

What?

When?

Where?

Who?



Why?

Learning Objectives: Why did the French chop their king's head off?

Tier 3 Vocabulary	Definition
Guillotine	A guillotine is an apparatus designed for efficiently carrying out executions by beheading. The device consists of a tall, upright frame with a weighted and angled blade suspended at the top.
Ancien Regime	The ancien regime was the political and social system of the Kingdom of France that the French Revolution overturned.
Estates General	A legislative and consultative assembly of the different classes of French subjects.
National Assembly	Was a revolutionary assembly of the Kingdom of France formed by the representatives of the Third Estate (commoners) of the Estates-General
Bastille	The Bastille was a fortress in Paris, known formally as the Bastille Saint-Antoine

Learning sequence

Witches

The Great Plague, 1665

The Great Fire of London, 1666

The Scientific Revolution

The Enlightenment

The Glorious Revolution



Golden Threads

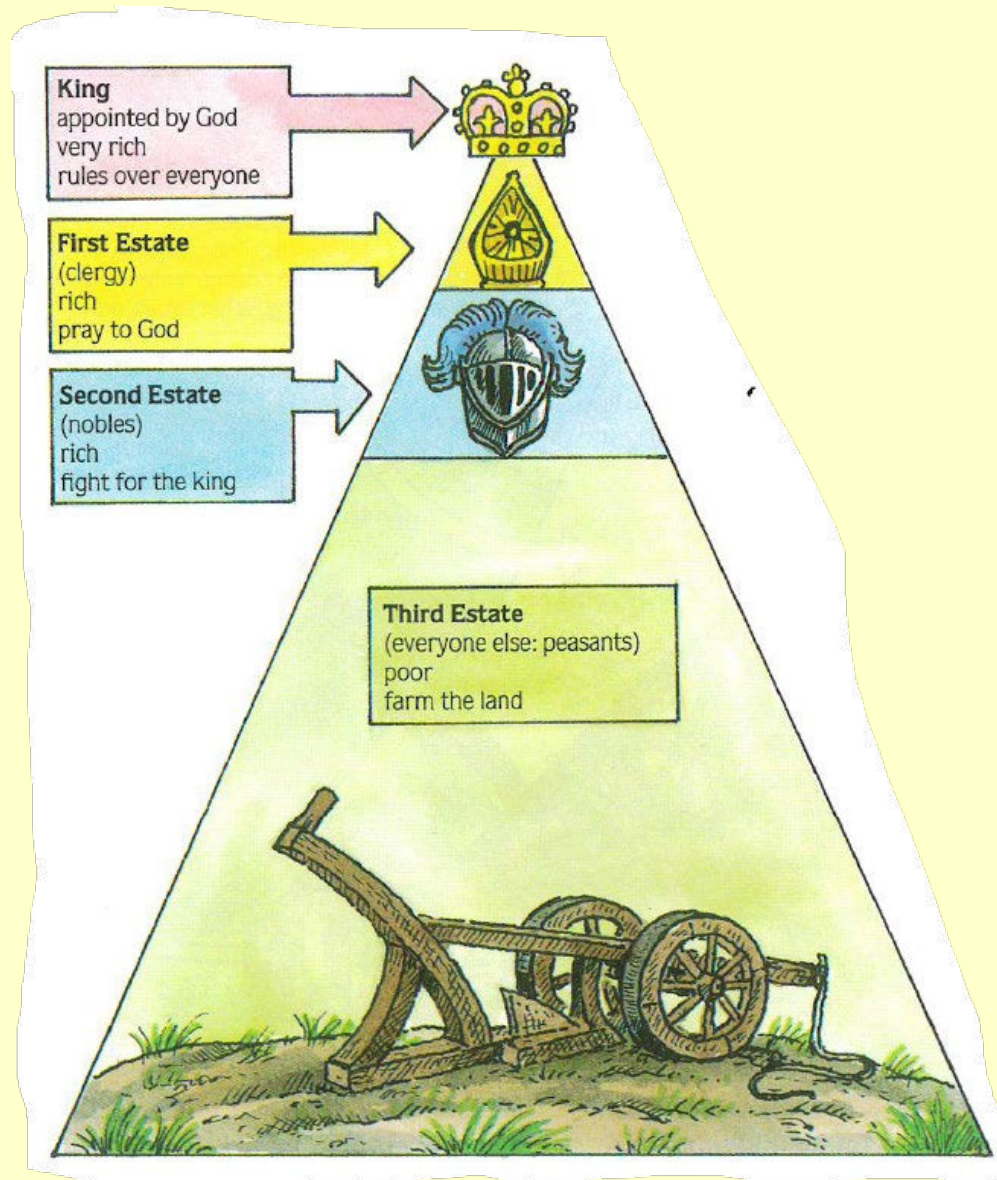
This lesson's Golden Thread is:

Power

Videos

- There are videos embedded in this lesson which you will need the internet for
- If you haven't got access to the internet don't worry, the only question you need the videos for is the last question and you can miss that out
- The other videos just give you extra information

French Society before the Revolution



Question 1 – Which of these groups did the king need to keep happy?

Question 2 – Which group is least likely to be happy?

What were the King and Queen like?

Louis XVI

In 1774 Louis XVI inherited the French throne. He was a family man, who loved his children, but he was more interested in making clocks and locks than affairs of state. His great passion was hunting.



SOURCE 3

Louis XVI

Question 3 – Why might the king and queen be unpopular?

Marie Antoinette

Louis had married the Austrian princess Marie Antoinette when he was fifteen. At first his young, beautiful bride was popular, but by the 1780s she was the victim of gossip at court, which didn't help Louis' position at all.

