

France 1774-1814: the French Revolution and Napoleon, AS History notes

These notes cover the France 1774-1814 topic of Cambridge International AS Level History 9489 (European option), from the accession of Louis XVI to the first abdication of Napoleon. Each section ends with a box headed Why it matters, with the key dates. The final sections cover the main historians' debates, key terms and people, and six exam-style questions with essay plans.

1. The ancien régime and the causes of the revolution, 1774-1789

Social structure and privilege

France in 1774 was an absolute monarchy of about 27 million people, divided by law into three orders. The First Estate, the clergy (roughly 130,000), owned about a tenth of the land, collected the tithe and paid no direct tax. The Second Estate, the nobility (estimates range from 120,000 to 350,000), held the senior posts in army, church and state, was exempt from the main direct tax, the taille, and lived largely from seigniorial dues. The Third Estate was everyone else, about 97 per cent of the nation: bourgeoisie, urban workers, and the peasantry, roughly four-fifths of the population, who paid the taille, the gabelle (salt tax), the tithe and feudal dues. Privilege defined the regime, and the system was resented both as unfair and because advancement by merit was blocked by birth.

The financial crisis

The immediate cause of revolution was the bankruptcy of the crown. Support for the American colonists (1778-1783) cost over a billion livres, almost all borrowed, and by the mid-1780s about half of annual revenue went on servicing debt. Necker (1777-1781) paid for the war by loans and in 1781 published the *Compte rendu*, which claimed a surplus by leaving out war costs. Calonne (1783-1787) told the king in 1786 that the deficit exceeded 100 million livres a year and proposed a land tax on all landowners regardless of order. To bypass the parlements, the sovereign courts which registered royal edicts, he called an Assembly of Notables in February 1787; the Notables replied that only the Estates-General, last called in 1614, could consent to new taxes. His successor Brienne fought the Parlement of Paris, which refused the reforms, was exiled in August 1787 and became the hero of public opinion; riots followed in 1788, notably the Day of the Tiles at Grenoble, and the army proved unreliable. In August 1788 the king summoned the Estates-General for May 1789, the treasury suspended payments and Necker was recalled. This revolt of the nobles broke the absolute monarchy before the Third Estate had acted.

The Enlightenment, the king and the harvest

The philosophes did not call for revolution but changed how educated people thought about authority: Montesquieu argued for the separation of powers, Voltaire attacked the church and arbitrary justice, and Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762) located legitimate authority in the general will of the people. Through salons, pamphlets and the example of the American Revolution, the idea spread that privilege by birth could not be justified and that the nation, not the king, was sovereign. Louis XVI, who came to the throne in 1774 aged nineteen, was honest and well meaning but indecisive; he backed reforming ministers and then abandoned them when the court turned against them, and Marie Antoinette's extravagance and the Diamond Necklace Affair of 1785 damaged the prestige of the



monarchy. Finally, the harvest of 1788 failed, and by spring 1789 the price of bread had roughly doubled, so that a Paris labourer might spend 80 per cent of his wages on it.

Why it matters. The revolution was caused by the coincidence of several factors: a state that could not pay its debts, a privileged elite that would not pay tax, a king who could not decide, ideas that questioned the regime, and a hungry population. The financial crisis forced the king to call the Estates-General, and the Estates-General gave the nation a forum in which to claim sovereignty. Weigh these causes against one another; do not just list them.

Key dates: 1774 accession of Louis XVI; 1781 Compte rendu; 1786 Calonne reveals the deficit; February 1787 Assembly of Notables; August 1787 Parlement of Paris exiled; June 1788 Day of the Tiles; July 1788 harvest failure; August 1788 Estates-General summoned.

2. 1789: the year of revolution

The Estates-General

Elections in early 1789 were accompanied by cahiers de doléances, lists of grievances asking for a constitution, equal taxation and an end to feudal dues. The great question was voting: the Parlement of Paris ruled that each order should vote separately, as in 1614, so that the privileged orders could always outvote the Third, and the Abbé Sieyès's pamphlet *What is the Third Estate?* (January 1789) answered: everything. The Estates-General opened at Versailles on 5 May 1789. After six weeks of deadlock the Third Estate, joined by some parish priests, declared itself the National Assembly on 17 June. On 20 June, locked out of their hall, the deputies swore the Tennis Court Oath not to separate until France had a constitution, and on 27 June the king gave way and ordered the other orders to join them.

The Bastille, the Great Fear and the August decrees

The surrender was not sincere. Troops gathered round Paris and on 11 July Necker was dismissed. Paris, hungry and expecting a royal coup, formed a militia, soon the National Guard under Lafayette, and on 14 July a crowd seeking gunpowder stormed the Bastille, the fortress that symbolised arbitrary power. Its fall meant the king could no longer rely on force. In the countryside, rumours of brigands hired by aristocrats produced the Great Fear in late July: peasants armed themselves and, finding no brigands, attacked the châteaux and burned the registers of feudal dues. On the night of 4 August liberal nobles in the Assembly renounced their privileges, and the decrees of 4-11 August abolished feudal dues, the tithe, venal office and tax exemptions, and opened careers to talent.

