RS Notes: The French Revolution



**Background to the Revolution**

* Estates General:
	+ Divided into 3 estates
		- 1st Estate= clergy (.5%)
		- 2nd Estate= nobles (1.5%)
		- 3rd Estate= commoners (98%)
	+ Each estate gets one vote in the Estates General
		- 1 & 2 vote together, making 3 powerless
* King had absolute power in gov’t
	+ Nobles and bourgeoisie (middle class) wanted power
		- Use Enlightenment principles to gain power
* ***There are 4 causes of the revolution***
	+ Near collapse of the gov’t finances
		- Wars: 7 Years War, American Revolution
		- Royal luxuries (Queen especially known for spending $)
			* King wanted to raise taxes to fix this, but the country was going into an economic depression
	+ Economic depression
		- Serfdom had been abolished, but people still paid feudal dues (relics of feudalism)
		- Living conditions were terrible
	+ Inequality in the gov’t
		- Only the Third Estate pays taxes
		- 98% is the minority in the Estates General
	+ New ideas of the Enlightenment
		- People should be free to elect gov’t officials.

**Estate General -> National Assembly**

* King Louis XIV needed to call the Estates General to meet to fix money troubles
	+ 3rd Estate wanted to vote with each member getting a vote
		- They had many more members than the other two
	+ King used the traditional method of voting (1 per estate)
		- So, the 3rd Estate broke away from the gov’t
* They became the **National Assembly** and went to draft a constitution
	+ They were locked out of their meeting place, so they went to a tennis court to draft it
	+ There, they promised to meet until it was drafted (Tennis Court Oath)
* The king’s forces were going to attack the National Assembly, but many commoners stepped in
	+ They stormed the **Bastille**
		- Royal armory and prison in Paris
	+ The king’s authority collapsed
* The Great Fear
	+ Many people felt threatened by the revolution
		- They were scared it would hurt them or their livelihoods
		- They were also scared that foreign monarchs would send troops to support the king
			* They didn’t want this to happen in their countries.
		- Militias were formed to protect themselves

**Destruction of the Old Regime**

* **Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen**
	+ The National Assembly proclaimed freedom and equal rights for all men, access to public office based on talent, an end to exemptions from taxation.
	+ All citizens have the right to participate in gov’t
	+ Freedom of speech and press
		- Women would get these rights, but not be allowed to participate in gov’t (including voting)
* Women in the US got the right to vote in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Louis XIV wanted to stay in Versailles
	+ Thousands of Parisian women marched there armed with pitchforks, swords, muskets, etc.
		- They met with him and told them about their plight
	+ They captured him and his family and marched them to Paris
		- Louis brought flour as a goodwill gesture
		- The royal family was virtually held prisoner in Paris
* The Church was reformed too
	+ Lands were seized
	+ Bishops and priests were to be elected by the people and paid by the state
	+ Many Catholics became enemies of the revolution
* Constitution of 1791
	+ Limited monarchy w/ Legislative Assembly (made laws)
		- Only men over 25 who paid enough taxes could vote
			* Only rich guys got in
* Many people opposed the new order
	+ Catholics, nobles, the poor, royalists
	+ The king tried to flee, but was returned to Paris
	+ Other monarchs (Austria and Prussia)
	+ The Legislative Assembly met for the 1st time in 1791
		- Declared war on Austria, but lost
* Because of these factors, political demonstrations broke out
	+ **Paris Commune** organized a mob attack on the king and L.A.
		- Captured the king and demanded an end to the monarchy.
	+ Power went to the Paris Commune
		- Made up of working people and the poor (*sans-culottes*= without fancy clothes)
	+ The revolution was about to enter a more radical phase