The French Revolution and Napoleon

"Liberty, equality, fraternity, or death; – the last, much the easiest to bestow, O Guillotine!"

—Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

"Impossible is a word to be found only in the dictionary of fools."

—Napoleon Bonaparte

Essential Question: How did events in France challenge the existing political and social order and provoke nationalism?

The Revolution in France

The **French Revolution** (1789–1799) was a period of dramatic change that posed a fundamental challenge to Europe's political and social order. Before the Revolution, absolute monarchs ruled France as an extension of their own private property. They answered to no one, waged wars to increase their power and wealth, and heavily taxed the poorest people. The aristocracy and the Catholic Church had privileges and riches unknown to the common people, including exemption from taxation.

As Enlightenment ideals (see Chapter 10) took hold in France, support grew for individual rights and a republican form of government. A **republic** is a state in which the people create the government, give it authority, and elect representatives. The representatives as well as civil servants run the government for the public good—not simply to build another palace for a king or paint his walls with gold. France's revolutionaries found inspiration from the successes of the American Revolution and the United States Constitution.

The French Revolution began as a popular uprising against the king and the aristocracy, one that was supposed to bring an end to tyranny. Instead, violence and turmoil led to a period known as the **Reign of Terror**, when leaders of the revolt crushed resistance to it and executed as many as 40,000 people. During this period, revolutionaries suppressed by force the very rights many people desired—free speech, free thought, and freedom from excessive government power.

Whilethe French Revolution had some success, it was not durable. During the next 100 years, France would be governed alternately as a republic,

a dictatorship, a constitutional monarchy, two empires, and a monarchy. It would take more revolutions before modern France would emerge as a democratic nation. Despite these setbacks, during the first half of the 19th century, France's revolutionary ideals spread throughout Europe and into the Americas, challenging traditional politics and diplomacy.

Causes of The French Revolution

Many of the root causes of the French Revolution stemmed from economic crises. During the reign of Louis XIV, France fought many expensive wars. To finance these wars, the king had to raise money—either through taxation or borrowing. The nobility had exempted themselves from taxation, but they were willing to lend money to the crown at high interest rates. Up to 60 percent of all tax revenues—collected from commoners—went to repay these rich creditors. The remaining budget was still not nearly enough to govern a country of 25 million people and to fight its endless wars.

France had colonized many parts of the world, and while these colonies did generate wealth through trade, it was not enough to offset the costs of defending and managing them. During the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), the French crown lost vast territories in the Americas and India to Britain. Britain had now become the dominant trading power in Europe.

France's Involvement in the American Revolution France saw a chance for revenge when the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain. With the American victory at Saratoga, the French provided money and weapons to the colonies. Their aid helped the American colonies win the war, but France ended up in a deepening financial crisis.

Problems with the Estates-General France was on the verge of collapse, in large part because it still operated in the same fashion as it had since the Middle Ages. This was referred to as the ***ancien régime,*** France's feudal social and political system from the 15th century until 1789. Under this system, the Church and nobility, who made up a small percentage of the population, controlled the economic, political, and social systems, including taxes and the courts, for their own benefit. Yet, like much of Europe, France had changed greatly during that time.

To deal with this financial crisis **Louis XVI** (1754–1793) was forced to call into action the **Estates-General**, which had been inactive for almost 200 years. The Estates-General was an assembly made up of three bodies:

- First Estate: the Catholic clergy—1 percent of the population owned 10 percent of land
- Second Estate: the nobility—2 percent of the population owned 30 percent of land
- Third Estate: the commoners—97 percent of the population owned 35 percent of land

As an unpopular ruler of a bankrupt state, Louis XVI felt he had to agree to revive the Estates-General. The people resented the wasteful extravagance of the Palace of Versailles, personified by the queen, **Marie Antoinette** (1755–1793), who spent lavishly on frivolous things when many of her subjects were starving. It became popular to blame Marie Antoinette, but in reality, France's problems began long before her arrival.

Though many in France hoped the Estates-General would resolve the country's problems, the governing body was ineffective for several reasons:

- Each of the three estates had one vote, even though the vast majority of French citizens were members of the Third Estate.
- The First Estate, the clergy, had already lost public confidence with the rise of secular and scientific beliefs during the Enlightenment.
- The Second Estate, the nobility, did not want to give up its privileges and power, which would involve taxing itself.
- The First and Second Estates always voted together since their interests were the same.
- Members of the Third Estate were forced to wear black robes and enter the meetings through a side door, reinforcing the perception that they were less important than the other two estates.

Eventually, the Third Estate realized that it could use its greater size to pressure the rest of the government to make significant changes.

