

2 The French Revolution (1789-1792)

2.1. CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION

In the late 18th century, France was plunged into a deep economic and social crisis. Poor harvests caused food prices to increase, which led to **popular protests**. In addition, the bourgeoisie, wealthier now due to economic growth, were frustrated by their lack of political influence and desired profound change.

Furthermore, the **French monarchy** was **impoverished** as a result of its excessive spending. The only solution was to introduce **tax reforms**: if the privileged classes began to pay taxes, the French state could be financed.

2.2. THE OUTBREAK OF THE REVOLUTION

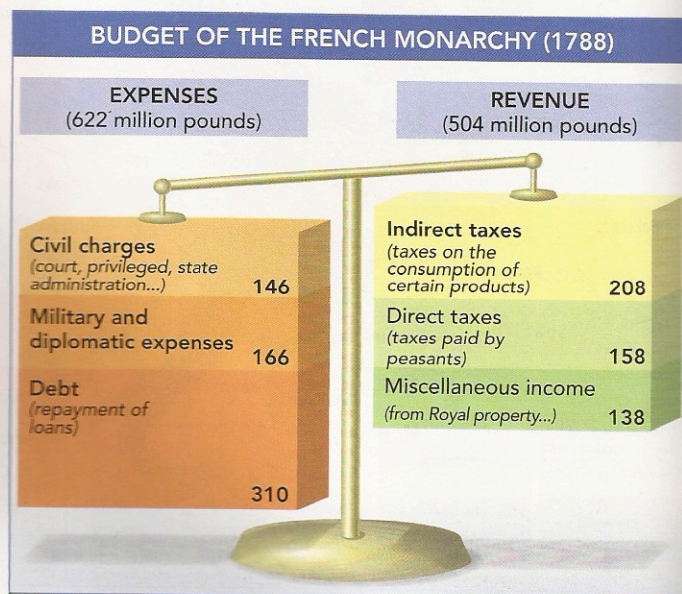
The privileged classes refused to accept the tax reform. They called for a meeting of the **Estates General** (representatives of the three estates), the only body that could approve tax reforms.

The king summoned the Estates General. They met in Versailles on 5th May, 1789, made up of representatives of the nobles, clergy and the Third Estate, and presided over by the king. The vote in this institution was normally carried out by estate. However, in order to increase its representation, the Third Estate requested individual suffrage. The king and the majority of the nobles and clergy rejected the request.

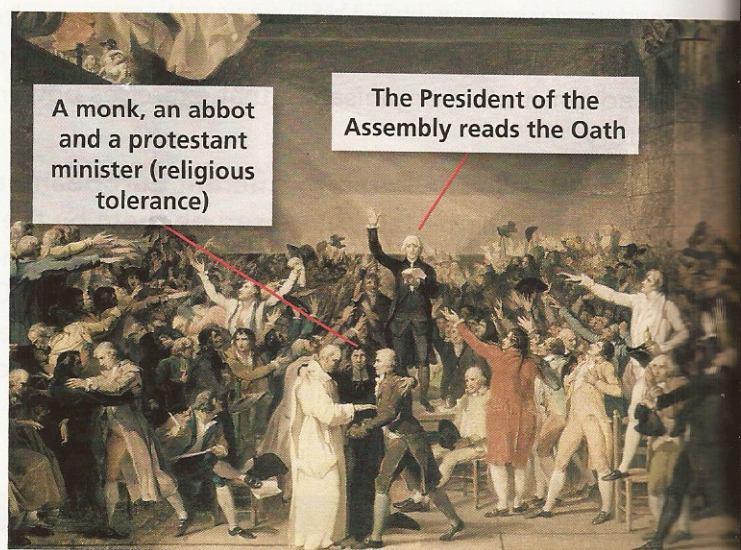
Therefore, on 17th June, the Third Estate proclaimed themselves the National Assembly, that is to say, representatives of the nation. Locked out of their meeting hall, they met on a tennis court and on 20th June made a vow called the Tennis Court Oath (Serment du jeu de paume). It stated that they would not disband until a **constitution** that reflected their demands was drawn up.

