## French Revolution Basics 20pt classwork Name:

The following forms a timeline for the French Revolution. Answer the questions on the right-hand side.

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| **Intro**: the French Revolution is one of the most important events in all of history. It is responsible for creating modern governments as well as ideas of nationality and patriotism. It also provided concrete examples of government in action. The Code Napoleon created a rational basis of law that is now used in most of the world. The Levee en Masse created modern draft armies and founded the idea that all people of a nation contribute to a war together—total war. The Metric System revolutionized the conduct of science and engineering.But the Revolution itself is a mess. It is one of the most complex events one can study. Exactly who wants what or why certain things occur can be very difficult to track. So, in general, one can divide the Revolution into 4 phases:* Phase 1: **the Bourgeois Revolution**: the middle class rises up, overthrows the nobility, and attempts to create a constitutional democratic monarchy that values trade and business. Creates substantial but ultimately moderate reforms.
* Phase 2: **the Radical Revolution**: the former allies of the Bourgeosie, mostly urban poor who are much more radical in their ideas, hijack the revolution and attempt to bring about extreme reforms.
* Phase 3: **Bourgeois Reaction**: the bourgeoisie recapture power and roll back the most extreme reforms. Government does not work, is corrupt, and not well liked.
* Phase 4: **Napoleon**: France’s most successful general ends the revolution and builds an autocratic empire that is based partly on the ideas of the original revolutionaries. France fights and conquers most of Europe before being defeated.
 | **List 5 legacies of the French Revolution:** |
| **Define each in your own words:*** **Bourgeois Revolution**
* **Radical Revolution**
* **Bourgeois Reaction**
* **Napoleon**
 |
| **The Ancien Regime (1500-1792)**: The “Ancien Regime” was a term used to refer to the French political system from before the French Revolution. The Ancien Regime was what is sometimes referred to as “Post-Feudal” which means that it still had many traits of feudalism such as nobles with fabulous wealth and power and peasants with almost no rights. However, the actual system of manors and land-granting had mostly disappeared after the Black Death. Since 1600, the monarchs of France had been centralizing power—slowly breaking the power of nobles and bringing all political control into the hands of the king. This was done partly by building fabulous royal palaces where nobles would naturally gather (and where the king could keep an eye on them). | **What makes the Ancien Regime “Post-Feudal?”****How were the French Kings centralizing power?** |
| **The Three Estates**: since the middle ages, France was divided into three “estates” which were basically social classes. At the top were priests who were immune to all taxes and collected 10% of the income of all people in the third estate in what was called the *Tithe*, a special religious tax. Then there were Nobles, who were also immune to most taxes (not all) and who also were owed special taxes from the peasants of the third estate. Nobles and Priests combined for about 3% of the French population.The other 97% belonged to the Third Estate. This was split between middle class (bourgeoisie), urban poor, and peasants. All of these people combined to own just 35% of the land of France, made 25% of the wealth of France, and yet had to pay for almost all of the taxes the government collected as well as having to support the priests and nobles—who both lived off the money taken from the Third Estate. | **Label:*** **First Estate:**
* **Second Estate:**
* **Third Estate:**

**Describe the Third Estate****List all the groups to whom the 3rd Estate paid taxes** |
| **Debt Crisis**: the Ancien regime was awful, outdated, and inefficient. The King could only really tax the Third Estate, who didn’t have all that much money and who were already being taxed to extraordinary levels (30-60% of income taxed).The decisive issue was the American Revolution. Before 1776, France had been fighting Britain and had lost 5 wars in the last 8 decades. This was the chance for France to strike back and they successfully did so. However, it cost so much money that France found itself struggling to pay back its loans. In 1787, half of France’s government revenue went to just paying back the interest on those loans. Added to this were problems with farming. France’s population had been growing recently, especially its urban population, and its inefficient farming system struggled to produce enough food. The result were starving peasants who hated the nobles who further taxed them. In 1775, so many peasant riots broke out that it was called the Flour War and in 1788 another bad harvest threatened to repeat those troubles. The Ancien Regime tried to fix these problems but was desperate by 1787. | **What was wrong with the tax system of the Ancien Regime?****What created the French Debt Crisis?****How bad was the debt crisis?****What other problems faced France?** |
