Topic 1.2 French Revolution

The Estates-General and the National Assembly



*Script

S1 Before the Revolution, France had three estates.

First estate : clergy

Second estate : nobles

Third estate : everyone else

S2

Second estate (nobles) : We have many privileges.

First estate (clergy) : We pay less tax.

S3

Third estate (everyone else) 1 : we do most of the work.

Third estate (everyone else) 2 : we pay most of the taxes.

S4

Third estate (everyone else) 1 : This system is unfair!

Third estate (everyone else) 2 : We want change.

The National Assembly



*Script

S1 In 1789, King Louis XVI called the Estates-General.

France has a money problem.

S2

We represent most of the people.

S3

But each estate gets only one vote.

S4

We are the National Assembly!

Vocab	What is means
Estates-General	a meeting of the three social groups in France
Estate	a social class in France before the Revolution
clergy	church leaders such as priests
nobles	people with high social rank and special privileges
Third Estate	the common people; everyone else in France
vote	a choice made to make a decision
National Assembly	a new group formed by the Third Estate to represent the people

Easy Explanation:
In 1789, King Louis XVI called the Estates-General because France had serious money problems. The meeting included the First Estate, the Second Estate, and the Third Estate.

The Third Estate said they represented most of the people in France, but each estate still got only one vote.

This was unfair to the Third Estate because the First Estate and the Second Estate always conspired and got two votes in total.

Because of this, they broke away and called themselves the **National Assembly**.

The Tennis Court Oath



***Script**

S1 June 20, 1789 : The Tennis Court Oath

Blue jacket guy : The hall is closed!

S2

Blue jacket guy : Then we will meet here.

S3

People : We will not leave until France has a constitution.

S4

People : We swear it!

Vocab	What it means
oath	a serious promise
constitution	a set of basic laws for a country
assembly	a group of people who meet to make decisions
delegate	a person chosen to represent others
meeting hall	the place where people meet officially
swear	to make a strong promise

Easy Explanation:
The members of the National Assembly found their meeting hall closed. Instead of giving up, they went to an indoor tennis court. There, they made a strong promise. They said they would not leave until France had a **constitution**. This promise became known as the **Tennis Court Oath**.

The Storming of the Bastille



*Script

S1 The king may use force.

S2 We need weapons and gunpower.

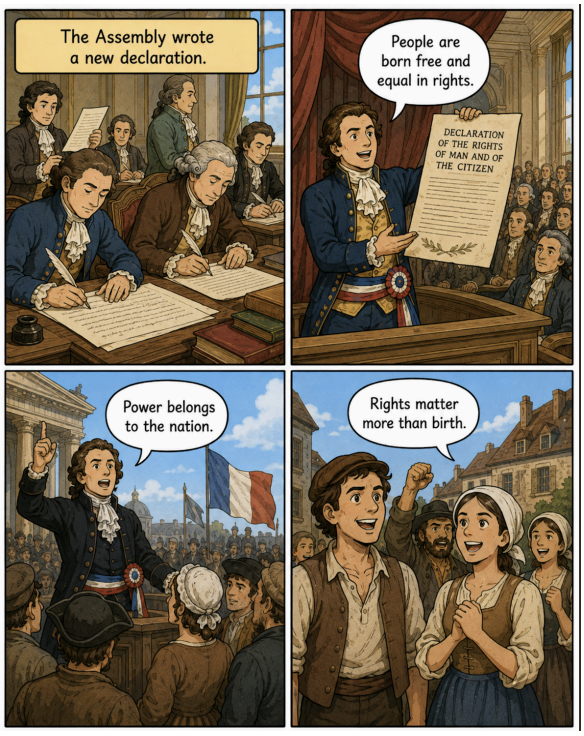
S4 The Bastille has fallen!

Vocab	Easy definition
Bastille	a prison fortress in Paris
force	violence or military power
weapon	something used for fighting
gunpowder	powder used in guns and cannons
fortress	a strong building used for defense
revolution	a big change in government by the people

Easy Explanation:

Many people in Paris were afraid that the king would use force against them. They wanted weapons and gunpowder to defend themselves. So, on July 14, 1789, they attacked the **Bastille**. The Bastille was a symbol of the king's power. When it fell, it became a powerful symbol of the Revolution.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen



*Script

S1 The Assembly wrote a new declaration.

