# Liberty Under Threat

Trace how emergency measures changed the French Revolution.

**SS24.WH.2c** "Explain how the Reign of Terror affected the French Revolution, including Robespierre and the guillotine."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two threats to the republic, circle two government responses, and number two effects of those responses to trace how the Terror changed the revolution.

### The Revolution and the Terror

1 In 1793, France's new republic faced armies from other European states and revolts at home. Its leaders feared that enemies would destroy the revolution and restore the monarchy. The National Convention gave broad powers to the Committee of Public Safety, which directed the war effort and pushed emergency measures. Maximilien Robespierre joined the committee in July 1793 and became one of its most influential voices. He argued that harsh action against suspected enemies could protect the republic and its promise of liberty. That argument helped turn fear of defeat into support for a policy later called the Reign of Terror.

2 The government passed the Law of Suspects in September 1793, allowing the arrest of people believed to oppose the revolution. Revolutionary courts tried many accused people, and thousands were sentenced to death. The guillotine, a machine with a falling blade, became a visible symbol of the Terror as crowds watched public executions. Other people died in prisons or in violent crackdowns outside Paris. Officials claimed these measures would defeat threats, but vague suspicions could turn neighbors against each other. As fear spread, revolutionary promises of rights and fair treatment were harder to uphold, even for people who supported the republic.

3 The Terror did not simply end the fighting. France's armies won important victories in 1794, while officials still sent suspected opponents to trial. Some members of the Convention worried they might be accused next and feared Robespierre's growing influence. In July 1794, they arrested him; he was executed by guillotine the following day. His fall led to the weakening of the Terror and a retreat from its most extreme policies. The revolution continued, but the Terror had changed its course: emergency rule had strengthened the state while costing lives, deepening distrust, and exposing a conflict between security and liberty.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did threats to the republic help Robespierre gain support for harsh measures?

2. How did arrests under the Law of Suspects affect the revolution's promise of rights?

3. How did the guillotine affect the experience of the Terror, beyond carrying out death sentences?

4. How did fear among Convention members change the course of the Terror in July 1794?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are addressing the National Convention in July 1794. Write one paragraph of 70 to 100 words that uses two facts from the passage, explains the conflict between security and liberty, and proposes one change to the government's actions.

ANSWER KEY

# Liberty Under Threat

GRADE 9 · SS24.WH.2c

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two threats to the republic, circle two government responses, and number two effects of those responses to trace how the Terror changed the revolution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did threats to the republic help Robespierre gain support for harsh measures? | **Foreign armies and revolts raised fears that the republic would fall. Robespierre argued that harsh action against suspected enemies would protect it.** |
| 2 | How did arrests under the Law of Suspects affect the revolution's promise of rights? | **People could be arrested on vague suspicions, making fair treatment harder to uphold and spreading distrust among neighbors.** |
| 3 | How did the guillotine affect the experience of the Terror, beyond carrying out death sentences? | **Public executions made the Terror visible and spread fear.** |
| 4 | How did fear among Convention members change the course of the Terror in July 1794? | **Members feared they might be accused next and arrested Robespierre. After his execution, the Terror weakened and its most extreme policies were rolled back.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Members of the Convention, our republic still needs protection from attacks, but fear cannot be our only tool. Under the Law of Suspects, people have been arrested because officials believed they opposed the revolution. Revolutionary courts have sentenced thousands to death, and public guillotine executions have spread fear. We should require clear evidence before an arrest and give accused people a fair chance to defend themselves. Such rules would let us investigate real threats without abandoning the liberty the revolution promised.

Accept other passage-supported explanations of how emergency measures affected rights, public fear, or the direction of the revolution. For Part 3, look for two accurate facts, a clear security-liberty conflict, and a specific proposed change.