1.3 Haiti Revolution

Saint-Domingue Before the Revolution



***Script**

S1 Saint-Domingue was a rich French colony.

S2 Saint-Domingue people : We do all the hard work. But we are not free.

S3 The colony had deep social inequality.

S4 Saint-Domingue people : This system is unfair.

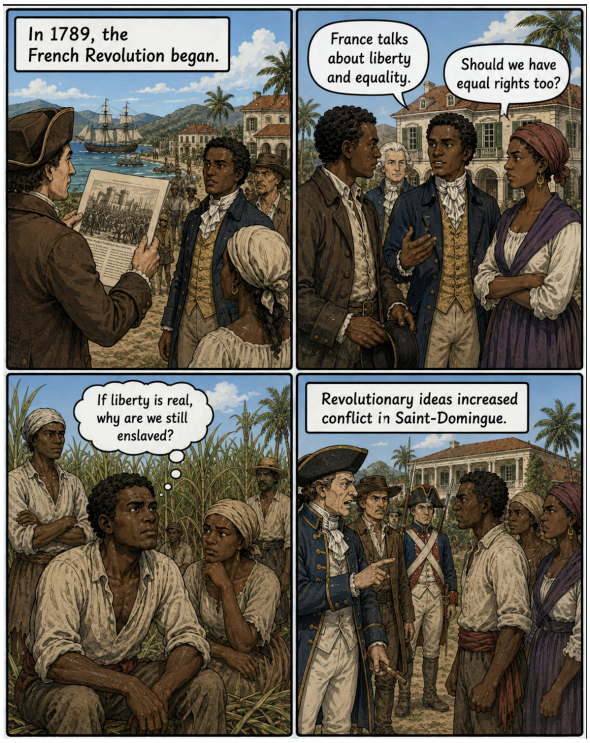
Vocab	Easy Definition
Saint-Domingue	the French colony that later became Haiti
colony	a place controlled by another country
plantation	a large farm that grows crops such as sugar or coffee
enslaved person	a person forced to work without freedom

social inequality	a situation where groups do not have the same rights, power, or opportunities
plantation owner	a person who owns a large plantation
free person of color	a non-white person who was legally free in Saint-Domingue

Easy Explanation:

Before the Haitian Revolution, Haiti was a French colony called **Saint-Domingue**. It was very wealthy because it produced large amounts of sugar and coffee. However, most of this wealth came from the forced labor of enslaved Africans. Society was deeply unequal. White plantation owners had great wealth and power, while enslaved people had almost no freedom or legal rights.

Revolutionary Ideas Reach Saint-Domingue



***Script**

S1 In 1789, the French Revolution began.

S2 Saint-Domingue people : France talks about liberty and equality. Should we have equal rights too?

S3 If liberty is real, why are we still enslaved?

S4 Revolutionary ideas increased conflict in Saint-Domingue.

Vocab	Easy Definition
French Revolution	the revolution that began in France in 1789
liberty	freedom
equality	the idea that people should have equal rights
equal rights	the same legal and political rights for different groups
conflict	serious disagreement or fighting between groups
revolutionary ideas	new ideas that challenge the old political or social system

enslaved	forced to live and work without freedom

Easy Explanation:

The **French Revolution began in 1789** and spread ideas about liberty and equality. People in Saint-Domingue heard about these ideas. Free people of color began asking why they did not have the same rights as white citizens. Enslaved people also questioned why France spoke about freedom while slavery still existed. These ideas increased tension in the colony.

The 1791 Slave Uprising



***Script**

S1 In 1791, enslaved people began a major uprising.

S2 Saint-Domingue people : We will fight for freedom. The slave system must end.

S3 The revolt spread across northern Saint-Domingue.

