

## **Dramaturgical Study of *The Revolutionists*:**

There have been thousands of revolutions since history began, but there are none as famous as the **French Revolution of 1789**. It lasted 10 years and caused the death of hundreds of thousands of people and ended with Napoleon becoming Dictator of France.

### CAUSES:

- Social and economic inequality
- New ideas that emerged from the Enlightenment
- Economic mismanagement
- environmental factors leading to agricultural failure, unmanageable national debt
- Political mismanagement on the part of King Louis XVI

### OUTCOMES:

- Establishment of a constitutional monarchy followed by the abolition and execution of the French monarchy
- Establishment of a secular and democratic republic that became increasingly authoritarian and militaristic.
- Radical social change based on liberalist and other
- Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte
- Armed conflicts with other European countries
- Despite the fact that revolutionaries often long to have the people run their own country, it usually ends in tragedy, leaving the country worse off than it was when it began. The French Revolution led to the invention of the guillotine and the death of some 40,000 people, including Queen Marie Antionette and her husband King Louis XVI, the last king of France. After the revolution, the country was left no better off than it was before, being under the ruler of a dictator, the famous Napoleon Boneparte. Similarities can be found at the

end of many other revolutions.

### **IMPORTANT EVENTS:**

#### 1. The Storming of the Bastille

- July 14, 1789
- Seen as a symbol of the monarchy's abuse of power.
- The fall of the Bastille was a *flashpoint* (inciting incident/ beginning) of the French Revolution

#### 2. The abolition of feudalism

- August 4th and 11th, National Constitutional Assembly abolished privileges and feudalism in the August Decrees, ending personal serfdom. Also a 10% tithe given to the church was abolished as well.
- “During the course of a few hours nobles, clergy, towns, provinces, companies and cities lost their special privileges (François Furet, "Night of August 4," in François Furet, and Mona Ozouf, eds. *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (1989) pp. 107–14.)”

#### 3. The Declaration of the Rights of Man:

- August 26th, 1789
- Published by the Assembly
- Declaration was directly influenced by Thomas Jefferson and his work with General Lafayette

#### 4. The Women's March on Versailles:

- Earliest and one of the most significant events of the French Revolution
- October 5th, 1789
- Caused by the harsh economic conditions women found themselves under, especially the shortage of bread.

- They marched to the palace, demanding the king and his administration to move to Paris.
- As many as 7,000 women joined the march
- The next day, the King and his family moved to Paris, which legitimized the National Assembly

#### 5. The Execution of Louis XVI:

- Occurred on the 21st of January, 1793, on the Place de la Revolution, the former Palace Louis XV.
- “Conservatives across Europe were horrified and monarchies called for war against revolutionary France (Wasson, Ellis (2009). *[A History of Modern Britain: 1714 to the Present](#)*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 118. [ISBN 978-1-4051-3935-9](#).)”

#### 6. The Reign of Terror:

- Began around June or September 1793
- **Maximilien Robespierre** is an important figure during this time. He was in control of the **Committee of Public Safety**. Ironically, he was later executed in the same place as the former king because he was acting more and more like a dictator as the years went by.
- The Terror caused the deaths of some 16,594 people.
- During this time, **Charlotte Corday** killed **Jean-Paul Marat**, which caused a further increase of Jacobin political influence.

#### 7. The Role of Women:

- Women had no rights before the French Revolution began. During the revolution, they began to demand equal rights to men.
- The Women’s Rights movement was crushed in October of 1793 when the country’s all male legislative body voted to ban all women’s clubs. “The Napoleonic Code later confirmed and

perpetuated women's second-class status (Abray, Jane (1975). "Feminism in the French Revolution". *The American Historical Review*. **80** (1): 43–62. doi:10.2307/1859051. JSTOR 1859051).”

- Beginnings of feminism
- Important figures: **Olympe de Gouges, Charlotte Corday** and Madame Roland

#### OTHER IMPORTANT REVOLUTIONS THROUGHOUT HISTORY:

**The Russian Revolution of 1917** ended in a similar manner, with the abolishment of monarchy and the slaughter of the royal family and the creation of the Soviet Union under Lenin and later Stalin. The former caused the death of 10,000 people during the Red Terror of 1918 and the latter caused the death of hundreds of thousands during the Great Purge (1936-1938).

**The Haitian Revolution** lasted from **1791 to 1804**. It was inspired by the French Revolution. (This is important to know because Marianne Angelle is supposedly from Haiti and the Haitian Revolution happened right around the same time as the French Revolution.

**The Revolutions of 1848** were a series of political upheavals around the world, including France, Germany, the Austrian Empire, the Italian States, Poland and the Kingdom of Hungary. These were most democratic revolutions. These revolutions “caused the end of the feudal system of government” and “saw the growth of democracy in Europe (<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-10-most-important-revolutions-of-all-time.html>).”

**The American Revolution** took place between **1765 and 1783**, right just before the French Revolution, and led to the

American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), which gained America their independence from Britain.

### **Helpful websites to look at:**

The French Revolution:

<https://www.history.com/topics/france/french-revolution>

A Guide to the French Revolution: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/07/french-revolution-bastille-day-guide-jacobins-terror-bonaparte/>

### **Videos:**

The French Revolution OverSimplified, Part I:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qRZcXIODNU>

Part II:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQmjXM4VK2U>

The French Revolution: Crash Course World History 29--

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TTvKwCylFY>

What caused the French Revolution?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBn7iWzrKoI>

An hour and a half long documentary about the French Revolution:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0tafP8H0ok>

Marie Antionette Biography: Her Own Undoing

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VO9He\\_KhGy4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VO9He_KhGy4)

Haitian Revolutions: Crash Course World History #30

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A\\_o-nU5s2U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A_o-nU5s2U)

Maximilien Robespierre: The Reign of Terror

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_plscSbrWts](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_plscSbrWts)

### **Other:**

*Marat/Sade* is a GREAT play by Peter Weiss. The film was directed by Peter Brook. It tells the story of the assassination of Jean-Paul Marat by Charlotte Corday. It is set in an insane asylum at Charenton, where the Marquis de Sade, who wrote the infamous

120 Days of Sodom, was institutionalized from 1803 until his death in 1814. De Sade did actually put on plays while living in the asylum.

Here's the full play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJc4I6pivqg>. I highly recommend it.