

# French Revolution



## Events of the French Revolution

In some ways, the American and French Revolutions were born of the same spirit, and even the same leadership. The French nobleman, Gilbert du Motier, better known as the Marquis de Lafayette, had served in George Washington's Continental Army from 1777 to 1781. He returned from his years supporting the American revolutionaries to become a leading figure in the call for liberty and equality in France. In 1789, Lafayette enlisted the help of Thomas Jefferson, author of the American *Declaration of Independence*, in writing a first draft of a parallel document for France, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. Yet in other ways, the French Revolution brought about even more profound change than the American Revolution. It abolished property rights as a requirement for full citizenship, abolished state sponsorship of religion, established religious toleration and freedom of speech, and resulted in the execution of the king himself. Many of the revolution's supporters called for the comprehensive transformation of the social order around the principles of democracy. Neither revolution introduced full political rights for women, but in most other respects, the French Revolution implemented a more comprehensive call for liberty and equality.

## French Revolution

### Events of the French Revolution

Primary Source 1:  
*Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (1789)

Primary Source 2:  
*Declaration of the Rights of Woman* (1791)

### Legacy of the French Revolution

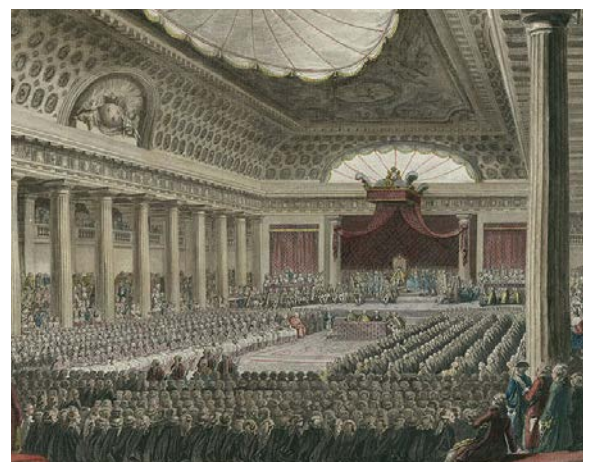
The French Revolution also proved much more challenging and complicated in practice than the American Revolution. Partly this was due to the nature of French monarchy: King Louis XVI had few checks on his centralized, absolute power, whereas the American colonists were accustomed to a British king who answered to Parliament, had set up self-governing structures in the colonies, and was far away. The social position of French people was also more rigidly defined than for colonists in British North America. France recognized only three categories of people, each of which had their own particular roles and privileges. The “first estate” was made up of clergymen such as priests and bishops; the “second estate” included noblemen—men like the Marquis de Lafayette; the “third estate” included everyone else: farmers, merchants, craftsmen, and laborers.



*Medallion depicting the “three estates”: the nobility, clergy, and third estate, 1789*

The church and the nobility paid no taxes on their land, and military leaders had to come from the nobility. The common people of the Third Estate included over 90% of the French population. They paid almost all the taxes, could not hunt or fish on land belonging to the church or nobility without special permission, and they could not wear certain kinds of clothing reserved for the other two estates. Most French people thus had no personal experience with structures designed to represent their perspective in government. Thus, calls for revolution in France demanded radical social as well as political change.

In the late 1780s, King Louis XVI found himself in a desperate financial situation, partly due to France’s generous support of the American colonists in their war against Britain. This sense of crisis was amplified by poor harvests and high prices on goods, which created hardships for everyday people. When other efforts to address France’s debt problems failed, King Louis decided to call the Estates General, a body representing all three French estates that had not met for 175 years. The Marquis de Lafayette was selected as a representative of the noble Second Estate. With other noble representatives, he traveled to Versailles in May 1789 to meet with representatives of the clergy (the First Estate) and the common



*The opening of the Estates General on May 5, 1789*



*A painting of the Tennis Court Oath by Jacques-Louis David, 1790s*

people (the Third Estate) to try to figure out a solution. The three estates argued about procedure for six weeks. By June 20, many representatives were fed up. The representatives of the Third Estate, together with Lafayette and a handful of noblemen and clergy, withdrew to the largest available space they could find—an empty tennis court—and named themselves the National Assembly. They swore to each other that they would not dis-

band until France had a new constitution based on principles of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*: liberty, equality, and human brotherhood.