The people of Paris supported the Assembly and on 14th July, 1789 they stormed the Bastille. The Bastille was where political prisoners were detained and it held a large supply of weapons.

The Revolution soon spread to other cities. In rural France, the peasants rebelled against the aristocracy (the Great Fear), burning farms and palaces. Later that year Louis XVI recognised the **Constituent National Assembly's** legality.



1. What did the balance of the monarchy's budget look like in 1788? Why was this? What solutions did Louis XVI's ministers propose?



Jacques-Louis David: The Tennis Court Oath, 1791 (Serment du Jeu de Paume).

2. Describe the scene. Include information on where and when it took place, what social classes are represented, the oath they took and their common goal. Check your answers at www.tiching.com/93150.
3. Explain why this scene symbolises the end of the absolute monarchy.

2.3. PHASES OF THE REVOLUTION

The French Revolution marked the arrival of liberalism. Between 1789 and 1799 different ways of organising the state were put into practice:

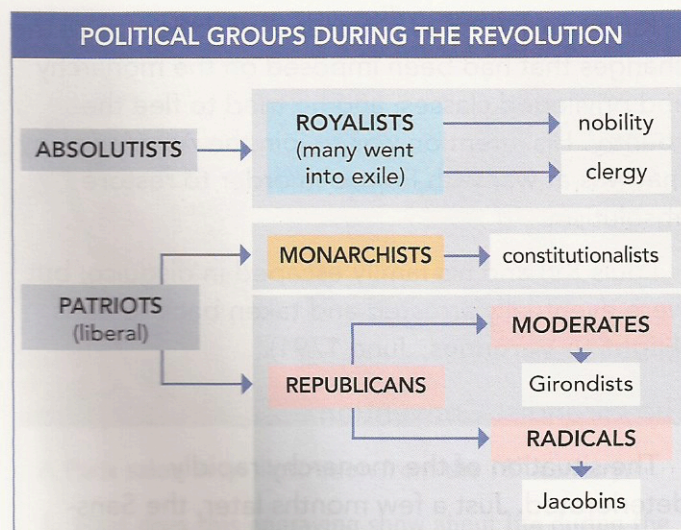
- The **constitutional monarchy** (1789-1792). A section of the bourgeoisie hoped to reach an agreement with the king and the privileged sector. It aimed to remove the Ancien Régime and impose moderate liberalism.
- The **democratic republic** (1792-1794). The radical bourgeoisie and the popular sectors proclaimed the republic. These groups attempted to make society democratic (universal male suffrage and social laws).
- The **bourgeois republic** (1794-1799). The moderate bourgeoisie gained power again in order to subdue the more radical political groups.

2.4. CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY (1789-1792)

The new Constituent National Assembly aimed to build a constitutional and parliamentary monarchy. It decreed the **abolition of feudalism** and approved the **Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen**. Its principles were based on man's right to liberty, equality and property.

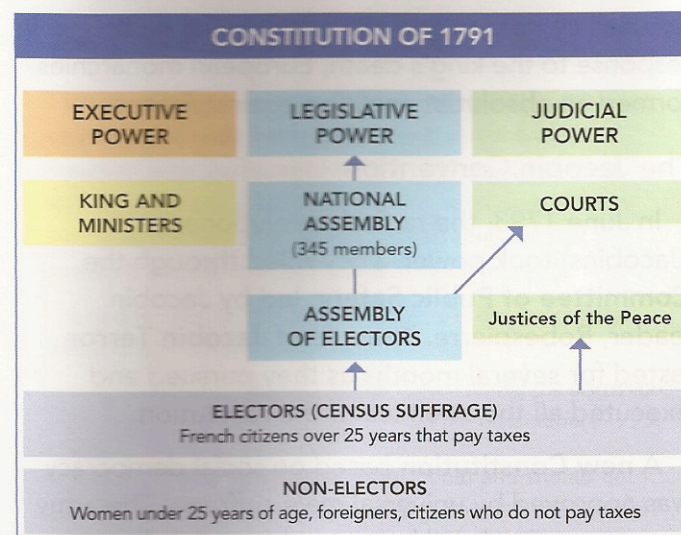
The Assembly drew up a **Constitution (1791)**, which included the separation of powers, national sovereignty and equality before the law. The king, however, was still able to **veto laws**. **Census suffrage** was also introduced.