Peasant and Bourgeoise Grievances The First and Second Estates feared mass rebellion by the peasants, who lived in poverty under feudal conditions. Peasants had already been rioting and looting. But the **bourgeoisie** of the Third Estate—the urban middle class who lacked noble titles and therefore weren't exempt from taxation—also spoke out against the excesses of the system. Many members of the bourgeoisie were wealthier than the nobility, but they lacked the same status. They wanted to dress and act like nobles, but the nobility wanted to preserve class distinctions. The aristocrats refused to share their titles or their tax exemptions.

Between March and April of 1789, each of the three Estates had compiled **cahiers**, or notebooks, declaring their grievances and their hopes for change. The French of the Third Estate asked for the following changes:

- a fairer taxation system
- a fairer voting system
- an end to the requirement that peasants provide unpaid labor to landowners
- the elimination of fees levied by nobles on peasant land holdings
- a halt to **tithes**, a 10-percent tax paid to the Church

After six weeks of negotiations that had started May 5, 1789, nothing was resolved. The Third Estate walked out and declared itself the official representative government, called the **National Assembly**, insisting that the French people deserved liberty, equality, and fraternity. As a start, the National Assembly granted themselves authority over taxation.

Reasons for the French Revolution		
Category	**Short-Term Causes**	**Long-Term Causes**
Economic	• In the French budget for 1789, 40 percent was for interest on loans and 30 percent was for the military. • The urban poor spent 80 percent of their income on bread. • Nobles and clergy were exempt from taxation, so the burden fell on farmers and workers.	• Taxes were not increased to repay debts and military expenditures. • Nobles and clergy exempt from taxation, were a burden on commoners • The wars of Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI had drained the economy without material gains.
Social	• Bad harvests of 1787-1788 hurt the poor. • The divide between bourgeoisie and peasants was growing. • People disliked Queen Marie Antoinette.	• Land ownership was concentrated in the hands of the clergy and nobles. • Most people were peasants, but had little status.
Political	• Few reforms helped the growing number of poor. • King Louis XVI was not a strong leader. • The bourgeoisie demanded reforms to help them. • Each estate, regardless of size, had one vote in the Estates-General.	• Provincial Parliaments wanted more power after the death of Louis XIV. • Kings refused to address basic problems of inequality. • The ideas of the philosophes and criticism of privileges and institutions grew during the Enlightenment.

The Tennis Court Oath In June 1789, the National Assembly met at an indoor tennis court after being locked out of its traditional meeting hall, and the members swore an oath not to disperse before achieving a new constitution. Some members of the clergy and liberal nobles joined the cause. Louis XVI grudgingly accepted this new government, but secretly, the army was mobilizing around Paris and Versailles to disband it. To some historians, the **Tennis Court Oath** marked the beginning of the French Revolution—though most people at the time did not realize it.

Bread Shortages All of this political maneuvering took place during France's worst economic conditions in decades. People were starving and unable to find one of the staples of their diet: bread. Bread shortages began as a result of a drought in 1788. Louis XVI decided to remove price controls on grain, thinking that if farmers could get higher prices, they would choose to grow more wheat, thus increasing the supply and keeping prices stable.

However, France's antiquated farming system didn't have the technology and efficiency to produce any additional food. As a result, prices skyrocketed. In addition, the king also allowed more grain to be exported. The exports, along with several years of bad weather, further reduced the grain supply and created a starvation crisis.

Pamphleteers distributed written articles denouncing the king and queen. Some claimed that Marie Antoinette's response to learning of the peasants' bread crisis was unsympathetic. She reportedly said, "Let them eat cake." She probably did not make that statement. However, people believed the propaganda and anger at the gap between the hardships of the poor and the luxury of the wealthy widened.

