

CBSE Class 9 History — Chapter 1: The French Revolution

Ultimate Important Questions Bank with Answers

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS + PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS + EXAM BOOSTER EDITION

SECTION 1: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q1. Explain the social composition of French society in the late 18th century. Why did it cause discontent?

Late 18th-century French society was divided into a rigid hierarchy known as the **Estates System**:

- **First Estate (Clergy):** Consisted of church officials. They owned vast amounts of land and enjoyed complete exemption from paying state taxes. They also extracted a religious tax called *tithe*.
- **Second Estate (Nobility):** Comprised feudal lords and aristocrats. They held high administrative positions, owned significant land, paid no state taxes, and enjoyed feudal privileges over peasants.
- **Third Estate (Commoners):** Comprised 95% of the population, including wealthy merchants, lawyers, officials (the bourgeoisie), artisans, and poor peasants. This entire estate bore the absolute burden of state taxes (such as the direct tax *taille* and indirect consumption taxes).

This caused severe discontent because the working majority held zero political influence and faced economic misery while the privileged minority enjoyed complete exemption from fiscal obligations.

Q2. What were the political and economic causes behind the empty treasury of France when Louis XVI ascended the throne?

When Louis XVI ascended the throne in 1774, he found an empty treasury due to the following factors:

1. **Long Years of War:** France had engaged in exhausting European military campaigns, which drained financial resources.
2. **American War of Independence:** Under Louis XVI, France helped the thirteen American colonies gain independence from Great Britain. This added more than a billion livres to a debt that had already reached two billion livres.
3. **High Interest Charges:** Lenders who gave the state credit began charging 10% interest on existing loans, forcing the French state to spend a massive percentage of its budget on interest payments alone.
4. **Extravagance of Versailles:** Maintaining the immense, luxurious court at the palace of Versailles required enormous financial resources.

SECTION 2: PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION COLLECTION (NCERT-BASED)

Q3. Evaluate the role of French philosophers and thinkers in creating an environment for the Revolution.

Philosophers did not directly orchestrate the street violence, but they targeted the ideological pillars of the Old Regime:

- **John Locke:** In his work *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke refuted the divine and absolute right of the monarch.
- **Jean Jacques Rousseau:** Carried the idea forward by proposing a form of government based on a social contract between people and their representatives in his book *The Social Contract*.
- **Montesquieu:** In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu proposed a division of power within the government between the legislative, executive, and judiciary. This template was adopted by the American colonies and inspired French assemblies.

These revolutionary ideas were discussed in salons and coffeehouses, spreading among the public through books and newspapers, which prepared the Third Estate to reject royal absolutism.

Q4. What was the direct significance of the fall of the Bastille on 14th July 1789?

The Bastille was a fortress-prison that stood as a hated symbol of the absolute power of the French King. On 14th July 1789, an angry armed crowd stormed the fortress, released the prisoners, and dismantled its structures. Its stones were sold in markets to people who wanted to keep a souvenir of this victory over the monarchy. The fall of the Bastille marked the breakdown of royal authority and the official start of the popular revolution.

SECTION 3: VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS (1 MARK)

Q5. In which year did Louis XVI ascend the throne of France?

1774.

Q6. Which royal family did Louis XVI belong to?

The Bourbon family.

Q7. Name the Austrian princess whom Louis XVI married.

Marie Antoinette.

Q8. What was the official currency of France that was abolished in 1794?

The Livres.

Q9. Define the term 'Tithe'.

A religious tax levied by the Church on peasants, equal to one-tenth of total agricultural produce.

Q10. What was 'Taille'?

A direct state tax paid by members of the Third Estate to the government treasury.

Q11. What is meant by a 'Subsistence Crisis'?

An extreme economic situation where the basic means of survival are endangered.

Q12. Who wrote the highly influential pamphlet called 'What is the Third Estate'?

Abbé Sieyès.

Q13. On what date did the French Revolution officially begin with the storming of the Bastille?

14th July 1789.

Q14. Where did the representatives of the Third Estate assemble to take the historic Tennis Court Oath?

An indoor tennis court on the grounds of Versailles.

Q15. Name the two leaders who guided the National Assembly during the Tennis Court Oath.

Mirabeau and Abbé Sieyès.

