Stages and Events of the French Revolution

The French Revolution went through many stages caused by changes in leadership and shifts in power. The time period from 1789 to 1792 is considered to be Stage 1. During this stage, the National Assembly made efforts to write a new constitution for France which would grant rights to all citizens of France.

STAGE 1 | 1789-91: National Assembly

1. May 1789
   Estates General is convened

2. June 1789
   Tennis Court Oath

3. July 1789
   Storming of the Bastille

4. August 1789
   The Decree Abolishing the Feudal System is issued

5. August 1789
   Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen is issued

6. October 1789
   The Women’s March on Versailles

7. October 1791
   The Constitution of 1791 is issued
May 1789: Estates General is convened

Context: By this time, the frustrations of the Third Estate had increased. Below, is an excerpt from "What is the Third Estate?" written in the last months of 1788 by French politician Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyes, and published at the very beginning of 1789. In this pamphlet, focused on the resentments and shaped the demands of the Third Estate.

Directions: Using the excerpt, respond to the questions on the left.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Excerpt from What is the Third Estate? by Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Questions</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The plan of this book is fairly simple. We must ask ourselves three questions. What is the Third Estate? Everything. What has it been until now in the political order? Nothing. What does it want to be? Something.</td>
<td>1. Who is the &quot;common enemy&quot;?</td>
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<td><strong>Chapter 6. What Remains to Be Done. Development of Certain Principles</strong></td>
<td>2. What does the author mean by “The fear of seeing abuses reformed alarms the aristocrats more than the desire for liberty inspires them.... They are afraid now of the States-General for which they were lately so ardent [passionate].... They no longer require anything: fear has provided a constitution for them?&quot;</td>
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<td>Gone is the day when the three orders were moved by the single thought of defending themselves against ministerial despotism [the rule or practices of a tyrant] and were ready to unite against their common enemy [...] The fear of seeing abuses reformed alarms the aristocrats [a noble] more than the desire for liberty inspires them.... They are afraid now of the States-General [Estates-General] for which they were lately so ardent [passionate].... They no longer require anything: fear has provided a constitution for them.</td>
<td>3. According to the author, why does the Third Estate need to improve its status?</td>
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<td>[...] The Third Estate must, moreover, recognize the danger that unless it improves its status it cannot simply remain as it is. Not to go forward is to go backwards. [...] In this situation, what remains to be done by the Third Estate if it wants to take possession of its political rights in a way that will serve the nation? There are two methods of achieving this aim. By the first method the Third Estate must meet separately; it must not cooperate with either the nobility or the clergy and it must not vote with them either by orders or by heads. [...] From the second point of view, the Third Estate is the nation. In this capacity, its representatives constitute the whole National Assembly and are seized of all its powers. As they alone are the trustees of the general will, they do not need to consult those who mandated them about a dispute that does not exist.</td>
<td>4. The author states &quot;... the Third Estate must meet separately; it must not cooperate with either the nobility or the clergy and it must not vote with them either by orders or by heads.&quot; Using your prior knowledge, what was the system of voting in the National Assembly that the author is referring to? Why do you think the author believes the Third Estate needs to meet separately?</td>
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| Source: Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyes. "What is the Third Estate?" [Link](http://pages.uoregon.edu/dluebke/301ModernEurope/Sieyes3dEstate.pdf) | **Turn and Talk:** The Third Estate is faced with making a decision about their membership in the Estates General.  
- How might the ideas in the document above influence the action of the Third Estate?  
- What do you think should be done? |
June 1789: Members of the Third Estate made the Tennis Court Oath

What is the National Assembly?

On June 10, 1789, Abbé Sieyès moved that the Third Estate proceed with the demonstration of its own powers and invite the other two estates to take part, but not to wait for them. They proceeded to do so two days later. Then they voted to declare themselves the National Assembly, an assembly not of the Estates-General but of "the People." They invited the other orders to join them, but made it clear they intended to conduct the nation’s affairs with or without them.

In an attempt to keep control of the process and prevent the Assembly from convening, Louis XVI ordered the closure of the Salle des États where the Assembly met. Weather did not allow an outdoor meeting, so the Assembly moved their deliberations to a nearby indoor tennis court, where they proceeded to swear the Tennis Court Oath (June 20, 1789), under which they agreed not to separate until they had given France a constitution. A majority of the representatives of the clergy soon joined them, as did 47 members of the nobility.


Excerpt from the Oath of the Tennis Court (June 20, 1789)

The Assembly quickly decrees the following:

The National Assembly, considering that it has been called to establish the constitution of the realm, to bring about the regeneration of public order, and to maintain the true principles of monarchy; nothing may prevent it from continuing its deliberations in any place it is forced to establish itself; and, finally, the National Assembly exists wherever its members are gathered.

"We swear never to separate ourselves from the National Assembly, and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the realm is drawn up and fixed upon solid foundations."

1. What is the significance of the Third Estate forming the National Assembly and inviting the other Estates?

2. Why was Louis XVI afraid of the formation of the National Assembly?

3. How would the creation of a constitution affect Louis XVI’s power?

4. Why was it important for every member of the National Assembly to make the Tennis Court Oath?

Turn and Talk: How does the Oath establish a relationship between the National Assembly that is different from their relationship with the king?

