**French Revolution Test Guide:**

The **Three Estates** were a **remnant of medieval France** and did not reflect the modern French nation.

1. The **clergy** (**First Estate**)

a. It contained less than 1% of population but the Catholic Church in France owned 20% of the land.

b. The clergy and the Church were **exempt from taxes**.

 Much of church’s income was drained away from local parishes by political appointees and high-ranking aristocrats.

2. **Nobility** (**Second Estate**)

a. 2-4% of the total population; exempt from taxation

b. It owned about 25% of the land.

c. It enjoyed a significant **resurgence** in influence **after the death of Louis XIV in 1715**.

d. **Nobles** enjoyed **medieval manorial rights** that **allowed** them **to tax peasants** for their own profit.

3. The **Third Estate** consisted of a **few rich merchants or professionals**, the **middle class**, **urban artisans**, unskilled workers **and the mass of peasants**.

a. It **bore** the vast **majority of the tax burden**.

 Taille: land tax

 Tithe: church tax equivalent to 10% of annual income.

b. The **bourgeoisie** **demanded** that **political and social power** be **congruent with** their **emerging economic power**.

 It **resented** the **First and Second Estates** who held **most** all of the **political and social power**.

 It **wanted reduction** of **privileges** for the **nobility** and **tax relief** for the middle class.

**III. Causes of the French Revolution**

A. **Long-Term Causes** – **Breakdown of the old order**—**ancien regime**

1. The French Revolution was **partly influenced by the American Revolution**.

a. Many French soldiers had served in America during the American Revolution.

b. The French bourgeoisie and lower nobility were intrigued by American ideals of liberty.

c. Massive **French aid to the Americans** resulted in an increase in the already **huge French debt**.

2. Increased criticism of the French gov’t was spurred by **rising expectations of the Enlightenment**.

a. **Political theories** of **Locke, Rousseau**, **Montesquieu** and other philosophers were popular.

b. **Laissez faire economic ideas** of French physiocrats (such as Quesnay) and Adam Smith were **popular among the middle class**.

 The middle class resented gov’t interference in their economic activities.

c. **Divine right theory** invoked by the Crown **did not fit** in **during** the **age of “enlightened despots**”.

 No representative assembly existed in France.

**The Three Estates did not reflect the realities of wealth and ability in French society.**

**B. Immediate Cause: Financial Mismanagement**

1. **During** the **reign of Louis XVI** (r.**1774-1792**), **France** was **nearly bankrupt**.

a. By the 1780s **half of France’s annual budget** went for **payment of interest** on the mounting **debt**.

b. France had **no central bank**, no paper currency, and no means of creating credit.

* The **only way** for the gov’t to **get revenue** was to **increase taxes**.

2. The gov’t was dependent on the poorest classes in society for revenue despite its having been taxed to its limit.

3. **Privileged classes refused to pay increased taxes**.

4. On July 5, 1788, **king reluctantly summoned** for a spring session of **Estates General**.

a. **Ironically, by forcing the summoning of the Estates General, the nobility unwittingly initiated the Revolution.**

C. **Estates General**-- **May, 1789**

1. It was a feudal assembly that represented the Three Estates

 It had **only met twice: 1302 (its inception) and 1614.**

2. In 1788-89 excitement swept over France on the eve of its very first election.

The **election** took place during the **worst depression** in 18th century France.

 **Grain shortages, poor harvests, and inflated bread prices persisted**.

3. **Common agreement** among the Three Estates:

a. France should have a **constitutional monarchy**

b. **Individual liberties** must be guaranteed by law

c. Position of parish clergy had to be improved

4. The **main issue dividing the three** estates was **how the Estates General should vote**.

IV. **The French Revolution and the “Age of Montesquieu”**

A. **National Assembly, 1789-1791**

1. On June 17, the **Third Estate declared itself** the true **National Assembly of France**.

1. When **locked out** of their meeting place **by Louis XVI** they **met** instead in an **indoor tennis court** three days later.
2. **Tennis Court Oath** (June 20): The Third Estate swore to remain together until it had given France a constitution.

c. The T**hird Estate** thus **assumed sovereign power on behalf of the nation**.

 In response, Louis XVI brought an army of 18,000 troops to Versailles.

d. The National Assembly was dominated by the **bourgeoisie.**

2. **Storming of the Bastille** – **July 14, 1789**

1. The “Parisian” revolution began in response to food shortages, soaring bread prices, 25% unemployment, and fear of military repression.
2. On July 14, an **angry mob stormed the Bastille** in **search of gunpowder and weapons**.

 The heads of the prison’s governor and the mayor were put on pikes and paraded through the streets.

 Citizens appointed marquis de Lafayette commander of the city’s armed forces.

 **Paris was lost to the king.**

1. The storming of the Bastille inadvertently saved the National Assembly.

3. The **“Great Fear”** of 1789

1. The spirit of rebellion spread to the **French countryside**, sparking a wave of violence.

b. **Peasants attacked manor houses** in an effort to **destroy the legal records of their feudal obligations**.

4. On **night of August 4**, the **National Assembly** voted to **abolish feudalism** in France and declared **equality of taxation to all classes**.

5. ***Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*** was issued August 26, 1789.

1. It became the constitutional blueprint for France.

b. **Enlightenment philosophies**

** Natural rights** are “liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression” **(Locke**)

**** Law is an expression of the “**General Will**” (**Rousseau**).

 It was i**nfluenced by American constitutional ideas**.

 It guaranteed **due process of law**; a citizen was innocent until proven guilty.