Once the Constitution was approved, a **Legislative Assembly** was formed. It created a new army (the **National Guard**) and took further steps to ensure the equality of citizens. Church property was nationalised but the state promised to fund the practice of Catholicism. A **civil Constitution of the Clergy** separated the Church and state.



4. Describe the members of each political group.

5. What sub-groups were there in the patriots? What did they have in common? What differences were there?



6. Use the diagram to describe the power structure in the Constitution of 1791.

ACTIVITIES

7. Who usually attended the Estates General? What was the king's goal for the May 1789 meeting?

8. Why did the Third Estate want universal suffrage? What effect would that have had on the voting results?

9. Summarise the causes of the Revolution.

10. What phases did the Revolution have? Identify the protagonists and describe their goals.

11. What were the Assembly's achievements: 1789-1792?

3.1. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (1792-1794)

King Louis XVI was not prepared to accept all the changes that had been imposed on the monarchy and privileged classes, and he tried to flee the country. His intention was to join the Austrian army that was at war with France in order to restore absolutism.

Louis XVI and his family escaped in disguise, but were eventually arrested and taken back to Paris (**Flight to Varennes**, June 1791).

The Girondist Convention

The situation of the monarchy rapidly deteriorated. Just a few months later, the Sans-culottes, a radical left-wing group, arrested the king and proclaimed the Republic (September, 1792). The power went to the moderate revolutionaries (Girondists), elected by universal male suffrage, who created the **National Convention**.

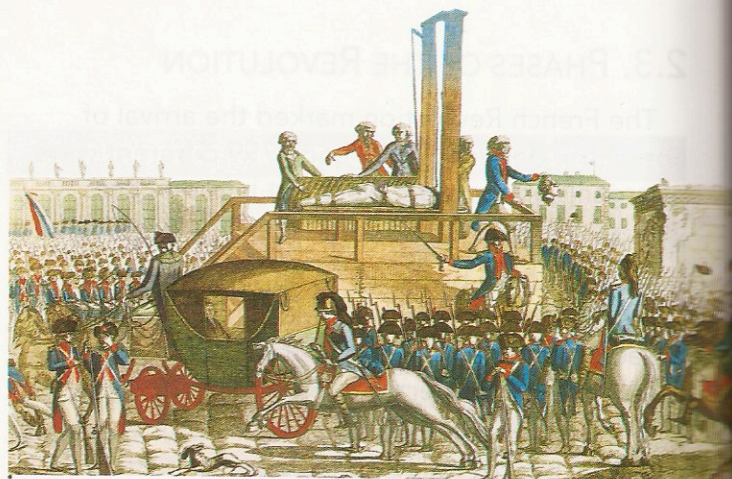
Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette were accused of treason and executed on the guillotine. In response to the king's death, European monarchies formed an **absolutist coalition** against France.

The Jacobin Convention

In June 1793, the radical revolutionaries (Jacobins) took power. They ruled through the **Committee of Public Safety**, led by Jacobin leader, Robespierre. The rule of **Jacobin Terror** lasted for several months as they pursued and executed all the enemies of the revolution.

A **new Constitution** based on social democracy was approved by universal male suffrage. The army was reorganised and large numbers of civilians were forcibly recruited. A series of **social laws**, such as price and salary controls (**Law of the Maximum**), were also passed in order to meet the demands of the Sans-culottes. A new calendar was even started and the cult of the goddess of reason was established. The aim was to create a secular society.

The Sans-culottes belonged to the poorest social group and their name comes from the fact that they wore trousers, not culottes (trousers tied below the knee) as the upper classes did. Illustration from 1793.




