

Name _____

Date _____

The French Revolution: The Bastille and the Reign of Terror

After the Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly, Louis XVI acted in two very different ways. Initially, he appeared to support the Assembly by making representatives of the First and Second Estates join the Assembly as well. At the same time, he also encouraged the nobles to send troops to Paris in order to frighten the National Assembly.

The troops were ineffective and did nothing to discourage the National Assembly. As a result of the presence of troops, mobs of hungry Parisians began collecting weapons for themselves. On July 14, 1789, a crowd of people was collecting weapons and marching through the streets. They arrived at the Bastille.

The Bastille was a jail in Paris. The mob of Parisians demanded weapons from the commander of the Bastille. When he refused, the people stormed the Bastille, killing the commander in charge and several soldiers. Later, they also killed the mayor of the city. To show their victory, the Parisians mounted the heads of the mayor and the commander on poles and paraded them through the city.

The fall of the Bastille is considered the beginning of the French Revolution. Today, the French still celebrate Bastille Day to commemorate their independence from the Old Regime.

After the storming of the Bastille, many of the French nobles left France because they were frightened. The people were still starving and feared that the king and the nobles would attempt to crush the Assembly. As a result, in October of 1789, over six thousand women and thousands of other revolutionaries marched to Versailles. They broke into the palace and captured the king, his wife, and their son. They forced all three to return to Paris with them. The king and queen were put in a palace in Paris, where they could be closely watched by the public. On one occasion, the royal family was captured after attempting to escape. The king and queen were again brought back to Paris. Their son was imprisoned and never heard from again.

The National Assembly continued to meet for two years, and many people hoped that the Assembly would make changes to improve the quality of life for all Parisians. The Assembly drafted a new constitution that horrified the ruling classes. This constitution abolished the aristocracy and gave peasants the same rights as nobles. In spite of this, the poor still remained poor, and their condition did not improve.

Other European countries feared that the turmoil in France would spill into their territories, so there were many battles along the French borders. Eventually, the Assembly was replaced by the Commune. The Commune was a radical new form of government, which punished anyone it considered to be a traitor. Often, suspected traitors were condemned to death without even receiving a trial. It was a very bloody time for France. Over 1,600 people were executed. The king was one of the people executed. He was brought into the main square in Paris and placed on the guillotine on January 21, 1793. Nine months later, Marie Antoinette met the same fate.

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The French Revolution: The Bastille and the Reign of Terror (Cont'd)

Shortly thereafter, a new government took power. The new government's reign was so bloody that it became known as the "Reign of Terror." Leaders fought with each other, trying to gain control of France. The Reign of Terror lasted for one year, from 1793 to 1794. Powerful courts sought to purge the country of all enemies and trials were held without upholding the rights guaranteed by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. There were over forty-thousand deaths during the Reign of Terror. The revolution that had begun in pursuit of liberty and freedom had turned into a bloody event.

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The French Revolution: The Bastille and the Reign of Terror Questions

Multiple Choice:

1. The Bastille was a jail in:

- a. England
- b. Boston
- c. Madrid
- d. Paris

2. There were over forty-thousand deaths during the:

- a. Black Plague
- b. Reign of Terror
- c. Paris Concert
- d. National Assembly

3. Today, the French still celebrate Bastille Day to commemorate their independence from:

- a. the Enlightenment
- b. the clergy
- c. National Assembly
- d. Old Regime

True or False:

___ 4. After the Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly, Louis XVI acted in two very different ways.

___ 5. The fall of the Bastille is considered the beginning of the French Revolution.

___ 6. The National Assembly drafted a new constitution that pleased the ruling classes.

___ 7. Marie Antoinette was praised as a hero of the revolution.

Fill Ins:

8. In October of 1789, over six thousand women and thousands of other revolutionaries marched to _____.

9. The Reign of Terror lasted for one year, from _____.

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