

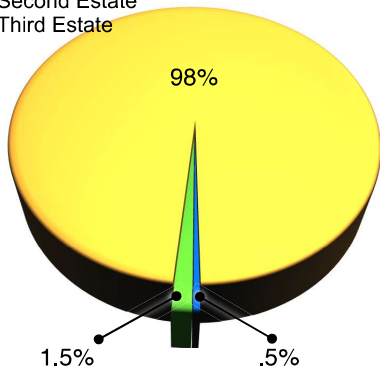
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Causes of the French Revolution

Since the Middle Ages, everyone in France had belonged to one of three social classes called estates. The First Estate comprised of church clergy, the second estate consisted of nobility and the rest of the French people, the middle class, urban lower class, and peasant farmers, belonged to the Third Estate. Analyze the charts below.

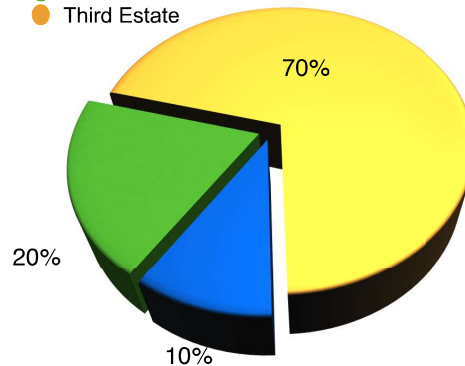
Percentage of Population by Estate

● First Estate
● Second Estate
● Third Estate

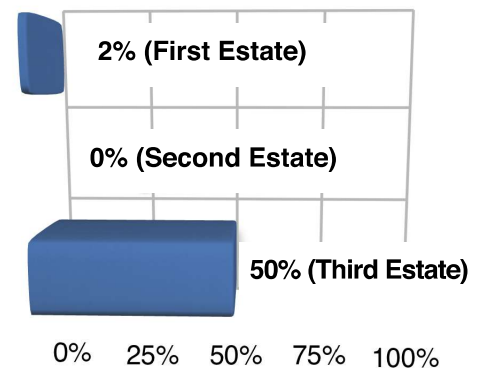


Percentage of Land Ownership by Estate

● First Estate
● Second Estate
● Third Estate

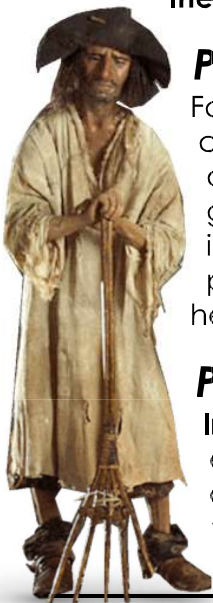


Percentage of Income Paid in Taxes



1. From the charts above, which estate had the greatest amount of people? Who consisted of this estate? _____
2. Which estate had the greatest amount of land compared to their population? Who consisted of the this estate? _____
3. Look at chart C. Which estate might feel resentment towards the others. Explain. _____

In addition to the resentment that was felt by many French citizens, there were other problems that led the the French to revolution. Read about the following problems.



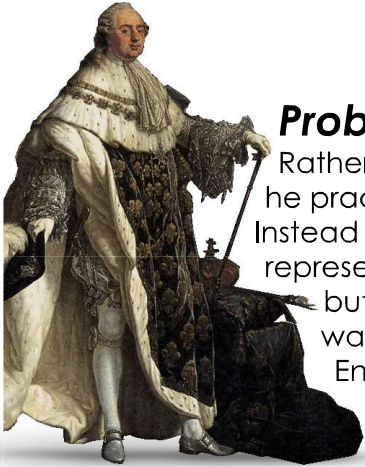
Problem 1 Deficit Spending

For many years, King Louis XIV's government had spent more money than it earned. When a country spends more than it earns, it called **deficit spending**. Wars like the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution and extravagant spending by the king and queen forced the government to borrow more and more money. By 1789, half its tax income went just to pay interest on this enormous debt. Both the church and nobility classes (First and Second Estates) paid little to no taxes to help pay for the debt, nor did they want to leaving the burden of heavy spending on the Third Estate. Louis once again, wanted to raise their taxes.

Problem 2 Poor Harvest

In addition, bad harvests caused food prices soaring. Many peasants did not have enough to eat. In towns, people rioted, demanding bread. In the countryside, peasants began to attack the manor houses of the nobles. The poor harvests also meant that many French farmers became unemployed. Meanwhile, the nobility, the clergy and King Louis and his family continued to live in the lap of luxury, in their palaces and castles.

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Problem 3 Failure of Reform

Rather than cutting expenses, King Louis XVI put off dealing with the emergency until he practically had no money left. His answer was to impose taxes on the nobility. Instead they forced him to call a meeting of the Estates General - a gathering of representatives from all three estates. Most common people wanted financial relief, but the elected members of the Third Estate wanted government reform. They wanted to change the monarchy and incorporate some of the ideas of the Enlightenment period and the American Revolution. King Louis was losing control.

Problem 4. The National Assembly

After weeks of un-resolving meetings, leaders of the Third Estate representing 98% of the people of France, took a daring step. They created a new government called the **National Assembly**. Some reform-minded nobles and clergy joined them. They met at the Royal Tennis Court and pledged an oath, **The Tennis Court Oath**. They promised to write a new constitution for France, and the King would be forced to comply with the new constitution. However, rumors that the king was going to attack the citizens of Paris and increasing food shortages, led to an attack on the Bastille (a Parisian political prison) and a violent revolution had begun.

Answer the following questions:

4. Why was the French Government bankrupt in 1789?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5. How did the poor harvest effect ordinary people of France? _____

6. How did King Louis intend raise more money for France? _____

7. What inspired the Third Estate's ideas of reform for government? _____

8. What did the representatives of the Third Estate do after weeks of endless debates? _____

9. What was the Tennis Court Oath? _____

10. Why do you think there were rumors that the king was going to attack the citizens of Paris? _____