Lafayette knew that the National Assembly would need protection while it did its work, so he immediately organized the National Guard. The National Guard needed weapons, and it was rumored that a large cache of guns was stored in the Bastille, a huge fortress in the center of Paris. Lafayette and the National Guard stormed the Bastille on July 14, 1789. As it turned out, they did not find many weapons, but their brazen assault of a structure representing the power of the king served as a powerful symbolic attack on the monarchy. The French Revolution had begun.

Pursuing their goal to reform France, the National Assembly quickly made a number of declarations, including a call to abolish the privileges of the nobility and sell off most of the Catholic Church's lands to pay France's debts. On August 26, 1789, they endorsed the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, a bold statement of universal human rights that Thomas Jefferson and Lafayette helped write. Then the National Assembly drafted a constitution that placed governing authority in the hands of an elected legislature, though it retained the king as a figurehead. Royal obstruction and lack of agreement among delegates to the National Assembly did not permit an immediate resolution, but at this point, it was clear some kind of compromise would be brokered between revolutionaries and a weakened monarchy.



*L. David's painting The Oath of La Fayetteville at the Festival of the Federation, 14*

Food shortages in September and a lack of progress in the National Assembly encouraged large numbers of women in Paris to take matters into their own hands. The spark for their protests was a lavish banquet hosted by the crown for foreign soldiers. But the steep price of bread was the women's main target. On October 5, 1789, thousands of ordinary women began marching from central Paris to





*The women's march on Versailles, October 1789*

to the royal palace at Versailles, with crowds growing as they traveled. When they arrived, the crowd killed two guards and carried their heads as trophies. They camped out that night, with the king and queen hiding out and protected by the Marquis de Lafayette and his National Guard. The next day, Lafayette convinced the king to follow the protesting women back to Paris, where they forced the king to accept the limitations on his authority demanded by the National Assembly.

Many men could not believe the key role played by ordinary women in changing the shape of the revolution—some even spread false rumors that the protesters must have been men in women's dress. But these women were part of an existing tradition of political activism among women in France, particularly when it came to forcing male political leaders to act when policies threatened the ability of families to find adequate food. As a result of these developments, it looked like France would transition to a constitutional monarchy with minimal bloodshed.

Not everyone was happy with the new government. Many common people of Paris, known as the *sans-culotte*, felt that the agreement to retain the monarchy would prevent the kind of sweeping political changes necessary for the creation of an equal society. Many called for political rights to be extended to all men, not just those who owned property. These arguments were also taken up in France's colonies, especially the Caribbean colony of St. Domingue (later known as Haiti), where mixed-race and free Black residents



*Painting of an uprising of Parisian sans-culottes in 1793 by Jean-Joseph-François Tassaert*

known as *gens de couleur* rose up to demand their rights as French citizens. Some women also resented their exclusion from political participation; the early feminist Olympe de Gouges published *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* (1791) arguing that women have the same inalienable rights as men. Meanwhile, many common people in the French countryside had their own grievances about their hardships they faced as farmers and laborers, while others retained conventional views about religion, politics, and social order. Some attacked the lands of local elites, while others were upset about the sudden changes brought about by the French Revolution, especially the selling of church lands and checks on the king's power.

All across Europe, kings were watching events in France and becoming nervous that their own people might rise up and demand representative governments, too. Austria's King Leopold II, brother of French queen Marie Antoinette, began organizing an army to return Louis XVI to full power in France. In August 1791, the two most powerful rival states of the Holy Roman Empire, Austria and Prussia, issued a joint declaration against the Revolution. Members of the new Legislative Assembly, formed in 1791, attempted to preempt an invasion by declaring



*Painting of the Battle of Valmy, in which Prussian troops attempted an attack on Paris in 1792, by Horace Vernet*

war on Austria on April 20, 1792. For the next 20 years, France would be at war with nearly all of its neighbors.

