



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## CAUSES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The French Revolution of 1789, is one of the most important events in European history. It had a great effect on France, Europe and the rest of the world.

The chart below explains some of the causes of the French Revolution.

**POLITICAL CAUSES:** King Louis XVI was an absolute monarch who ruled by Divine Right. He placed hundreds of people in jail and killed others. Nobles had all the power. There was no democracy. In addition, Louis XVI's wife, Marie Antoinette was very unpopular with the French because she spent a lot of money and she was an Austrian.

**SOCIAL CAUSES:** There were three (3) classes of people in France. The First Estate was the Church. Members of the Church paid no taxes. The Church owned 20% of the land. The Second Estate were the nobles. They had all the best jobs in the country and they owned most of the land. They also paid no taxes. The Third Estate was made up of 97% of the people (peasants, workers, middle class). They had no special rights. They did pay all the taxes.



**July 14, 1789. The French people capture the Bastille prison in Paris. The attack on the Bastille started the French Revolution.**

**ECONOMIC CAUSES:** The Third Estate had to pay all the taxes, even though the nobles and the Church had most of the wealth. In addition, the country was broke because Louis XVI spent so much.

Louis XVI asked the Estate General (French Legislature) for more money. Since each class was equal in the Estates-General, the First and the Second Estate joined together and voted 2-1 to tax the Third Estate. The Third estate refused to accept the vote. They left the Estates-General and went to a Tennis Court where they promised to change France and make it more democratic. Stories began that King Louis XVI was calling out the army to arrest the members of the Third Estate at the Tennis Court. Thousands of French attacked the Bastille and captured it. That date was July 14, 1789, and it is known as Bastille Day in France. It is the day the French Revolution started.

**QUESTIONS :**

- A) Look at the cartoon to the right. It was printed in France in 1789.
1. Who do each of the people in the cartoon represent?
  2. What is the action of the cartoon?
  3. What group do you believe the person in the cartoon represents?



- B) List one Political, one Social and one Economic cause for the French Revolution?

Political:

Social:

Economic:

3. Why did the Third Estate leave the Estates-General?
4. Why is Bastille Day a national holiday in France?