

**Causes of the French Revolution:** Read all documents. Answer the questions and complete the chart

**Historical Context**

The French Revolution of 1789 had many long-range causes. Political, social, and economic conditions in France contributed to the discontent (unhappiness) felt by many French people-especially those of the Third Estate. The ideas of the philosophers of the Enlightenment brought new ideas about the role of government and powers guaranteed to citizens. Finally, the American Revolution showed the French that a country could be successful without a king.

**Directions:** Answer the questions which follow each document (25 pts)

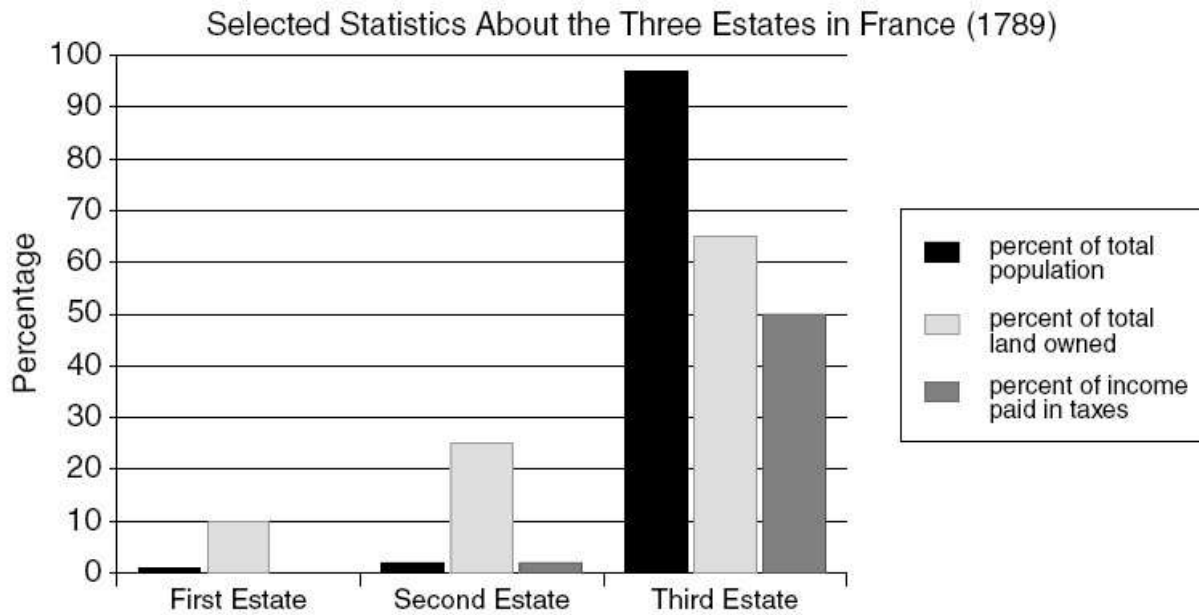
**Document 1: Friedman & Foner, A Genetic Approach to Modern European History, College Entrance Book Co., 1938**

“. . . Powers of the king.—The King, Louis XVI, was absolute. He ruled by the divine right theory which held that he had received his power to govern from God and was therefore responsible to God alone. He appointed all civil officials and military officers. He made and enforced the laws. He could declare war and make peace. He levied taxes and spent the people’s money as he saw fit. He controlled the expression of thought by a strict censorship of speech and press. By means of *lettres de cachet* (sealed letters which were really blank warrants for arrest) he could arbitrarily imprison anyone without trial for an indefinite period. He lived in his magnificent palace at Versailles, completely oblivious to the rising tide of popular discontent. . . .”

Q1: What kind of a ruler is Louis XVI? (Complete sentences)

Q2: Why might the people of France be angry with King Louis XVI? (Complete sentences)

**Document 2:** This diagram illustrates the three estates in 1789 and the land each held during the Old Regime.



Q3: What unfair conditions existed in pre-revolutionary France?

Q4: What conclusions can you draw about the relationship between the percentage of the population in each estate and the percentage of land owned by that estate? (Complete sentences)

**Document 3: Excerpt from: Miss Betham-Edwards, ed., Arthur Young's Travels in France During the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789**

“September 5, 1788: The poor people seem very poor indeed. The children are terribly ragged.