| **The Aristocratic Revolt (1787-1789)**The Aristocratic Revolt is not usually considered to be part of the Revolution—just a prelude to it. This was an attempt by nobles to move in the opposite direction of the French Revolution—towards less rights for the common people and more inequality between the classes.In 1787, the government admitted that it could not pay back its debts without changing the government. To try to pay down the enormous debt, the King looked to the only groups in France who were not taxed—the nobles and priests. The nobles had lost most of their power since the 1500s but they still were exempt from taxes and they owned most of the wealth. However, the nobles refused to pay without regaining some of their lost privileges. They wanted a monopoly on government and military offices, they wanted more control of the peasantry and greater protection of the French agricultural economy. The King attempted a number of methods to force noble compliance but proved powerless. | **Why is the Aristocratic Revolt not part of the Revolution?****What was the Aristocratic Revolt?****What did the Nobles want?** |
| **Phase 1: the Bourgeois Revolution** |
| **The Estates General (1789)**The King needed support to force the Nobles to pay taxes and to reform the deteriorating government. In a last-ditch effort to find this support, the King and his advisors turned to an ancient institution called the Estates General. The Estates General was a meeting of all the 3 estates in a huge parliament and had only been called once since the middle ages—in 1618—almost 200 years prior. In it, each estate had equal representation, 300 delegates. The 300 delegates from the first estate represented 150,000 priests. The 300 delegates from the second represented 350,000 nobles. And the 300 delegates from the third represented 3 million bourgeoisie and 22 million peasants or working poor.The inequality of this was obvious and hated by the Third Estate. The Third Estate wanted reform even more than the nobles and this was their chance to get it. They argued that it was grossly unfair that they should have no more vote than the other estates, who they vastly outnumbered. The King, needing support from the Third Estate, agreed and double their representation to 600 delegates. This pleased the Third Estate and they launched into preparations with enormous enthusiasm.However, the King began to realize that he wanted the proposed reforms the Third Estate desired even less than the proposed reforms the nobles wanted. So on the day the Estates General met, it was announced that the estates would vote as a whole estate, basically meaning the first estate had 1 vote, the second had 1, and the third had 1—regardless of how many delegates were in each. | **What was the Estates General?****Why did the King call it?****Why wasn’t it a fair system?****How did the King get the Third Estate to support the Estates General?****What did the King do to screw over the Third Estate?** |
| **Tennis Court Oath**The Third Estate felt cheated—like they had been tricked into supporting something they would have resisted. They refused to follow the rules and stated they would meet in one huge hall—all 1200 delegates —to create France’s new constitution. They worked for a few days in this manner while the King watched worriedly. Finally, the King locked the door to their assembly chamber, not letting them in.The Third Estate delegates met in an indoor tennis court and decided there whether to give in or to continue their work. There they decided to continue and made their famous Tennis Court Oath—a promise to never break up until France had a constitution. More critically, they declared themselves to be the National Assembly of France and invited the other 2 estates to join them. After a couple days, most of the 1st Estate joined and a handful of sympathetic nobles. | **Why did the Third Estate feel cheated?****How did the Third Estate respond?****What was the Tennis Court Oath?** |
| **The Storming of the Bastille**The people of France had felt cheated by the Estates General and riots broke out across France—especially in Paris. However, when word came that the delegates of the Third Estate had taken power into their own hands, the people celebrated and thousands demonstrated in Paris in favor of the National Assembly. But the King watched in growing concern. Rumors began to circulate that he planned to end the Assembly—by force if necessary.The people of Paris feared that war was coming and wanted to arm themselves and show the King that he had no power to fight the will of the people. Their target was the Bastille—a medieval castle/prison in the heart of Paris where the King’s political prisoners were held, tortured, and sometimes killed (though not in many years). The castle was stormed, some of the King’s soldiers killed, and a few people freed. No weapons were found but it sent a message to the King—he was no longer in control. Many date this attack as the beginning of the Revolution. | **What were the people of Paris concerned about before the Storming of the Bastille?****Why did they attack the Bastille? (2 reasons)****Why is this the “start” of the Revolution?** |