Writing Task: How did the Third Estate react to their frustration with the King Louis XVI?
How did the relationship between the French people and the king change in the early stages of the Revolution?
Objective: Explain how the relationship between the French people and the king changed between 1789 and 1792.

Introduction
Directions: Using your prior knowledge from lessons on Pre-Revolutionary France and the text below, answer the question that follows.

. . . 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 [without reason] 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 [frustration]. . . .  

Describe the relationship between the French people and king Louis XVI before the French Revolution. What rights and powers did the king have? What rights and powers did the people have?
**July 1789: The Citizens of France stormed the Bastille**

Watch [French Revolution - Storming of the Bastille](Start to 5:00) (Start to 5:00) and read the transcript below then answer the questions to the right. ([Transcript](#))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Why was the Bastille attacked?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How did the King react to Bastille being attacked?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 3. When the revolutionaries attacked the Bastille, they killed royal troops and destroyed the prison that was used to hold people who spoke out against the king. How does this reflect a change in the relationship between the French people and the king? | [Image]([The Storming of the Bastille by Jean-Pierre Houel, 1789](Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prise_de_la_Bastille.jpg))
**August 1789: The National Assembly issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen**

**Context:** The declaration was to serve as a reminder to society and the governing bodies that everyone had equal rights and that their duty was to serve all citizens, not just the social elite.

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**Excerpt from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, August 27, 1789**

The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt [disgust] of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities [disaster] and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn [serious] declaration the natural, unalienable [not able to be given away], and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties ... Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices [protection] of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

**Articles:**

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.

2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible [in law] rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

3. The principle of all sovereignty [supreme power or authority] rests essentially in the nation. No body and no individual may exercise authority which does not emanate expressly from the nation.

4. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.

5. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty...

6. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may,

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1. In your own words, paraphrase the message conveyed in the opening paragraph of the document.

2. How is this idea represented in Article 3 different than the divine right to rule that absolute monarchs like Louis XVI used to justify their power?

3. In Article 6, the document states: “All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.” Paraphrase the meaning of this statement, and speculate as to whom it was likely directed.

4. Identify two examples of influences from the Enlightenment in this document.
accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

13. A common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces and for the cost of administration. This should be equitably distributed among all the citizens in proportion to their means.

16. A society in which the observance of the law is not assured, nor the separation of powers defined, has no constitution at all.

http://www.c3teachers.org/inquiries/frenchrev/

5. Choose two of the articles and complete the chart below based on your understanding of events leading to the creation of the document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art. #</th>
<th>Why did the National Assembly advocate for this article?</th>
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</table>

6. What do you think the National Assembly hoped to achieve by writing and issuing this document?

7. Give two examples from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen that show a change in the relationship between the French people and the king and explain why the relationship is different than what is described in the Introduction activity.
**October 1789:** Women from Paris marched to the Palace at Versailles, captured Louis XVI and his family, and forced them to come to Paris.

Watch [French Revolution - Women's March on Versailles](#) (8:02 to end) and read the transcript below then answer the questions to the right. [Transcript]

### Questions

1. Why did the women (and men) march from Paris to Versailles?

2. What were king Louis XVI and his family forced to do as a result of the march?

3. How did the Women's March on Versailles and the forced removal of the royal family to Paris change the relationship between the French people and the king?
September 1791: The Constitution of 1791 is issued

The Constitution of 1791, September 3, 1791
The Constitution of 1791 was the first constitution written during the French Revolution. The preamble [introduction] to the Constitution was the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Below, is only the section describing government organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE III: OF PUBLIC POWERS</th>
<th>1. Which Enlightenment philosopher most influenced this document? What is his idea called?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. The legislative power is delegated to a National Assembly, composed of temporary representatives freely elected by the people, to be exercised by it, with the sanction [approval] of the King, in the manner hereinafter determined.</td>
<td>2. When the National Assembly creates a law, who has the power to approve it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The government is monarchical; the executive power is delegated to the King, to be exercised, under his authority, by ministers and other responsible agents in the manner hereinafter determined.</td>
<td>3. According to the Constitution of 1791, what role does the King have in the government?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The judicial power is delegated to judges who are elected at stated times by the people.</td>
<td>4. Explain the relationship between the French people and the king according to The Constitution of 1791. How is it different than the relationship before the Revolution?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Excerpt from The Constitution of 1791, September 3, 1791 from The Constitutions and other Select Documents Illustrative of the History of France (1789-1907).
https://archive.org/stream/cu31924026370936/cu31924026370936_djvu.txt
## Closing

Directions: Using information from the documents and videos above, complete the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>How did this event change the relationship between the French people and the king?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Storming of the Bastille, July 14, 1789</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The Decree Abolishing the Feudal System, August 4, 1789</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The Women’s March on Versailles, October 5th-6th, 1789</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The Constitution of 1791, September 3, 1791</td>
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</tbody>
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Write at least one paragraph explaining how the relationship between the French people and the king changed between 1789 (before the revolution started) and 1792 (after the issuing of the Constitution of 1791).