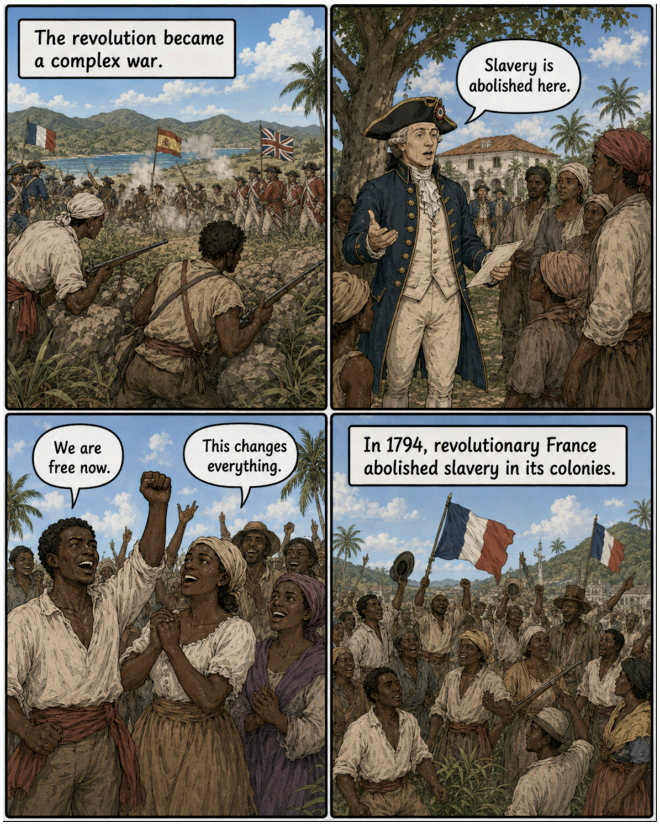
S4 Saint-Domingue people : This is a revolution against slavery.

Vocab	Easy Definition
uprising	an organized fight against people in power
revolt	an attempt to fight against a government or system
slavery	a system in which people are owned and forced to work
rebel	a person who fights against the government or existing system

resistance	action against control or oppression
freedom	the ability to live without being controlled or enslaved
northern Saint-Domingue	the northern area of the French colony where the 1791 uprising spread quickly

Easy Explanation:
In **August 1791**, enslaved people in northern Saint-Domingue began a large uprising. They organized secretly and then attacked plantations and other symbols of slavery. Their goal was not simply to change the government. They were fighting directly against the **slave system** and for their freedom. The revolt quickly spread across the northern part of the colony.

France Abolishes Slavery



***Script**

S1 The revolution became a complex war.

S2 Slavery is abolished here.

S3 Saint-Domingue people : We are free now. This changes everything!

S4 In 1794, revolutionary France abolished slavery in its colonies.

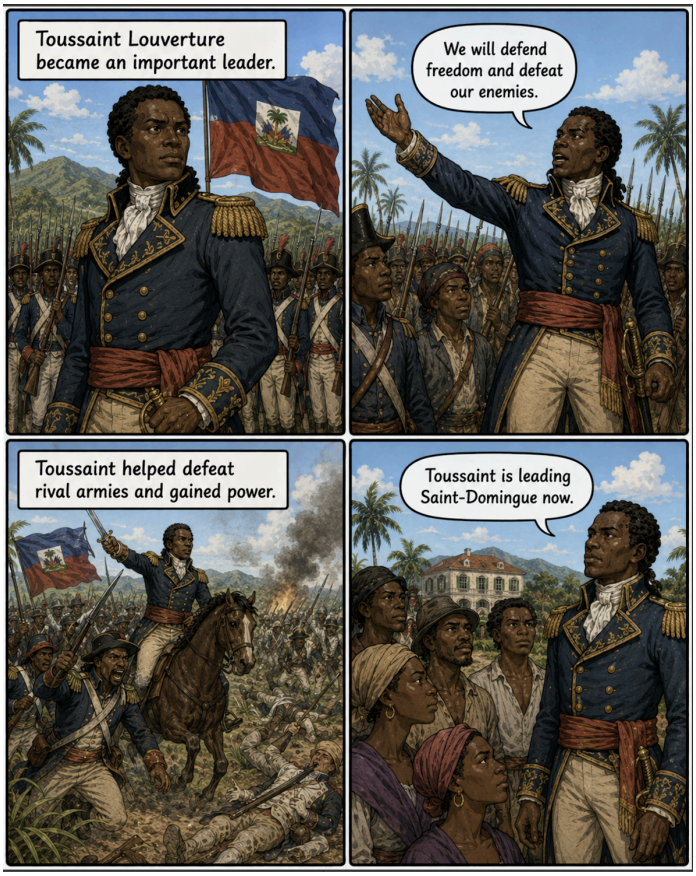
Vocab	Easy Definition
complex war	a war involving many different groups and goals
abolish	to officially end something
slavery	a system where people are forced to work as property
commissioner	an official sent by a government to carry out important duties
emancipation	the act of freeing people from slavery