The Liberal Phase of the Revolution

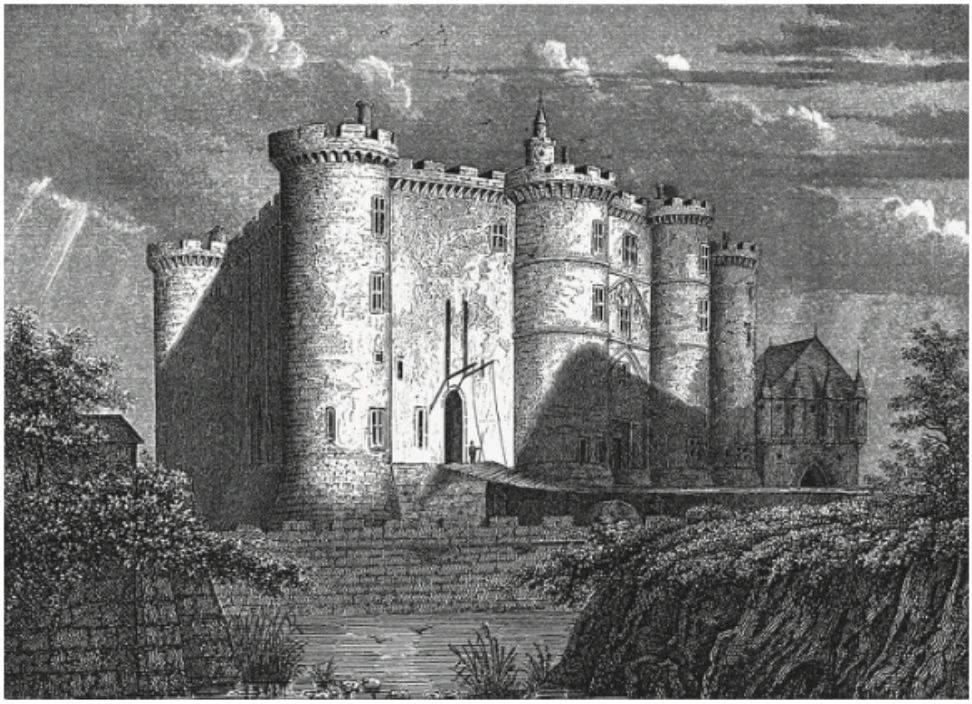
The first phase of the French Revolution (1789–1791) produced liberal reforms. The National Assembly abolished hereditary privileges for the aristocracy, increased popular participation in voting, nationalized the Catholic Church, and established a constitutional monarchy. However, as the people continued to express their rage, the Revolution became increasingly violent and intolerant of moderate opinions.

Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen On July 14, 1789, only a few weeks after the Tennis Court Oath, a group of rebels redirected the course of events. They were known as ***sans-culottes*** (French for "without knee-breeches") because they could not afford to buy the style of pants worn by more prosperous men. Hearing that the king was going to forcibly disband the National Assembly, the rioters stormed the Bastille, a prison in Paris. While the prison held only seven inmates (five forgers and two criminally insane), it symbolized the repression exercised by the French government. July 14, known as **Bastille Day**, has become France's equivalent of the Fourth of July in the United States. It is widely celebrated as the start of the Revolution.

Throughout the summer of 1789, peasants rose up, destroying the manorial records, looting and burning the homes of tax collectors and elites. Nobles fled the country during what became known as **The Great Fear**. These actions were, however, mostly crimes against property, not people.

On the night of August 4, the National Assembly officially abolished feudalism by voting to end seigniorial rights and fiscal privileges of the nobility, clergy, and towns. Interestingly enough, this marked the end of the Revolution for the vast majority of French peasants, who only wanted freedom from traditional ties to the outdated manorial system.

On August 26, the National Assembly took matters a step further by issuing the **Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen**. Much like the English and American Bills of Rights, it affirmed the "natural rights of man," so important to John Locke and Thomas Jefferson. It called for equality, free speech, representative government, and popular sovereignty. The day was a turning point in history. In just a few years, these ideals would spread throughout the rest of Europe.



The Bastille was often used to house political prisoners, although it was nearly empty when it was seized by revolutionaries on July 14, 1789.

Credit: Getty Images

Women's March on Versailles In October 1789, nearly 7,000 women marched 14 miles from Paris to Versailles in the pouring rain. Carrying pitchforks, pikes, and other weapons, they chanted "Bread! Bread!" Upon arrival, they got past a royal guard force of 20,000 men and broke into the palace searching for Marie Antoinette. Eventually, Marie Antoinette—using her children as a human shield—stood on a balcony before the rabble and allowed them to scream their frustrations at her.

The women didn't kill the queen, though they had beheaded two of her guards and stuck their heads on pikes. Instead, they demanded that the king agree to the following terms:

- distribute all the bread the palace had hoarded
- accept the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen
- accompany the women back to Paris to see how real citizens lived

The king was forced to agree. The October march by the women of Paris ended the days of the king's reign from the lavish Palace of Versailles. From that point until their executions, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette lived as virtual prisoners of the Revolution.

Civil Constitution of the Clergy One issue facing the new government was the role of the Church. Already, the National Assembly had abolished all monastic orders and confiscated the Catholic Church's lands within France. The **Civil Constitution of the Clergy** (1790) expanded the law in the following ways:

- placed the Catholic Church completely under the authority of the state
- eliminated the 10-percent tithe (tax) paid by the peasants
- demanded that the clergy owe allegiance to France (not to outside interests such as the Pope)
- regulated dioceses to align them with new administrative districts
- stated that bishops and priests would be elected by the people

The new government sold Church property to raise money for the government. France was largely a Catholic nation, so all these acts restricting the Church angered the Church's strongest supporters, and many turned against the French Revolution.

Abolition of Provinces and Division of France into Departments In 1790, the National Assembly abolished the provinces of the *ancien régime* to achieve greater national unity. After 1792, the country was divided into *départements,* or **departments**, based on geographical features more than on historical territories that had their own loyalties. The departments established in 1792 continue to exist today.

