

AIM: Why was there a revolution in France in 1789?

DO NOW: Please answer the question in your binder.

Q: Using the two paragraphs below, complete your pyramid of the three estates of the Old Regime. Include details like: people's occupations; % of land owned; % of population; and taxes paid.

In the 1770s, the social and political system of France—the **Old Regime**—remained in place. Under this system, the people of France were divided into three large social classes, or **estates**. Two of the estates had privileges, including access to high offices and exemptions from paying taxes, that were not granted to the members of the third. The Roman Catholic Church, whose clergy formed the **First Estate**, represented less than 1% of the population, but owned 10 percent of the land in France. It provided education and relief services to the poor and contributed about 2 percent of its income to the government. The **Second Estate** was made up of rich nobles. Although they accounted for just 2 percent of the population, the nobles owned 20 percent of the land and paid almost no taxes.

About 97 percent of the people belonged to the **Third Estate**. Three different groups made up this estate. The first group—the **bourgeoisie** (or middle class)—were bankers, factory owners, merchants, professionals, and skilled artisans. Although some of the bourgeoisie were as rich as nobles, they paid high taxes (as much as 50% of their income). Many felt that their wealth entitled them to a greater degree of social status and political power. The workers of France's cities formed the second, and poorest, group within the Third Estate. These urban workers included tradespeople, apprentices, laborers, and domestic servants. Paid low wages and often out of work, they often went hungry. Peasants formed the largest group within the Third Estate, more than 80 percent of France's 26 million people. Peasants paid about half their income in taxes to nobles, the Church, and to the king's agents. Peasants and the urban poor resented the clergy and the nobles for their privileges and special treatment.

Document 1

Q1: Examine the political cartoon. Which estate do you think each character represents? What message do you think the cartoonist is attempting to convey?



Document 2

Q2: How did D'Antraigues sum up the views of the Third Estate? How does this quote represent Enlightenment ideas?

The Third Estate is the People and the People is the foundation of the State; it is in fact the State itself; the . . . People is everything. Everything should be subordinated to it. . . It is in the People that all national power resides and for the People that all states exist. - Comte D'Antraigues

Document 3

Q3: Use the following passage to identify five economic problems France faced in the 1780s. List the problems in your binder.

By the 1780s, France's once prosperous economy was in decline. This caused alarm, particularly among the merchants, factory owners, and bankers of the Third Estate. On the surface, the economy appeared to be sound, because both production and trade were expanding rapidly. However, the heavy burden of taxes made it almost impossible to conduct business profitably within France. Further, the cost of living was rising sharply. In addition, bad weather in the 1780s caused widespread crop failures, resulting in a severe shortage of grain. The price of bread doubled in 1789, and many people faced starvation.

During the 1770s and 1780s, France's government sank deeply into debt. Part of the problem was the extravagant spending of Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette. Louis also inherited a considerable debt from previous kings. And he borrowed heavily in order to help the American revolutionaries in their war against Great Britain, France's chief rival. This nearly doubled the government's debt. In 1786, when bankers refused to lend the government any more money, Louis faced serious problems.

Document 4

Q4: Read the descriptions of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. How would you feel about them if you lived in France as a member of the Third Estate in 1789? Write your response in your binder.

Louis XVI (1754–1793)

Louis XVI's tutors made little effort to prepare him for his role as king—and it showed. He was easily bored with affairs of state, and much preferred to spend his time in physical activities, particularly hunting. He also loved to work with his hands, and was skilled in several trades, including lock-making, metalworking, and bricklaying.



Despite these shortcomings, Louis was well intentioned and sincerely wanted to improve the lives of the common people. However, he lacked the ability to make decisions and the determination to see policies through. When he did take action, it often was based on poor advice from ill-informed members of his court. As one politician of the time noted, "His reign was a succession of feeble attempts at doing good, shows of weakness, and clear evidence of his inadequacy as a leader."

Marie Antoinette (1755–1793)

Marie Antoinette was a pretty, lighthearted, charming woman. However, she was unpopular with the French because of her spending and her involvement in controversial court affairs. She referred to Louis as "the poor man" and sometimes set the clock forward an hour to be rid of his presence.