colony	a territory controlled by another country
revolutionary France	the French government created during the French Revolution

Easy Explanation:

The Haitian Revolution became a **complex war** involving different groups inside Saint-Domingue as well as France, Britain, and Spain. In 1793, French officials in Saint-Domingue began freeing enslaved people. Then, in **1794**, revolutionary France officially abolished slavery in its colonies. This was a major turning point because the French government now formally recognized freedom for formerly enslaved people.

Toussaint Louverture Rises to Power



***Script**

S1 Toussaint Louverture became an important leader.

S2 Toussaint Louverture : We will defend freedom and defeat our enemies.

S3 Toussaint helped defeat rival armies and gained power.

S4 Toussaint is leading Saint-Domingue now.

Vocab	Easy Definition
Toussaint Louverture	a formerly enslaved man who became a major military and political leader
leader	a person who guides or controls a group
military	connected to soldiers and war
rival	a person or group competing against another

defend	to protect something from attack
gain power	to become more politically or militarily powerful
Saint-Domingue	the French colony later known as Haiti

Easy Explanation:

Toussaint Louverture became one of the most important leaders of the Revolution. He had once been enslaved, but he became a skilled military commander and politician. After France abolished slavery, Toussaint supported the French Republic and helped defeat enemy armies. By the late 1790s, he had become the most powerful leader in Saint-Domingue.

The Constitution of 1801



***Script**

S1 In 1801. Saint-Domingue adopted a new constitution.

S2 Slavery will never return.

S3 The colony governs itself now. But it is still linked to France.

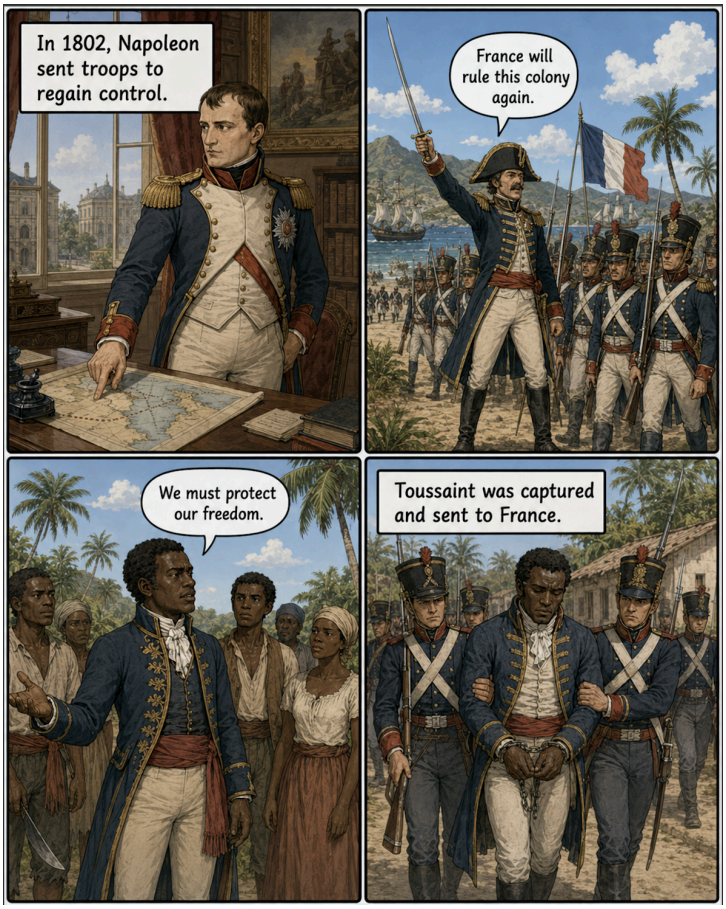
S4 Napoleon did not like Toussaint's growing power.