Constitution of 1791 France's first constitution established a constitutional monarchy that placed lawmaking power in the hands of the new legislative assembly. It also gave the king a limited veto and allowed him to appoint his own ministers. However, many French citizens did not trust that their monarch would abide by the terms of the constitution.

The War of 1792 Louis XVI and his family became captives in their palace. One night in June 1791, they disguised themselves and attempted to flee the country. After they were caught and forced to return to Paris, their captors discovered that the king had written a letter denouncing the Revolution. In addition, a group of émigrés, people who had left the country, and much of the French army loyal to the king, had urged Prussia and Austria to invade France to restore the monarchy to its previous power. Despite its internal struggles, the new French government declared war on those nations in 1792.

The Revolution's leaders convinced the French people that defending the country and supporting the Revolution were tied together. Working-class Parisians stormed the Tuileries Palace where the king's family lived in constant terror. The rioters killed 600 members of the king's guard and threatened the legislative assembly.

The Radical Revolution

By 1790, political parties had begun to spring up, organized as clubs. Foremost among these were the **Jacobins**. The Jacobins included members of the National Assembly and radical leaders such as **Maximilien de Robespierre** (1758–1794).

Following the summer violence of 1792, the National Assembly dissolved itself, calling for elections to form a new parliament called the **National Convention**. All adult men—but no women—would be permitted to vote. However, rumors had spread that prisoners planned to join up with the approaching Prussian army. Radical *sans-culottes* such as **Jean-Paul Marat** (1743–1793) whipped the people into a frenzy of violence known as the September Massacres, in which crowds attacked the prisons and slaughtered more than 1,000 inmates.

The Jacobins seized control of the National Convention from the more moderate **Girondins** and implemented the following changes in 1793:

- They abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic.
- They adopted a new calendar.
- They officially eradicated Christianity in France.
- They publically beheaded Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette by guillotine.

The other nations of Europe, horrified by the killing of the monarchs, allied against France. France stood alone, divided against itself. The Jacobins and Girondins couldn't compromise to rule the country and quell the violence. Fearful that the Revolution was in danger, the Jacobins began the **Reign of Terror**, a 10-month attempt to quash or kill the opponents of the Revolution, during which they guillotined 16,000 in Paris alone. The total in all of France reached 50,000.

The Committee of Public Safety When the Reign of Terror began, the **Committee of Public Safety** was created. It suspended the new constitution and controlled the National Convention. Robespierre and **Georges Danton** (1759–1794) headed the Committee. Its job was to defend against foreign attacks and domestic rebellions. Because of the threats to France from across Europe and from within its own borders, the Committee assumed great powers.

As Robespierre's vendettas against the counter-revolutionaries grew more extreme, people began to denounce the Committee for acting like a dictatorship. Those critics were arrested and executed. Danton, who strongly disapproved of the suppression of dissent, retreated from public life. However, soon Danton was drawn back into politics as a leader of the moderate opposition. For example, he argued against the complete elimination of Christianity. Robespierre had Danton arrested on charges of corruption and executed. At the guillotine, Danton said, "Show my head to the people. It is worth the trouble."

The Execution of Robespierre Eventually, Robespierre himself was challenged by opponents on the Committee of Public Safety. Some thought he was too radical while others considered him too moderate. He was sent to the guillotine in 1794. After the execution of Robespierre, the Reign of Terror subsided.

Revolutionary Armies and Mass Conscription

The Jacobins were an unstable force, but they did change French society. They promoted a strong sense of patriotism and created an enormous army. All able-bodied, unmarried men agaed 18 to 25 were conscripted to serve, in a draft called the ***levée en masse***. Despite some draft evasions and desertions, the army grew to more than 1,000,000 men by 1794—the largest Europe had seen.

Previous wars had been fought by professional soldiers of governments or dynasties. But this French force was an army created by a people's government, and the entire nation was involved in the war. Civilians were killed on a larger scale than ever before, and the door was opened to the total war of the modern world.

The French army was responsible for not only preserving the Revolution in France, but also for spreading its ideals through Europe. With fair pay and benefits, soldiers and their families were committed to the Revolutionary movement to spread wealth more equally and to abolish poverty. Families of soldiers received stipends. Men injured in battle were given generous veterans benefits. France's goal became not only to reinvent itself but also to spread its beliefs throughout Europe using its army of believers.

Women in the French Revolution

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen was aptly named since the French Revolution did not extend equal rights to women. Women couldn't vote, own property, make a will, file a lawsuit, or serve on a jury. However, in the early stages of the Revolution, women were hopeful about gaining rights. They participated by forming clubs and debating politics.

Olympe de Gouges Writer and reformer **Olympe de Gouges** (1748–1793) fought for the rights of women and minorities during the Revolution. Her most famous work was the **Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen** (1791)—a response to the failure of Revolutionary ideals to extend to women. She once said, "Women have the right to mount the scaffold; they should likewise have the right to mount the rostrum [a podium for political speeches]." She herself often made speeches advocating divorce rights for women and the right of children whose parents were not married (as hers were not) to inherit parental property.