In 1781 *A Historical Essay on the Life of Marie Antoinette* was produced. It was reprinted every year until 1793. The government at first tried to suppress it by burning all copies, but it was still widely read. It helped spread the following rumours:

- that Marie Antoinette had many lovers – both men and women
- that she wasted money – it was believed she had agreed to buy a diamond necklace worth 1.6 million livres
- that she interfered in the running of the country.



SOURCE 5

Marie Antoinette

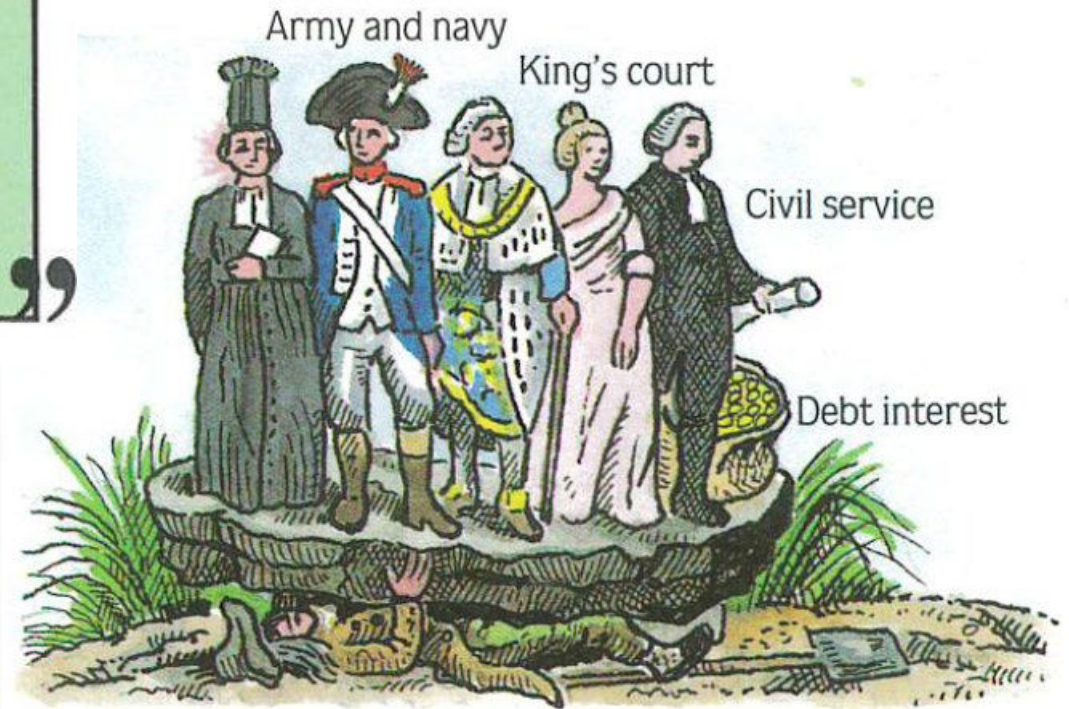
Economic and social changes

During the eighteenth century important economic changes took place in France. Peasants were finding it increasingly difficult to pay for the basics in life.

SOURCE 1 Statistics about France from the 1730s to 1789

Cost of living rose	45%
Wages rose	22%
Population of France 1715:	19 million
1789:	26 million

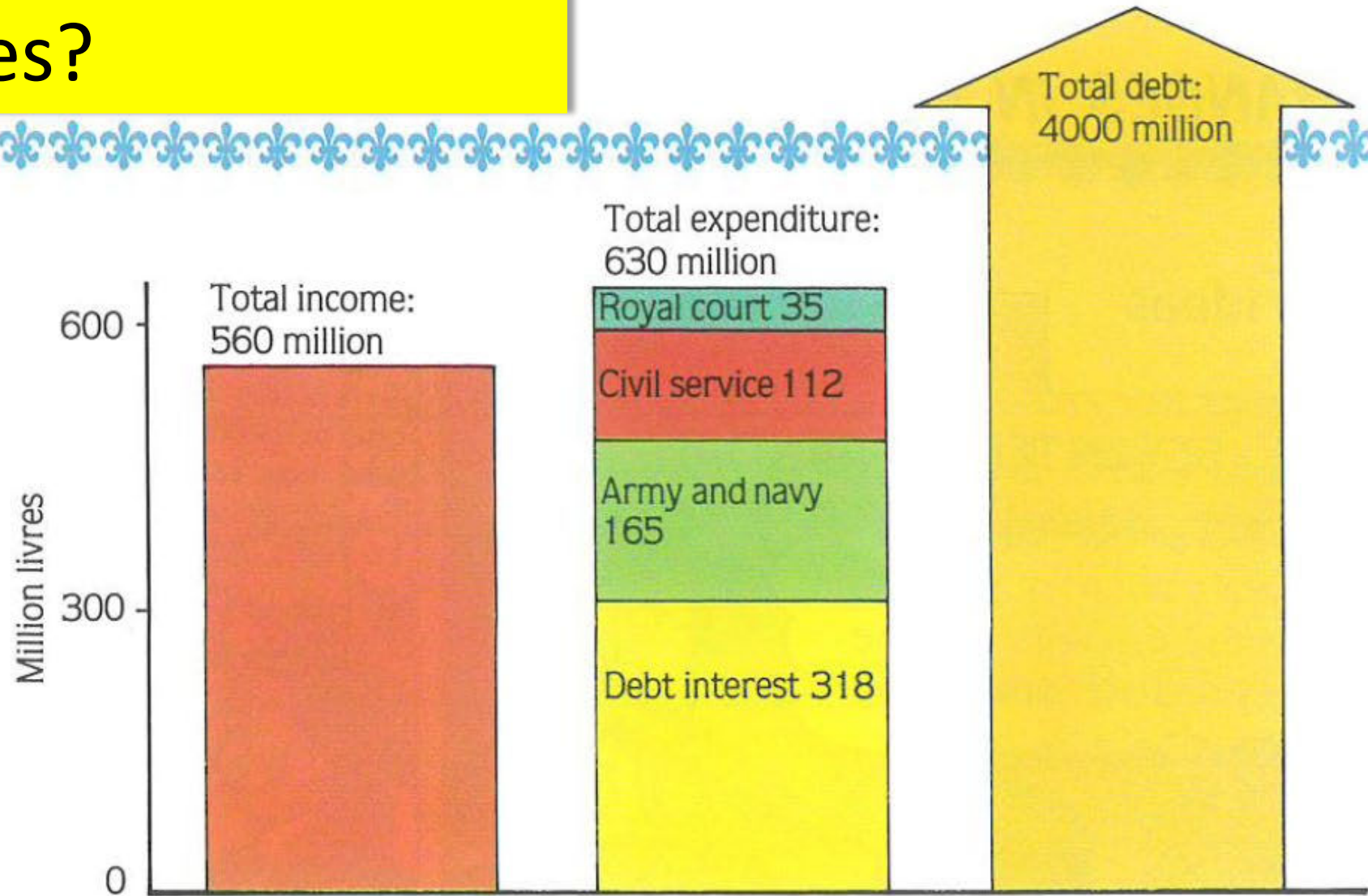
Question 4 – The peasants of France got poorer by what percent?



