Rights Under Pressure

Trace how revolutionary ideas became demands, actions, and new conflicts.

MWH.C.4 "Analyze the political, economic, and social transformations brought about by the events of the age of revolutions. Analyze the complex political, social, and economic causes culminating in the French Revolution (e.g...."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two conditions that pushed people toward revolution, circle two demands for change, and number three events that changed who held power. Use your marks to trace how causes led to actions and consequences.

From Crisis to Revolution

1. In 1788, a poor harvest drove up bread prices in France. The monarchy faced debt but often shielded nobles and clergy from taxes that burdened ordinary people. Wealthy merchants and professionals, part of a growing middle class, wanted political influence to match their economic role. Enlightenment writers argued that legitimate government rested on the people, not inherited privilege. In 1789, Louis XVI called the Estates General to address the crisis. When representatives of the Third Estate found the voting system could silence them, they declared a National Assembly and took the Tennis Court Oath, promising to write a constitution.

2. Paris crowds stormed the Bastille in July 1789, fearing royal force and searching for weapons. That summer, the National Assembly issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It asserted that law should express the general will and apply equally to citizens, challenging rule by birth. Revolutionaries also seized church lands and brought the Catholic Church under state authority, weakening its independence. War and fear of enemies intensified conflict. Louis XVI was executed in 1793; during the Reign of Terror, revolutionary leaders used executions against suspected opponents. A movement for liberty had also produced coercion.

3. The revolution's language of rights traveled beyond France, but people interpreted it differently. Enslaved people in the French colony of Saint-Domingue fought for freedom, leading to Haiti's independence in 1804. Napoleon later spread legal equality for men through his law code, while his conquests stirred resistance and nationalism across Europe. After his defeat, Britain and other powers met at the Congress of Vienna to restore monarchies and prevent one state from dominating Europe. Yet in 1848, food shortages and working-class hardship helped ignite uprisings. Protesters demanded constitutions, a free press, and wider voting rights, sometimes alongside national unity.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did economic conditions and Enlightenment ideas each increase pressure for political change in France?

2. How did the Declaration's ideas challenge the old system, and how did the Reign of Terror conflict with the revolution's promise of liberty?

3. Compare two ways revolutionary change spread beyond France, using Haiti and Napoleon's conquests.

4. Why did the Congress of Vienna's attempt to restore monarchies not end demands for change in Europe?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word editorial for readers in 1848. Urge them to demand a constitution, a free press, or wider voting rights; explain how two distinct events or ideas from the French Revolution support your demand, and address one reason readers might doubt that a revolution would protect liberty.

ANSWER KEY

Rights Under Pressure

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two conditions that pushed people toward revolution, circle two demands for change, and number three events that changed who held power. Use your marks to trace how causes led to actions and consequences. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did economic conditions and Enlightenment ideas each increase pressure for political change in France?	**High bread prices, unequal taxes, and debt increased hardship and anger. Enlightenment arguments that government rested on the people challenged inherited privilege.**
2	How did the Declaration's ideas challenge the old system, and how did the Reign of Terror conflict with the revolution's promise of liberty?	**The Declaration called for laws expressing the general will and applying equally to citizens, rather than rule by birth. During the Terror, leaders executed suspected opponents.**
3	Compare two ways revolutionary change spread beyond France, using Haiti and Napoleon's conquests.	**Enslaved people in Saint-Domingue fought for freedom and won Haiti's independence. Napoleon spread legal equality for men through his law code, while his conquests provoked nationalist resistance.**
4	Why did the Congress of Vienna's attempt to restore monarchies not end demands for change in Europe?	**The congress restored monarchies, but food shortages and working-class hardship helped spark uprisings in 1848. Protesters still demanded constitutions, a free press, and wider voting rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Citizens of 1848, demand a free press. In 1789, members of the Third Estate took an oath to write a constitution because the old voting system could silence them. The Declaration then said that law should express the general will. How can rulers hear that will if people cannot publish their views? The Reign of Terror shows that a revolution can punish those it calls opponents, even while promising liberty. A free press would let citizens challenge leaders without treating criticism as a crime.

Accept other passage-supported causal links and comparisons. The editorial should connect two distinct French revolutionary events or ideas to one 1848 demand and address a concern about protecting liberty.