 It established **sovereignty of the people**.

c. **“Citizen”** applied to all French people, regardless of class.

6. **Rights of Women**

1. Women gained increased **rights to divorce**, to **inherit property**, and to get child support from the fathers of their illegitimate children.

b. Women, however, **did not share in equal rights**.

1. **Olympe de Gouges**: *The Rights of Woman,* 1791

 Following the official *Declaration of the Rights of Man*

d. **Mary Wollstonecraft** in England published ***Vindication of the Rights of Woman*** in 1792.

7. **Women’s march to Versailles** (October 1789)

1. Women pushed the revolution forward in October when shortages of bread persisted.
2. Incited by **Jean-Paul Marat,** 7,000 women (along with the Paris national guard) marched 12 miles from Paris to Versailles demanding the king redress their economic problems.

 Unemployment resulting from reduced demand for garments devastated women in the putting-out system.

1. The King and Queen were forced to move to Paris to live at the **Tuileries**, the royal residence in Paris.

8. Creation of the **Constitution of 1791**

a. **The Civil Constitution of the Clergy** (1790)

 In essence, it secularized religion.

 It created a national church with 83 bishops and dioceses.

 It was the biggest mistake made by the National Assembly and represented its first significant failure.

1. France became a **constitutional monarchy** with a unicameral Legislative Assembly.
2. The National Assembly divided France into **83 departments** governed by elected officials

9. **Flight to Varennes,** June 1791

a. **Louis XVI tried to escape France in June 1791** to avoid having to approve the Constitution of 1791 and to raise a counter-revolutionary army with émigré noblemen and seek help from foreign powers.

b. He was **captured** and the King and Queen became prisoners of the Parisian mobs.

c. The king was forced to accept a constitutional monarchy.

d. The king was now viewed by many as a **traitor to his country** and he lost much of his public support.

B. **Legislative Assembly**, 1791-1792

1. A completely new group of legislators replaced the National Assembly in the new government.

1. **Jacobins**, named after their political club, came to dominate the Legislative Assembly.

 The **Girondins**, a group of Jacobins, became the “left” or advanced party of the Revolution in the Legislative Assembly and led the country into war.

 They were passionately committed to liberal revolution.

2. A revolutionary municipal gov’t was set up in Paris, which effectively usurped the power of the Legislative Assembly.

a. Led by **Georges-Jacques Danton**

b. At the urging of radicals, the Legislative Assembly suspended the Constitution of 1791.

3. War was the main issue during the period of the Legislative Assembly.

a. The **Declaration of Pillnitz** was issued by **Prussia and Austria** in August 1791.

 ***Émigrés***, French nobles who fled France beginning in 1789, influenced Prussia and Austria to declare the restoration of the French monarchy as their goal.

 The Austrian Emperor, Leopold, would be willing to take military steps to restore order to France if all other powers joined him.

V. The “Age of Rousseau”: 1792-1799

A. **The National Convention (Jacobin Republic)**, 1792-1795

1. France was proclaimed a republic on Sept. 21, 1792.

1. The monarchy was abolished and replaced by a republican form of government.

b. Society was based on the ideals of ***Equality, Liberty, Fraternity.***

c. A **majority** of the the members of the **National Convention** were **Jacobins** and republicans, who were **well-educated middle class**.

2. The ***sans-culottes*** became very influential on the National Convention.

a. Predominantly from the working-class; extremely radical

 They were a separate faction from those of the National Convention and had an economic agenda.

1. Their **violence** and influence kept the revolution moving forward.
2. **Louis XVI was convicted of treason and executed in January 1793.**
3. In May 1793, the **“Mountain”** (“**Jacobins”**) supported by the ***sans-culottes*** ousted the Girondins.
4. The Mountain believed the Girondins would ally with conservatives and royalists to retain power
5. **Committee of Public Safety** (1793-94)
6. By the summer of 1793, the Committee of Public Safety became an emergency gov’t to deal with internal and external challenges to the revolution. Led by **Maximilien Robespierre**

6. **Military victorie**s led to the desire to **spread Revolutionary ideals outside France.**

 ***Lévee en masse***: the entire nation was conscripted into service as war was defined as a national mission.

7. **Reign of Terror** (1793-94)

1. It was the **most notorious event of the Revolution.**
2. **Queen Marie Antoinette was executed in October 1793.**
3. About 40,000 people throughout France were executed or died in prison; many by the **guillotine**.

d. Executions became a spectator sport.

f. The Terror became a political weapon; it was **not directed at any class** in particular

* Most deaths occurred in places in open revolt against the Convention, such as the **Vendée,** in western France.

g. Eventually, **no one could feel safe from Robespierre’s terror** as **leading Jacobins**, **including Danton**, who opposed Robespierre were eventually executed.

8. “Republic of Virtue” emerged as a new political culture under Robespierre to inculcate revolutionary virtue.

1. The **Cult of the Supreme Being** was introduced in June 1794.

* **Notre Dame Cathedra**l was converted into the **“Temple of Reason.”**

9. **End of the Terror**

1. Opposition to Robespierre mounted in July, 1794.

 On July 27, **1794, Robespierre was denounced** in the Convention, arrested, and **executed the next day**, along with his close associates.

**Thermidorian Reaction (1794)**: ended reign of terror

 Constituted a significant swing to the right (conservatism).

**Coup d’Ètat Brumaire**, November, 1799

 Upon returning from Egypt with his forces, **Napoleon drove legislators from the Legislative Assembly.**

 A **plebiscite** (general referendum) overwhelmingly approved: 3,011,007 to 1,562.