Vocab	Easy Definition
constitution	a set of basic laws for governing a country or territory
self-government	the ability of a place to govern itself
governor for life	a governor who is allowed to stay in power for the rest of his life
linked	still officially connected to something

slavery	the system that the constitution said could not return
authority	the power to make decisions and control government
Napoleon Bonaparte	the French leader who wanted stronger control over Saint-Domingue

Easy Explanation:
In **1801**, Saint-Domingue adopted a new constitution under Toussaint Louverture. The constitution confirmed that slavery would not return and gave the colony much more control over its own government. Toussaint became governor for life. However, Saint-Domingue was still officially connected to France. Napoleon saw Toussaint's growing power as a threat to French control.

Napoleon Sends Troops and Toussaint Is Captured



***Script**

S1 In 1802, Napoleon sent troops to regain control.

S2 France will rule this colony again.

S3 We must protect our freedom.

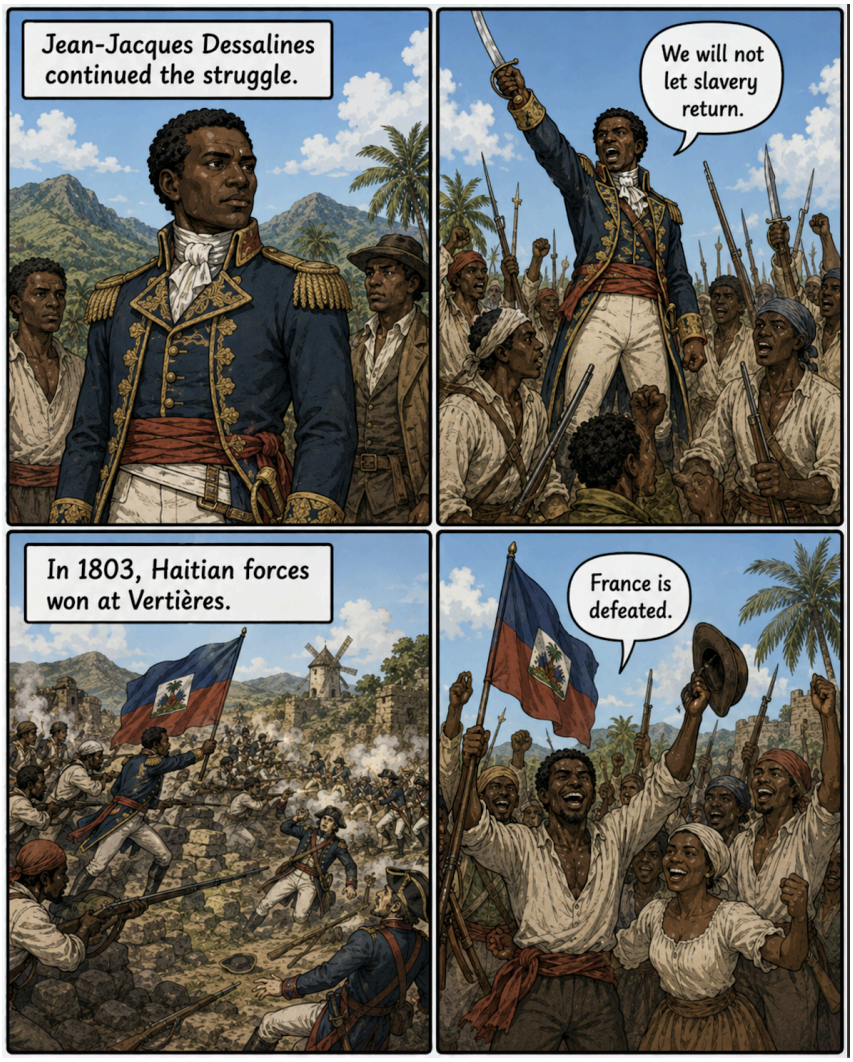
S4 Toussaint was captured and sent to France.

