

Causes of the French Revolution

Social inequality	The tax burden on the third estate
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Causes of the French Revolution (cont)

Before the French revolution, social inequality was a huge problem in France. France was divided into three estates. The estate that a person was in determining their rights, obligations, and status. The first estate was made up of the Catholic clergy, including monks, nuns, priests, and bishops. The second estate was made up of the French nobility. The third estate consisted of all the other people of France. These people included peasants, merchants, poor lawyers, and poor labourers. The estates began to anger the citizens of the third estate. The third estate resented its several positions within French society. The third estate was forced to pay heavy taxes while the other two did not. Many people in the third estate felt as though they were being crushed by the clergy and nobility and were being treated very unfairly. This caused anger and chaos.	The tax burden on the third estate was an important cause of the French revolution and explains how each of the different estates was treated. The First Estate in France owned 10% of the land, but their spokesmen provided only 0.5% of the population. The first estate was very wealthy and didn't have to pay any taxes. They had many privileges including tithes which is where they take one-tenth of taxes to support the Church. The second estate owned 25% of the land and was 1.5% of the population. The second estate was free from paying most taxes and were allowed to collect dues from the third estate. On the other hand, the third estate took up 98% of the population, owned 65% of the land, and was forced to pay heavy taxes. This was one of the main reasons why the third estate was poor. Will all of their money being spent paying excessive taxes they had very little money to spend on food (the price of bread had also risen due to the rising of taxes). This burdened the third estate leading to their questioning this unjust Estates System and planning to overthrow it.
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Causes of the French Revolution (continued)

Monarchy

Causes of the French Revolution (continued) (cont)

The monarchy spent money on unnecessary things which caused anger amongst the third estate. Using the money on buying extravagant luxuries, first by Louis XV and then by Louis XVI, increased the economic crisis facing France and was one of the primary reasons behind the revolution. One example of this was the construction and remodelling of the Palace of Versailles during the 17th and 18th centuries. Another example of unnecessary spending was the Marie Antoinette spent much money on refurbishing the Palace of Versailles, which included the Petit Trianon. She also spent lots of money on clothes, jewellery, and gambling. These large amounts of money being spend on unnecessary things by the French monarchy made the third estate very dissatisfied and began to view their leaders as wasteful while they had to suffer due to the poor economic state of the nation. The third estate had to pay all the taxes. Another reason that the French third estate was angry at the monarchy is that instead of helping with the food shortage when told about the bread shortage, Marie Antonette said "If the people have no bread, let them eat cake." This led to national trouble and eventually to the revolution.

Causes of the French Revolution (continued)

Economy



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Causes of the French Revolution (continued) (cont)

An important cause of the French revolution is the economic crisis that France was facing at the time. Throughout the 1700's France was involved with several wars (mainly against Britain) which cost them a lot of money. One example of this was during the American war of independence against Britain. France had allied with the US and helped with America's war efforts. This was very expensive and caused France to go into bankruptcy. King Louis XVI's decision to help America during the war would soon cause him to be facing a financial crisis in his own country. Louis XVI tried to fix his country's financial crisis by increasing tax rates on the third estate and new taxes for the nobility. By doing this Louis XVI failed to realise that the French nobility would work to block his plans and the third estate would soon become angry with the monarchy. Another reason the cause of France's economic crisis was the expensive extravagant lifestyles of the French monarchy in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1623 the Palace of Versailles was first built by Luis XIII and over the next 155 years, the palace saw expensive renovations and additions. Marie Antoinette ordered a new theatre to be built in the Palace of Versailles. In total, the entire building of the Palace of Versailles would have cost France around \$2 billion in today's value. Marie Antoinette also spent lots of money on fancy clothing and jewellery. By spending money on all of these things it left little money to spend on food which caused a food shortage for the third estate (also because the first and second estates were eating it all). These large expenditures by the French monarchy were the main causes of France's economic crisis which angered the third estate (because their taxes increased with every expenditure of the monarchy) and directly led to the outbreak of the French Revolution. There are many other causes of the French Revolution, but these are a few of the main ones.



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