

NAME: _____ BLOCK _____

~ FRENCH REVOLUTION DOCUMENTS ~

DOCUMENT # 1

France had been at war for most of the last one-hundred years. The country was bankrupt and unemployment and bread prices were high. Louis XVI's solution was to try to impose new taxes on the nobility to pay for the debt. However, his attempts to reform the tax system to raise money were blocked by the nobility (Second Estate) and the clergy (First Estate).

Louis XVI's ministers advised him to call a meeting of the Estates-General—an assembly of representatives from all three estates—to approve this tax. The French parliament (“Estates-General”), made up of the First Estate clergy, the Second Estate nobility, and the Third Estate commoners, which had not met in 175 years, and could only meet with the consent of the king.

Under the assembly's medieval rules, each estate's delegates met in a separate hall to vote, and each estate had one vote. The two privileged estates could always outvote the Third Estate.

Source: Meredith Macardle, *The Timechart History of Revolutions*, Worth Press Ltd., 2007 (adapted)

QUESTION: What are three ways the Old Regime (the Estates-General) did not represent the people fairly?

DOCUMENT # 2

This excerpt is adapted from *Travels in France* by Arthur Young, who traveled through France from 1787 to 1789.

In the south of France there is a taille [tax on the land and its produce]. There is an injustice in levying the amount each person must pay. Lands held by the nobility are taxed very little. Lands held by commoners are taxed heavily. . . .

September 5, 1788: The poor people seem very poor indeed. The children are terribly ragged.

June 10, 1789: The lack of bread is terrible. Stories arrive every moment from the provinces of riots. . . . The price of bread has risen above people's ability to pay. This causes great misery.

July 1789: . . . I was joined by a poor woman who complained of the hard times. “The tailles and feudal dues [rents owed the lords] are crushing us,” she said.

QUESTION: What are three observations this traveler made about the life of the peasants in France between 1787 and 1789.

DOCUMENT # 3

Theses are excerpts from the *cashiers* (list of grievances about the king, taxing, and voting in the Estates General) brought to the Estates General.

That the king be forced to reform the abuses and tyranny of letter de cachet.
That every tax . . . be granted [by the Estates General] only for a limited time.
That the taille [a tax on land] be borne equally by all classes. . . .
The meeting of the Estates General . . . shall be scheduled for definite times. . . .
in order to assure the third estate the influence it deserves because of its numbers . . . its votes in the assembly
should be taken by head. . . .

QUESTION: What three changes did the third estate demand be made in the French government?

DOCUMENT # 4



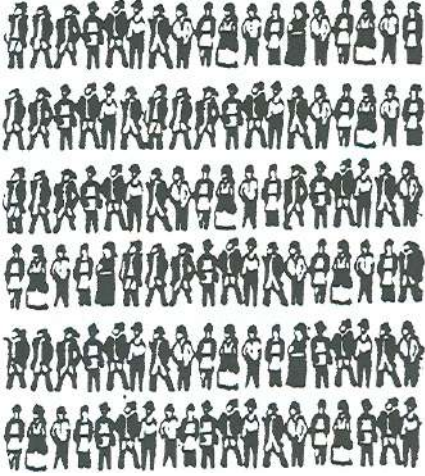
. . . **Powers of the king.**—The King, Louis XVI, was absolute. He ruled by the *divine right theory* which held that he had received his power to govern from God and was therefore responsible to God alone. He appointed all civil officials and military officers. He made and enforced the laws. He could declare war and make peace. He levied taxes and spent the people's money as he saw fit. He controlled the expression of thought by a strict censorship of speech and press. By means of *lettres de cachet* (sealed letters which were really blank warrants for arrest) he could arbitrarily imprison anyone without trial for an indefinite period. He lived in his magnificent palace at Versailles, completely oblivious to the rising tide of popular discontent. . . .

Source: Friedman & Foner, *A Genetic Approach to Modern European History*, College Entrance Book Co., 1938

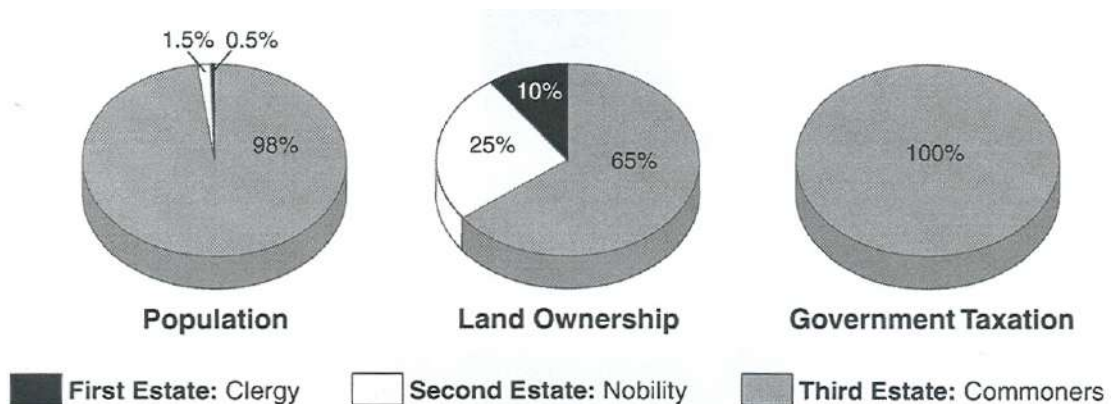
QUESTION: What are three ways that Louis XVI contributed to the unhappiness of the people in France?

DOCUMENT # 5

The diagrams illustrate the three estates in 1789, pre-revolutionary, France.

First Estate	Second Estate	Third Estate
 Clergy	 Nobles	 Middle class, peasants, city workers
- 0.5% of the people - owned 10% of the land	- 1.5% of the people - owned 25% of the land	- 98% of the people - owned 65% of the land

Source: Theresa C. Noonan, *Document-Based Assessment Activities*, Walch , 1999 (adapted)



Source: Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History*, Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2003 (adapted)

QUESTION: According to the diagrams, what are two unfair conditions that existed in pre-revolutionary France?

DOCUMENT # 6

On August 27, 1789, the National Assembly of France adopted a revolutionary document, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, and excerpt from this document is below.

There are also Enlightenment philosopher quotes that influenced the writing of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*

from <i>A Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen</i>	Enlightenment Quotes
Article 1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. . . .	“Men being . . . by nature all free, equal, and independent . . .” - <i>John Locke</i>
Article 2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression. . . .	“No great . . . eloquence is needed to prove that Christians should tolerate one another. I go even further and declare that we must look upon all men as our brothers. . . . Are we not all the children of one father and creatures of the same God? . . .” - <i>Voltaire</i>
Article 10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.	“I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it.” - <i>Voltaire</i>
Article 11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law. . . .	

QUESTION: What two Enlightenment ideas did the French revolutionaries include in their *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*?