Though de Gouges was initially enthusiastic about the Revolution, its excesses dismayed her. As with many famous figures during this time, her death date gives a clue to her fate. She was beheaded by guillotine during the Reign of Terror for aligning herself with the moderate Girondists.

Credit: Alexander Kucharsky, portrait of Olympe de Gouges, c. 1790

Society of Republican Revolutionary Women The group known as the **Society of Republican Revolutionary Women** lasted only five months, but it raised issues important to women of the time. Founded in 1793, it consisted largely of working-class women who vowed to "rush to the defense of the Fatherland" and "to live for the Republic or to die for it." Women of the group wore decorated red bonnets to signal their membership, which often provoked violence against them. In 1793 during the Reign of Terror, when the Jacobins turned against one of the women's leaders, the society dissolved itself.

The De-Christianization of France

The National Assembly pursued a policy of de-Christianization as part of its attempt to establish a new order based on Enlightenment reason rather than faith. *Saint* was removed from all street names, the cathedral of Notre Dame was renamed the Temple of Reason, and a new republican calendar was adopted with year one beginning on September 22, 1792, the day on which the National Convention had proclaimed France a republic. Each year would have 12 months of three 10-day weeks. The remaining days were designated as festival days. The calendar also had the added benefit of reducing the number of nonworking days from 56 to 35. The new calendar faced much opposition from the beginning and eventually it was abandoned.

The Directory The Reign of Terror came to an end in 1794 with the arrest and execution of Robespierre. The moderate Girondins who had survived returned to power and wrote a new constitution that did the following:

- established France's first bicameral (two house) legislature
- gave executive power to a five–member committee called the **Directory** (or *Directoire*)
- allowed Parliament to appoint the members of the Directory

The Directory was yet another unsuccessful attempt at government. It lasted only four years and was riddled with corruption. It came to rely on the French army to enforce its authority. When radical factions such as the Jacobins protested, they were shut down by the army, now led by a young general named **Napoleon Bonaparte** (1769–1821). Napoleon and other generals wielded much of the national power as the French army pacified the country and also defeated the Prussians, Austrians, Spanish, and Dutch.

The Consulate In 1799, Napoleon staged a **coup d'état**, a sudden overthrow of the government. He abolished the Directory. He replaced it with a governing system called the **Consulate** in which three consuls, or chief magistrates, would lead the French government. Napoleon appointed himself one of the consuls. The system lasted just five years, from 1799 to1804.

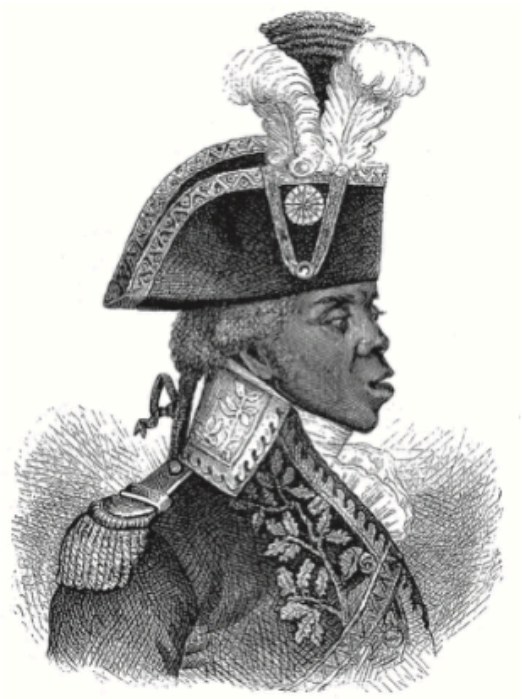
The Revolution Outside of France

Napoleon's coup ended the era of the French Revolution and ushered in the Napoleonic era. Under Napoleon's military leadership, France dominated the European continent and spread its revolutionary ideals across the world. This sometimes resulted in France's own colonies fighting for independence against their colonial rulers.

The Haitian Independence Movement

As Napoleon was rising through the military ranks, the French Revolution inspired rebellions in other regions of the world. Partly, people felt inspired by the power of the Revolution's egalitarian ideals. In addition, while France was embroiled in domestic strife, its colonies were vulnerable to unrest. One major uprising began as a slave revolt in the French colony that would become the nation of Haiti.

Toussaint L'Ouverture (c.1743–1803) was a black man born a slave on Saint-Domingue, the western half of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. Today the island is composed of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. L'Ouverture's master taught him to read and later freed him in the mid-1770s. L'Ouverture possessed several traits that made him a great leader. He was intelligent and literate and could speak several languages. Further, he was a skilled military commander and a shrewd diplomat. Like Napoleon, L'Ouverture was influenced by the Enlightenment and ascended to power during a revolution.