| **Women’s March (1789)**The real turning point, however, is the less noted Women’s March. Hungry and hearing that the King and Queen were hoarding bread, an army of women marched on the Versailles, the palace the King lived in. They dragged cannons and carried the heads of murdered guards on pikes. And at the gates they demanded bread. There was none to be found.But there was a second demand. Versailles was several miles away from Paris and it made the people feel like the King was hiding from the people. They took him from Versailles and brought him to Paris, to a castle in the city called the Tuilleries. Here he would rule France but here he could also be a hostage if need be. From here on, the King realized he could not directly fight the revolution and would typically surrender to its demands. | **What motivated the Women’s March?****Why did the Women’s March force the King to obey the Revolution?** |
| **The National Constituent Assembly (1789-1791)**After the third estate took control, they formed the National Constituent Assembly, a legislature for France. Under this name they began to form the basis for a constitutional monarchy. The King mostly went along with the changes, wielding the power that he did have to protect priests and nobles from the more vengeful ideas of the third estate. The Assembly was moderate. Most of the delegates of the Third Estate had been bourgeoisie, who had money and mostly just wanted rights, fair laws, and a more modern economic system—all things that the King also wanted. This was not the peasants who wanted land redistribution and wealth redistribution or urban poor, who hated priests and wanted to see France divorced from religion. This was a moderate revolution.And it was extremely successful for a while. The most memorable acts of the Revolution came from this period—at least the most memorable good ones. The last remnant of **Feudalism was abolished** in the first few months. A universal code of rights known as the **Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen** was created. And finally, the **First French Constitution** was written and signed in 1791, some two years after the beginning of the Revolution.The King did not want a constitution but he had still been part of its creation, refusing certain small parts of the constitution until it was at least somewhat palatable to him. He eventually signed it and the revolutionary government became a working government—a constitutional monarchy. | **What was the National Constituent Assembly?****What did the moderate, bourgeois government want?****What other groups and demands did the government ignore?****List 3 great accomplishments of this government.****What kind of government did the constitution create?** |
| **Legislative Assembly (1791-1792)**Technically the King was the head of the French government but he honestly had very limited powers, more comparable to the US president than a King in the true sense. The successor to the National Assembly—the Legislative Assembly—had the actual power. This was the government of the Bourgeoisie, ruled by the principles of individual and economic freedom and the sanctity of rights. It was based upon reason. But it was also moderate. Only men could vote and only those who owned land could vote—about 10% of the French Population.So how’d it do? Not very well. France still struggled to pay back its debts. They had started to issue a paper currency called the *Assignat* but that currency was in freefall, having lost 25% of its value in just over a year. The poor were still suffering, more even than before because the new individualist government put no restrictions on grain prices, which had since soared.The King, growing increasingly fearful of the revolution, fled France in 1791 but was caught before he could cross the border. It seemed his plan was to seek safety with his brother in law, the Emperor of Austria, who was a vocal enemy of the Revolution. Many of the more radical people in France wanted to see him executed for Treason.France was at war now with both Austria and Prussia. France’s greatest general, Demourez, had betrayed France and emigrated to Prussia. France was not doing well in these wars either. Enemy armies operated inside France’s borders, putting many of her smaller cities under siege.And there were political issues too. Many, especially among the urban poor, began to complain that this government had not lived up to the ideas of the enlightenment. They saw the government as too moderate, more concerned with staying wealthy than actual reforming France. These radicals increasingly identified with the term **Jacobin**—the political party that came to stand for extreme reforms.Meanwhile many of the peasants felt the government was already going too far. The government had forced all priests in France to swear allegiance to France rather than the pope. These peasants turned against the Paris government, who they now saw as liberal radicals. By 1792, most of the countryside had rebelled against the central government, attempting to remove the radical influence they saw there.  | **What were some of the principles of the Legislative Assembly?****What struggles did this government have?****Describe the problem with the King****What happened in France’s wars?****What did the radicals want that the government wasn’t giving them?****What’s a Jacobin?****What problems did the government have with peasants?** |