Q16. When did the National Assembly complete the first draft of the French Constitution?

1791.

Q17. Who were 'Active Citizens' according to the Constitution of 1791?

Men over 25 years of age who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a laborer's wage, giving them the right to vote.

Q18. Who wrote the 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen'?

Olympe de Gouges.

Q19. Name the national anthem of France composed by Roget de L'Isle.

The Marseillaise.

Q20. Which political club derived its name from the former convent of St Joseph in Paris?

The Jacobin Club.

Q21. Who was the undisputed leader of the Jacobin Club during the radical phase?

Maximilien Robespierre.

Q22. What did the term 'Sans-culottes' literally mean?

"Those without knee breeches," referring to working-class Jacobins who wore long striped trousers.

Q23. On what date was France officially declared a Republic after abolishing the monarchy?

21st September 1792.

Q24. Name the machine used to execute people by decapitation during the Revolution.

The Guillotine, invented by Dr. Guillotin.

Q25. Which period of French history is known as the 'Reign of Terror'?

The period from 1793 to 1794.

Q26. What executive body ran France after the fall of Robespierre's government?

The Directory, an executive body composed of five members.

Q27. In which year did Napoleon Bonaparte crown himself Emperor of France?

1804.

Q28. In which famous historic battle was Napoleon Bonaparte finally defeated?

The Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

Q29. In which year did slavery finally get abolished across all French colonies?

1848.

Q30. When did women in France finally win the right to vote?

1946.

 EXAM TIP: 1-MARK DATE ACCURACY

Make sure you can distinguish between the date when the monarchy was abolished (September 21, 1792) and the date when Louis XVI was executed (January 21, 1793). Mixing up these dates is a common mistake on short-answer questions.

SECTION 4: SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS (2–3 MARKS)

Q31. Describe the events that led to the formation of the National Assembly on 20th June 1789.

On 5th May 1789, Louis XVI called an assembly of the Estates-General to pass proposals for new taxes. The Third Estate demanded that voting be conducted on the principle of "one member, one vote," rather than "one estate, one vote." When the king rejected this proposal, members of the Third Estate walked out of the assembly in protest. On 20th June 1789, they assembled in an indoor tennis court at Versailles, declared themselves the **National Assembly**, and swore an oath not to separate until they had drafted a constitution that limited the powers of the monarch.

Q32. Trace the structural causes that triggered a 'Subsistence Crisis' in old France.

The subsistence crisis was caused by a combination of factors:

1. **Population Increase:** The population of France grew from 23 million in 1715 to 28 million in 1789, creating a rapid increase in the demand for food grains.
2. **Supply Deficit:** Grain production could not keep pace with the rising demand, causing the price of bread—the staple food of the majority—to rise sharply.
3. **Wage Stagnation:** Laborers' wages were fixed by owners and did not keep pace with inflation, widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Bad weather conditions, like drought or hail, further reduced harvest yields, triggering a subsistence crisis.

Q33. Outline the main characteristics of the political club known as the Jacobins.

The Jacobin Club became a powerful political force during the radical phase of the revolution. Its members belonged mainly to the less prosperous sections of society, including small shopkeepers, artisans, shoemakers, pastry cooks, watchmakers, and daily-wage laborers. Led by Maximilien Robespierre, they wore long striped trousers to distinguish themselves from the aristocracy, who wore knee breeches. They supported radical equality, democratic voting rights, and state-controlled prices.

Q34. What was the 'Directory'? Why did it lead to political instability in France?

After the fall of Robespierre's government, a new constitution was introduced that denied voting rights to non-propertied citizens. It set up two elected legislative councils, which appointed a **Directory**—an executive body made up of five members—to prevent power from being concentrated in a single individual. However, the Directors frequently clashed with the legislative councils, who then tried to dismiss them. This constant political instability paved the way for the rise of a military dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte.

SECTION 5: LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS (5 MARKS)

Q35. Analyze the multi-dimensional causes (social, economic, and political) that led to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.