Vocab	Easy Definition
regain control	to take power over something again
expedition	a military force sent to another place for a special purpose
French troops	soldiers sent by France
capture	to take someone as a prisoner

freedom	the condition of not being enslaved
control	political or military power over a place
prison	a place where people are kept after being arrested or captured

Easy Explanation:
In **1802**, Napoleon sent a large French army to Saint-Domingue to regain stronger control over the colony. Many people feared that France might bring slavery back. Toussaint tried to protect the freedom gained during the Revolution, but he was eventually captured by the French. He was sent to France, where he later died in prison in **1803**.

Dessalines and the Final Victory



***Script**

S1 Jean-Jacques Dessalines continued the struggle.

S2 Jean-Jacques Dessalines : We will not let slavery return.

S3 In 1803, Haitian forces won at Vertieres.

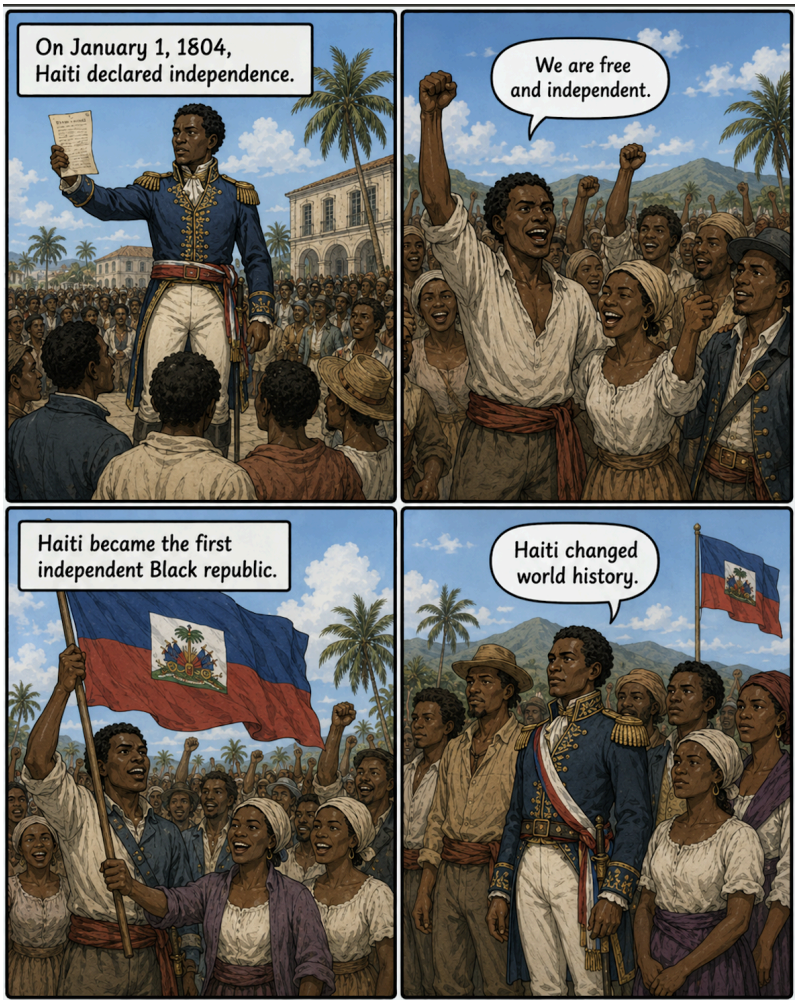
S4 France is defeated.

Vocab	Easy Definition
Jean-Jacques Dessalines	a Haitian revolutionary leader who continued the fight after Toussaint
struggle	a difficult fight for a goal

slavery	the system Haitian revolutionaries feared France would restore
Haitian forces	the revolutionary army fighting against French control
Battle of Vertières	the major 1803 battle in which Haitian forces defeated the French
defeat	to win against an enemy
independence	freedom from control by another country

Easy Explanation:
After Toussaint was captured, **Jean-Jacques Dessalines** became one of the main leaders of the fight against France. Haitian revolutionaries believed they had to keep fighting to prevent slavery from returning. In **November 1803**, Haitian forces defeated the French at the **Battle of Vertières**. This victory effectively ended France's attempt to regain control of the colony.