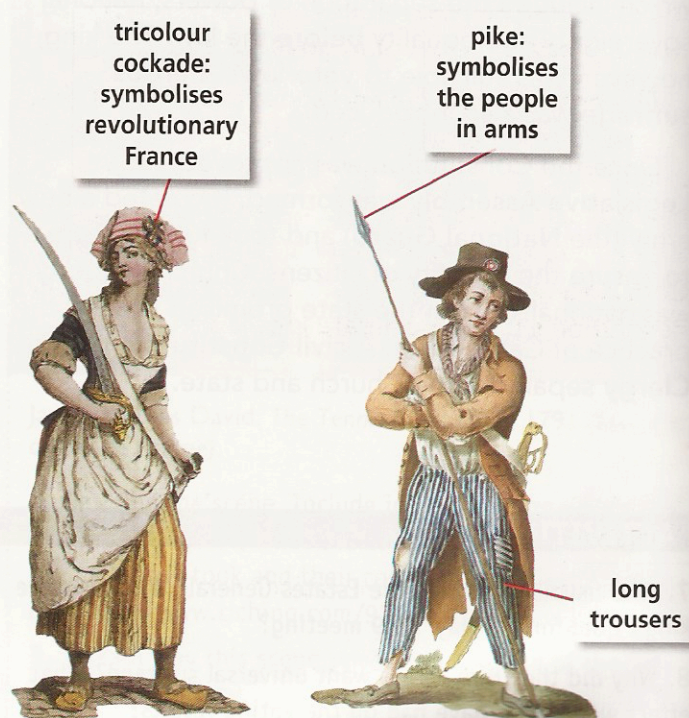
Execution of Louis XVI on 2nd January, 1793 (18th century engraving). His wife, Marie Antoinette, was executed on 16th October.

1. Why was Louis XVI executed? What was the charge?
2. Who attended the execution? What moment is shown in the engraving?
3. Do you think the king admits his guilt? Find out below.

@ Find out more on the Internet...

Go to www.tiching.com/93151

- Listen and check your answers to activities 1-3.
-  Prepare a newscast of the execution and present it to the class.



long trousers

The fall of the Jacobins

During the summer of 1794, the situation in France became less volatile. Internal revolts were suppressed, and army attacks from the countries that opposed the Revolution, were defeated.

Nevertheless, the majority of the bourgeoisie were opposed to the Jacobins and their violent methods of rule. In July, the bourgeoisie led a coup to remove the Jacobins from power and put an end to the political persecutions. Robespierre and other Jacobin leaders were tried and executed.

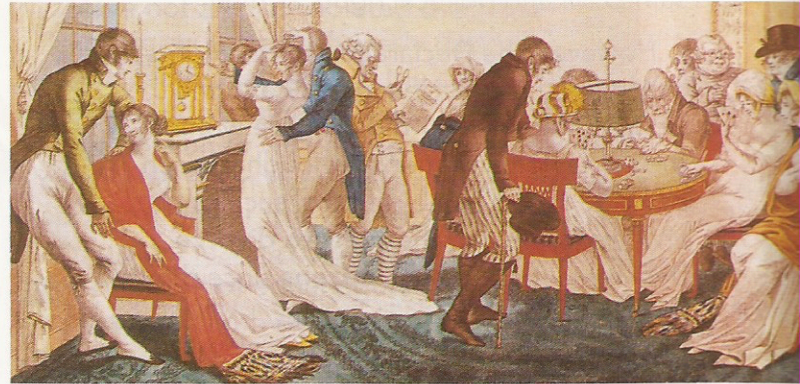
3.2. THE BOURGEOIS REPUBLIC (1794-1799)

Following the coup, the conservative bourgeoisie retook power. Its leaders implemented a **new Constitution** (1795). Under the new government, executive power was very strong, with a five-member board (the Directory). The vote by consensus was re-established and legislative power once again rested with two chambers (**the Council of Five Hundred and the Council of the Elders**).