| **Phase 2: Radical Revolution** |
| **The National Convention (1792-1795)**In summer 1792, France was in crisis. Rumors spread that the king and thousands of imprisoned noble supporters were planning to escape and take back control from the people.On August 10, radicals took over. angry Parisians stormed the prisons. The King was taken hostage, over a thousand of his supporters were murdered in their jail cells. The radicals declared the monarchy to be at an end. Back at the Assembly, the moderates panicked and many fled the city. Jacobins now controlled the government and created a new constitution. They allowed every man to vote and promised to lead France into a new age of reason and enlightenment. | **What happened on August 10, 1792?****How was the new government different from the Assembly?** |
| **The Reign of Terror (1793-1794)**The new revolutionary government, known as the National Convention, saw France was in crisis and decided that extreme actions were needed to save the country. With the revolution under threat, more and more radical people take power to defend the revolution. This culminates with the creation of the **Committee of Public Safety**, a small council given dictatorial powers over France. They make it their mission to end all disloyalty to the revolution. **Maximillian Robespierre** eventually rose to the lead of the Jacobins and the Committee. He was firmly idealistic and totally uncompromising. Under his leadership, France entered the Reign of Terror.The symbol of his government would be the guillotine, a device used to behead people. The King would be one of the first to meet it. He was executed for treason in 1793. But many more would be executed. This new radical government did not suffer enemies. Those who fought against it died. Those who spoke out against it died. Those who held too closely to the old ways died. Over 13 months, 16,000 people are executed by the government—mostly on suspicion of being anti-revolutionary. | **Why did the Convention turn to extreme action?****What was the mission of the Committee of Public Safety?****What was Robespierre like?****What is a guillotine?****List at least 3 people/groups who were killed by the guillotine?** |
| **Radical Reforms**The National Convention had no desire to be moderate. It believed that all of France working together under the power of the central government could fix any problem. It believed in protecting the poor and disenfranchised, in breaking the power of religion over the people of France, and destroying all those who would stop France’s progress.The economy under the bourgeoisie had been extremely free from rules. But that had hurt the poor, not helped them. This new government removed economic freedoms. The prices of all major goods sold in France were set by a law known as the **Price Maximum**. If you were caught selling things for more, you could be executed. For the first time in 5 years, bread prices began to fall and many peasants laid down their arms, satisfied by this new government.The other big law was the **Levee en Masse**. One of the most important laws in history, it stated that ALL people of France are responsible to defend her in times of war. Regardless of wealth or class, all young men served in the army. Others would do their part by building weapons or rationing supplies for the soldiers. This gave France the largest army in Europe overnight and allowed the creation of a wartime economy. This new army also believed in their task, that they were fighting for freedom and liberty.With this new army, the National Convention reversed the course of history. It crushed the German armies invading France, it butchered those peasants still in rebellion, and soon it began to invade France’s neighbors to free them from their own rulers.But the Convention wasn’t done there. It wanted to end the influence of religion over the mind and celebrate reason above all. France adopted a new calendar. The months, days, and even year were changed to remove Christian influence. 1793 was now the year 2 (dating from the end of the monarchy). Conflicting non-Christian churches appeared. There was the Church of Reason, which basically just worshipped humanism and rationality. There was a Cult of the Supreme Being, which worshipped a god, but just not a Christian God. A sort of unknowable force. | **What did this new government believe in?****What was the Price Maximum? Who did it help/hurt?****What was the Levee en Masse?****What was the result of the Levee en Masse?****Describe some efforts of the Convention to reduce Christian influences:** |