Despite these challenges, the revolutionary Legislative Assembly pushed forward in the summer of 1792, attempting to govern while also preparing for war. Under pressure from the sans-culotte of Paris, the radical members of the Legislative Assembly, known as Jacobins, introduced increasingly extreme mea-

sures that the king vetoed, reducing his popularity even more. On August 10, the streets of Paris erupted in chaos as the people took control of the city. On August 13, they arrested and imprisoned Louis XVI after he attempted to flee France. A few days later, the Austrian army captured the Marquis de Lafayette. On September 21, 1792, the monarchy was officially abolished and the Legislative Assembly disbanded. The new constitution Lafayette helped to bring into existence lasted less than one year.

Many revolutionaries in France believed that in order to establish a new government where all men could enjoy equal rights they must build a new society from scratch. As the radical revolutionary leader Maximilien Robespierre declared,



*Painting of the guillotine in Paris, c. 1793*

*To found and consolidate democracy, to achieve the peaceable reign of the constitutional laws, we must end the war of liberty against tyranny.... We must smother the internal and external enemies of the Republic or perish with it; now in this situation, the first maxim of your policy ought to be to lead the people by reason and the people's enemies by terror.<sup>1</sup>*

Robespierre and several prominent Jacobin leaders of the Revolution proceeded to do just that. While a new constitutional convention attempted to fashion a pure republican government, France was ruled by the so-called Committee of Public Safety. Fearful of enemies both outside and inside France, the Committee erected a guillotine in the heart of Paris and executed between 15,000 and 17,000 people (including King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette) believed to be counter-revolutionaries. They also instituted major social changes, requiring everyone to be addressed as “citizen” rather than by status titles like “Monsieur,” instituting the metric system,



*A clock in “decimal time,” created during the French Revolution*

1. “Maximilien Robespierre: Justification of the Use of Terror,” Internet Modern History Sourcebook, last modified April 14, 2025, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/robspierre-terror.asp>.

introducing a secular annual calendar based on reason alone, and obliging everyone to eat whole wheat “equality bread” rather than the fine white bread favored by the rich. They responded to uprisings by enslaved people in St. Domingue and appeals from French abolitionists by officially outlawing colonial slavery in 1794. The period of dramatic transformation, known as the Reign of Terror, lasted from September 1792 to July 1794. It ended when Robespierre and several of his fellow Jacobins were arrested and sent to the guillotine themselves.

The chaotic outcome of the Reign of Terror left France to try for a third time to create a revolutionary government, following a first try at constitutional monarchy and then a second at a republic. France’s leaders in this period were known as Thermidorians because they came to power in the month of Thermidor, named for the summer heat, in late July and August in the new revolutionary calendar. The Thermidorians embarked on writing yet another constitution while they did their best to fight a war against Austria, Prussia, and most of Europe. They relied on the *levee en masse*, a program of mass conscription that required every able-bodied man between 18 and 25 to fight for France. This was the first national army made up of people obliged to fight in defense of their rights and political liberties. But the French army struggled. Most pre-revolutionary army officers had been members of the nobility. But many nobles fled France during the Terror, so the military had to quickly develop new leaders. ular annual calendar based on reason alone, and obliging everyone to eat whole wheat “equality bread” rather than the fine white bread favored by the rich. They responded to uprisings by enslaved people in St. Domingue and appeals from French abolitionists by officially outlawing colonial slavery in 1794. The period of dramatic transformation, known as the Reign of Terror, lasted from September 1792 to July 1794. It ended when Robespierre and several of his fellow Jacobins were arrested and sent to the guillotine themselves.

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In this situation, one of the most successful new French generals was a commoner from Corsica, a Mediterranean island under French control. Napoleon Bonaparte’s military successes made him wildly popular, so that when the Thermidorian government began to falter, Napoleon marched into Paris and staged a coup d’etat. He originally styled himself a Consul, like the leaders of the ancient Roman Republic. But Napoleon soon took personal power. In 1804 he crowned himself emperor. France did not successfully establish a parliamentary constitutional republic until 1871, nearly eight decades after the French Revolution.