Toussaint L'Ouverture, the leader of the Haitian Revolution, used guerrilla tactics effectively against the French colonial rulers.

Credit: Getty Images

Slave Revolt Saint-Domingue was perhaps the world's most lucrative colony. The sugar it grew and exported made plantation owners very wealthy. However, 89 percent of its inhabitants were enslaved Africans who led horrible lives, as owners worked slaves to death and often used torture to punish them. One owner said it was more profitable to work a slave to death and buy another one than to treat a slave humanely.

In 1791, a slave rebellion spread through the colony. Though L'Ouverture was already free, he shared the slaves' rage and took command of the revolt. First, he shipped his wife, sons, and former master off the island and to safety. Then, he trained his troops in **guerrilla warfare** tactics. Guerrilla warfare involves quick, small military actions against larger regular army or police units.

While France fought its own Revolution, Spain and Britain invaded and tried to seize Saint-Domingue. Initially, the black rebel commanders joined with the Spaniards from the eastern side of Hispaniola, while the British occupied the island's coasts. France's hold on its most profitable colony was in danger. However, in 1794, the French National Convention did what neither Spain nor England would: they declared the slaves free. L'Ouverture returned to the French side.

Haiti After the Revolt The French governor of Saint-Domingue appointed L'Ouverture lieutenant governor. The British began losing ground, and the Spaniards were expelled from Saint-Domingue. L'Ouverture became a popular figure who advocated for reconciliation between the races. Though L'Ouverture forced people to work, the laborers were free and shared in plantation profits. The European plantation owners were permitted to return and run their businesses.

L'Ouverture pushed his rivals aside and appointed himself military governor over the newly renamed nation of Haiti. First, he signed trade treaties with Britain, much to the displeasure of France. Then, his forces invaded the Spanish portion of the island and freed all the slaves there. Napoleon distrusted L'Ouverture and began plotting against him. A French army arrived on the island, and L'Ouverture was tricked and arrested. He died in a French prison in 1803. However, his trusted followers feared France would reestablish slavery. They fought the French army and won, leading to Haiti's independence in 1804.

British Opponents of the French Revolution

Because France's Enlightenment impulses didn't match the violent reality of its actions, some condemned the French Revolution. One of the most influential writers of the time was the Englishman **Edmund Burke** (1729–1797). Burke wrote *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* In it, he cautioned Britain against engaging in the types of excesses occurring in France. Burke began writing his book in 1789 before the Reign of Terror; however, his warnings of anarchy came to pass. Britain managed to subdue its own radical reformers who demanded greater freedoms both at home and for British subjects in India. Britain's stable representative government and healthy economy allowed it to remain peaceful.

First Consul and Emperor

Born on the Italian island of Corsica, Napoleon Bonaparte came from humble circumstances. He went to French schools and the military academy. During the Revolution, he rose quickly as an officer, achieving the rank of brigadier general in 1794 at age 25. After saving the National Convention from the Parisian mobs, he defeated the Austrians in Italy. Returning to France as a hero, Napoleon was given command of an army to invade Egypt. Suffering defeats to the British on both land and sea, Napoleon returned to France, leading the coup to overthrow the Directory. He then became first consul of the three-member Consulate, the new governing body. In 1800, he led his army against Austrian forces in Italy and won. This victory cemented his power. He signed a peace treaty with Britain. By 1802, he had the government name him first consul for life, but that title was not enough to feed his hunger for power. In 1804, he crowned himself Napoleon I, emperor of France.

Domestic Reforms under Napoleon

Napoleon wanted to stabilize France after the violent excesses of the Revolution. One important step he took was to create the **Napoleonic Code**, a body of law governing people, property, and civil procedures. Prior to the Code's completion in 1801, France had a confusing, disorganized set of regional regulations based on feudal traditions. The Napoleonic Code reinforced revolutionary principles by recognizing the equality of all citizens under the law, guaranteeing religious toleration, and protecting property rights.

Centralized Government and the Merit System Napoleon also created a centralized national government, in which merit, rather than ancestry or social position, determined advancement. The French bureaucracy grew more efficient. For the first time it applied a tax system fair to all. When Napoleon became first consul, the government had a debt of 474 million francs and it had only 167,000 francs in the treasury. Napoleon hired professional tax collectors who maintained accurate records and didn't skim from the money they collected. Gradually, indirect taxes increased on various items. Reducing expenses and increasing revenues helped stabilized the government's budget.

Educational System Under Napoleon, France opened schools called ***lycées*** for boys ages 10 to 16. The middle class now had more educational opportunities, with the idea that these young men would then move into the military and the government. Scholarships were also given to those who could not afford to attend. The *lycées'* primary purpose was to indoctrinate an entire generation into the Napoleonic way of thinking.