SOURCE 3 What the peasants' taxes had to pay for

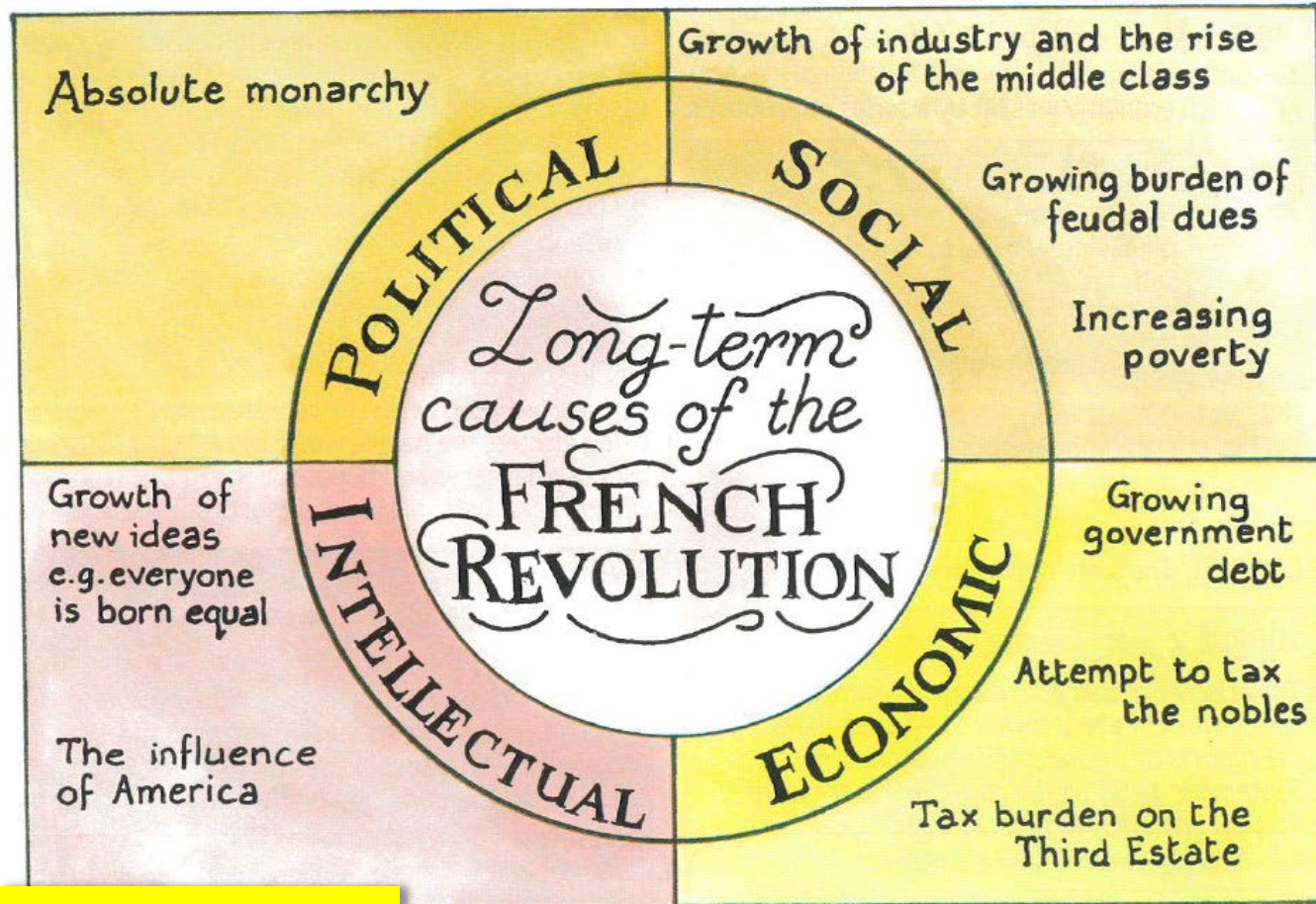
Question 5 – which group do you think paid most taxes?

King Louis XVI was a worried man too. During the eighteenth century the French government had got more and more into debt. Many people blamed the extravagance of the court, particularly the King's wife Marie Antoinette. Others blamed the French tax system which was unfair and was very poorly run. The government allowed private companies to collect taxes. Not surprisingly some of the money never reached the king.