| **Triumphs of the Jacobin Republic**For all its flaws, the Convention was extremely effective. In 14 months, France went from a failing state to the greatest country on Earth—all because of the National Convention. The convention also had its triumphs. It was the first to recognize all men as voters. It gave women rights and abolished Slavery. None of these things were done by any of the other revolutionary governments. Of all France’s governments, the Jacobins were the ones that most believed in the principles that had created the Revolution. | **In what ways was the radical phase of the revolution admirable?** |
| **Phase 3: Bourgeois Reaction** |
| **Thermidorian Reaction (1794)**On the 9th day of Thermidor, year III (July 27th, 1794). People had had enough. So many had gone to the guillotine, even many of the heroes of the Revolution. Danton, Brissot, D’Eglantine, Vergniaud, Hebert had all been champions of the people and were now headless. Finally, the people rose up against the Committee of Public Safety and now the committee was sent to the Guillotine, starting with Robespierre himself. This mass execution was called the Thermidorian Reaction. The Jacobins were banned from government and the Bourgeois took over again. | **Why were people sick of the government?****What is the Thermidorian Reaction?** |
| **The Directory (1795-1799)**The Convention was put to an end by a third French Constitution. This created a fairly conservative government that was ruled by a council of five men known as the Directory. It ended many of the laws the bourgeois had hated. The Price Maximum was ended. Slavery was reintroduced in many colonies. Women lost many rights.But the Directory was not a success. France’s money again started to plunge. The government was repeatedly involved in corruption and a number of ugly scandals made it look bad. The radical element had not been defeated either, and still occasionally tried to seize the government. Now many of the nobles were returning and they too made several attempts at the government. The Directory’s answer to both was the army. Again and again the army stepped in to save the government. | **What decisions were reversed by the Directory?****List problems with the Directory** |
| **Phase 4: Napoleon** |
| **Napoleon’s Rise (1799-1804)**France’s greatest soldier was named Napoleon Bonaparte. He had proved himself again and again since 1793 when he had swept into command. He had also survived the Jacobin purges in 1795 but his close ties to them bought him credibility amongst the radicals. In 1799, Napoleon and two of his allies led a coup d’état against the government and replaced the democratic-ish Directory with a military oligarchy led by the Consulate—a three member council.From the very beginning, Napoleon was the leader and he slowly removed all remnants of democracy. He became First Consul in 1800, putting him over the other two members. Then he became First Consul for life in 1802, no longer needing to be “elected.” And finally he dissolved the Consulate in 1804 and was crowned Emperor of the First French Empire. | **Who was Napoleon?****How did he come to power?****When did he become emperor?** |
| **Napoleon’s Government**Napoleon believed in many of the ideas of the Revolution but he also believed in order. So he began to recreate France. He took many of the institutions of government from the Revolutionary period and rebuilt them from the ground up to be more efficient and more hierarchical (with people being clearly in charge of others). He did the same with the army and with the professors in colleges. But his most important work was the **Code Napoleon**. He didn’t write it, but he did commission its creation and put his name on it. This was a complete rewriting of the French legal system. It focused on two things: the same laws apply to everyone and laws should be written so that they make sense to the common person. The Code Napoleon recognized many of the ideas of the revolution—right to a fair trial, no secret laws, equality before the law, natural rights, and similar things. But it was also fairly conservative. It reversed gains for women’s rights to before the revolution, making them to subservient to their fathers or husbands. It also made slavery fully legal again. | **What did Napoleon believe in?****How did he change France’s government?****What is the Code Napoleon?****What values of the revolution did the code continue?****What are some problems with it?** |