Religious Reform The **Concordat of 1801**, an agreement between Napoleon and representatives of the Catholic Church in Paris and Rome, reconciled some of the animosity caused by the earlier eradication of Christianity and confiscation of Church lands:

- The Church was reestablished in France, but it gave up claims on its former land holdings (which had already been sold by auction).
- Napoleon would nominate bishops, who would appoint priests, but the government would pay both Catholic and Protestant clergy.
- Napoleon recognized that Catholicism was the religion of the majority of French citizens, without making it the official state religion.

Economic Reforms Napoleon's goals to promote economic health were straightforward: increase foreign trade and strive for full employment. Agriculture was a key to achieving both ends. Before the Revolution, France's agricultural system was so antiquated that the country imported staples such as butter and cheese. By 1812, France had become an exporter of these goods. Textile exports boomed as well. Napoleon discouraged unions and closely regulated the trade guilds, thinking that unhappy workers in unions could plant the seeds of rebellion. Instead, he focused on improving worker conditions to preempt any desire to unionize.

Curtailment of Rights under Napoleon

Napoleon succeeded in creating national laws, reforming the economy, and affirming the redistribution of land once held by the Catholic Church. However, he was no longer a proponent of liberty, equality, and fraternity. To maintain power and build his empire, he used secret police, censored free speech, and limited individual rights. Abroad, he reinstituted slavery on the French islands of Martinique and Guadalupe in the Caribbean. In name, France was a republic that became an empire. In reality, it was a dictatorship.

Secret Police During Napoleon's reign, royalist and radical plotters threatened the government and its leaders. The man responsible for uncovering these plots was Minister of Police **Joseph Fouché** (1759–1820), who acted as chief of espionage. Fouché ran a vast network of spies and was adept at gathering and using information. He even kept a dossier on Napoleon.

Fouché, a former priest, hated the Catholic Church and refused to support the Concordat of 1801. His strong views cost him his job at one point, but his skill in discovering dissenters made him valuable to Napoleon. Fouché assured Napoleon that all possible threats to the emperor were eliminated—either publically or privately. Some innocent people were assassinated simply to send a message to potential plotters. Napoleon didn't worry about these deaths. He believed that the ends of maintaining order justified such means.

Censorship and Restrictions Press censorship became more and more important to Napoleon as he came under increased public criticism. Paris had four major newspapers, each of which was required to maintain an on-staff censor to suppress the expression of opposition to Napoleon's politics or to his military expansions across Europe.

Limitation of Women's Rights Under Napoleon's reign, women did not have the same rights as men. For example, husbands had the legal power to:

- control their wives' wages
- control the property their wives brought into marriage
- divorce wives for adultery (even have them imprisoned)
- control all jointly held property
- control their wives' ability to file suits in civil court, take loans, or sell property

Further, while men could obtain a divorce easily, women could do so only with difficulty. All these rules were part of the Napoleonic Code.

Spread of Revolutionary Ideals across Europe

Between 1799 and 1815, Napoleon fought a shifting alliance of European countries during the period of the **Napoleonic Wars**. Using his large army of patriotic citizens, Napoleon won nearly all his early battles against Austria, Prussia, and Russia. By 1806, much of central and southern Europe was under French control.

As Napoleon's armies traveled across Europe, they spread ideals of the Revolution. They proved that ordinary citizens could overthrow a monarchy and strip the aristocracy of their traditional privileges. Peasants now owned lands formerly controlled by the Church, signaling the end of serfdom in France. When Haitian slaves rebelled, France had abolished slavery there. When the Haitians learned that the French had reintroduced slavery on the nearby island of Guadeloupe they revolted against French rule, and in 1804

won their independence. Despite setbacks and missteps, the trajectory was clear: The old order was ending and the time of the common people had arrived. This notion changed European politics and societies forever.

Nationalistic Responses

The period from 1804, when Napoleon crowned himself emperor, until 1814, when he abdicated for the first time (but soon returned to power), became known as the First Empire. Napoleon abolished the Holy Roman Empire and redrew the map of Europe. The armies of Napoleon spread the ideas of the French Revolution, abolishing feudalism as they conquered territory. He heavily taxed conquered peoples to spare the French while he continued his wars. Unable to defeat Britain militarily, Napoleon created the **Continental System**, a blockade of British goods being shipped to European ports.

Napoleon's actions awakened a new identity in the people he conquered. People began to feel a stronger sense of **nationalism,** a pride in one's cultural heritage that later led to a desire to have a single political state for that culture. Before the spread of nationalism, people identified more with their city or region than with all people who shared their culture. Their political loyalty was more to an individual ruler, such as a king, than to the state in general. People commonly were loyal to a ruler who did not even speak their language.