SOURCE 5 Government income and expenditure, 1788

SOURCE 9 The long-term causes of the French Revolution



WHO WAS DISCONTENTED?



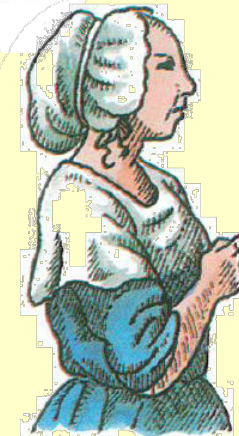
A



B



C



D

Question 6

Decide which feature shown on Source 9 the peasant (A), noble (B), businessman (C) and urban worker (D) would be most upset by.

WHAT CAUSED THE FRENCH REVOLUTION?



Trigger 1:

Economic slump

The French economy was hit by a series of problems.

Year	Weather	State of harvest
1787	Rainy autumn, mild winter, hot summer	Poor, silk harvest failed
1788	Rainy spring, freak hailstorm in July	Terrible
1789	Hard winter with bad frosts	Generally good but poor wine harvest

SOURCE 1 The state of the harvests, 1787–89

Question 7 – Why was 1789 the year when the revolution started?



SOURCE 6 The opening of the Estates General

Trigger 2:

Calling the Estates General

In August 1788 the government was bankrupt. No one would lend it money. It couldn't raise new taxes or even collect many existing taxes. The King was forced to call the Estates General.

This assembly had not met since 1614. It consisted of representatives of the three ESTATES.

- The King hoped it would agree to raise new taxes.
- The nobles hoped they would control it and get concessions from the King.
- The people of France had great hopes that it would solve all their problems.

In early 1789, when the representatives were being elected, the people were also asked to draw up lists of grievances and hopes for the future (*cahiers de doléances*). People listed all sorts of problems:

Question 8 – Why did the King call the Estates General?

Louis' mistakes

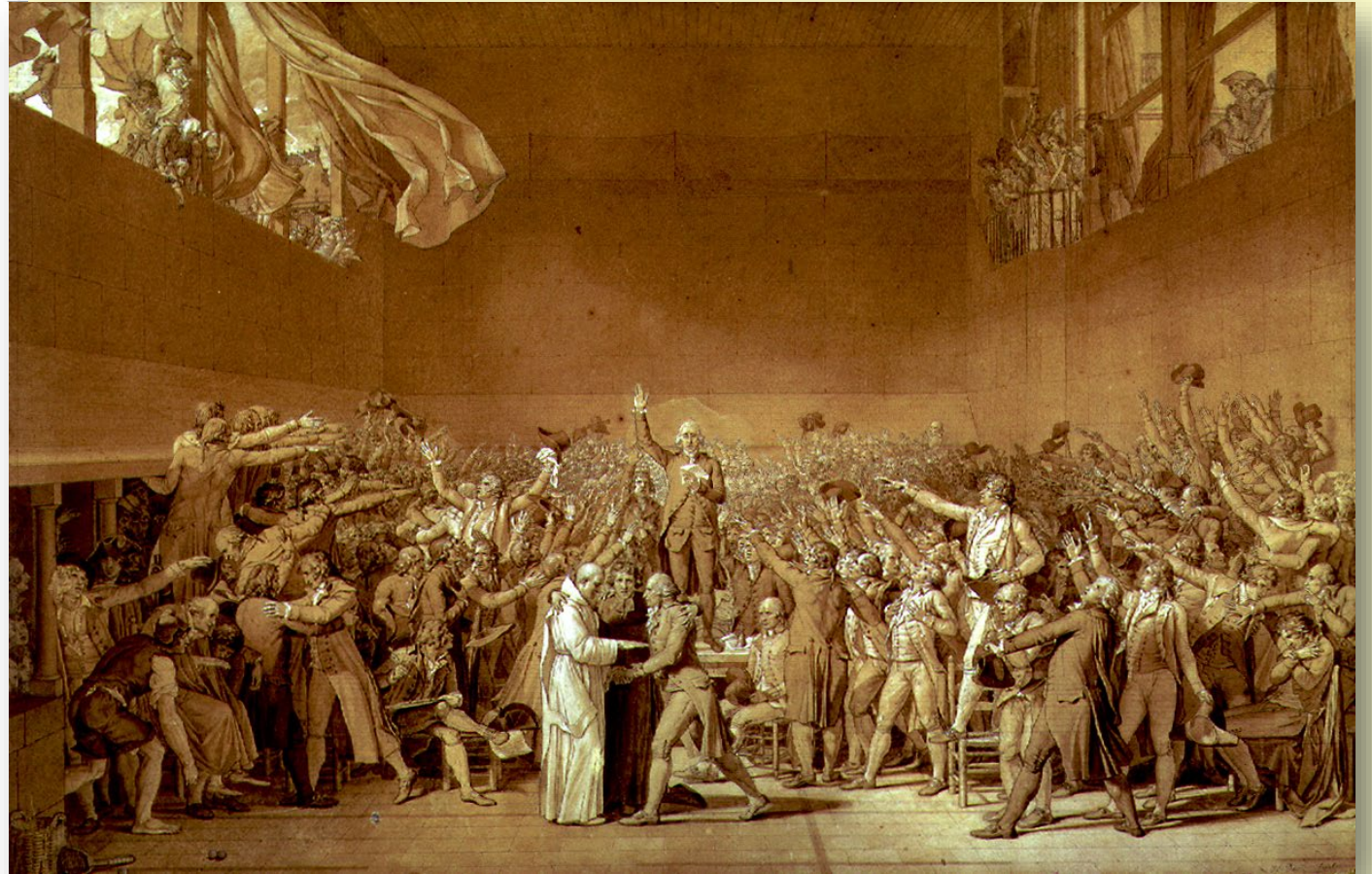
When the Estates General met at Versailles, on 4 May 1789, Louis made a terrible mistake: he did not propose major reforms. At the time he was very concerned about the health of his son, who was dying of tuberculosis.

