



The French Revolution Flashcards

Part of the AP European History collection

Overview

This resource contains a collection of 43 flashcards that will help students master key French Revolution concepts that may be covered on the AP European History exam.

These are not actual test questions, nor do they involve much “application” of knowledge. Instead, they focus on the basic factual and conceptual knowledge that students must first internalize if they are to successfully formulate logical responses to multiple-choice or essay questions on the eventual exam.

Brainscape has created this content in partnership with several AP European History teachers and tutors, as well as ex-executives from test prep publishers such as Kaplan and The Princeton Review. The material is as comprehensive as possible, while still being broken down into small bite-sized chunks that make it easy to study. We have included a variety of question formats to help students’ minds encode the knowledge as deeply as possible.

How to Use This Resource

Teachers and students can use these flashcards in a variety of creative ways. Below are a few common use cases:

1. Post this PDF on your class website, so students can download it on their own, and potentially print their own copy as a study aid (and even *cut out* individual flashcards)
2. Use these questions as inspiration for your own quiz questions
3. Use these flashcards as a “game”, where one student (or group of students) asks another student (or group) a random question, and keeps score of how well the questions are being answered
4. Encourage students to use the digital version of the flashcards (see below)

Online and Mobile Version

All of these flashcards are available to study on the Brainscape website (brainscape.com) and in our mobile app(s). Brainscape’s “smart flashcards” study system uses our unique “Confidence-Based Repetition” method, which repeats questions in a progressive pattern based on students’ personalized path of mastery. Teachers can track students’ progress and identify students who need more guidance.

Students can study a portion of Brainscape’s premium flashcards for FREE and can gain unlimited access for a small fee. Students can also use Brainscape to create & share their own supplementary flashcards (which is ALWAYS FREE).

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#	Question	Answer
1	What were the primary complaints of the French peasantry in 1788?	<p>They complained of the high cost of bread, high taxes supporting both the French crown and the nobles who owned the land on which they farmed, the salt tax (the gabelle), and the corvée, which required them to work free of charge on local roads.</p> <p>French peasants made up almost 80% of France's population, yet had little political power.</p>
2	What was the French government's financial position in 1788?	The French government was in serious financial straits. Expenses from the Seven Years' War and the support for the American Revolution, high government spending under Louis XIV, and the inability to tax nobles had brought the French government to the brink of bankruptcy.
3	What initial step did Louis XVI take to solve the French financial crisis?	<p>Louis XVI convened a Court of Nobles in 1789.</p> <p>The French nobility had long been immune from any taxation by the Crown, and to offset the nation's financial crisis, Louis XVI sought the nobles' permission to tax them for the first time. The Court of Nobles declined, and Louis XVI summoned the Estates-General to meet in the spring of 1789.</p>
4	After the Court of Nobles refused to be taxed in 1788, Louis XVI summoned the Estates-General. What was the Estates-General?	The Estates-General was the national assembly of France, which had not met since 1614. Louis XVI looked to the Estates-General to provide solutions to the government's dire fiscal position.
5	What three estates made up the Estates-General?	<p>The three estates of the Estates-General were the clergy (the First Estate), the nobility (the Second Estate), and the common people (the Third Estate).</p> <p>Some 96% of France's populace comprised the Third Estate, and in recognition of its size Louis XVI provided it with double the number of representatives of the First and Second Estates.</p>

#	Question	Answer
6	In January 1789, Abbé Sieyès, a French clergyman elected to the Third Estate, published <i>What is the Third Estate?</i> . What did Sieyès argue?	<p>Sieyès argued that the First and Second Estates were completely unnecessary to France's well being, and that the Third Estate was the only legitimate representative of the French people.</p> <p><i>What is the Third Estate?</i> gave voice for the first time to the discontents and aspirations of a heretofore silent segment of the French population.</p>
7	Why did the Third Estate leave the Estates-General in June of 1789?	<p>During the early days of the Estates-General, the first two estates proposed that votes should be taken by estate, rather than by head. This meant that there would only be three votes, and the First and Second Estates would always be able to vote down any proposal from the Third Estate.</p> <p>Outraged, the membership of the Third Estate, led by Abbé Sieyès, left the assembly and met at a nearby tennis court.</p>
8	In June of 1789, members of France's Third Estate in the Estates-General took the Tennis Court Oath. What did they swear to do?	<p>At a tennis court at Versailles, the Third Estate declared themselves France's National Constituent Assembly and swore an oath not to disband until they'd composed and adopted a written constitution.</p> <p>On July 9, 1789, Louis XVI recognized the Assembly's authority. In declaring themselves France's only legitimate representative body, the Third Estate took inspiration from Abbé Sieyès's <i>What is the Third Estate?</i>, which had argued that only the Third Estate could speak for France.</p>
9	On July 12, 1789, two events set off a large riot in Paris. What were the two events?	<p>On July 12, 1789, word reached Paris that King Louis XVI had dismissed Jacques Necker, the French finance minister who was believed to be sympathetic to the National Assembly. That same day, it became widely known that Louis XVI had ordered German and Swiss mercenary troops from the French frontier to Versailles and Paris.</p> <p>Believing that both events marked the start of an attempt by the monarchy to reassert control over France, crowds began to gather throughout Paris. French Army detachments proved unable to contain the crowds, which began plundering any place where bread and wine were stored.</p>