The liberal politics of the new Republic stood in between absolutism and the social democracy of the Jacobins. Therefore, there was opposition to the government on two sides: on the one side was the privileged sector, which awaited the return of the monarchy, on the other were the Sans-culottes, who preferred the Jacobin government.

The ensuing political and social crisis meant that the **army** was the only body capable of reinstating order. In 1799, one of the board members, a young general called **Napoleon Bonaparte**, led a coup and started a new government called the **Consulate**. Bonaparte's aim was to implement the Revolution's more moderate ideologies.

ILLUSTRATION FROM THE 18TH CENTURY



A Paris salon in an illustration from the 18th century.

4. What does this engraving show about life during the Directory for the upper classes who had survived the rule of Jacobin Terror? How does it compare with life during the reign of Louis XVI?

A COUNTRY GOVERNED BY PROPERTY OWNERS

We must be governed by the best, the best are the most educated and most interested in keeping the laws. However, with few exceptions, the only men with these features are those who have property, who are rooted in the country where they have it, defend the laws that protect it and the tranquillity that it conserves (...).

A country run by the owners is social order, a country ruled by non-owners is the state of nature.

Boissy d'Anglas speech during the discussion of the Constitution, 1795.

- According to d'Anglas, who should and should not govern the nation: a Sans-culotte or a Parisian shop owner? Give more examples. Explain your choices.

ACTIVITIES

5. Who were the Sans-culottes? What was their role in the Revolution?
6. What was the National Convention? Who held the power during this time?
7. What reforms did the Jacobins introduce? Why did they fall? What happened to the Jacobin leaders?

8. Make a chart to show how power was distributed in the bourgeois Republic in 1794. Use the model on page 29.
9. What sectors opposed the new Republic? Why? What did they want?
10. What conditions led to the end of the Republic? Why did the military play a role in its downfall?

Women and the French Revolution

Women participated actively in the French Revolution. They demanded the same civil and political rights as men.

However, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in 1789 and the Constitution of 1791 did not give women the same rights as men. Although women benefited from some reforms, such as **civil marriage** and the **right to divorce**, they remained **passive citizens** since they could not vote.

It was at this time that women started to have a collective voice as they called for legal equality between the sexes.

Key women



Olympe de Gouges was a writer and feminist activist who took an active part in the Revolution, and drafted a project called the Declaration of the Rights of Woman

and the Female Citizen (1791). She was charged with activism and guillotined in 1793 for opposing King Louis XVI on the death penalty.

Madame Roland was an educated woman and a great admirer of Rousseau, whom she regularly received in her salon. Her influence was considerable among the Girondists. She was also arrested and executed in 1793.



She is credited with the phrase which she proclaimed on passing before the Statue of Liberty, as she was led to the scaffold: "Freedom, what crimes are committed in thy name."



Claire Lacombe, a French actress, founded a patriotic women's club: the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women. Watercolour, 1791.

Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen, 1791

Preamble. Mothers, daughters, sisters and representatives of the nation ask to form part of the National Assembly. They believe that ignorance, omission and contempt for the rights of women are the only causes of public disasters and the corruption of governments, and have decided to put forward the natural, inalienable and sacred rights of women in a solemn declaration. (...)

Article 1. Woman is born free and equal to men in rights. Social distinctions must not be founded on the common good. (...)

Article 10. No one is to be disturbed by women's opinions. If a woman has the right to mount the scaffold, she must equally have the right to mount the speaker's platform, provided that her demonstrations do not disturb the legally established public order.

@ Find out more on the Internet...

Go to www.tiching.com/93152:

- Write a short biography of Olympe de Gouges: her life and works.
- Explain why she is considered one of the first feminists.

THE NAPOLEONIC CODE AND WOMEN

The rights of any French citizen are recognised, but the rights of women are restricted to the minimum.

The husband should financially support the married woman and she must obey her husband.

Parental authority (parental rights) rests upon the children's father.

The husband should administer the assets of his wife and family.

A woman needs her husband's permission for any legal proceeding (acting as plaintiff in a lawsuit) and in order to work.

