

## II.E.6

### People's Revolutions

# Popular Sovereignty? – How the French Revolution struggled with liberty, equality and brotherhood, 1789–1799

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In dieser Einheit werden sich die Lernenden mit den Ursachen, der Ereignis- und Ideengeschichte, der politischen Terminologie sowie mit kontroversen Deutungen der Französischen Revolution auseinandersetzen. Dazu werden sie zum einen ausgewähltes repräsentatives Quellenmaterial unterschiedlicher Gattungen analysieren, zum anderen aber auch Historikerdarstellungen lesen und sich dabei etwas grundsätzlicher mit dem Problem, wie komplexe historische Vorgänge linear strukturiert sprachlich dargestellt werden können, befassen. Insofern lernen die Schülerinnen und Schüler in dieser Einheit sowohl inhaltlich, methodologisch, sprachlich und auch ansatzweise geschichtsphilosophisch dazu.

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### KOMPETENZPROFIL

Klassenstufe: Sek. II

Dauer: 8 Unterrichtsstunden bzw. 4 Doppelstunden

Kompetenzen:

1. **Analyse** – Primärquellen und Darstellungstexte analysieren;
2. **Schreiben** – einen historischen Darstellungstext verfassen;
3. **Textverständnis** – Texte vergleichen

Thematische Bereiche: Neuere Geschichte, Französische Revolution 1789–1799, Geschichte Frankreichs

Zusatzmaterialien: Vokabelliste, Chronologie

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## Auf einen Blick

### 1./2. Stunde

**Thema:** "... one is above the will of all" – explaining the problems of the Ancien Régime

- M 1 Picturing the Revolution of 1789
- M 2 The Ancien Régime revolving around problems
- M 3 Abbé Sieyès's pamphlet "Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?"
- M 4 Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Enlightenment Philosophy
- M 5 Writing an outline: The problems of France in early 1789

### 3./4. Stunde

**Thema:** "... that every privilege, every distinction, every exception should disappear" – out-lining the liberal revolution of 1789

- M 6 Norman Davies on the French Revolution in 1789-1790
- M 7 The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen
- M 8 Further major changes until 1791
- M 9 Revolutionary Iconography

### 5./6. Stunde

**Thema:** "The Revolution is the war of liberty against its enemies" – trying to explain the Reign of Terror 1793-1794

- M 10 A commemorative plaque of the king's execution
- M 11 Increasing radicalisation
- M 12 The Sans-culottes
- M 13 Robespierre's speech on 3 December 1792 at the trial of Louis XVI
- M 14 Robespierre and terror – speech to the Convention on 'public morality'
- M 15 The radicalisation of France after 1790

### 7./8. Stunde

**Thema:** "The French Republic is immortal such as truth?" – assessing the French Revolution

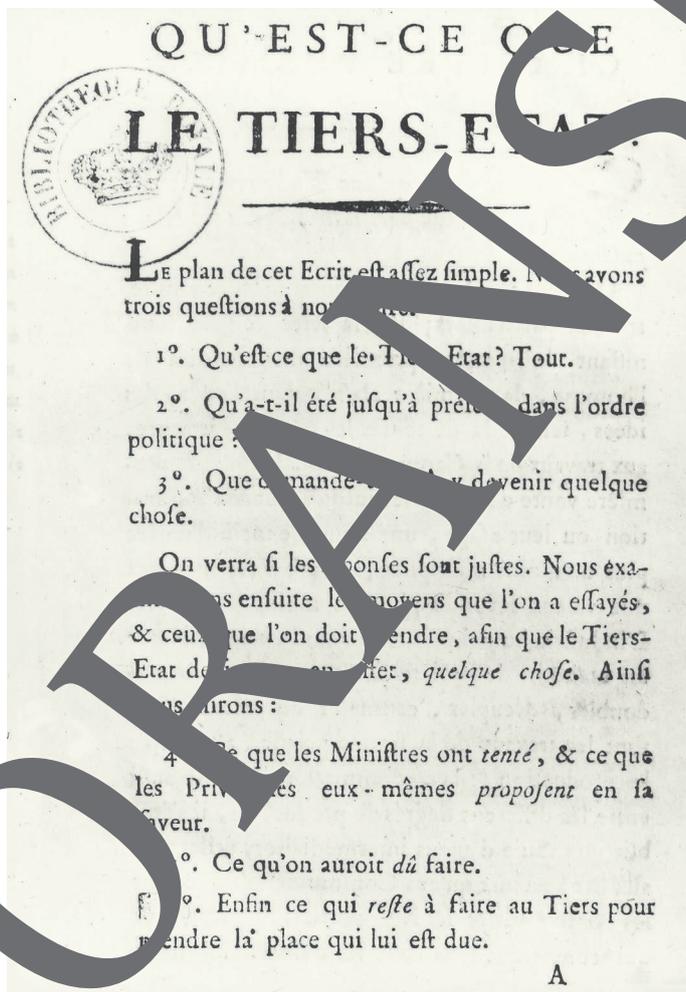
- M 16 The Directory
- M 17 Two historians' views on the Directory
- M 18 Three historians' views on the French Revolution
- M 19 Picturing (the) Revolution today

## M 3

## Abbé Sieyès's pamphlet "Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?"

In January 1789 the clergyman Abbé Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, who had read many of the Enlightenment philosophers' texts and who was to be in the Estates-General as a delegate for the Third Estate, published a famous pamphlet. Pamphlets were relatively cheaply produced small booklets. They were an effective way to reach many people – at least those who could read. People might even read it aloud to wider audiences. It functioned a bit like a post on a social-media platform today. It could also be distributed further. This particular pamphlet was a great success. Within about four weeks some 30,000 copies were sold. In the pamphlet Sieyès asks and answers the following questions:

- 'What is the Third Estate? Everything.
- What has it been in the political order so far? Nothing.
- What does it ask to be? To become something.'