# Primary Source: Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789)

*The Marquis de Lafayette wrote the first draft of this declaration in consultation with Thomas Jefferson, author of the American Declaration of Independence, though the final version was the product of considerable debate and revision. The National Assembly adopted it in late summer 1789 as a foundational statement of purpose for the creation of a new constitution for France. The constitution did not last, but the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen continued to be influential in French society and beyond.*

Source: "The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen," ConstitutionNet, accessed April 2025, [https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/declaration\\_of\\_the\\_rights\\_of\\_man\\_1789.pdf](https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/declaration_of_the_rights_of_man_1789.pdf).

Approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789

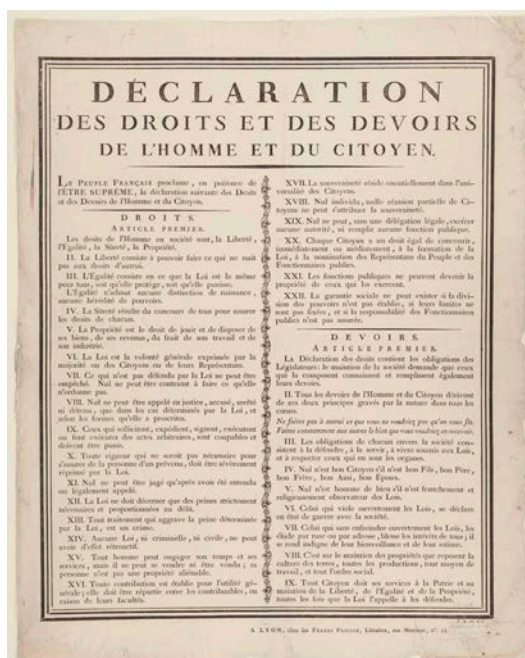
The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties; in order that the acts of the legislative power, as well as those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all political institutions and may thus be more respected, and, lastly, in order that the grievances of the citizens, based hereafter upon simple and incontestable principles, shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all. Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

## Articles:

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.

2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.



Copy of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, printed in 1795

4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.
5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law.
6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.
7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Anyone soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.
8. The law shall provide for such punishments only as are strictly and obviously necessary, and no one shall suffer punishment except it be legally inflicted in virtue of a law passed and promulgated before the commission of the offense.
9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.
10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.
11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.
12. The security of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces. These forces are, therefore, established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those to whom they shall be entrusted.



*Artistic depiction of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, c. 1789*





*The tennis court where members of the Third Estate gathered in 1789*

13. For maintenance of public authority and for expenses of administration, taxation of women and men is equal; she takes part in all forced labor service, in all painful tasks; she must therefore have the same proportion in the distribution of places, employments, offices, dignities, and in industry.

14. The citizenesses and citizens have the right, by themselves or through their representatives, to have demonstrated to them the necessity of public taxes. The citizenesses can only agree to them upon admission of an equal division, not only in wealth, but also in the public administration, and to determine the means of apportionment, assessment, and collection, and the duration of the taxes.

15. The mass of women, joining with men in paying taxes, have the right to hold accountable every public agent of the administration.

16. Any society in which the guarantee of rights is not assured or the separation of powers not settled has no constitution. The constitution is null and void if the majority of individuals composing the nation has not cooperated in its drafting.

17. Property belongs to both sexes whether united or separated; it is for each of them an inviolable and sacred right, and no one may be deprived of it as a true patrimony of nature, except when public necessity, certified by law, obviously requires it, and then on condition of a just compensation in advance.

## Primary Source 2: Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen (1791)

*A self-educated butcher's daughter from the south of France, Olympe de Gouges became a writer and pamphleteer in Paris in the 1780s. Frustrated by what she perceived as women's exclusion from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the new revolutionary regime, she penned this version and sent it to Marie Antoinette in hopes that the queen could convince the National Assembly to adopt it. That never happened, but de Gouges' declaration offers a fascinating alternative vision for what liberty, equality, and rights might mean.*

Source: *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 124–29.

To be decreed by the National Assembly in its last sessions or by the next legislature.