Haiti Declares Independence



***Script**

S1 On January 1, 1804, Haiti declared independence.

S2 We are free and independent.

S3 Haiti became the first independent Black republic.

S4 Haiti changed world history.

Vocab	Easy Definition
independence	the condition of governing yourself without another country controlling you
declare	to announce something officially

Haiti	the new independent country created from Saint-Domingue
republic	a country without a king, where political power is not inherited through monarchy
independent Black republic	a self-governing country led by Black people and free from colonial rule
colonial rule	control of one territory by another country
Haitian Revolution	the revolution that destroyed slavery and French colonial rule in Saint-Domingue

Easy Explanation:
On **January 1, 1804**, Dessalines declared the colony independent from France and renamed it **Haiti**. Haiti became the first independent Black republic and the second independent country in the Americas. The Revolution was historically important because formerly enslaved people successfully destroyed slavery in the colony and defeated a major European empire. Haiti's independence challenged both colonialism and racial slavery around the Atlantic world.

Final Summary

Easy explanation

Saint-Domingue was a wealthy French colony, but its economy depended heavily on enslaved African labor.

The French Revolution spread ideas about liberty and equality, causing free people of color and enslaved people to demand greater rights and freedom.

In 1791, enslaved people began a major uprising against slavery, starting the Haitian Revolution.

France abolished slavery in its colonies in 1794, and Toussaint Louverture became a powerful military and political leader in Saint-Domingue.

In 1802, Napoleon sent French troops to regain control. Toussaint was captured, but the revolution continued under leaders such as Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

Haitian forces defeated the French in 1803, and Haiti declared independence on January 1, 1804.

The Revolution destroyed slavery and French colonial rule in Haiti, creating the first independent Black republic. However, the new nation faced serious economic and international challenges after independence.

Check Your Understanding

1. Why was Saint-Domingue an important colony for France?

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2. How did the French Revolution influence people in Saint-Domingue?

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3. Why did enslaved people begin a major uprising in 1791?

4. Why was France's abolition of slavery in 1794 important?

5. What role did Toussaint Louverture play in the Haitian Revolution?

6. Why did Napoleon send French troops to Saint-Domingue in 1802?

7. How did the Haitian Revolution change from a slave uprising into a war for independence?

8. Why was Haitian independence historically important? Use two facts.

Teacher Answer Key

1. Saint-Domingue produced valuable goods such as sugar and coffee and was one of France's richest colonies. Its economy depended heavily on enslaved labor.

2. The French Revolution spread ideas about liberty and equality. Free people of color demanded equal civil rights, while enslaved people questioned why they remained enslaved if freedom and equality were supposed to be universal.

3. Enslaved people faced forced labor, violence, and a lack of freedom. In 1791, they organized a large uprising to fight against the slave system and gain freedom.

4. France's abolition of slavery officially recognized freedom for enslaved people in French colonies and changed the political goals and alliances of the revolution.

5. Toussaint Louverture became a major military and political leader. He helped defeat rival armies, defended the end of slavery, and became the dominant leader in Saint-Domingue.

6. Napoleon wanted to restore stronger French control over Saint-Domingue and reduce Toussaint's growing political power. Many people in Saint-Domingue also feared that France might restore slavery.

7. The Revolution began mainly as a struggle against slavery. As France tried to regain control and fears of slavery returning increased, revolutionary leaders increasingly fought for complete independence from France.

8. Strong answers should explain that Haiti became independent in 1804 and became the first independent Black republic. The Revolution also ended slavery in Saint-Domingue and showed that enslaved people could successfully defeat a European colonial power.

Sources used for fact-checking

U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian — **The Haitian Revolution, 1791–1804**

Library of Congress — **Haiti and the Haitian Revolution**

Library of Congress — **French Caribbean and Haitian Collections**

Encyclopaedia Britannica — **Haitian Revolution**