| **Wars of the Coalitions**In 1792, a coalition of conservative states allied against France’s revolutionary government. Britain eventually joined them as well. By 1797, they were defeated but a Second Coalition formed in 1798. They were defeated in 1801 only for a third Coalition for form in 1803. In total, France fought seven coalitions.These wars started as a disaster for France but after the Levee en Masse in 1793, France consistently won these wars. Once France’s superb army came under Napoleon’s Control, these wars were even more successful. France began to conquer. Napoleon imagined himself the champion of the Revolution and repeatedly deposed Kingdoms to establish constitutional dictatorships like his own in France. To some of these he placed his family members like his brother as Emperor of Spain. By 1806, most of Western and Central Europe was under France’s control. Very little was actually conquered, but just replaced by *puppet governments*, ones controlled indirectly by Napoleon.In these places, the Code Napoleon was put into place and Napoleonic reforms applied to government and army. This is the first way that the gains of the French Revolution were spread. Fair trials, natural rights, and constitutions were forced upon many of Europe’s governments.But there was also an accidental legacy. People saw the secrets of France’s victories—the Levee en Masse, nationalism, and patriotic fervor. The legacy of Napoleon and the Revolution is as much a legacy of war, national hatred, and genocide as it is of freedom, democracy, and rights. By 1812, reforms in many countries, especially Prussia, were creating armies that could Rival Napoleon.And more problems were appearing. Napoleon had failed to defeat Britain and his fleet had been destroyed. So he tried to defeat Britain by forcing all people in Europe to stop trading with Britain, called the Continental System. This was inconvenient for Britain but it made Napoleon’s puppet governments hate him and eager to be free of him.Their chance came in 1812. Napoleon made his worst ever blunder. He invaded Russia in the fall of 1812. He destroyed Russia’s army easily but the winter soon settled in and his army was not ready. Of the 340,000 Frenchmen he brought, only 12,000 returned to France.Now the rest of Europe shook off their chains and the War of the Sixth Coalition began. It culminated in 1814 at Leipzig in Germany. An army of 350,000 coalition soldiers met an army of 200,000 French soldiers. It was the largest battle in European history to that date. Over a 5 day battle, 100,000 people died and Napoleon was defeated. Within weeks, he had surrendered to the Coalition. | **What were the Coalition Wars?****What was the turning point in the Coalition Wars?****Describe how Napoleon brought Europe under control:****What changes occurred in Europe under Napoleon’s control?****Describe the accidental legacy of Napoleon****Why was the Continental System a failure?****How was Napoleon defeated in Russia?****List 3 facts about the Battle of Leipzig:** |
| **The Hundred Days (1815)**The Coalition restored the monarchy to France. They thought about killing Napoleon but did not want to make a martyr of him. Instead, they exiled him to a remote Italian island called Elba. However, many back home in France hated this restored monarchy and craved Napoleon’s return as yet more gains of the revolution slipped back into feudal inequality.Aided by Italian friends, Napoleon escaped Elba and returned to France. The monarchy fled and the French Army rallied to Napoleon, who they adored. For 100 days, the French empire lived again. A Seventh Coalition formed against him and eventually cornered his army at Waterloo in 1815. There Napoleon met his final defeat.He was again exiled but this time to one of the most remote places on earth, St Helena, an island in the middle of the southern Atlantic Ocean with no other landmass within 200 miles. Guarded for the rest of his life by an entire garrison of British soldiers and a squadron of British ships. He would die in 1821 at the age of 51 (possibly from Cancer or from British poisoning) | **What happened to Napoleon?****What happened to France?****What happened during the 100 Days?****What was Napoleon’s final fate?** |
| **After the Revolution** |
| **Monarchy Restored**In 1815, France again had a monarchy. The nobles returned to a position of extreme wealth. In this sense the revolution failed. However, the grave inequalities that inspired the revolution never truly returned. Feudal privileges remained dead. Napoleon’s great law code stayed as well. And while people didn’t have all the rights they wanted, they did at least have some. In this sense, the revolution succeeded. | **In what ways was the revolution a failure?****In what ways was it a success?** |
| **The Age of Revolution**But beyond this, an era of repeated revolutions dawned in Europe. People wanted rights and democracy and freedom to follow Britain and France’s example into the wealth of the growing industrial revolution. Over and over they looked to France. In 1830 there was a second French Revolution and a third in 1848. Eventually the growth of democratic ideas became too hard to resist. By 1900, democracy was the norm rather than the exception in Europe. And all looked back to the French Revolution for their examples. | **What was Europe like after the French Revolution?****What was France’s position during the Age of Revolution?** |