The Declaration of Rights and the October Days

On 26 August 1789 the Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen: men are born and remain free and equal in rights; the natural rights are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression; sovereignty resides in the nation; law is the expression of the general will; all citizens are equal before the law and eligible for office according to talent. It ignored women, slaves and the poor, but became the founding text of modern liberalism. When the king delayed approving the decrees, thousands of market women marched to Versailles on 5 October demanding bread; on 6 October the royal family was brought back to Paris.

Why it matters. In six months France moved from absolute monarchy to a National Assembly

claiming sovereignty, from a society of orders to legal equality, and from a king at Versailles to a king who was effectively a prisoner in Paris. Three forces made this possible, the deputies of the Third Estate, the Paris crowd and the peasantry, and none could have succeeded alone.

Key dates: 5 May Estates-General opens; 17 June National Assembly; 20 June Tennis Court Oath; 14 July Bastille; late July Great Fear; 4-11 August decrees; 26 August Declaration of Rights; 5-6 October October Days.

3. The constitutional monarchy, 1789-1792

Reconstruction and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy

The Constituent Assembly rebuilt the state: 83 departments replaced the provinces, and citizens were divided into active citizens, who paid enough tax to vote (about 4.3 million men), and passive citizens who could not. Church lands were nationalised (November 1789) to back the assignats, a paper currency that steadily lost value. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy (July 1790) made the clergy elected officials paid by the state and cut their ties with Rome, and in November 1790 all clergy were ordered to swear an oath to it. Only seven bishops and about half the parish clergy did so; the Pope condemned it, and France split between juring and refractory priests. This was the Assembly's gravest mistake: it turned devout peasants, above all in the west, against the revolution, gave the counter-revolution a popular base, and convinced the king that he could not in conscience support the new regime.

Varennes

On the night of 20-21 June 1791 the royal family fled Paris for the frontier, leaving a declaration repudiating the revolution. They were stopped at Varennes and brought back through silent crowds, and trust in the king was destroyed. On 17 July the National Guard fired on a republican crowd on the Champ de Mars, killing about fifty. In September Louis accepted the Constitution of 1791, which gave him a suspensive veto but left real power with an elected Legislative Assembly.

War and the fall of the monarchy

The Legislative Assembly was dominated by the Girondins, led by Brissot, who wanted war with Austria to expose the king's treachery, unite the nation and punish the émigrés. The king and queen also wanted war, expecting France to lose and foreign armies to restore them; almost alone, Robespierre warned that war would end in dictatorship. On 20 April 1792 France declared war, and the army, stripped of its noble officers, was beaten at once. The king vetoed decrees against refractory priests and for a camp of fédérés near Paris, and the Brunswick Manifesto (25 July), threatening Paris with vengeance if the royal family were harmed, provoked the rising of 10 August 1792, when the Paris sections and fédérés stormed the Tuileries and massacred the Swiss Guard. The king was suspended and a Convention called. As the Prussians advanced, crowds killed between 1,100 and 1,400 prisoners in the September Massacres. On 20 September the army stopped the Prussians at Valmy, and the next day the Convention abolished the monarchy; 22 September 1792 became the first day of Year I of the Republic.

Why it matters. The constitutional monarchy failed for three connected reasons: the king never accepted it, as Varennes showed; the Civil Constitution of the Clergy split the country and gave the counter-revolution a cause; and the war, begun by the Girondins for political reasons,

radicalised Paris and made the king look a traitor.

Key dates: July 1790 Civil Constitution of the Clergy; 20-21 June 1791 Varennes; 20 April 1792 war on Austria; 10 August 1792 Tuileries stormed; 2-6 September 1792 September Massacres; 20 September 1792 Valmy; 22 September 1792 Republic.

4. The Republic and the Terror, 1792-1794

The king's execution and the crisis of 1793

The Convention was divided between the Girondins, the Montagnards (the Mountain, led by Robespierre and Danton and backed by Paris) and the uncommitted Plain. The Montagnards argued that the king must die for the Republic to live, and Louis was guillotined on 21 January 1793. War with Britain followed in February. A levy of 300,000 men provoked the rising of the Vendée in March, a savage civil war led by local nobles and refractory priests, and in April the army's commander Dumouriez defected. The Convention built the machinery of the Terror in response: the Revolutionary Tribunal (March), representatives on mission with full powers in the departments, and on 6 April the Committee of Public Safety. On 2 June the Paris sections surrounded the Convention and forced the expulsion of 29 Girondin deputies, who raised the Federalist revolt in Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux and Caen.

The Terror

Robespierre joined the Committee of Public Safety on 27 July 1793, and the Committee governed France for a year. The levée en masse (23 August) conscripted the whole nation, raising the armies to about 800,000. The Law of Suspects (17 September) allowed the arrest of anyone whose conduct or connections made them suspect, and the General Maximum (29 September) fixed prices and wages. Representatives on mission carried out mass killings at Lyon, Nantes and in the Vendée. About 16,600 people were executed after trial and perhaps as many again died in prison or without trial, while the Vendée war cost far more; only about 8 per cent of the victims were nobles. Robespierre then destroyed the factions: the Hébertists, the extreme dechristianisers, on 24 March 1794, and the Dantonists, who urged mercy, on 5 April. The Law of 22 Prairial (10 June) removed the right to a defence and allowed only acquittal or death; in seven weeks the Paris tribunal executed about 1,400 people, more than in the previous fourteen months.