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10	On July 14, 1789, Parisian rioters searching for arms and ammunition attacked what symbol of royal authority?	<p>The Bastille, which was a large fortress in the heart of Paris. The Bastille was a highly visible symbol of royal authority. On the morning of July 14, 1789, some 1000 Parisians gathered at the Bastille's gates and demanded that the guns inside be turned over to them.</p> <p>When the officer in charge of the Bastille refused, fighting broke out and more than 90 attackers died before the officer surrendered. The "Storming of the Bastille" is widely regarded as the start of the French Revolution.</p>
11	What was the Great Fear?	<p>In late July and early August 1789, rumors circulated in rural France that French nobles planned to starve the peasantry by burning their crops. The Great Fear, as it came to be called, induced peasants to arm themselves and attack manor houses. Many peasants took advantage of the opportunity to destroy records of their tax obligations.</p> <p>Coupled with the Paris Riots and the Storming of the Bastille, the Great Fear demonstrated that traditional French society and government was rapidly disintegrating.</p>
12	In August of 1789, France's new National Assembly issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a statement of principles of the new government. What did the Declaration provide?	<p>The salient points of the Declaration provided that all men were born and remain free and equal in their rights. It provided for freedom of religion, the press, speech, and guaranteed the right to be secure from arbitrary arrest and to petition the government. The Declaration emphasized natural rights, endowed in man by virtue of being human.</p>
13	What prompted 7,000 women to march from Paris to Versailles on October 5, 1789?	<p>The Women's March on Versailles took place when Parisian city officials failed to address food shortages that had raised the price of bread.</p> <p>Storming the royal palace, the women demanded that King Louis XVI return with them to Paris as a sign of his willingness to cooperate with the National Assembly. Louis XVI acceded to their demands, legitimizing the National Assembly.</p> <p>The Women's March to Versailles began with a rumor that Louis XVI's wife Marie Antoinette was hoarding grain.</p>



#	Question	Answer
14	What action did the National Assembly take in 1790 to restrict the power of France's Catholic Church?	<p>The National Assembly passed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which confiscated lands owned by the Catholic Church.</p> <p>The Civil Constitution also provided that the clergy would have to take an oath of loyalty to the National Assembly, and that bishops and priests would be elected.</p>
15	Besides passing the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, what other reforms did France's National Assembly undertake between 1789 and 1792?	<p>The French National Assembly instituted the metric system, reformed the nation's organizational structure by dividing the country into 83 departments, abolished internal tariffs, and drafted a new constitution which included a constitutional monarchy.</p>
16	In 1791, _____ wrote The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen.	<p>Olympe de Gouges</p> <p>While de Gouges applauded measures passed by the National Assembly to make divorce easier and to allow women to inherit property, in her Declaration she demanded that women be given complete equal rights.</p> <p>In 1793, de Gouges would go to the guillotine for criticizing the French Republic.</p>
17	How did seating indicate one's political leanings in the French National Assembly?	<p>Those who supported the King sat on the right, moderates sat in the center, and those who distrusted the King sat on the left. To this day, conservatives are generally indicated as "the right" and liberals as "the left."</p>
18	Which two French leftist groups competed for power in the early National Assembly?	<p>The two groups jockeying for power were the Jacobins and the Girondists, so named for the political clubs at which their members met.</p>
19	Who were the Jacobins?	<p>During the early days of the French Revolution, the Jacobins were those members of the National Assembly who demanded that the King be removed and a republic declared.</p> <p>Most Jacobins were from France's urban areas, and the group was led by Jean-Paul Marat, Georges Danton, and Maximilien Robespierre. The Jacobins opposed burgeoning wars with Austria and Prussia and relied for support upon the Paris radicals, known as the sans-culottes.</p>

