

History

Theme III: Society, Culture and Politics in France during the 19th Century

Chapter 6: The French and the Vote, 1814-1870

Introduction

In 1815, following the defeat of Napoleon I, Louis XVIII became King of France. This period was known as the Restoration. Out of 30 million inhabitants, 100 000 had the right to vote and elect their representatives. The battle for the right to vote was one of the biggest issues of the 19th century in France. At first it was reserved exclusively for the elite but by 1848 universal masculine suffrage had been adopted.



The village votes. Lithography by Gastieux. This scene is a polling station in Brittany at the end of the 19th century. The man in the centre of the print is in the process of depositing his vote. The men in the foreground, on the right, are peasants whilst the men in the background, who are better dressed, are the bourgeois. The artist has included these groups to show the diversity of citizens who could vote.

D.N.L. Vocabulary

Census suffrage (suffrage censitaire): system of suffrage based on a tax threshold (droit de vote accordé aux homes les plus riches pouvant payer un seuil d'impôt minimal - le cens).

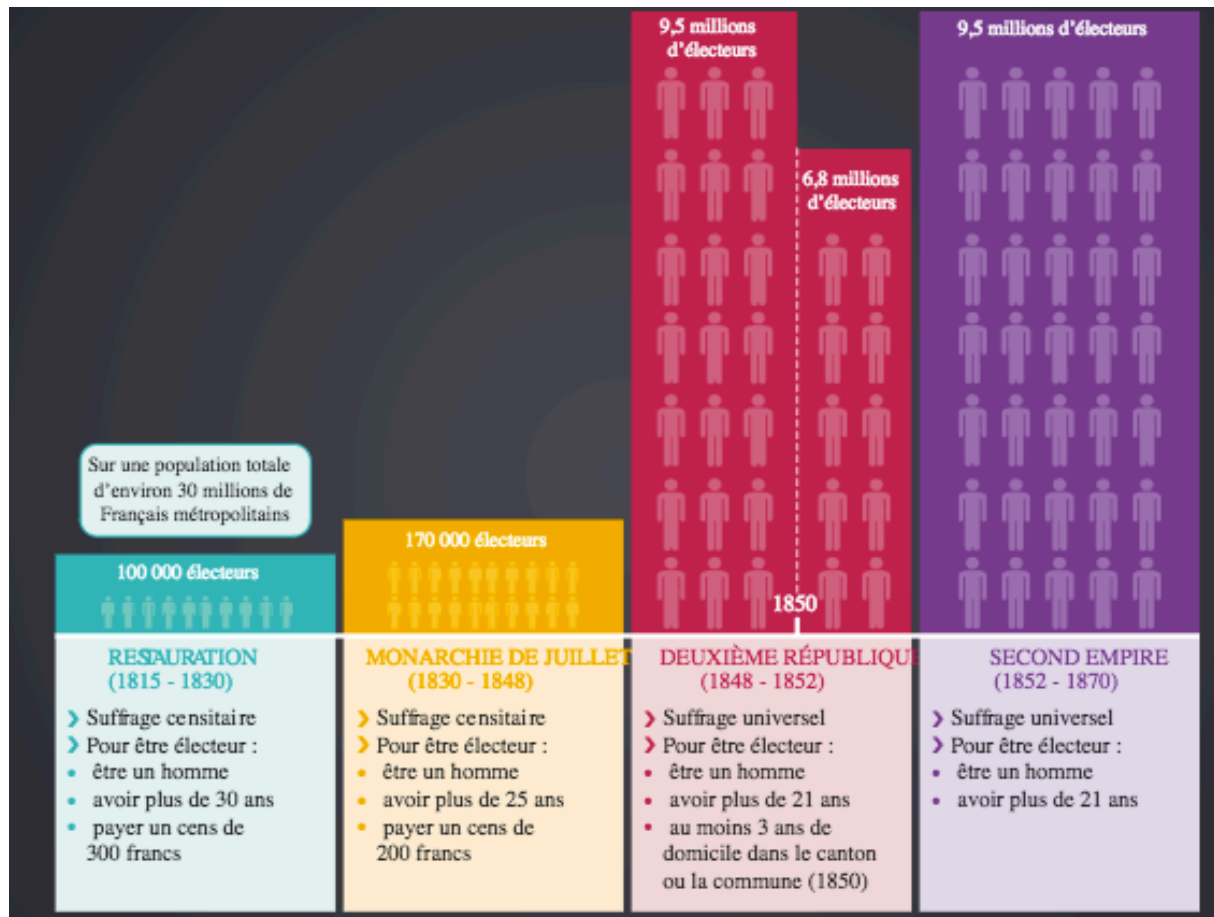
Democracy (une démocratie): political regime in which power belongs to the people.