June 10, 1789: The lack of bread is terrible. Stories arrive every moment from the provinces of riots and disturbances, and calling in the military, to preserve the peace of the markets....The price of bread has risen above people's ability to pay. This causes great misery.

July 12, 1789: Walking up a long hill, to ease my mare, I was joined by a poor woman, who complained of the times, and that it was a sad country; demanding her reasons, she said her husband had but a small plot of land, one cow, and a poor little horse, yet they had to pay a tax of 42 pounds of wheat, and three chickens, to one noble and 168 pounds of oats, one chicken and 1 sou [small unit of money] to another...the taxes and laws are crushing us.

This woman, at no great distance, might have been taken for sixty or seventy, her figure was so bent, and her face so wrinkled and hardened by labor, — but she said she was only twenty-eight.”

Q5: List three observations this traveler made about the life of the peasant in France between 1787 and 1789.

**Document 4: French and American soldiers during the American Revolution. France sent an estimated 12,000 soldiers and 32,000 sailors to the American war effort.**



**Document 5: From *Lectures on the French Revolution* by Sir John Dalberg-Acton, an English historian, politician, and writer.**

“The condition of France alone did not bring about the overthrow of the monarchy... for the suffering of the people was not greater than they had been before. The ideas of the [Enlightenment philosophers] were not directly responsible for the outbreak...[but] the spark that changed thought into action was supplied by the Declaration of American independence... The American example caused the Revolution to break out...”

Q6: How might France’s participation in the American Revolution help spread the ideas of the Enlightenment?  
(Complete sentences)

**Document 6: Comte D’Antraigues as quoted in an excerpt from *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*.**

“The Third Estate is the People and the People is the foundation of the State; it is in fact the State itself; Nobles and clergy are merely political categories while according to the unchangeable laws of nature the People is everything. Everything should be subordinated (inferior) to it... It is in the People that all national power resides and for the People that all states exist.”

Q7: What Enlightenment idea is the Comte D’Antraigues expressing in this quote?

**Document 7: The following are excerpts from a list of complaints about the king, taxing, and voting in the Estates General that were presented to the assembled Estates General in 1789.**

**Background:** *The Estates General was like a Parliament or Congress. Representatives from each of the three Estates could attend. Each Estate was given 1 vote for a total of 3 votes on any issue the Estates General looked at. All of these reforms were rejected.*

“That the king be forced to reform the abuses and tyranny [of his rule].... That every tax.... Be granted only for a limited time [and periodically re-evaluated]....That the taille [a tax on land] be borne equally by all classes.... The meetings of the Estates General.... Shall be scheduled for definite times.... In order to assure the third estate the influence it deserves because of its numbers... its votes in the assembly should be taken by head...”

Q8: What three changes did the Third Estate demand be made in the French government? Why do you think these specific demands were made?

Q9: Ultimately, the demands were rejected. Why would the French government reject these demands? What was the likely result of this rejection on the attitudes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate? (Complete sentences)

**Document 8: Excerpt from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789).**

- Men are born and remain free and equal in rights; social distinctions can be established only for the common benefit.
- 2. The aim of every political association (*government*) is the conservation (*protection*) of the imprescriptible (*can't be taken away*) rights of man; these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression....
- 4. Liberty consists of being able to do anything that does not harm another person...
- 10. No one may be disturbed (*bothered, arrested*) because of his opinions, even religious, provided that their public demonstration does not disturb the public order established by law.
- 11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man: every citizen can therefore freely speak, write, print...
- 16. Any society in which guarantees of rights are not assured nor the separation of powers determined has no constitution.

Q10: According to this document, what are the natural rights of man?

Q11: How might a belief in these ideas lead the French to start a Revolution against their king? (Complete sentences)

**List the factors you believe caused the French Revolution**

Brainstorm causes of the French Revolution based on these source documents and fill out this chart:

Causes- Claim	Evidence	Explanation (how is this a cause of the French Revolution?)
<p>Peasant Hardships-</p> <p>What problems did peasants face?</p> <p>What were the short and long term effects of these hardships/problems?</p> <p>Why would these hardships make people take action to change their government?</p>		
<p>Enlightenment Ideas-</p> <p>What Enlightenment ideas did the people of France know about?</p> <p>How did they find out about them?</p> <p>How did it change the way they felt about their government?</p>		

Claim Sentence Frame: The French Revolution was caused by \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.