National Assembly

Representatives of the Third Estate and many of the clergy from the First Estate were very disappointed over Louis' approach. They joined together and declared themselves to be a National Assembly. They wanted to set up a new CONSTITUTION, laying down how France should be run.

The Tennis Court Oath

The next day, 20 June, members of this National Assembly swore a famous oath that they would not disband until they had achieved their aims. Louis was forced to agree to their proposals. At the same time, however, he began secretly to call up troops. People were afraid he might use them to destroy the Assembly. They decided to take matters into their own hands.



Question 9 – What was the National Assembly and what oath did they swear?

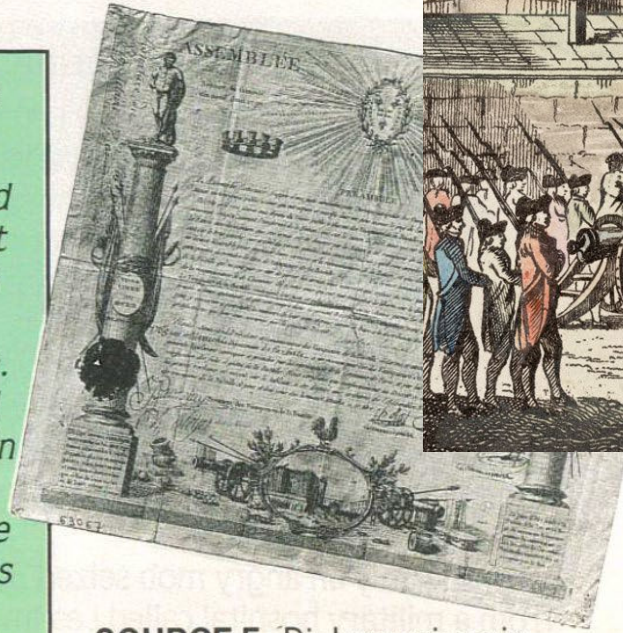
The Bastille

The storming of The Bastille on 14 July 1789 by the people of Paris is the most famous moment of the Revolution. July 14 is now the French national holiday.



SOURCE 4 A recent historian describing the Bastille

“A huge building of eight round towers linked by walls 80 feet high. It was surrounded by an air of mystery and had a sinister reputation as a prison. Yet its dreaded dungeons had not been used for years, and in 1789 it held only seven unimportant prisoners. To the people of Paris, unaware of its proposed demolition, the Bastille was the symbol of a harsh and cruel government.”



SOURCE 5 Diploma given in 1790 to people involved in the storming of the Bastille

Question 10 – Why did the people choose the Bastille to attack?

The storming of the Bastille

On the evening of 14 July 1789 Louis XVI, King of France, was at his palace in Versailles. In his hunting diary for that day he wrote 'Nothing', and went to bed. Yet in Paris, only 20 km away, 14 July was filled with the sound of guns and the streets ran with blood.

Tension had begun to build in Paris during a long hot summer. Bread prices had risen, leading to hunger. Riots were breaking out and rumours were spreading that the King was going to bring in troops to strengthen his power.

On 14 July an angry mob seized 30,000 muskets from a military hospital called Les Invalides. They marched towards the Bastille where the city's gunpowder supply had been taken for safe-keeping. The governor of the Bastille, the Marquis de Launay, 80 army pensioners and 30 Swiss guards were waiting to defend it.



Question 11 – What does King Louis's diary entry show about his understanding of how bad the situation had become?

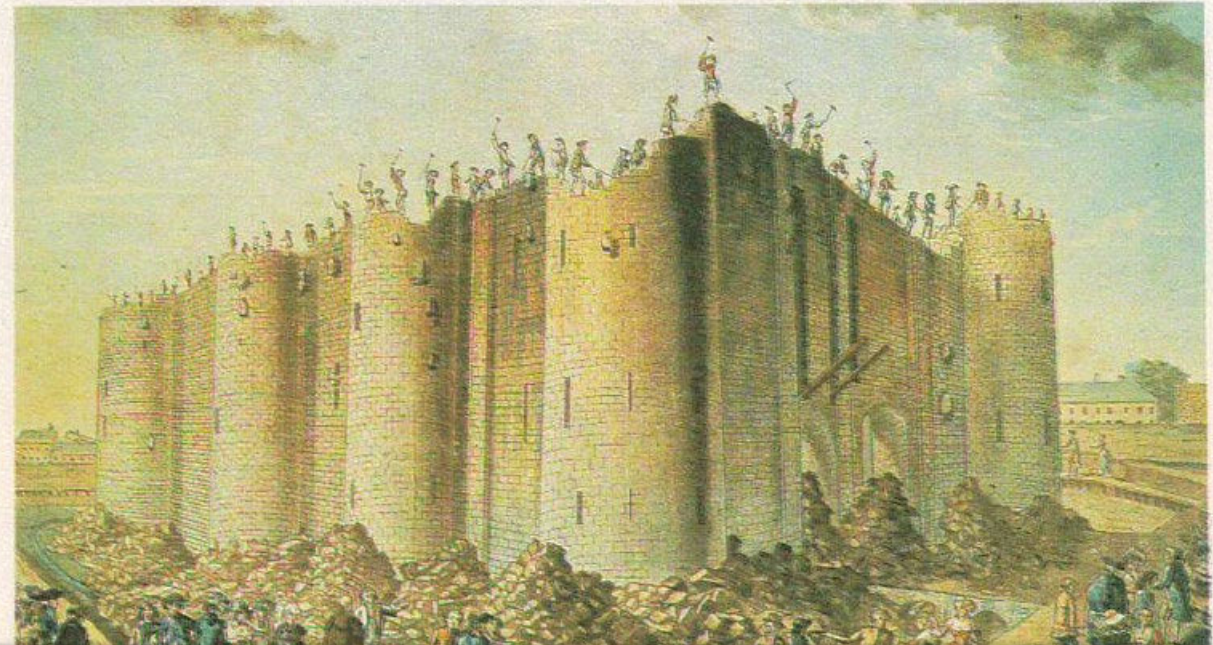
Revolution

On a hot 14 July the patience of the Paris workers finally cracked and the Bastille was stormed and destroyed. All around France the peasants, their grievances ignored, had also taken the law into their own hands. The Revolution had begun.