Polling station (bureau de vote): place where people go to vote.

Republic (République): form of government in which power is exercised by representatives designated by the citizens.

Universal suffrage (suffrage universel): This describes the right of all citizens to vote. Universal masculine suffrage was adopted in France in 1848 however women, foreigners and minors were excluded.

Evolution of the Number of Voters in France, 1815-1870



Out of a total population of 30 million

100 000 voters

170 000 voters

9.5 million voters & 6.8 million voters

9.5 million voters

Restoration in France (1815-1870)

Census suffrage
Voters had to (be):

- male
- aged more than 30
- pay a poll tax

July Monarchy (1830-48)

Census suffrage
Voters had to (be):

- male
- over 25 years old
- pay a poll tax

Second Republic (1848-52)

Universal suffrage
Voters had to (be):

- male
- aged over 21 years old
- a resident in a commune for at least 3 years (1850)

Second Empire (1852-70)

Universal suffrage
Voters has to (be):

- male and over 21

1815-1848

From 1815 to 1848 people could choose deputies who voted for laws. However, they had limited voting rights and only 100 000 French people participated in elections, these were the richest citizens who were also aged over 30 years old. This was known as census suffrage.



The words on the short man read 'restrained suffrage'.

Engraving by Honoré Daumier, early 19th century, which is critical of census suffrage

Following the July 1830 revolution a liberal monarchy was put in place. The richest citizens, aged over 21 years old, could vote in local elections. This involved 3 million French inhabitants in total.

Painting people in the 1830 Revolution (The July Days)



Eugène Delacroix,
'Liberty Guides the
People', 1831, oil
on canvas, 3.2 x
2.6m (Louvre
Museum, Paris)

Delacroix created a painting of events in 1830 and tried to convey all the drama of period. He showed a crowd breaking through a barricade during the revolution of July 1830 and mixed an allegory of Liberty with social stereotypes of Parisian people of the period.



Allegory of Liberty carrying a revolutionary flag.



A peasant.



A worker



A member of the bourgeois or a master artisan



A Parisian child.

The subsequent revolution of February 1848 ended the monarchy and created a Second Republic. Universal masculine suffrage began and people could elect deputies and the President of the Republic. The first president elected with nearly 75% of votes was Louis-Napoleon, nephew of Napoleon I.

1848-1870

In 1851, Louis-Napoleon orchestrated a coup d'état and re-established an Empire in 1852 assuming the name Napoleon III. Universal suffrage continued by the emperor advocated official candidates and financed their electoral campaigns. It was very difficult for their opponents to be heard.

The Right to Vote and the Citizens

The urn and the shotgun (1848)



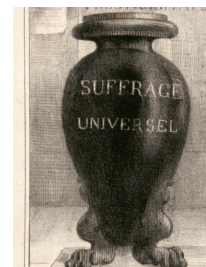
The introduction of universal suffrage was seen by some as a way of avoiding repeated revolution (in 1789, 1830 and again in 1848). People would put violence to one side, they would be no need to overthrow leaders by force and the Republic could be changed by a vote. The worker represented in the engraving has not thrown away his weapon because it might be needed against exterior threats to France.



Clubs and newspapers show the development of political life since the Revolution



A worker, recognisable by his clothes puts his ballot in an urn



The urn is modelled on one from Ancient Greece seen as the birth place of democracy