

French Revolution (Revolutions Series: World Events Over Time)

Eugene Lieber



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French Revolution Prelude to Revolution 1. Absolute divine right monarchy rules France. The lavish spending of King Louis XIV in early 1700s. The crisis of France's large debt incurred helping the American Revolution against England. 2. The class system. Taxing the have-nots. Life on the edge for the peasants and city people. Resentments of the middle class. 3. The role of the French Enlightenment starting in the late 1600s with the ideas of Voltaire, Rousseau and others. The Revolution. 4. First, Moderate Phase (1789-91). Declaration of Rights Of Man. The bourgeoisie write a constitution, form an assembly, propose a constitutional monarchy, rejected by the king. The Bastille storming in 1789 as a venting of long-simmering anger. Why Europe forms a coalition army and attacks France. 5. Second, Violent Phase (1791-94). Attack brings the Jacobins, the "lower bourgeoisie" to the fore with leader, Robespierre. Reign of Terror. Guillotine claims 17,000, including King Louis XVI and wife, and soon also Robespierre and other Jacobin leaders. 6. Third, Moderate Phase (1794-99). Emergence of Napoleon as modern hero who consolidates capitalist gains for all time. His mixed motives and achievements. War and final downfall at Waterloo. Effects of the Revolution 7. Defeat of France. The victors and the Congress of Vienna. Royalty returns to rule France and nobles reclaim land, but gains are there to stay. 8. The "White Terror." 9. Lasting effects. How the French Revolution colors future world history. Selected theme: Why the Enlightenment is not suppressed, its role in the French Revolution, and implications for our time.



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