◀ **SOURCE 6** Model of the Bastille made in 1790 from stones taken from the Bastille

▼ **SOURCE 7** The Bastille being demolished, a print made for sale in France and Germany



Question 12 – What happened to the Governor after the Bastille had been stormed, and what did the people do to the building itself?



What should be done with the King?

IN 1788 Louis was prepared to try reform and was hailed as a hero when he called the Estates General. When many of its members formed the National Assembly in June 1789, Louis had little choice but to go along with it. The revolutionary leaders wanted to share power with him. The question was whether Louis really accepted the changes the Revolution had made, or whether he was biding his time, hoping for help from abroad.

In June 1791 events took an unexpected turn.

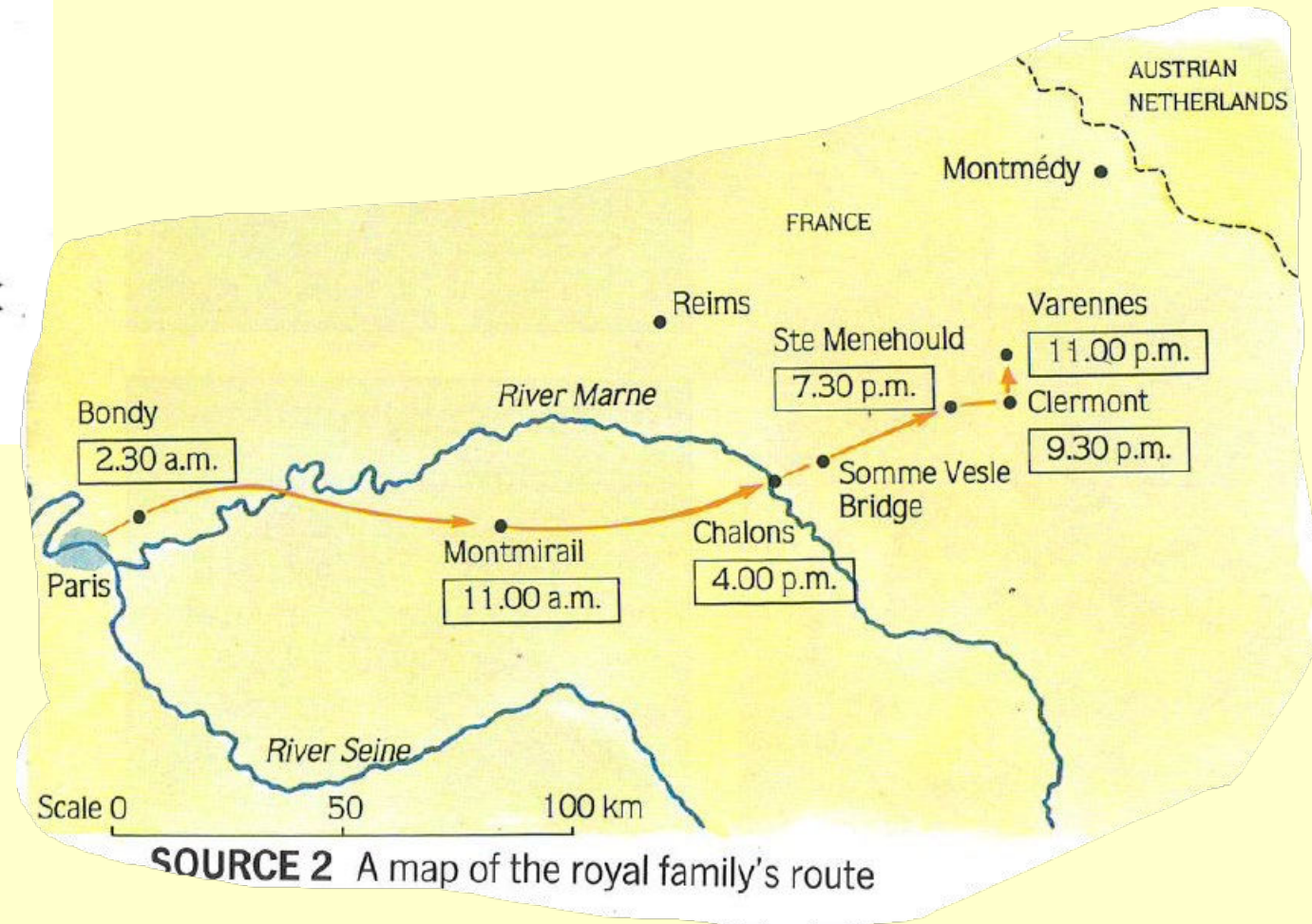


Question 13 – Why did the people not kill the king straight away?

The plan unfolds

The King's plan was to get to Montmédy, a town near the frontier. Montmédy was a fortified garrison town 300km from Paris and 2km from the Austrian Netherlands. The plan was to gather the King's supporters with the possibility of calling on Austrian troops, if necessary, to help restore Louis to full power. But there were problems. The coach, chosen by the Queen because it could carry the whole family, was of a heavy type. Despite its six horses it could only travel at 10km an hour. The bodyguards wore easily recognised uniforms, and there were six people instead of the five named on the false passport. Source 3 tells you what happened.

