

The French Revolution

Source Based Questions

Source 1

Read the source given below and answer the questions that follow by choosing the most appropriate option:

In 1774, Louis XVI of the Bourbon family of kings ascended the throne of France. He was 20 years old and married to the Austrian princess Marie Antoinette. Upon his accession the new king found an empty treasury. Long years of war had drained the financial resources of France. Added to this was the cost of maintaining an extravagant court at the immense palace of Versailles. Under Louis XVI, France helped the thirteen American colonies to gain their independence from the common enemy, Britain. The war added more than a billion livres to a debt that had already risen to more than 2 billion livres. Lenders who gave the state credit, now began to charge 10 per cent interest on loans. So, the French government was obliged to spend an increasing percentage of its budget on interest payments alone. To meet its regular expenses, such as the cost of maintaining an army, the court, running government offices or universities, the state was forced to increase taxes. Yet even this measure would not have sufficed. French society in the eighteenth century was divided into three estates, and only members of the third estate paid taxes. The society of estates was part of the feudal system that dated back to the middle ages. The term Old Regime is usually used to describe the society and institutions of France before 1789.

Q1. Identify the correct option regarding the French treasury when Louis XVI became King of France in 1744.

- a. The financial resources of France had drained
- b. The French treasury was empty
- c. Taxes were increased to improve the cost of maintenance
- d. Interest on loans were increased to raise the credit

Ans. (b)

Q2. Name the group of persons invested with special functions in the church.

- a. Peasants
- b. Nobles

- c. Clergy
- d. Feudals

Ans. (c)

Q3. Which family was ruling in France when the French Revolution took place?

- a. Bourbon family
- b. Sultan family
- c. Middle class family
- d. Jacobins

Ans. (a)

Q4. How many American colonies gained independence from Britain under Louis XVI?

- a. 12
- b. 13
- c. 14
- d. 15

Ans. (b)

Q5. Why was the French government obliged to spend an increasing percentage of its budget on interest payments alone?

- a. To meet the regular expenses
- b. To reduce the debt burden
- c. Lenders were charging 10 per cent interest on Loans
- d. To fulfill the requirements of huge amount of money for maintenance

Ans. (c)

Q6. Identify the cause(s) for the empty treasury of France under Louis XVI.

- a. The king's court at the immense palace of Versailles required huge amount of money for its maintenance.
- b. Taxes were levied only on the third estate and the first and second estates who were rich were exempted from paying taxes.
- c. The war with Britain added more than a billion livres to a debt that had already risen

to more than 2 billion livres.
d. All of the above.

Ans. (d)

Source 2

Read the source given below and answer the questions that follow by choosing the most appropriate option:

Although Louis XVI had signed the Constitution, he entered into secret negotiations with the King of Prussia. Rulers of other neighbouring countries too were worried by the developments in France and made plans to send troops to put down the events that had been taking place there since the summer of 1789. Before this could happen, the National Assembly voted in April 1792 to declare war against Prussia and Austria. Thousands of volunteers thronged from the provinces to join the army. They saw this as a war of the people against kings and aristocracies all over Europe. Among the patriotic songs they sang was the Marseillaise, composed by the poet Roget de L'Isle. It was sung for the first time by volunteers from Marseilles as they marched into Paris and so got its name. The Marseillaise is now the national anthem of France. The revolutionary wars brought losses and economic difficulties to the people. While the men were away fighting at the front, women were left to cope with the tasks of earning a living and looking after their families. Large sections of the population were convinced that the revolution had to be carried further, as the Constitution of 1791 gave political rights only to the richer sections of society. Political clubs became an important rallying point for people who wished to discuss government policies and plan their own forms of action. The most successful of these clubs was that of the Jacobins, which got its name from the former convent of St. Jacob in Paris. Women too, who had been active throughout this period, formed their own clubs.

Q1. How did the volunteers from various provinces see war against Prussia and Austria?

- a. As a war to endanger the basic means of livelihood.
- b. As a war of the people against kings and aristocracies all over Europe.
- c. As a direct consequence of measures taken by the government.
- d. As a matter of political tension in the whole of Europe.

Ans. (b)

Q2. What is the national anthem of France?

- a. Chateaux
- b. Marseillaise
- c. Sans-culottes
- d. Taille

Ans. (b)

Q3. Identify the incorrect statement regarding Jacobins.

