

Causes of the French Revolution: Mid-Term Factors

1/3: International Factors

- In the 1770's, King Louis XVI paid for French soldiers to help the Americans in their War of Independence from Britain. However, these soldiers came home infected with revolutionary ideas themselves:
- "The freedom for which I am going to fight inspires me and I would like my own country to enjoy such a liberty that would fit in with our monarchy, our position and our customs" – a French soldier in America

2/3: Economic Factors

- By 1789, France was bankrupt. France was still paying off debts incurred by the wars of Louis XIV a hundred years before! The King was keen for the First and Second Estates to start paying taxes, but they refuse. So he started taxing the peasantry even more. They were very annoyed at this.



In this cartoon from the time, Louis is looking at the chests and asks "where is the tax money?" The financial minister, Necker, looks on and says "the money was there last time I looked." The nobles and clergy are sneaking out the door carrying sacks of money, saying "We have it."

How does this cartoonist highlight economic, political AND social causes of France's problems?

3/3: Intellectual Factors

- The 18th Century was the age of “The Enlightenment”, when many philosophers began to argue that society should be run by **logic** and **reason** rather than **tradition** and **superstition**.
- The following philosophers were particularly dangerous because they did not simply criticise the King and Queen, but attacked the fundamental idea of **monarchy** altogether.

**Rousseau:**

1. “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains”
2. “In the natural order, men are all equal”
3. “You forget that the fruits belong to all and that the land belongs to no one”
4. “To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties”.

Diderot:

5. “There is no true sovereign, there can be no true lawmaker, but the people”
6. “Man will only be free when the last king is strangled with the guts of the last priest”
7. “A thing is not proved just because no one has ever questioned it. So scepticism is the first step toward truth”

**Tom Paine:**

8. “A hereditary ruler is as absurd an idea as a hereditary mathematician”
9. “The state of a king shuts him off from the world, yet the business of a king requires him to know it thoroughly”
10. “Aristocrats degenerate the human species by intermarrying constantly with each other”

1. Highlight your favourite quote from each philosopher.

2. Which is your favourite quote overall? Why?

Main Task: Dishing the Dirt!

- You are a newspaper journalist and a supporter of King Louis. Your job is to destroy the reputation of the philosophers by finding “Juicy Details” about the private life of each one.
- Your teacher may wish to divide the class into three teams to investigate one philosopher each to start with, then feedback with your findings.

	Juicy Detail...
Rousseau	1.
	2.
	3.
Diderot	1.
	2.
	3.
Paine	1.
	2.
	3.

Homework / Extension Task

1. Produce a flow diagram in your books explaining how these three factors are connected to each other.

(a) Long-Term factors: The "Three Estates" system

(b) Short-Term factors: The weaknesses of (a) the King and (b) Queen

(c) Mid-Term factors: (a) Economic, (b) Intellectual and (c) International factors

SUGGESTION: If you think this is too straightforward, break this into 6 factors (underlined) and try to link all of them.