The French Revolution was caused by a combination of structural factors:

- **Social Causes:** The feudal Estates System divided society into three groups. The first two estates (Clergy and Nobility) enjoyed privileges, including tax exemptions and ownership of most land, while the Third Estate bore the entire tax burden and lacked social status.
- **Economic Causes:** France faced a severe financial crisis due to long years of war, expenditures from helping the American colonies, and the cost of maintaining the court at Versailles. A sudden spike in food prices combined with bad weather led to a subsistence crisis, leaving the population vulnerable.
- **Political Causes:** Louis XVI ruled as an absolute monarch who believed in the divine right of kings. He ran an inefficient centralized administration that was indifferent to public suffering. His decision to call the Estates-General to raise taxes without addressing Third Estate demands triggered open rebellion.
- **Role of Middle Class & Philosophers:** An educated middle class (bourgeoisie) emerged, arguing that no social group should be privileged by birth. They popularized ideas of liberty, equal laws, and representative government proposed by thinkers like Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu.

Q36. Describe the measures taken by Maximilien Robespierre during the 'Reign of Terror' (1793–1794). Why did it finally collapse?

Robespierre followed a policy of severe control and punishment. His government implemented the following measures:

1. **Price and Wage Controls:** Laws placed a maximum ceiling on wages and prices. Bread and meat were rationed.
2. **Equality Bread:** Peasants were forced to transport their grain to cities and sell it at prices fixed by the government. The use of expensive white flour was banned, and all citizens were required to eat a loaf made of whole wheat, called equality bread.
3. **Egalitarian Language Forms:** Traditional titles like *Monsieur* (Sir) and *Madame* (Madam) were replaced with *Citoyen* and *Citoyenne* (Citizen) to promote social equality.
4. **Institutional Closures:** Churches were shut down, and their buildings were converted into military barracks or government offices.
5. **Guillotine Execution Policy:** Anyone seen as an enemy of the republic—including nobles, clergy, or members of other political parties—was arrested, tried by a Revolutionary Tribunal, and guillotined if found guilty.

This harsh rule caused widespread fear. Even supporters of Robespierre began demanding moderation. He was eventually convicted by a court in July 1794, arrested, and executed on the guillotine, bringing the Reign of Terror to an end.

Q37. Trace the role and changing condition of women in France before, during, and after the Revolution.

Women played an active role in the events of the French Revolution. Their status shifted through several phases:

- **Condition under the Old Regime:** Most women of the Third Estate had to work hard to earn a living as seamstresses, laundresses, or domestic servants. They lacked access to formal education or vocational training, and their wages were systematically lower than those of men.
- **Early Revolutionary Advances:** The revolutionary government introduced laws to improve their lives. State schools were created, schooling became compulsory for girls, and marriage was made into a voluntary contract registered under civil law. Divorce was made legal and could be applied for by both men and women. Women were also permitted to train for jobs or run small businesses.
- **The Radical Crackdown:** During the Reign of Terror, the government issued laws closing women's political clubs and banning their political activities. Prominent leaders, including the feminist writer Olympe de Gouges, were arrested and executed.
- **Long-Term Struggle:** The Constitution of 1791 classified women as passive citizens with no voting rights. This spurred a political struggle for equal voting rights and wages that continued for over a century. French women eventually won the right to vote in **1946**.

SECTION 6: CASE-BASED QUESTIONS

Source Paragraph:

The National Assembly completed the draft of the constitution in 1791. Its main object was to limit the powers of the monarch. These powers instead of being concentrated in the hands of one person, were now separated and assigned to different institutions — the legislature, executive and judiciary. This made France a constitutional monarchy. The Constitution of 1791 vested the power to make laws in the National Assembly, which was indirectly elected. That is, citizens voted for a group of electors, who in turn chose the Assembly. Not all citizens, however, had the right to vote. Only men over 25 years of age who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a labourer's wage were given the status of active citizens.

Q38. What was the primary objective behind drafting the French Constitution of 1791?

The primary objective was to limit the absolute powers of the monarch and prevent them from being concentrated in the hands of a single individual.

Q39. How was power structured inside the government under this new system?

Power was divided among three distinct branches: the Legislature (National Assembly), the Executive (King and Ministers), and the Judiciary.

Q40. Explain the difference between active and passive citizens under the 1791 framework.

Active citizens were men over 25 years of age who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a laborer's wage, giving them the right to vote. All other citizens—including men who did not meet the tax criteria, along with all women and children—were classified as passive citizens with no voting rights.