- a. The Jacobins or the society of the friends of the Constitution was the most famous and influential club prior to the French Revolution.
- b. It became an important rallying point for people who wished to discuss government policies and plan their own forms of action.
- c. The members belonged mainly to the prosperous section of society.
- d. Shopkeepers, artisans like shoe-makers, pastry cooks, servants, daily wage workers were included in it.

Ans. (c)

Q4. How did the Jacobin club get its name?

- a. From the society of the friends of the Constitution.
- b. From the former convent of St. Jacob in Paris.
- c. From the active women who formed their own clubs.
- d. From the fashionable sections of society especially nobles who wore knee length breeches.

Ans. (b)

Q5. Name the poet who composed the patriotic song, Marseillaise.

- a. Louis XVI
- b. Mirabeau
- c. Abbé Sieyes
- d. Roget de L'Isle

Ans. (d)

Q6. Who seized power after the fall of the Jacobin government?

- a. The third estate

- b. The clergy and the nobility
- c. The wealthier middle classes
- d. The first and second estates

Ans. (c)

Source 3

Read the source given below and answer the questions that follow:

On 5th May, 1789, Louis XVI called together an assembly of the Estates General to pass proposals for new taxes. A resplendent hall in Versailles was prepared to host the delegates. The first and second estates sent 300 representatives each, who were seated in rows facing each other on two sides, while the 600 members of the third estate had to stand at the back. The third estate was represented by its more prosperous and educated members. Peasants, artisans and women were denied entry to the assembly. However, their grievances and demands were listed in some 40,000 letters which the representatives had brought with them. Voting in the Estates General in the past had been conducted according to the principle that each estate had one vote. This time too Louis XVI was determined to continue the same practice. But members of the third estate demanded that voting now be conducted by the assembly as a whole, where each member would have one vote. This was one of the democratic principles put forward by philosophers like Rousseau in his book, 'The Social Contract'. When the king rejected this proposal, members of the third estate walked out of the assembly in protest.

Q1. Which section of French society was forced to give up their powers after the French Revolution?

Ans. The first and second estates were forced to give up their powers after the French Revolution.

Q2. What did the members of the third estate demanded about voting?

Ans. The members of the third estate demanded that voting must be conducted as a whole where each member would have one vote.

Q3. Mention the divisions in French society before the French Revolution.

Ans. The French society was divided into three estates:

(i) First Estate: It comprised of the clergy which was a group of persons invested with special functions in the church.

(ii) Second Estate: This estate comprised of nobility which were the aristocrats and landlords.

(iii) Third Estate: This comprised the big businessman, merchants, peasants, artisans, city workers and middle class people.

Source 4

Read the source given below and answer the questions that follow:

The period from 1793 to 1794 is referred to as the Reign of Terror. Robespierre followed a policy of severe control and punishment. All those whom he saw as being 'enemies' of the republic - ex-nobles and clergy, members of other political parties, even members of his own party who did not agree with his methods - were arrested, imprisoned and then tried by a revolutionary tribunal. If the court found them 'guilty' they were guillotined. The guillotine is a device consisting of two poles and a blade with which a person is beheaded. It was named after Dr Guillotin who invented it. Robespierre's government issued laws placing a maximum ceiling on wages and prices. Meat and bread were rationed. Peasants were forced to transport their grain to the cities and sell it at prices fixed by the government. The use of more expensive white flour was forbidden; all citizens were required to eat the pain d'égalité (equality bread), a loaf made of wholewheat. Equality was also sought to be practised through forms of speech and address. Instead of the traditional Monsieur (Sir) and Madame (Madam) all French men and women were henceforth Citoyen and Citoyenne (Citizen). Churches were shut down and their buildings converted into barracks or offices.

Q1. What do you understand by the term 'Reign of Terror'?

Ans. The period from September 1793 to July 1794 is referred to as the 'Reign of Terror'. During this period, Robespierre who ruled France at that time, followed a policy of severe control and punishment and terrorised people with his harsh measures.

Q2. What type of device is guillotine?

Ans. The guillotine is a device consisting of two poles and a blade with which a person is beheaded.

Q3. Write any two changes seen in the regime of Robespierre's government.

Ans. Two changes seen in the regime of Robespierre's government are:

- (i) Peasants were forced to transport their grain to the cities and sell it at fixed prices by the government.
- (ii) Churches were also shut down and their buildings were converted into barracks or offices.