A woman cannot hire or dispose of property without the consent of her spouse.

Female adultery is a more serious criminal offence than male adultery.

In recognition of the right to equality

Have not all men violated the principle of equal rights by thoughtlessly depriving one half of the human race of the right to take part in the formation of laws, that is to say, by the exclusion of women from the rights of citizenship? Can there be a greater test of the apparent power that creates the habit, even among the learned men, than that of invoking the principle of equal rights (...) and forgetting it with regards to twelve million women?

Marquis de CONDORCET: *On giving women a citizen's rights*, 1790.

The denial of rights to women

Should women exercise political rights and interfere in the affairs of government?

No, because they should sacrifice these issues to concentrate upon those which they are destined by nature. The private functions for which women are naturally intended help to maintain social order. And to maintain social order, each sex needs to take care of that which it has been entrusted by nature.

What is the character of the woman? Customs and nature have indicated her functions: educating children, preparing the spirit and hearts of her children for public tasks, elevating their souls. (...) After seeing to her household chores, women are destined to incite the love of virtue. Thus they serve their country. (...)

Speech by the deputy André Amar, October 1793.



On 5th October 1789, thousands of women marched from Paris to Versailles in protest. Illustration from 1879.

@ Find out more about what happened in Versailles at www.tiching.com/93154

1. Which social reforms introduced during the Revolution benefited women?

2. Make a list of the social classes and professions of the women who took part in the Revolution. Think about how they participated (documents, activities, events).

3. Paraphrase quotes and facts from the documents. Ask your partner to guess the source. → S1: *Women have the right to free speech.* S2: *Olympe de Gouges wrote that. It's from the Declaration of Rights of Women.*

4. What reasons did most male revolutionaries give for denying equal rights to women? And the Marquis de Condorcet? What was his point of view?

5. Discuss the role of women in the Revolution: → *I think they were(not) important because...*

6. Compare the rights of men and women under the Napoleonic Civil Code. Make a table with these headings: *Extent of rights, Money and assets, Legal proceedings, Parental authority, Criminal offences.*

7. How would you reply to Amar's arguments?

4 The Napoleonic period (1799-1815) 12

4.1. NAPOLEON: FROM CONSUL TO EMPEROR

In 1799 Napoleon was named consul, which saw the end of the Directory and the beginning of rule under the **Consulate** (1799-1804). This was a period of **autocratic** and **authoritarian** rule. The **Constitution of 1800** did not speak of the separation of powers or of the declaration of rights.

Napoleon represented the interests of the moderate bourgeoisie, implementing **economic liberalism** and creating the **Bank of France**. He allowed exiles to return if they accepted the new government and signed an agreement with the Church called the **Concordat**.

At the same time, a set of codes (civil, criminal, trade), were drawn up that completed the Constitution. The state was organised into departments that were run by prefects (military governors) who implemented government policies. The public finance sector was reformed and in education, state schools were created (lycées).

Napoleon, now an all-powerful ruler, crowned himself Emperor in 1804 in Notre Dame, Paris.