S2 People are born free and equal in rights.

S3 Power belongs to the nation.

S4 Rights matter more than birth.

Vocab	Easy definition
declaration	an official statement
rights	freedoms and protections people should have
citizen	a member of a country with rights and duties
equal	the same in value, rights, or importance
nation	the people of a country
birth	the family or social class a person is born into

Easy Explanation:

The Assembly wrote a new declaration about people's rights. It said that people are born free and equal in rights. It also said that power belongs to the **nation**, not only to the king. This was a big change from the old system. It showed that a person's **birth** should not be more important than their rights.

From Constitutional Monarchy to Republic



*Script

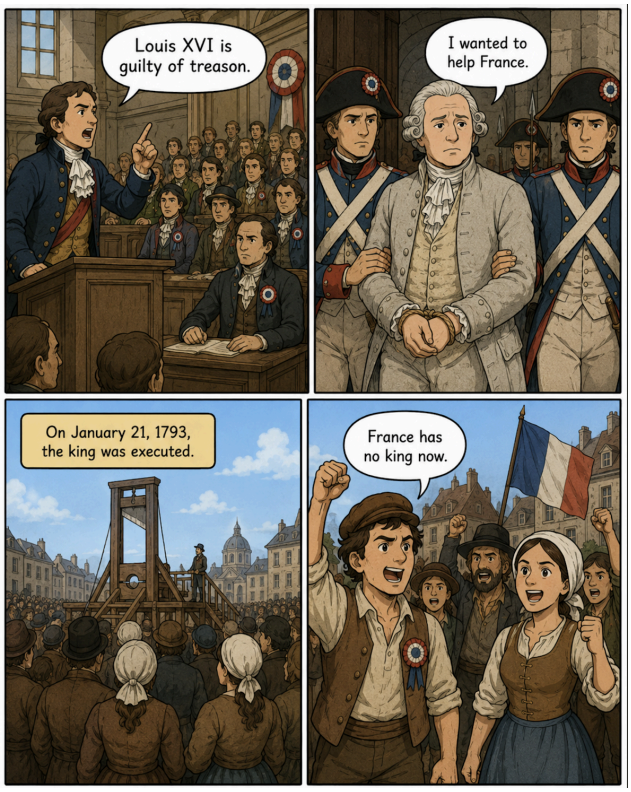
S1 In 1791, France became a constitutional monarchy.
S2 The king still rules, but his power is limited.
S3 We do not trust Louis XVI.
S4 France is now a republic!

Vocab	Easy definition
constitutional monarchy	a system where there is still a king, but his power is limited by law
limited	not complete; controlled by rules
monarchy	a government led by a king or queen

republic	a country without a king, where leaders represent the people
trust	to believe that someone will act honestly or correctly
Constitution of 1791	the law that limited the king's power in France

Easy Explanation:
In 1791, France became a **constitutional monarchy**. This meant the king still ruled, but his power was limited by the constitution. However, many people did not trust Louis XVI. They believed he was against the Revolution. Later, the monarchy ended, and France became a **republic**.

The Execution of Louis XVI



***Script**

S1 Louis XVI is guilty of treason.

S2 I wanted to help France.

S3 On January 21, 1793, the king was executed.

S4 France has no king now.

Vocab	Easy definition
guilty	responsible for doing something wrong
treason	acting against your own country
execute	to kill as a legal punishment
trial	a formal process to decide if someone is guilty
king	the male ruler of a monarchy
Louis XVI	the king of France during the Revolution

Easy Explanation:
Louis XVI was put on trial during the Revolution. Many revolutionaries said he was guilty of **treason**. On January 21, 1793, he was **executed**. After his death, France no longer had a king. This showed that the Revolution had become much more radical.

The Reign of Terror



***Script**

S1 France faced war and fear.

S2 Enemies of the Revolution must be punished.

S3 Anyone could be accused.

S4 People feared the guillotine.

Vocab	Easy definition
terror	great fear
enemy	a person or group seen as dangerous or against you
punish	to give a penalty for doing something wrong
accuse	to say that someone did something wrong
guillotine	a machine used to execute people by cutting off the head
fear	a strong feeling of being afraid

Easy Explanation:

During the **Reign of Terror**, France faced war and fear. Revolutionary leaders said that

enemies of the Revolution had to be punished. Many people were **accused**, even when there was little proof. Thousands were killed by the **guillotine**. This period showed how the Revolution became violent and dangerous.