Question 14 – Why did King Louis want to go to Montmedy?



1 When the horses need changing the king talks to people...

... at one place he is recognised, but at first his subjects are on his side.

4:00 p.m.

2 Trying to speed up the coach wheel hits a bridge...

... time is lost righting the carriage.

3 Meanwhile back in Paris...

We still need the King!

We will issue an order for him to be brought back.

We'll say he's been kidnapped.

... the National Assembly debate the King's escape.

4 **SOMME VESLE BRIDGE**

The Duc de Choiseul and 40 troops are waiting for Louis but he is late...

Send a coded message: There is no sign that the treasure will pass today. I am leaving to join M. de Boillé.

... half an hour later Louis arrives and finds no troops

5 **SAINTE MENEHOULD**

I've seen that face before - on a 50 livre note! Raise the alarm. I'll follow them on my horse.

7:30 p.m.

CLERMONT

Change the horses. We'll try to get to Montmédy through Varennes.

I heard them saying they were going to Varennes.

I know a short cut

9:30 p.m.

7 **VARENNES**

The troops aren't here - drive into town

The road's blocked!

Stop them!

I want to see your papers!

VARENNES

Meanwhile, 100 metres away, royal troops wait in vain.

VARENNES

Still no sign of the King.

10:30 p.m.

8 The Royal Family are made to wait in the local prosecutor's house

Yes, I am your King.

The Duc de Choiseul arrives in the night to rescue the King...

I have 30 cavalry. You can escape.

If I were alone I would. But you are only 30 against a crowd. A bullet might kill my queen, my son, my daughter, my sister. We must be calm and reflect.

Meanwhile the King's brother, the Comte de Provence, has fled to Brussels and safety.

10 22-25 JUNE The Royal Family is escorted back to Paris...

... crowds along the way jeer them.

Anyone who applauds the King will be beaten, anyone who insults him will be hanged.

11 In Paris there is grim silence.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH THE KING?

In the end the National Assembly decided to keep Louis as their CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCH. On 3 September 1791 the constitution was proclaimed. Louis took an oath of loyalty to it. On 30 September the National Assembly declared its work finished. It seemed that the Revolution was over. But it was not to be.

Just over the border from France was the great Austrian Empire. It was still ruled by an ABSOLUTE MONARCH, as France had been before the Revolution. What's more, he was Marie Antoinette's brother.

Should France go to war?

Austria was protecting nobles who had fled from France and were plotting against the Revolution. On 20 April 1792 France declared war on Austria. This war had dramatic effects for Louis.

However, as Sources 14–18 show you, not everyone in France thought the war was a good thing. And even people who supported the war had different reasons for doing so.

SOURCE 14 Written by Louis to his Austrian agent, December 1791

“A war in Europe would greatly improve [my] situation. France is in such a state that she could not resist even a partial campaign.”

SOURCE 15 From a letter by Marie Antoinette to her brother Leopold, ruler of Austria, 1791

“Our only hope of help lies with foreign powers. It is for you to put an end to the disturbances of the French Revolution.”

SOURCE 18 From a speech by Robespierre, January 1792

“France is in no state to fight a war. Put your own house in order before you try to take liberty to others elsewhere. No one loves armed missionaries.”

SOURCE 16 From a speech by Brissot, a republican deputy, December 1791

“A people which has just won its liberty after ten centuries of slavery needs a war to bring about its consolidation. War is actually a national benefit. The moment has come for a new crusade, a crusade for liberty the world over.”

SOURCE 17 A decree of 19 November 1792

“The National Convention declares in the name of the French nation that it will help all peoples who wish to recover their freedom . . . and protect those citizens who have been oppressed.”