Guerrilla War in Spain Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808, forcing King Charles IV to abdicate. Unwilling to bend to French rule, the Spanish were joined by British troops to fight the French. The British effectively used small bands of Spanish fighters to harass the French army. These small groups used guerrilla tactics to harass the French army of 200,000 men. By 1814, Napoleon had lost what was called the Peninsular War.

Nationalism in German States Nationalism also arose in German states, especially Prussia, where intellectuals called for cultural nationalism based on the unity of the German people. Prussia, which had been crushed by the army of Napoleon, undertook a series of political and military reforms. These included the abolition of serfdom and the creation of a larger standing army.

Russian Scorched Earth Policy Napoleon, declaring he wanted to free Poland from Russian power and hoping to end Russian support for Great Britain, invaded Russia in June 1812 with an army of about 600,000. Russia had an army of about equal size, but had the advantage of knowing the land and how to survive the harsh Russian winters.

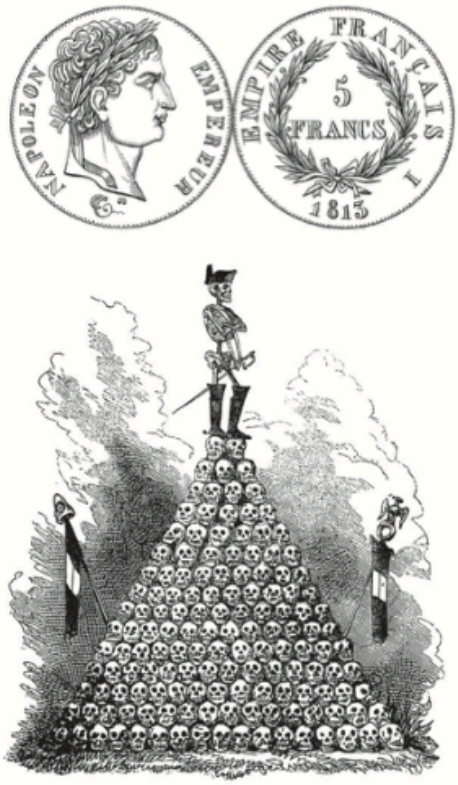
As French forces moved deeper into Russia, the Russian army made the strategic choice to retreat, never allowing the French to defeat them decisively. Further, the Russians burned everything behind them. This was called a **scorched earth policy** and prevented the French army from living off the land. Napoleon managed to reach Moscow, but the city had been evacuated and was ablaze. Lacking food and supplies, Napoleon began to retreat in October. However, his decision to retreat came too late. As the Russian winter set in,

French troops and their horses began dying from cold and starvation. Fewer than 40,000 French soldiers returned home. French **hegemony**, or authority over others, had ended.

End of the Napoleonic Era

As his army retreated during the Russian winter, Napoleon learned of an attempted coup back in France. He was also defeated by a revived opposing coalition led by Prussia and Austria. Napoleon was forced to abdicate in 1814 and sent to the Mediterranean island of Elba. He returned to France in 1815. He raised yet another army, only to be defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in present-day Belgium. He abdicated a second time and this time was exiled to St. Helena, a remote island in the South Atlantic Ocean, where he remained until his death. Approximately 750,000 French soldiers and citizens died from warfare during the time Napoleon had pursued his dreams of domination.

From 1814 to 1815, the Congress of Vienna met, guided by two principles: legitimacy and balance of power. The leaders of Austria, Great Britain, Prussia, and Russia met under the leadership of Prince Klemens von Metternich of Austria. Their goals were simple. First, redraw Europe's borders to where they were prior to 1792. Second, restore legitimate monarchs to the thrones of Europe. Guided by the ideology of conservatism, their efforts, both internationally and domestically, brought an era of stability to Europe.



MONUMENT TO NAPOLEON!

Napoleon was portrayed by artists in contrasting ways—as a noble Roman emperor, a tyrannical murderer, or an inspiring general—depending on which aspect of his life they wanted to emphasize.

Credit: Getty Images

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Governance

French Revolution
republic
Reign of Terror
ancien régime
Louis XVI
Estates-General
Marie Antoinette
tithes
National Assembly
Tennis Court Oath
pamphleteers
Bastille Day
The Great Fear
Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen
Civil Constitution of the Clergy
departments
Jacobins
Maximilien de Robespierre
National Convention
Jean-Paul Marat
Girondins
Reign of Terror
Committee of Public Safety
Georges Danton
levée en masse
Olympe de Gouges
Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen
Society of Republican Revolutionary Women
Directory
Napoleon Bonaparte
coup d'état
consulate
Toussaint L'Ouverture
guerrilla warfare
Edmund Burke
Napoleonic Code
lycées
Concordat of 1801
Joseph Fouché
Napoleonic Wars
Continental System
nationalism
scorched earth policy

Social Structure

bourgeoisie
cahiers
sans-culottes
hegemony