Marie Antoinette refused to wear the tight-fitting clothing styles of the day and introduced a loose cotton dress for women. The elderly, who viewed the dress as an undergarment, thought that her clothing was scandalous. The French silk industry was equally angry. In constant need of entertainment, Marie Antoinette often spent hours playing cards. One year she lost the equivalent of \$1.5 million by gambling in card games.

SOME FACTS ABOUT WEALTH DISTRIBUTION

- Microsoft CEO Bill Gates has more wealth than the bottom 45 percent of American households combined.
- As of 1995, the wealth of the top one percent of Americans is greater than that of the bottom 95 percent.
- In 1996, the top 20% of U.S. households claimed 48.2 percent of national income while the bottom fifth gets by on 3.6 percent.
- In 1998, the world's 225 richest people had a combined wealth of \$1 trillion. That's equal to the combined annual income of the world's 2.5 billion poorest people.

Distribution of U.S. Wealth, 2007

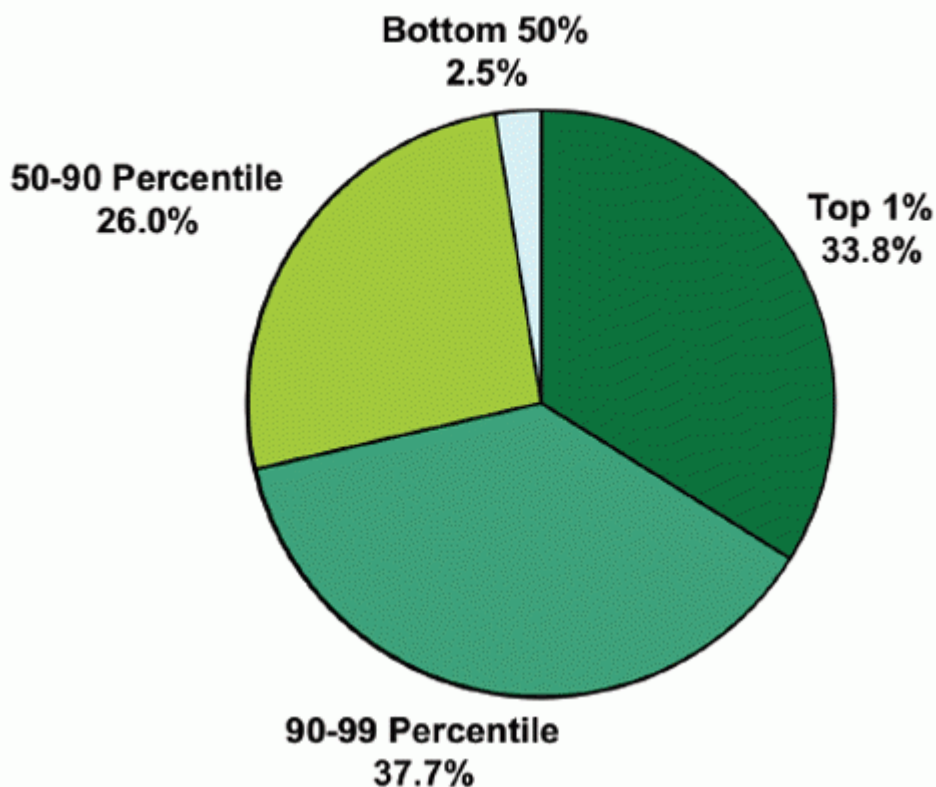


Table 7: Income equality in selected countries

Country/Overall Rank	Gini Coefficient
1. Sweden	23.0
2. Norway	25.0
8. Austria	26.0
10. Germany	27.0
17. Denmark	29.0
25. Australia	30.5
34. Italy	32.0
35. Canada	32.1
37. France	32.7
42. Switzerland	33.7
43. United Kingdom	34.0
45. Egypt	34.4
56. India	36.8
61. Japan	38.1
68. Israel	39.2
81. China	41.5
82. Russia	42.3
90. Iran	44.5
93. United States	45.0
107. Mexico	48.2
125. Brazil	56.7
133. South Africa	65.0

Note: These figures reflect family/household income, not individual income.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (2010).

Source: *World History: Patterns of Interaction*