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20	Who were the Girondists?	During the early days of the French Revolution, the Girondists supported war with countries that desired to re-impose absolute monarchy on France. Most Girondists hailed from the countryside, and had little support within Paris itself.
21	Prodded by Marie Antoinette, Louis XVI and his family attempted to flee France in June of 1791. Where were they headed?	<p>Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and their family were headed for Austria, where Marie Antoinette's brother ruled. They managed to escape Paris, but were captured at the small town of Varennes when the local postmaster recognized the King from his likeness on a French coin.</p> <p>Louis XVI and his family were accused of being traitors and the credibility of the King as a constitutional monarch was placed in jeopardy.</p>
22	What was the Declaration of Pillnitz?	<p>In August of 1791, Leopold II of Austria and Frederick William II of Prussia issued the Declaration of Pillnitz, which declared that the restoration of absolute monarchy in France was in the interest of all European sovereigns.</p> <p>The National Assembly responded by declaring war on Austria and Prussia in April of 1792.</p>
23	By the summer of 1792, the combined armies of the First Coalition (Austria and Prussia) had brushed aside the French army and were approaching Paris. How did the French populace react?	<p>Marching to the tune of the Marseillaise, the new French national anthem, military recruits poured into Paris and stopped the First Coalition's onslaught at the Battle of Valmy.</p> <p>Nearly half of France's forces were citizen recruits, rather than professional soldiers such as those in the Prussian and Austrian armies.</p>
24	Who were the sans-culottes?	<p>The sans-culottes were urban left-wing radicals who dominated Paris during the French Revolution. The sans-culottes included laborers, small artisans, and shopkeepers.</p> <p>In the summer of 1792, the sans-culottes seized control of Paris and intimidated the National Assembly to call for new elections to a National Convention, in which all male voters over 21 could participate. The goal of the National Convention would be to draft a new constitution for a republic, since the 1791 Constitution had established a constitutional monarchy.</p>

#	Question	Answer
25	What was the first step taken by France's 1792 National Convention?	In addition to its work drafting France's new constitution, the Convention was empowered to govern France, and on September 21, 1792, as its first act, formally abolished the French monarchy and declared the First French Republic. Eventually, the Convention postponed drafting the Constitution until after France's ongoing war with Prussia and Austria.
26	On January 21, 1793, the French National Convention sentenced Citizen Louis Capet to death. Who was Citizen Louis Capet?	<p>Citizen Louis Capet was Louis XVI, stripped of his title. Louis XVI was guillotined in the center of Paris. His death shocked monarchs throughout Europe.</p> <p>In addition to Austria and Prussia, France was soon at war with most of Europe, including Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Naples, and the Netherlands.</p> <p>In the National Convention, the Girondists had favored imprisonment, while the Jacobins argued that Louis XVI should be executed.</p>
27	In the Spring of 1793, the Jacobins and sans-culottes allied to eject what group from the National Convention?	<p>The Jacobins and sans-culottes allied to eject the Girondists from the National Convention.</p> <p>Henceforth, the Convention would be dominated by the radicals of the Far Left. In the countryside, Girondist and Catholic rebellions against the National Convention's authority broke out.</p>
28	In the spring of 1793, the National Convention was faced with domestic unrest and surrounded by foreign enemies. How did the Convention seek to defeat these threats?	<p>Dominated by the Jacobins, the Convention organized an emergency government, The Committee of Public Safety.</p> <p>The Committee of Public Safety exercised absolute control over the government, decreeing maximum prices for food and reorganizing the army both to quash domestic disturbances and to withstand attacks by the nations allied against France.</p>
29	Who was Maximilien Robespierre?	<p>Maximilien Robespierre was the head of the Committee of Public Safety in 1793 and 1794.</p> <p>Robespierre decreed the Law of the Maximum, instituted the Republic of Virtue, and led the Reign of Terror. Robespierre was dedicated to remaking France, going so far as to create a new French calendar and a new French religion, the Cult of the Supreme Being.</p>

#	Question	Answer
30	In 1793, the Committee of Public Safety placed _____ in charge of reorganizing the French Army.	Lazare Carnot Deeming the foreign and domestic threats faced by France as a national emergency, Carnot instituted conscription, vastly growing the size of the French Army and enabling it to defeat its enemies.
31	Define: Reign of Terror	Guided by Maximilien Robespierre, the Reign of Terror took place in 1793-1794. Directed originally at royalists, the Reign of Terror soon consumed anyone denounced as a counter-revolutionary as Robespierre sought to remake France into a Republic of Virtue. Some 25,000 victims lost their lives on the guillotine, including prominent Jacobin leaders such as Georges Danton. In June of 1794 it consumed Robespierre himself (as its last victim), who'd been denounced in the Convention.
32	What was the Thermidorian Reaction?	The Thermidorian Reaction (named for one of the months of France's new calendar) was a rightward shift of the French government after Robespierre's fall. During the Thermidorian Reaction the Convention readmitted the Girondists and drafted a new constitution. Under the new Constitution of 1795, the Convention decreed a Legislative Assembly, which in turn would select a five-member executive branch known as the Directory.
33	To whom was the right to vote restricted under the French Constitution of 1795?	Under the Constitution of 1795, the right to vote was restricted to male property owners. This limitation led to a rebellion from the sans-culottes which was easily put down. More difficult was a royalist uprising by the aristocracy in October of 1795, which may have succeeded had it not been for the actions of a Corsican officer of the artillery named Napoleon Bonaparte, who used cannons to suppress the uprising.