The Directory Rules France



***Script**

S1 After the Terror, the Directory ruled France.

S2 We will restore order.

S3 The government is weak and unstable.

S4 The army is gaining power.

Vocab	Easy definition
Directory	the government that ruled France after the Reign of Terror
restore	to bring back
order	peace and control in society
unstable	not strong or secure; easily changed
government	the group that rules a country

army	the military forces of a country

Easy Explanation:

After the Reign of Terror, a new government called the **Directory** ruled France. It said it would restore order. But the government was weak and **unstable**. People still faced problems like high prices and job shortages. At the same time, the **army** became more powerful.

Napoleon Seizes Power



***Script**

S1 In 1799, Napoleon seized power.

S2 Napoleon : I will bring order to France.

S3 The Revolution is changing again.

S4 The French Revolution entered a new stage.

Vocab	Easy definition
seize power	to take control of the government
Napoleon	a French military leader who became ruler of France
order	peace and control

stage	a step or period in a process
revolution	a major change in government and society
power	control or authority over people and government

Easy Explanation:
In 1799, **Napoleon** took control of France. He said he would bring order to the country. Many people thought the Revolution was changing again. His rise marked a new stage in French history. It is often seen as the end of the French Revolution.

1.2 French Revolution — Final Summary

Easy explanation

France's unfair social system gave special privileges to the clergy and nobles, while the Third Estate paid most taxes.

Government debt, high food prices, and Enlightenment ideas increased anger toward the monarchy.

In 1789, the Third Estate formed the National Assembly, took the Tennis Court Oath, and challenged the king's authority.

The storming of the Bastille became a symbol of the Revolution, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen promoted liberty, equality, and national sovereignty.

France first became a constitutional monarchy, but distrust of Louis XVI grew. The monarchy was later abolished, and France became a republic.

Louis XVI was executed in 1793. The Revolution then became more radical during the Reign of Terror.

After the Terror, the Directory ruled France but remained weak and unstable.

In 1799, Napoleon seized power, bringing the Revolution into a new political stage.

The Revolution ended many legal privileges based on birth and promoted equality before the law, but political and social equality remained incomplete. The 1791 Constitution formally abolished hereditary distinctions and feudal privileges. (elysee.fr)

Check Your Understanding

1. Why was the Third Estate unhappy with the Old Regime?

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2. Why did King Louis XVI call the Estates-General in 1789?

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3. Why was the Tennis Court Oath important?

4. Why did the storming of the Bastille become an important symbol of the Revolution?

5. What new ideas were included in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen?

6. How did France change from a monarchy to a republic?

7. Why did the Revolution become more radical during the Reign of Terror?

8. Was the French Revolution successful in creating equality? Use two facts.

Teacher Answer Key

1. The Third Estate represented most of the population but had fewer political privileges and carried much of the tax burden. The clergy and nobles had special legal and social privileges.

2. France had a serious financial crisis and large government debt. Louis XVI called the Estates-General to deal with taxation and the country's money problems.

3. The National Assembly promised not to separate until France had a constitution. It showed that representatives were challenging the king's absolute authority.

4. The Bastille represented royal power and imprisonment. Its fall showed that ordinary people could directly challenge the monarchy.

5. The Declaration promoted ideas such as liberty, equality in rights, legal protections, and the principle that political sovereignty belongs to the nation.

6. France first limited Louis XVI's power through the Constitution of 1791. Growing distrust, war, and political conflict later led revolutionaries to abolish the monarchy and create a republic. The 1791 Constitution also abolished hereditary privileges and feudal distinctions. (elysee.fr)

7. France faced foreign war, internal rebellion, and fear of counterrevolution. Revolutionary leaders used arrests, trials, and executions against people considered enemies of the Revolution.

8. Strong answers should recognize both change and limitation. For example, hereditary privilege and feudal distinctions were abolished, and equality before the law became an important principle. However, political participation was still limited, women did not receive equal political rights, and revolutionary violence contradicted some of the Revolution's ideas about liberty.

Sources used for fact-checking

French Government, **Légifrance — Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1789**

Élysée — **The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen** (elysee.fr)

Élysée — **The Constitution of September 3, 1791** (elysee.fr)

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