SECTION 7: ASSERTION AND REASON QUESTIONS

AR RULES REMINDER FOR STUDENTS

Select options as follows:

A: Both statements are true and R explains A.

B: Both statements are true but R does not explain A.

C: A is true but R is false.

D: A is false but R is true.

Q41. Assertion (A): On 20th June 1789, representatives of the Third Estate assembled inside an indoor tennis court at Versailles.

Reason (R): They wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to Louis XVI and support his proposals for new taxes.

Answer: C (A is true but R is false)

Explanation: The assertion statement is historically accurate. However, the reason statement is completely false; they assembled to declare themselves the National Assembly and draft a constitution that limited the king's powers, actively opposing his tax proposals.

Q42. Assertion (A): Robespierre's government introduced laws placing a maximum ceiling on prices and wages.

Reason (R): During the Reign of Terror, the government wanted to ensure equality and manage severe food shortages.

Answer: A (Both statements are true and R explains A)

Explanation: Robespierre implemented strict economic controls to enforce radical equality and prevent food speculation, meaning the reason directly explains why the price ceiling laws were passed.

Q43. Assertion (A): The French Constitution of 1791 gave all adult citizens inside France the right to vote.

Reason (R): The National Assembly wanted to establish a constitutional monarchy with separate powers.

Answer: D (A is false but R is true)

Explanation: The assertion is false because the 1791 constitution denied voting rights to women, poor men, and children by dividing them into active and passive citizens. The reason statement is historically true.

SECTION 8: COMPETENCY-BASED & CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

Q44. How did the triangular slave trade support the economic interests of the French merchant class in port cities like Bordeaux and Nantes?

The triangular slave trade operated between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. French merchants sailed from ports like Bordeaux and Nantes to the African coast, where they bought slaves from local chieftains. These slaves were branded, shackled, and packed into ships for a three-month voyage across the Atlantic to the Caribbean, where they were sold to plantation owners.

This forced labor supply kept production high on plantations, which provided Europe with sugar, coffee, indigo, and tobacco. The wealth generated by this trade helped fund the growth and prosperity of these port cities.

Q45. Read the ideas behind the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen'. In what ways was this document limited in its practical application?

While the declaration used progressive language—stating that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights"—its practical application was limited in two major ways:

1. **Gender Bias:** It excluded women from political participation, treating them as passive citizens and prompting figures like Olympe de Gouges to draft a separate declaration for women.
 2. **Property Bias:** It tied voting rights to property ownership and tax payments, keeping political power concentrated in the hands of the wealthy middle class (bourgeoisie) while leaving poor citizens without influence.
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SECTION 9: TIMELINE-BASED QUESTIONS

Year Milestone	Historical Event Occurring	Strategic Importance & Significance
1774	Louis XVI becomes King of France.	Inherited an empty treasury and deep financial debt.
5th May 1789	Convocation of the Estates-General.	Triggered protests over voting systems, starting the revolution.
20th June 1789	The Tennis Court Oath.	The Third Estate formed the National Assembly to limit royal power.
14th July 1789	Storming of the Bastille.	Marked the breakdown of royal authority and the start of popular resistance.
1791	Drafting of the first Constitution.	Converted France into a Constitutional Monarchy with separate powers.
1792–1793	Abolition of Monarchy; Execution of King.	France became a Republic; Louis XVI was guillotined for treason.
1793–1794	The Reign of Terror.	Maximilien Robespierre used strict controls and the guillotine.
1804	Napoleon Bonaparte becomes Emperor.	Reintroduced monarchy and began military campaigns across Europe.
1815	The Battle of Waterloo.	Napoleon was defeated, marking the end of the revolutionary military era.

SECTION 10: TOP 10 HIGHEST-PROBABILITY EXAM QUESTIONS

These select questions have the highest probability of appearing in school assessments. Review them carefully.

TOP SELECTION — 5 MARKS

Q46. What was the Green Revolution package impact on French colony setups? (Correction: What was the impact of the French Revolution on the global legacy of liberty and democratic rights?)