#	Question	Answer
34	The Directory lasted in power until 1799 despite widespread dissatisfaction from the French populace. How did the Directory's government last four years?	<p>Although on the domestic front the Directory was unpopular, during its reign the French Army won a number of military victories enabling the Directory to maintain power.</p> <p>The French Army conquered the Austrian Netherlands, much of Northern Italy, and crossed the Rhine into Germany.</p> <p>After defeating the Austrians in Italy in 1797, Napoleon attempted to conquer Egypt, where he met with less success.</p>
35	In 1799, France's Directory government was overthrown. What two figures led the coup?	<p>Abbé Sieyès and Napoleon Bonaparte led the coup which deposed the Directory on the 18th Brumaire, 1799. They quickly wrote a new constitution which gave executive authority into the hands of three "Consuls."</p> <p>Sieyès gave the resulting government the credibility of the Revolution, and Napoleon provided the popular support of a successful general. Napoleon was named the First Consul in the new government, giving him near absolute authority over the state.</p>
36	In 1790, English philosopher Edmund Burke published a conservative reflection on the French Revolution. What did Burke argue?	<p>With the apropos title of Reflections on the Revolution in France, Burke's work predicted that the French Revolution would devolve into chaos, before giving rise to a military dictatorship.</p> <p>Burke's predictions would prove correct. Reflections on the Revolution in France is the classical conservative critique of revolutionary movements.</p>
37	What education reforms did Napoleon Bonaparte undertake?	<p>Napoleon Bonaparte established free, universal public education under the guidance of the state.</p> <p>Each school taught an identical curriculum, such that a student in Rouen and a student in Marseilles learned the same thing on the same day.</p> <p>Napoleon also established schools devoted to math and science and the University of France.</p>

#	Question	Answer
38	What was the Code Napoleon?	<p>The Code Napoleon was the first complete codification of French law. While it provided for freedom of conscience and property rights, the law disallowed female equality.</p> <p>True political freedom was also barred; Napoleon ruled as an enlightened despot.</p>
39	In 1801, Napoleon and the Pope reached an agreement known as the _____.	<p style="text-align: center;">Concordat of 1801</p> <p>The agreement settled the longstanding dispute between France and the Catholic Church, and gave the religion special status. In exchange for the right to have a say in Church affairs and run French schools, the Pope recognized the new French government.</p>
40	In 1804, Napoleon did away with all pretense and named himself the Emperor of France. How did most French citizens react?	<p>Tired of revolution and chaos, most French citizens acquiesced to Napoleon's actions, with a few ineffectual dissenters.</p> <p>Napoleon himself governed as an enlightened despot, ignoring the ideas and traditions of the French Revolution.</p>
41	Define: Continental Blockade	<p>The Continental Blockade was a French embargo on British trade, designed to wreck the British economy. Between 1805-1808, Napoleon had defeated Prussia and Austria, made a treaty with Russia, and had subjected the Netherlands, much of Italy, and many of the German states to French rule.</p> <p>Only Britain remained a threat. Napoleon's efforts failed; Britain shifted its trade to the Americas and the European economy plunged into a recession.</p>
42	An invasion of what country led to the disintegration of Napoleon's Army?	<p style="text-align: center;">Russia</p> <p>In 1812, despite treaties with the Tsar, Napoleon launched an invasion of Russia. Although he took Moscow, a lack of supplies forced Napoleon to retreat in the middle of winter. Altogether, he suffered an 80% casualty rate, destroying the French Army.</p>

#	Question	Answer
43	How did the Napoleonic Wars end?	<p>In 1813, Napoleon was defeated by the combined forces of Prussia, Russia, Austria, Sweden, and Saxony at the Battle of Leipzig. In early 1814 he resigned and was exiled to the island of Elba.</p> <p>He returned briefly in 1815, only to be defeated at the Battle of Waterloo by a combined Anglo-Prussian force. Napoleon was sent to a small island in the South Atlantic, never to return.</p>