The French Revolution

Impact of the American Revolution

- War for Independence
  - Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776
  - Declaration of Independence, 1776
- Battle of Saratoga, 1777
  - Commitment of European aid
- Battle of Yorktown, 1781
- Peace of Paris, 1783
- The Constitution of the United States (1789)
- The Bill of Rights (1791)
- Concept of freedom & personal rights

The Social Structure of France (Old Regime)

- The Old Regime (*Ancien Régime*)
- A social structure grounded on privilege
- First Estate
  - clergy (130,000)
- Second Estate
  - nobility (350,000)
- Third Estate
  - Commoners (97% of population)
  - Peasants = 75-80% of the population
  - Peasants own 35-40% of the land
  - Skilled artisans, shopkeepers, and wage earners
- Bourgeoisie (middle class)
  - Own 20-25% of the land
  - Some Bourgeoisie moved into ranks of nobility

Frustration Trigger's Revolution

- Experiencing economic growth
  - Expansion of foreign trade and industry...
- Population Pressures
- One-third or more of population is poor
- Privileges
  - clergy
  - nobility
- Bad harvests in 1787 and 1788
- Monarchy faces financial crisis

Political Grievances

- The new reality
  - Status based on wealth and economic achievement
- Taxation without representation
• Differences within estates  
  – High clergy owned hunting dogs and estates  
  – Lower clergy served as parish priests  
• The resentment towards the seigneurial system  
• Once again the ideas of equality  

The National Assembly  
• Estates General  
  – "doubling the Third Estate"  
  – Summoned in 1789  
  – Summoned for first time in since 1614  
• Estates General meets May 5, 1789  
  – Question of voting by order or head  
  – Abbé Sieyès “What is the Third Estate?”  
  – First estate “vote by order”  
• June 17th 1789 Third Estate  
  – Declares itself the National Assembly  
  – Tennis Court Oath, June 20  

The “Mob” of Paris  
• France falls into civil war  
• Louis XVI attempts to reinforce Paris but fails  
  – Attack on the Bastille, July 14  
  – Louis accepts the tricolor cockade of the Revolution  
  – Recognizes the commune or Paris.  
  – Formation of the National Guard  
    • Marquis de Lafayette  
• Food Shortages  
• Revolution spreads  
  – Popular revolutions break out in cities and countryside  
  – Peasant rebellions, July 19-August 3  
  – Great Fear!  

The Destruction of the Old Regime  
• National Assembly votes  
  – Abolish seigneurial rights  
  – Fiscal privileges  
  – Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen  
• Women march on Versailles (1789)  
• Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1790)  
• Constitution of 1791  
  – Establishes a constitutional monarchy  
  – Legislative Assembly (Oct 1791)  
  – The division of France into 83 departments  
• Declared war on Austria (1792)  
  – Mob attacks royal palace  
  – Legislative Assembly suspends monarchy
– Louis XVI executed (1793)

A Nation in Arms
• Declaration of Pillnitz pits Europe against France
• Declaration of war on Austria, April 20, 1792
• Louise XVI executed (1793)
• Wartime powers granted to Committee for Public Safety
• Committee of Public Safety calls for universal mobilization
• People’s Army, which by 1794 numbered a little over 1 million people
• Napoleon will use this army to control Europe

The Radical Revolution
• The Committee of Public Safety (Comité de Salut Public),
  – de facto executive government
• Radical Parisian political groups
  – Jacobins (Montagnards) win control of the National Assembly from the Girondins
  – Sans-culottes are the extreme radical revolutionaries
• The “Reign of Terror” begins…
  – Attempting a “republic of virtue”
  – Attacks on church backfire, Calendar flops
• The Vendée rebellion (civil war/counterrevolution)
  – Lyons, Marseilles, Vendée break from republic
  – Cities brought under control by 1794 after terrible bloodshed (75,000 deaths)

The Directory (Thermidorean Reaction)
• Robespierre is executed (July 1794)
• Constitution of 1795
• The Directory gains unsavory reputation
  – It is a period of stagnation and corruption
  – Had to content with royalist and Jacobins
• Consolidated many of the achievements of the National Convention,
  – Creation of a system of elite centralized schools, the grandes écoles.
  – The French economy recovered from the disruption caused by the Terror
  – Successes of the French armies laid the basis for the conquests of the Napoleonic period.

Napoleon Takes Control
• A “whiff of grapeshot” pacifies Paris mobs
• 1792–1797 Napoleon seizes Italy and defeats Austria
• Napoleon returns from Egypt a hero
• Coup d’Etat of Eighteenth Brumaire (1799)…
  – New constitution overwhelmingly approved by the French people
  – Replaces the Directory with a three-member Consulate.
  – Napoleon became first consul.
• Napoleon crowned emperor in 1804

The Age of Napoleon
• France developed
  – a powerful & centralized bureaucratic structure
  – Tax collection became efficient
  – Promotion based on ability
  – Nobility based on military service
• Shut down newspapers and mail
• The “Code Napoleon” (forms basis of French law today)
• Acceptance of revolutionary principles; legal equality, religious toleration, economic freedom… (established liberal traditions in Europe)
• French army brought nationalism to Europe

The End of an Era
• The “Continental System”
• Peninsula War 1808-1814
• 1812 Grande Armée invades Russia
  – Russians follow scorched earth policy
  – Moscow will burn
  – “Great Retreat”
• Battle of Leipzig 1813
• Napoleon exiled to Elba 1814
• The Hundred Days (20 March 1815 - 28 June 1815)
• Napoleon defeated at Waterloo (March 18, 1815)
• Exiled to St. Helena, died 1821