

## Chapter 7-1: The French Revolution Begins

- **Essential Question:** Which estate would you want to belong to and WHY?
  - ▣ The Old Regime
  - ▣ The Forces of Change
  - ▣ Revolution Dawns
  - ▣ A Great Fear Sweeps France

# The Old Regime

- France was considered the most advanced country in Europe in the 1700's, but was great unrest caused questions raised by the Enlightenment.
- The system of feudalism left over from the Middle Ages called the **Old Regime** was still in place and people were divided into 3 large social classes called estates.

# The Old Regime

- The 1st two estates had **privileges** like access to high office and exemptions from paying taxes.
- **First Estate: clergy of the Roman Catholic Church**
  - ▣ 1% of population
  - ▣ Owned 10% of land
- **Second Estate: rich nobles.**
  - ▣ 2% of population
  - ▣ Owned 20% of land

# The Old Regime

- The rest of the French people (about 97%) made up the Third Estate
  - Within the 3rd estate there were three groups
    - Bourgeoisie (middle class)
    - Workers
    - Peasants made up more than 80%, paid about half of their income in taxes. They were eager for change

# The Forces of Change

- New ideas (Enlightenment) about the power of people took hold among the people of the 3rd estate, such as equality, liberty, and democracy.
- The success of the American revolution inspired them, and they discussed the radical ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau.
- Poor weather lead to poor harvests, the price of bread doubled in 1789 and many people faced starvation
- Heavy taxes, and government debt cause instability in France.
- France's government sank deeply into debt and extravagant spending by the king and queen was part of the problem

# The Forces of Change

- Louis XVI weak leader, paid little attention to advisors, preferred to be hunting.
- When he was 15, he married Marie Antoinette, a member of Austria's royal family, a long time enemy.
- As queen Marie spent so much money on gowns, jewels and gifts she became known as Madame Deficit.
- Louis put off dealing with Frances economic woes until France faced bankruptcy.
- When he tried to tax aristocrats the second estate forced to call a meeting of the Estates-General (an assembly of representatives from all 3 estates) to deal with crisis.

# Revolution Dawns

- The clergy and nobles had dominated the Estates –General throughout the Middle Ages and expected to again in 1789.
- 3rd Estate delegates, mostly members of the bourgeoisie, insisted all 3 estates meet and each delegate would have one vote, which gave them the advantage.
- In the Estates-General the 3<sup>rd</sup> estate demands more rights.

# Revolution Dawns

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> act of the revolution, the 3rd Estates delegates vote to establish the **National Assembly** to pass laws and reforms in the name of the French people.
- This in effect was the end to the absolute monarchy and the start of a **representative government**.



# Revolution Dawns

- 3 days later the 3rd estate delegates found themselves locked out of their meeting room, and they broke down a door to an indoor tennis court, pledging to stay until they had drawn up a new constitution.
- This pledge was called the **Tennis Court Oath**

# A Great Fear Sweeps France

- After rumors flew that King Louis had ordered foreign troops to massacre French citizens in Paris, an angry crowd of peasants overwhelmed the king's troops to overthrow **Bastille**, a Paris prison, in the 1<sup>st</sup> symbolic/violent act of revolution.
- Before long rebellion spread from Paris to the countryside.
- Rumors swept through that Nobles were hiring outlaws to terrorize peasants.

# A Great Fear Sweeps France

- A senseless panic, called the **Great Fear**, leads to great destruction in the French Countryside
  - ▣ Peasants broke into and burned noble's manor houses
- Women angered by the price of bread (1789) march on **Versailles** and break into Kings palace
  - ▣ Kill two guards and force Louis and his wife Marie Antoinette to move to Paris