Preamble.

Mothers, daughters, sisters, female representatives of the nation ask to be constituted as a national assembly. Considering that ignorance, neglect, or contempt for the rights of woman are the sole causes of public misfortunes and governmental corruption, they have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of woman: so that by being constantly present to all the members of the social body this declaration may always remind them of their rights and duties; so that by being liable at every moment to comparison with the aim of any and all political institutions the acts of women's and men's powers may be the more fully respected; and so that by being founded henceforward on simple and incontestable principles the demands of the citizenesses may always tend toward maintaining the constitution, good morals, and the general welfare.

In consequence, the sex that is superior in beauty as in courage, needed in maternal sufferings, recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of woman and the citizeness.

1. Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on common utility.
2. The purpose of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of woman and man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and especially resistance to oppression.

### DÉCLARATION DES DROITS DE LA FEMME ET DE LA CITOYENNE,

*A décréter par l'Assemblée nationale dans ses dernières séances ou dans celle de la prochaine législature.*

#### P R É A M B U L E.

Les mères, les filles, les soeurs, représentantes de la nation, demandent d'être constituées en assemblée nationale. Considérant que l'ignorance, l'oubli ou le mépris des droits de la femme, sont les seules causes des malheurs publics et de la corruption des gouvernements, ont résolu d'exposer dans une déclaration solennelle, les droits naturels, inaliénables et sacrés de la femme, afin que cette déclaration, constamment présente à tous les membres du corps social, leur rappelle sans cesse leurs droits et leurs devoirs, afin que les actes du pouvoir des femmes, et ceux du pouvoir des hommes pouvant être à chaque instant comparés avec le but de toute institution politique, en soient plus respectés, afin que les réclamations des citoyennes, fondées désormais sur des principes simples et incontestables, tournent toujours au maintien de la constitution, des bonnes mœurs, et au bonheur de tous.

En conséquence, le sexe supérieur en beauté comme en courage, dans les souffrances maternelles, reconnaît et déclare, en présence

*First page of the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen, 1791*



3. The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially in the nation, which is but the reuniting of woman and man. No body and no individual may exercise authority which does not emanate expressly from the nation.

4. Liberty and justice consist in restoring all that belongs to another; hence the exercise of the natural rights of woman has no other limits than those that the perpetual tyranny of man opposes to them; these limits must be reformed according to the laws of nature and reason.

5. The laws of nature and reason prohibit all actions which are injurious to society. No hindrance should be put in the way of anything not prohibited by these wise and divine laws, nor may anyone be forced to do what they do not require.



*Depiction of an elderly woman and sans culotte, c. 1791-1794*



*A woman sans-culotte, likely Pauline Léon who co-founded the Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women*

6. The law should be the expression of the general will. All citizenesses and citizens should take part, in person or by their representatives, in its formation. It must be the same for everyone. All citizenesses and citizens, being equal in its eyes, should be equally admissible to all public dignities, offices and employments, according to their ability, and with no other distinction than that of their virtues and talents.

7. No woman is exempted; she is indicted, arrested, and detained in the cases determined by the law. Women like men obey this rigorous law.

8. Only strictly and obviously necessary punishments should be established by the law, and no one may be punished except by virtue of a law established and promulgated before the time of the offense, and legally applied to women.

9. Any woman being declared guilty, all rigor is exercised by the law.

10. No one should be disturbed for his fundamental opinions; woman has the right to mount the scaffold, so she should have the right equally to mount the rostrum, provided that these manifestations do not trouble public order as established by law.



*Meeting of a club of patriotic women during the French Revolution*



11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of woman, since this liberty assures the recognition of children by their fathers. Every citizeness may therefore say freely, I am the mother of your child; a barbarous prejudice [against unmarried women having children] should not force her to hide the truth, so long as responsibility is accepted for any abuse of this liberty in cases determined by the law [women are not allowed to lie about the paternity of their children].

12. The safeguard of the rights of woman and the citizeness requires public powers. These powers are instituted for the advantage of all and not for the private benefit of those to whom they are entrusted.

