From Reform to Revolution

Trace the pressures, events, and ideals of the French Revolution

MWH.C.4.1 "Analyze the complex political, social, and economic causes culminating in the French Revolution (e.g., influence of Enlightenment philosophy, taxation, development of the middle class, excesses and corruption of the French monarchy…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two pressures that drove demands for reform, circle one idea that challenged royal rule, and number three revolutionary events in the order they happened.

When France Demanded Change

1 In the late 1780s, French royal debt grew after wars and lavish court spending. The monarchy relied on taxes that weighed heavily on commoners, while many nobles and clergy enjoyed exemptions. Bad harvests drove up bread prices, squeezing workers and shopkeepers. An expanding middle class of merchants and professionals had money and education but little political power. Enlightenment writers questioned inherited privilege and argued that government needed the consent of the governed. Together, financial strain and new political ideas turned complaints into demands for reform.

2 To address the debt, Louis XVI called the Estates-General in 1789, giving representatives of the three estates a rare chance to meet. Disputes over voting led members of the Third Estate to form the National Assembly and swear the Tennis Court Oath, promising a constitution. When Parisians stormed the Bastille, they showed that anger could become armed revolt. The assembly's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen proclaimed legal equality and national sovereignty, directly challenging privilege and absolute monarchy.

3 The revolution did not follow a peaceful path. In 1793, revolutionaries executed Louis XVI, and during the Reign of Terror the government executed thousands of people it deemed enemies. Revolutionaries seized church lands and ended the Catholic Church's status as a privileged institution in France, weakening its wealth and political power. Calls to defend the nation strengthened modern nationalism, even as violence divided citizens. Later revolutionaries drew on popular sovereignty and legal equality, though the gap between those ideals and the Terror exposed a lasting tension.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did economic hardship and the middle class's position combine to increase demands for reform?

2. Trace the path from the Estates-General to the Tennis Court Oath. What did the storming of the Bastille show?

3. How did the Declaration challenge royal rule, and how did the Reign of Terror conflict with its ideals?

4. How did the revolution change the Catholic Church's position in France and influence later revolutions?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence petition from a Paris shopkeeper to the National Assembly in late 1789. Propose two specific reforms that address different problems in the passage, and explain how one reform reflects an idea in the Declaration.

ANSWER KEY

From Reform to Revolution

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.4.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two pressures that drove demands for reform, circle one idea that challenged royal rule, and number three revolutionary events in the order they happened. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did economic hardship and the middle class's position combine to increase demands for reform?	**Debt, unequal taxes, and high bread prices created hardship. Educated, prosperous middle-class people also wanted political power they lacked.**
2	Trace the path from the Estates-General to the Tennis Court Oath. What did the storming of the Bastille show?	**Voting disputes at the Estates-General led Third Estate members to form the National Assembly and swear to create a constitution. The Bastille attack showed that anger had become armed revolt.**
3	How did the Declaration challenge royal rule, and how did the Reign of Terror conflict with its ideals?	**The Declaration proclaimed legal equality and national sovereignty instead of inherited privilege and absolute monarchy. Executing people deemed enemies conflicted with those ideals.**
4	How did the revolution change the Catholic Church's position in France and influence later revolutions?	**Seizing church lands and ending its privileged status weakened the Church's wealth and political power. Later revolutionaries adopted ideas of popular sovereignty and legal equality.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Members of the National Assembly, high bread prices are making it hard for my customers and me to get by. Please change the tax system so nobles and clergy pay taxes on the same terms as other people. Please give commoners a stronger voice when laws are made, since our work supports this country. Equal taxation would put the Declaration's promise of legal equality into practice.

Accept other passage-based pressures, events, and effects when students explain the connections accurately. In the petition, look for two distinct, specific reforms and a clear link between one reform and a Declaration principle.