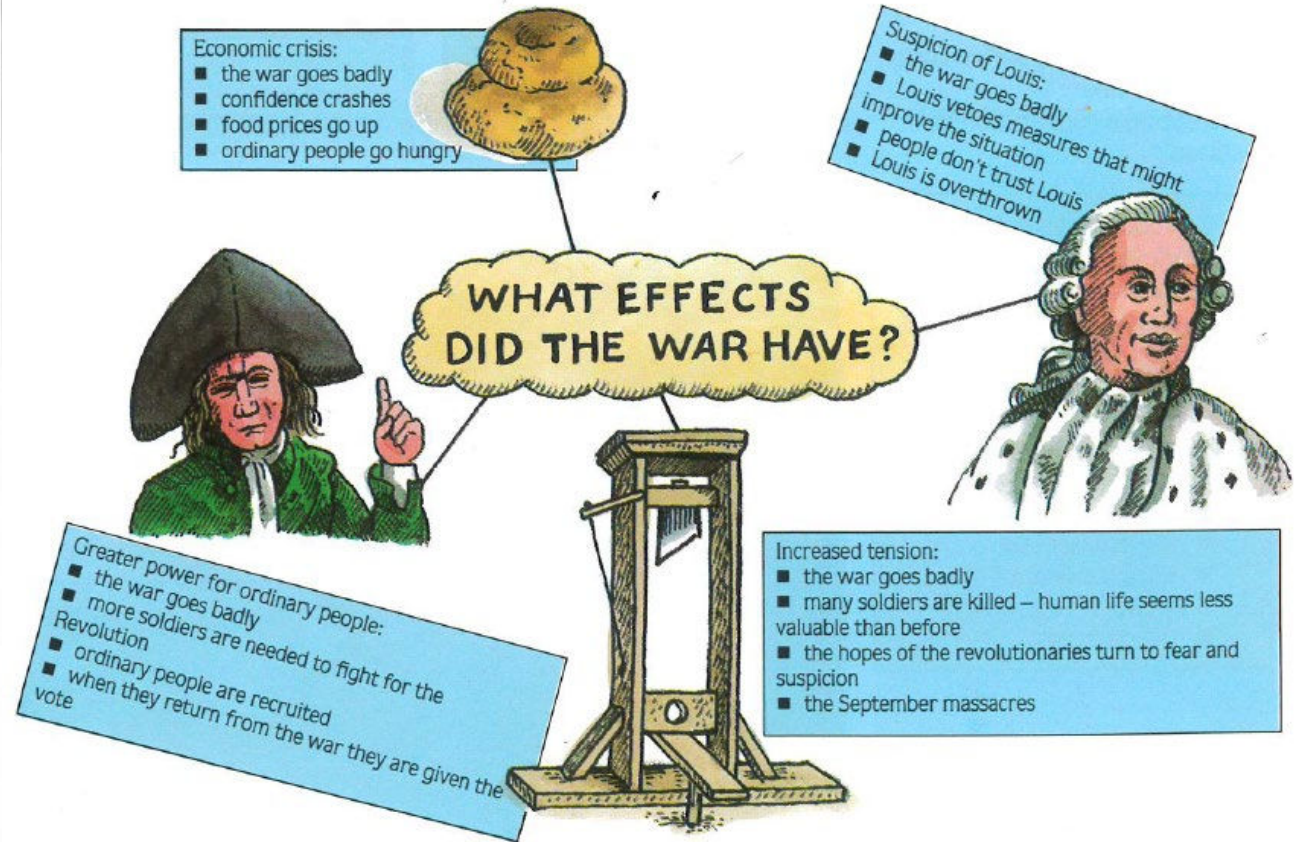
The storming of the Tuileries

Unrest came to a climax in Paris on 10 August. National Guards from all over France stormed the King's palace, the Tuileries. The French people no longer wanted a king. They called him 'Louis the Last'. The King was taken prisoner. On 21 September 1792 the assembly declared France a REPUBLIC.

Question 15

- a) Was it fair to blame France's problems on Louis? Explain your answer.
- b) Do you think people's views about what should be done with Louis were changed by the war?

SOURCE 19 The effects of the war



Louis' trial

The charges

Louis faced 33 charges, including:

- bankrupting the nation
- plotting against the Revolution
- trying to flee
- accepting a constitution he despised.

Question 16 –
How many
deputies of the
jury would have
needed to
change their
mind to save
Louis?



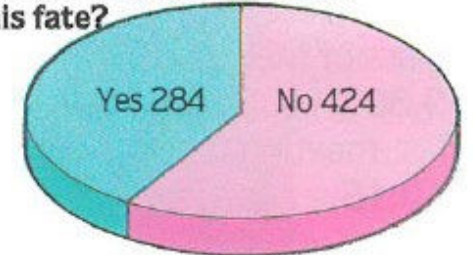
The verdict

The result of the trial was decided by a vote. The jury of deputies had to answer three questions:

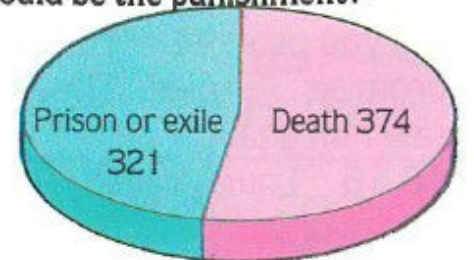
Is Louis guilty?



Should there be a REFERENDUM to decide his fate?



What should be the punishment?



The day before the execution: 20 January

Afternoon The King spent his time with an Irish priest called Edgeworth who was to act as his confessor.

7.00 p.m. Louis was allowed to see his family for the first time since the death sentence was passed.

8.30 On leaving his family Louis ate dinner with a spoon (no knife was allowed). His last supper included two chicken wings, some vegetables, two glasses of wine, and a piece of sponge cake with a glass of Malaga wine for dessert.

9.30 Louis had an emotional last meeting with his family.

10.15 Louis got up to leave: 'I assure you that I will come to see you tomorrow morning at eight.' 'Do you promise?' 'Yes I promise . . . Adieu.' They never saw him again.

10.16 Louis prayed with Edgeworth.

12.30 a.m. The King prepared for bed. Clery, the King's servant, started rolling his hair. 'That won't be necessary,' Louis said.

Louis slept soundly.

The execution

Louis began his journey to the guillotine at the Place de la Révolution at eight o'clock. It was a cold, rainy winter's morning. Everything was quiet. The king had been ordered to stay on the route was lined with troops. A wild and unsuccessful rebellion attempt was made by Baron de Batz and just four other men. At 10 o'clock Louis arrived at the guillotine. Twenty-two minutes later he was dead.



Write the following events in CHRONOLOGICAL order - the order in which they happened. Look at the dates to help you.

- ☹ **In December 1792 Louis XVI the king, was put on trial. He was accused of being a traitor to France by plotting with Austria.**
- ☠ **In the Spring of 1792 the Austrians invaded France and threatened to destroy Paris if the royal family were hurt.**
- ♥ **On 16th October 1793 Marie Antoinette, the Queen, was executed.**
- ☺ **On 20th June 1791 Louis XVI tried to escape from Paris**
- ☹ **On 21st January 1793 the King was executed in Paris - at the Place de la Revolution**
- 🔪 **On 10th August 1792 the King's palace was attacked**
- 🏛 **On 21st September 1792 a new parliament was set up. It voted for a republic - a country without a monarch.**

Question 17 – write the events out in the correct chronological order



Question 18 – The top two videos are of the King's Execution (don't worry you don't see anything gory but please don't watch if you think this will upset you). The bottom video is of the Queen's execution – what differences do you notice?

What happened next?



Extension work: Research ‘the terror’ and ‘Napoleon Bonaparte’ for the next bit of the story...