.



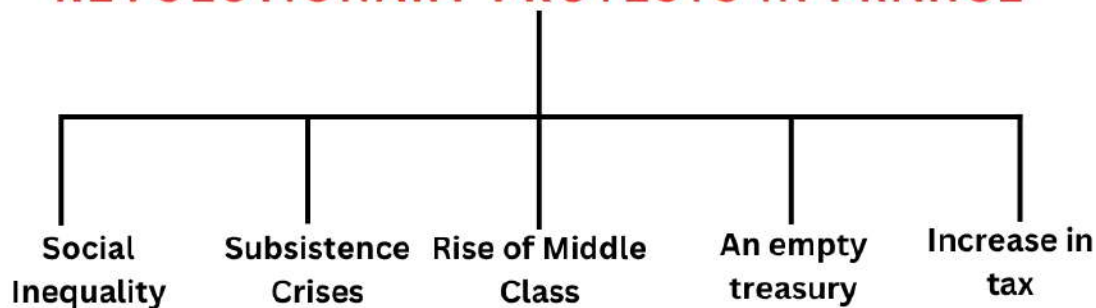
- Robespierre's government set clear limits to wages and prices of essential goods. Meat and bread were common. Farmers were also forced to sell grain at the price set by the government. Churches were closed.
- Robespierre followed his policies so strictly that even his supporters turned against him. He was finally convicted by a court in July 1794 and guillotined.
- After the fall of the Jacobin government, the wealthier middle class took power. They realized a constitution that gave no rights to the non-proprietary class.
- The Board was appointed with five members. This administrative council was often in conflict with the legislative councils. This political instability paved the way for the emergence of a military dictatorship under Napoleon Bonaparte.

Women's Participation in the Revolution

- Women actively participated in the French Revolution. French women had no power. Most of the women of the third farm had to work to make a living. They worked as seamstresses, sold flowers and vegetables, or worked as domestic servants in the houses of wealthy families.

- Women started their own club to raise their voices. A famous women's club was the Revolutionary Republican Women's Association. This club demanded that women be given the same political rights as men. Until then women did not have the right to vote.
- In the beginning, many laws were made to improve the status of women in French society. Schooling became compulsory for all girls. Fathers could no longer marry their daughters without their consent. Divorce was legalized and women were trained for various jobs.
- During the Terror many laws were passed ordering the closure of women's clubs. Many women were condemned and guillotined. However, women's struggle for equal voting rights continued. French women finally got the right to vote in 1946.

REASONS THAT LED TO THE OUTBREAK OF REVOLUTIONARY PROTESTS IN FRANCE



Abolition of slavery

- One of the important reforms of the Jacobin Club was the abolition of slavery in the French colonies.
- Europeans brought slaves from Africa and then sold them to plantation owners. As slaves worked in the colonies, the growing demand from European markets for sugar, coffee and indigo was met.
- The slavery system in France was hardly criticized. This is because slaves were important on plantations.
- After the Jacobins banned slavery, Napoleon Bonaparte reintroduced it. Political instability in France paved the way for a military dictatorship under Napoleon Bonaparte.

- He and his troops continued the ideas of the French Revolution in Europe. He introduced laws such as the protection of private property and uniform systems of weights and measures.
- Many of his measures, which carried revolutionary ideas about freedom and modern law to the rest of Europe, influenced people long after Napoleon was gone.
- However, he also placed his followers on the thrones of the countries he invaded. Therefore, he was considered an attacker.
- The ideas of freedom, equality and democratic rights were the greatest gifts of the French Revolution to the world.
- In India, Tipu Sultan and Raja Ram Mohan Roy fervently followed the French Revolution and praised the ideals of the French Revolution.