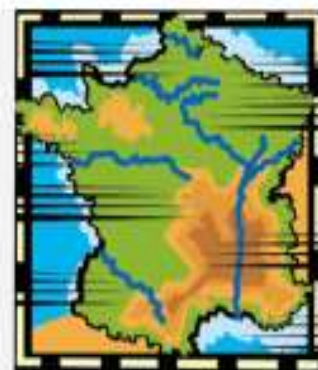


## Causes of the French Revolution

Before the French Revolution, France was a monarchy, which meant that all the power in the country was centralized in the hands of the king. The people were divided into three general social classes. The highest class was called the First Estate, and was made up of church leaders. The Second Estate was made up of the aristocracy. But most of the people belonged to the Third Estate. While the First and Second Estates lived privileged lives, the Third Estate did most of the work and paid most of the taxes. There was little opportunity for anyone to change their social status. In this environment, a number of issues eventually caused the members of the Third Estate to revolt against the king.

One of these issues was that France was in a state of financial crisis. It had borrowed money in order to fight the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution. The king had gone into further debt in order to finance his extravagant lifestyle. In an attempt to settle these debts, the king raised taxes, placing an even greater financial burden on the Third Estate.



At the same time, there was not enough to eat in France. The people were starving, and the price of bread continued to rise. New ideas were also beginning to spread in the 1700s, ideas like liberty and equality. And the success of the American Revolution had shown that other forms of government besides a monarchy were possible.

Finally, Louis XVI was out of touch with how difficult life was for most of the people in France. When members of the Third Estate formed the National Assembly to demand that the king make changes that would help them, he did not respond. He was also in conflict with the Second Estate about what kinds of reforms should be made. Together, these problems set the stage for a revolution that would eventually end the "ancien regime" and pave the way for a new form of government.

## QUESTIONS: Causes of the French Revolution

1. Before the French Revolution, France was a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. How many social classes were there before the French Revolution?
3. What was the social class made up of the clergy called?
4. What was the social class made up of the common man, to which most of the people in the country belonged?
5. What was the social class made up of the aristocracy called?
6. Leading up to the French Revolution, the country of France was in a \_\_\_\_\_ crisis as a result of wars and the king's extravagant lifestyle.
7. How did the king attempt to solve the problem referenced in #6 above?
8. What other kind of crisis was affecting France leading up to the French Revolution?
9. Describe the relationship between King Louis XVI and the Third Estate leading up to the French Revolution.
10. King Louis XVI was in conflict with the Second Estate about what?