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## Task

Based on your results from the previous tasks, explain why this pamphlet found so many buyers and why it had such a big impact.

## M 5 Writing an outline: The problems of France in early 1789

### Outlining history – a skills file for dealing with the operator *outline*

#### Definition

An outline is a clearly structured logical presentation of what happened. It tries to be as objective as possible. It is **not** an assessment that passes judgement on the past. For an assessment one writes an essay and not an outline.

#### Why do historians write outlines?

History is not about anything that we can directly see today, take a picture or measure and explain. We can only see relics of past times but not the past itself. Thus, when we try to reconstruct what happened in the past, we can never reconstruct the past directly. We can only construct a textual presentation of what happened in the past: we 'write history'. The building material for this textual construction is language. We basically write a linear text in which we present what happened. This text is called a narrative. A good historical narrative tries to come as close as possible to the real course of past events. But it will always fall short of presenting exactly what happened because we do not know all the details. Furthermore, time and space for our narrative are limited. Therefore, we must select carefully what we include (mostly what we regard as important and essential for the understanding of what happened). In fact, our narrative might in the end differ from somebody else's narrative of the same historical event because we have selected different points and might have prioritised them differently. Furthermore, we might have used different words. Despite trying hard to be as objective as possible, our choice of words might still be somewhat subjective. Adjectives can reveal what the author of an outline actually thinks: If somebody introduces his/her outline saying that the French Revolution was a great event, then this sets a different tone than when he/she says that it was dramatic or tragic. To call it historic (= historically influential), however, would be rather neutral. Nouns too can play a role. If you call the death of the French king an act of killing, of execution or of murder/assassination, makes quite some difference. Therefore, choose your words well.

#### The elements of an outline

1. **Introduction:** It states what the outline is about and the relevance of the topic (= why this topic is interesting for historians). It should be brief (about two sentences might already be enough).  
**Helpful phrases:** To begin with – Let me start by saying – In the following text I will outline/present... to take a chronological look at – In this outline I will deal with the following topic
2. **Main body:** It is clearly and logically structured and presents the aspects in chronological order or ordered according to priority (from the least important to the most important aspect). You might want to explain your selection of points or your priority ranking. Make sure that you link the different aspects.

#### Useful words and phrases:

- Establishing chronology: first(ly), second(ly), third(ly), then, afterwards, shortly after, following X, after X, since and for
- Establishing cause and effect: as a result of, consequently, this is why, thus, therefore, hence, because (of), since/as, for, for this reason
- Establishing simultaneity: while, as, parallel to, at the same time, simultaneously, during
- Establishing contrast: whereas, while, however, but

## Revolutionary Iconography

M 9

By 1791 the French Revolution had developed its own iconography (= images and symbols associated with the revolution). For example, the red liberty cap represented emancipation because in Ancient Rome liberated slaves wore this type of caps. In a way it can be compared to a meme in today's Internet culture.



Decorative plate of presumably 1791; text elements (English translation): 'union, force, liberty, fatherland'; private collection, © Kulok

### Tasks

1. Analyse the iconography of the decorative plate of 1791.
2. Write an outline of the liberal phase of the French Revolution. Restrict yourself to no more than 500 words. Try to link the various aspects logically and to include a brief introduction and a short conclusion.

## The Directory

IM 16

In late July 1794, with Robespierre dead, the Terror quickly resided. Surprisingly fast, the system of the Reign of Terror was dismantled. The dictatorial committee rule was ended. Jacobin politicians were purged. The Jacobin club was closed. France seemed to awake from a nightmare, suffering from revolutionary fatigue. However, the war against the alliance of counter-revolutionary European monarchs such as Austria, Prussia, Britain and others continued. But at home in France, the non-Jacobin politicians who were now in government tried to return to political stability. Yet, Robespierre's ghost lingered on. The Jacobins and their ideas of an egalitarian republic had not fully disappeared with the execution of Robespierre and the other leading Jacobins. So, the question was how France should deal with the complex legacy of the French Revolution. Let us first turn to what system followed the fall of the dictatorship of the Jacobin-led Committee of Public Safety. Below you find a chart describing the Directoire (Directory) as this system is called.



A caricature of an Incroyable (Unbelievable) and a Merveilleuse (Wonderful) – they belonged to the youth of rich bourgeois and noble Parisian society (often returning from exile) enjoying the end of the harsh Terror regime and dressing extravagantly; the young reactionary used their clubs to chase and beat the Jacobins.

*Wikipedia. Gemeinfrei gestellt.*

Napoleon closing down the Directory's 'Council of 500' Dutch gravure,

*Wikipedia. Gemeinfrei gestellt.*



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