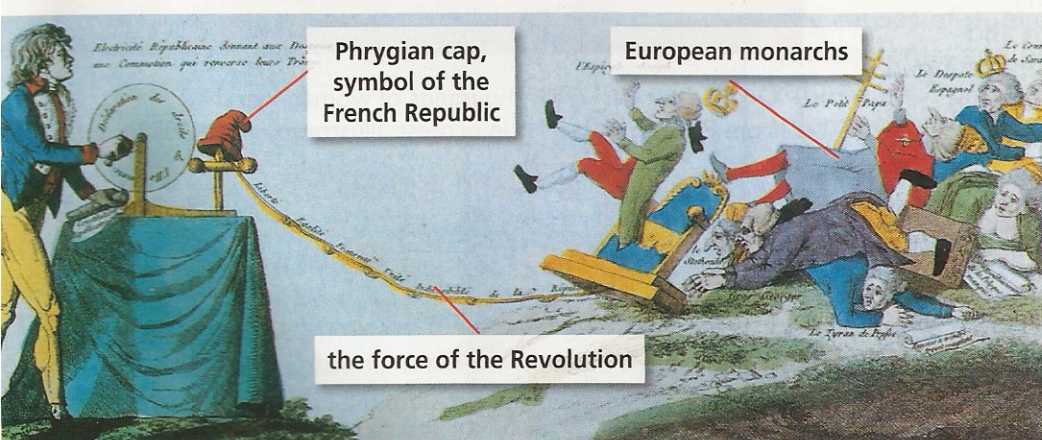
4.2. THE CONQUEST OF THE EMPIRE

Between 1804 and 1811, Napoleon and his army formed a great empire that spanned most of Europe, except Britain. In the conquered territories, absolute monarchs were overthrown and some of the principles of the French Revolution imposed: moderate liberalism in politics and economics, limitations on the power of the Church and the removal of some of the privileges enjoyed by the Ancien Régime.



Dominique INGRES: *Napoleon II on the imperial throne*, 1806. Napoleon's court was full of luxury and ceremony. He surrounded himself with rich bourgeoisie to whom he granted titles and dignities.

3. Does Napoleon resemble a king in this portrait? Why? How was his coronation different from a king's?



French cartoon, 1793.

1. Analyse the cartoon with a partner. The figure on the left is creating an 'electrical spark': What does the spark represent? Which monarchs are affected? What is happening to them? Why?
2. The caption for the cartoon is 'All fall down'. Think of some alternative captions and share your ideas with the class.

NAPOLEON'S PROGRAMME

I think my government should unite all the French (...). The end of the Revolution must be the result of the efforts of all, but to contain the various parties and make them harmless to one another what is needed is a strong hand, capable of resisting any pressure. (...)

The Revolution will not end until all emigrants and the clergy return subjected and controlled by an arm of iron, born of the Revolution.

Letter from Napoleon Bonaparte to his brother Joseph, 1799

- How did Napoleon think that France should be governed?



4. Interpret the map. Use question words and: → to annex, to oppose, ally - enemy, to be against, to rise up against, to be loyal to.

Example: → What allies did Napoleon...

5. Why is Spain portrayed as a satellite of France? Who was ruling there at the time?

@ Find out more about Napoleon's military campaigns at: www.tiching.com/93155. Which armies were most responsible for the defeat of Napoleon?

4.3. THE FALL OF NAPOLEON

Napoleon's military campaigns were responsible for spreading liberal ideas throughout Europe. However, the French armies occupied the nations by force and tried to make members of Napoleon's family or army generals, leaders in the defeated countries. He also collected taxes from the **annexed** countries and appropriated their wealth.

As a result, the French invasions sparked strong nationalist feelings in the conquered countries and large parts of the populations in these territories rose up against France.

A revolt that started in Spain in 1808 against the invasion and the imposition of a foreign king (**Joseph Bonaparte**) marked the beginning of the decline of Napoleonic rule.

In 1814, following defeats in Spain and Russia, Napoleon abdicated. He was forced into exile and fled to the island of Elba. He returned to power briefly in 1815 (The Hundred Days) but was defeated at the Battle of **Waterloo** (Belgium) by the great European powers (Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria).

A return to the Ancien Régime, in both France and Europe, now seemed inevitable.



6. Study the chart and listen to the summary of the French Revolution's legacy in Europe. What is missing? Complete the summary.

ACTIVITIES

- What name is given to the period under Napoleonic rule? How long did it last?
- What social group benefited most from Napoleon's rule? Why?
- What were Napoleon's objectives? List his most important reforms: → draw up, organise, create.
- Give examples of Napoleon's revolutionary principles.

- How did Napoleon conquer his empire? Who helped him control the conquered lands?
- List some of the effects of Napoleon's conquests.
- Why was the revolt in Spain an important event in the fall of Napoleon?
- Compare the rule of Napoleon and Louis XVI. Make a Venn diagram to show similarities and differences.