13. For maintenance of public authority and for expenses of administration, taxation of women and men is equal; she takes part in all forced labor service, in all painful tasks; she must therefore have the same proportion in the distribution of places, employments, offices, dignities, and in industry.

14. The citizenesses and citizens have the right, by themselves or through their representatives, to have demonstrated to them the necessity of public taxes. The citizenesses can only agree to them upon admission of an equal division, not only in wealth, but also in the public administration, and to determine the means of apportionment, assessment, and collection, and the duration of the taxes.

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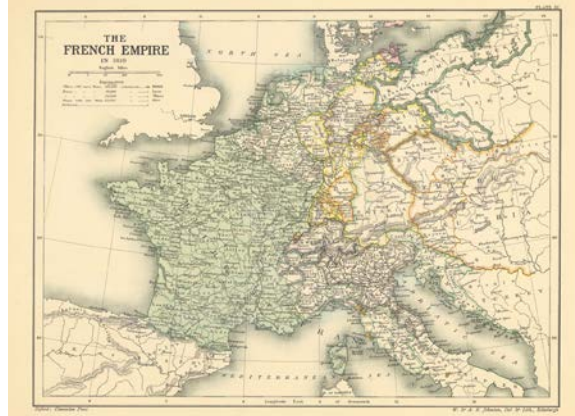
*As the revolution became increasingly radical, Olympe de Gouges was executed by guillotine in 1793*

16. Any society in which the guarantee of rights is not assured or the separation of powers not settled has no constitution. The constitution is null and void if the majority of individuals composing the nation has not cooperated in its drafting.

17. Property belongs to both sexes whether united or separated; it is for each of them an inviolable and sacred right, and no one may be deprived of it as a true patrimony of nature, except when public necessity, certified by law, obviously requires it, and then on condition of a just compensation in advance.

# Legacy of the French Revolution

Napoleon's rise to power brought an end to the French Revolution. In many ways, the Revolution appeared to have failed. The attempt by Lafayette and the National Assembly to curb the power of the French king and the efforts of Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety to create a democratic republic resulted in chaos, a military coup, and an emperor's rise to power. After Napoleon's defeat in 1813, the younger brother of King Louis XVI, now called Louis XVIII, took the throne in a restoration of the Bourbon dynasty monarchy that the French Revolution had deposed.



*Map of Napoleonic conquests of Europe at their greatest extent in 1810*

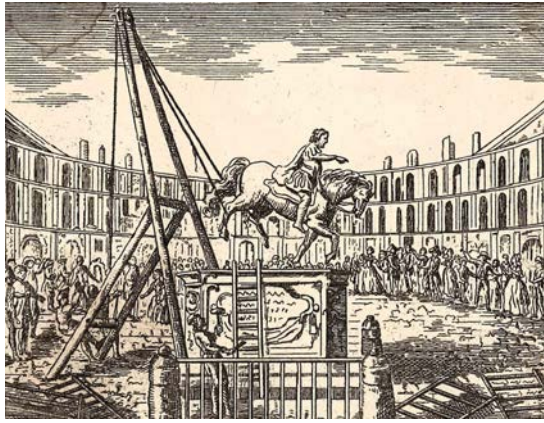
Despite these limitations, it proved impossible to rescind the bold claims to freedom and equality in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. Napoleon's universal legal code included many of the principles that the revolutionaries of 1789 had been trying to implement, including equality before the law and ending special privileges for certain groups of people. As Napoleon conquered territory in Europe, he implemented his legal code and dramatic reforms across the continent, even into Russia. Napoleon's siege of Moscow in fall 1812 led to interactions between French and Russian military officers, many of whom were later involved in Russia's disastrous 1825 Decembrist Revolt that attempted to force the tsar to implement reforms to introduce constitutional limits on the monarchy.

