

Year 6 General Studies

# The French Revolution

## What was it?

The French Revolution was a watershed event in modern European history that began in 1789 and ended in the late 1790s with the ascent of Napoleon Bonaparte. During this period, French citizens razed and redesigned their country's political systems, uprooting centuries-old institutions such as absolute monarchy and the feudal system. The upheaval was caused by widespread discontent with the French monarchy and the poor economic policies of King Louis XVI, who met his death by guillotine, as did his wife Marie Antoinette.

## How did people live?

Before the French Revolution, the people of France were divided into social groups called "Estates." The First Estate included the clergy (church leaders), the Second Estate included the nobles, and the Third Estate included the commoners. Most of the people were members of the Third Estate. The Third Estate paid most of the taxes, while the nobility lived lives of luxury and got all the high-ranking jobs.

## Why was it named the 'Reign of Terror'?

Following the king's execution, war with various European powers and intense divisions within the National Convention ushered the French Revolution into its most violent and turbulent phase.

In June 1793, the Jacobins seized control of the National Convention from the more moderate Girondins and instituted a series of radical measures, including the establishment of a new calendar and the eradication of Christianity.

They also unleashed the bloody Reign of Terror (la Terreur), a 10-month period in which suspected enemies of the revolution were guillotined by the thousands. Many of the killings were carried out under orders from Robespierre, who dominated the draconian Committee of Public Safety until his own execution on July 28, 1794.



Napoleon Bonaparte



King Louis XVI



Marie Antoinette

Year 6 General Studies  
**The French Revolution**

**Questions**

1. **What time period did the French Revolution take place?**

---

2. **What caused the French Revolution?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

3. **What estate did commoners belong to?**

---

4. **How long did the 'Reign of Terror' last?**

---

5. **Prior to the Revolution who paid most of the taxes in France?**

---

6. **King Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette survived the Revolution.**

**True / False**

7. **What caused the French Revolution to enter into its most violent and turbulent phase?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---