The French Revolution left an enduring global legacy, structured around several key themes:

- **Dismantling of Feudalism:** It marked the end of feudal privileges, aristocratic birthrights, and absolute monarchies in Europe.
- **Spread of Liberty and Equality:** The ideas of individual liberty, freedom of speech, and social equality spread across Europe, inspiring subsequent revolutionary movements during the 19th century.
- **Concept of Sovereignty:** It shifted the definition of sovereignty from the person of a monarch to the collective nation-state, popularizing representative democracy.
- **Impact on India:** Indian nationalist leaders, most notably **Tipu Sultan** and **Rammohan Roy**, were deeply inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution and integrated them into their political thinking.

TOP SELECTION — 3 MARKS

Q47. Explain the system of slave trade abolition inside French territories. Who finally kept it active?

The evolution of slavery in France followed a complex path: The National Assembly held long debates about whether the Rights of Man should extend to colonies, but did not pass laws banning slavery out of fear of upsetting wealthy merchants. In **1794, the Jacobin Convention** passed a decree freeing all slaves in French colonies. However, ten years later, **Napoleon Bonaparte reintroduced slavery** to support plantation owners. Slavery was eventually abolished across all French colonies in **1848**.

TOP SELECTION — 5 MARKS

Q48. Discuss the rise, policies, and eventual fall of Napoleon Bonaparte as an emperor.

Napoleon Bonaparte rose to power due to the political instability created by the Directory. In 1804, he crowned himself Emperor of France. He saw himself as a modernizer of Europe and introduced several progressive laws, including the **protection of private property**, a **uniform system of weights and measures** using the decimal system, and the Civil Code (Napoleonic Code), which removed birth privileges. Initially, many saw him as a liberator who brought freedom, but his armies soon came to be viewed as an invading force. He was eventually defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

TOP SELECTION — 3 MARKS Q49. Describe how the abolition of censorship impacted daily life in revolutionary France after 1789.

Under the Old Regime, all written materials and cultural activities—including books, newspapers, and plays—could be published or performed only after being approved by royal censors. After the storming of the Bastille in 1789, censorship was abolished, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen proclaimed freedom of speech and expression as a natural right. Newspapers, pamphlets, books, and prints flooded towns and villages, debating political events and allowing ordinary citizens to participate in public life.

TOP SELECTION — 3 MARKS Q50. Detail the economic burden placed on the Third Estate through feudal dues and taxes.

The Third Estate faced severe financial strain under the Old Regime. They were required to pay tithes (one-tenth of their crop yield) to the Church, *taille* (a direct income tax) to the state, and indirect taxes on everyday items like salt and tobacco. In addition, peasants owed feudal dues to local lords, which included working in the lord's fields, serving in the military, or building public roads, leaving them with little income for basic survival.

SECTION 11: COMMON MISTAKES STUDENTS MAKE

✗ **Date Confusion regarding Slavery:** Many students write that Napoleon permanently abolished slavery.

✓ **Correction:** Napoleon did not abolish slavery; he **reintroduced** it in 1804. Slavery was first abolished by the Jacobin Convention in 1794, and permanently ended in French colonies in **1848**.

✗ **Mixing up Tax Terms:** Interchanging the definitions of *Tithe* and *Taille*.

✓ **Correction:** *Tithe* was a religious tax paid directly to the Church. *Taille* was a direct tax paid to the state treasury. Keep these straight to avoid losing marks on short-answer questions.

✗ **Misunderstanding the role of the Legislative Assembly vs Directory:** Believing the Directory drafted the 1791 Constitution.

✓ **Correction:** The 1791 constitution was drafted by the **National Assembly**. The Directory was an executive body created later, under the 1795 constitution, to prevent the rise of another dictatorship after Robespierre's fall.

SECTION 12: LAST-MINUTE REVISION SHEET

📌 CORE CONCEPTS AT A GLANCE

- **Estates System Inequality:** The First and Second Estates held privileges and tax exemptions, while the Third Estate bore the financial burden of the state.
- **The Catalyst:** A combination of severe debt, state spending, and a subsistence crisis forced the king to call the Estates-General, triggering the revolution.

- **Constitutional Shift:** France shifted from an Absolute Monarchy to a Constitutional Monarchy in 1791, then to a radical Republic in 1792, before transitioning to the Directory and eventually to Napoleon's empire.
- **Global Impact:** The revolution popularized the foundational ideas of **Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity**, which influenced modern democratic movements worldwide.