France experienced several more popular revolts that attempted to reform the government in the ways envisioned in 1789. In July 1830, the Marquis de Lafayette participated in a movement that overthrew King Charles X—another of Louis XVI's brothers who succeeded Louis XVIII in 1824—and replaced him with a constitutional monarch with limited powers. Another uprising in 1848 aimed to eliminate the monarch entirely in favor of an elected president and parliament. However, chaos ensued and led to a coup by Napoleon's nephew, Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, who proclaimed himself Emperor Napoleon III in 1852. The new emperor ruled over what he called the Second Empire. He abdicated in 1870 after losing a war with Prussia, making way finally for the establishment of a stable French republic largely based on the principles of the 1789 revolution.



*"Liberty Leading the People," a painting representing the July 1830 revolution by Eugène Delacroix*

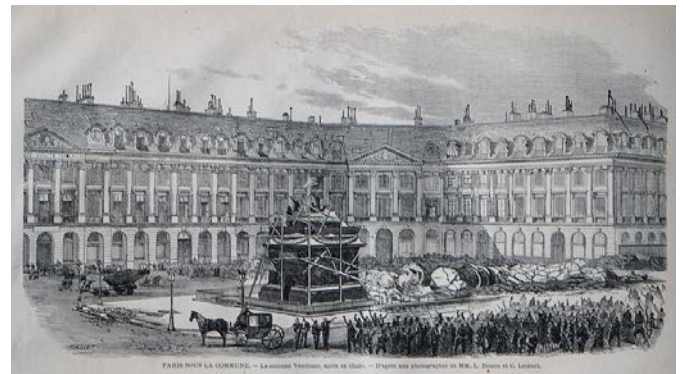




*Revolutionaries removing the statue of Louis XIV, 1792*

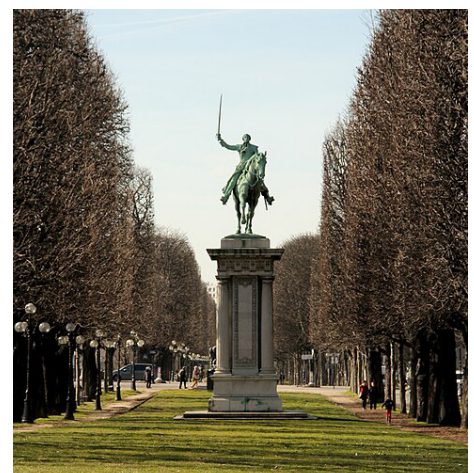
self to sit atop that column for the square. That statue was removed in 1814, but replaced in 1833. During the creation of the new French republic in 1871, the statue of Napoleon was removed once more; it was replaced again in 1874, and remains there today. In August 1792, revolutionaries also removed the statue of Louis XIV at the Place de la Victoires in central Paris, erected in 1686 to celebrate that king's military victories. In 1822, a new statue of Louis XIV was erected at the same site by the government of King Louis XVIII, which stands today. In 1791, the National Assembly transformed the recently completed Church of St. Geneviève into a secular mausoleum for heroes of the French state, called the Pantheon. The site was twice re-consecrated as a Catholic church and then re-secularized as The Temple of Great Men as control of France vacillated in the 19th century.

If the French Revolution was more radical than the American Revolution, but also more contested and untidier in its outcomes, then it's not surprising that its monument landscape had been complex and ambiguous as well. Unsurprisingly, during the revolution, revolutionaries tore down monarchist monuments, for example the equestrian statue of King Louis XIV in 1792 on the Place Vendôme in 1789. In 1810, however, Napoleon commissioned a column celebrating his military victories, and a statue of him-



*Destruction of the Vendôme Column, 1871*

While the United States considered Lafayette a hero in the 19th century, he was much less popular in France. He had taken moderate positions in the early phase of the Revolution and tried to use the National Guard to protect the king. He even ordered the National Guard to fire on the sans-culotte protesters in Paris who advocated for a more radical revolution. After he was released from prison in Austria, Lafayette retreated from public life, refusing to serve in Napoleon's government or engage in politics. The large equestrian statue of Lafayette that stands in Paris today was commissioned in 1899 by the government of the United States, who wanted to see him recognized in his home country. Meanwhile, in the eastern United States, Lafayette has many statues dedicated him, and his name is used for many cities and towns, counties, parks, streets, and high schools.



*Statue of Lafayette, Paris, 2015*



## Further Reading

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