Thermidor

By summer 1794 the justification for terror was disappearing: the revolts were over and victory at Fleurus (26 June) drove the Austrians from Belgium. Robespierre had made enemies of the recalled representatives on mission (Fouché, Tallien, Barras) and of deputies who feared they were next. On 9 Thermidor (27 July 1794) the Convention shouted him down and ordered his arrest with Saint-Just and Couthon; the sections did not rise, and the next day Robespierre and 21 followers were guillotined without trial.

Why it matters. The Terror is the most debated episode of the revolution. One view sees it as a response to circumstances, emergency government that saved a Republic fighting for its life; another sees it as the result of Jacobin ideology, the belief in a single general will that treated opposition as treason. The chronology supports both: the Terror was created in the crisis of 1793 but reached its height in mid-1794 after the crisis had passed.

Key dates: 21 January 1793 execution of Louis XVI; March 1793 Vendée rising; 6 April 1793 Committee of Public Safety; 2 June 1793 Girondins expelled; 23 August 1793 levée en masse; 17 September 1793 Law of Suspects; 10 June 1794 Law of 22 Prairial; 26 June 1794 Fleurus; 27-28 July 1794 fall of Robespierre.

5. The Thermidorian reaction and the Directory, 1794-1799

Reaction and the Constitution of Year III

Public opinion forced the men of Thermidor to dismantle the Terror: the Law of 22 Prairial was repealed, the Committee of Public Safety lost its powers and the Jacobin Club was closed in November 1794. The Maximum was abolished in December and prices soared. The Paris sans-culottes rose for the last time in Germinal (April 1795) and Prairial (May 1795), demanding bread and the democratic Constitution of 1793; the army was used against Paris, and the popular movement was finished as a political force. The Constitution of Year III (August 1795) was designed to prevent both dictatorship and popular rule: two councils, an executive Directory of five, and a vote restricted to taxpayers. The Two-Thirds Decree, reserving two-thirds of the new seats for members of the Convention, provoked the royalist rising of 13 Vendémiaire (5 October 1795), crushed by General Bonaparte's cannon.

Why the Directory failed, and Brumaire

The Directory is usually judged a failure. It had no legitimate base: attacked by Jacobins and royalists, it annulled elections it lost, purging royalist deputies with troops in Fructidor (September 1797) and Jacobin ones in Floréal (1798), and being purged by the councils in Prairial (1799). Finance was chaotic: the assignat was abandoned in 1796, two-thirds of the debt repudiated in 1797, and the treasury lived on plunder from the armies. Corruption was notorious, and the regime depended on an army whose generals became a power in their own right: Bonaparte negotiated the Treaty of Campo Formio (October 1797) himself after his Italian campaign. In 1799 the Second Coalition drove the French from Italy while Bonaparte was in Egypt, from which he returned in October. The Director Sieyès wanted a stronger executive and needed a general. On 18-19 Brumaire Year VIII (9-10 November 1799) the councils were moved to Saint-Cloud on the pretext of a Jacobin plot; when the Five Hundred resisted, Bonaparte's brother Lucien called in the troops. Sieyès intended a figurehead; Bonaparte wrote the constitution himself.

Why it matters. The Directory shows the difficulty of building a stable republic on a narrow base after a period of terror. Its failure was political rather than military or economic: by 1799 the armies had held and the economy was recovering. The lesson contemporaries drew was that France needed a strong executive, and the repeated use of the army in politics (Vendémiaire, Fructidor, Brumaire) made a general the obvious candidate.

Key dates: November 1794 Jacobin Club closed; April-May 1795 Germinal and Prairial; August 1795 Constitution of Year III; 5 October 1795 Vendémiaire; 1796-1797 Italian campaign; September 1797 Fructidor; May 1798 Floréal; 9-10 November 1799 Brumaire.

6. Napoleon's rise and rule: Consulate and Empire, 1799-1814

The Consulate and the reform of the state

The Constitution of Year VIII (December 1799) made Bonaparte First Consul with the power to appoint ministers and propose laws. The legislature was split so as to be powerless: a Tribune discussed laws without voting and a Legislative Body voted without discussing. Plebiscites with inflated official results approved it and later made him Consul for Life (1802) and Emperor (1804). From February 1800 a prefect appointed by the First Consul governed each department, and local elections ended. The Bank of France (1800) and the franc germinal (1803) gave France a stable currency; tax collection was centralised. Lycées (1802) trained officers and administrators, and from 1808 an imperial nobility was created. Fouché's police and censorship, which cut the Paris newspapers from 73 to 13 in 1800 and to 4 by 1811, kept opposition silent.

The Concordat and the Civil Code

The Concordat with Pius VII (signed July 1801, published 1802) recognised Catholicism as the religion of the majority of the French, not the state religion: the state nominated bishops and the Pope invested them, clergy were paid by the state and swore loyalty to it, and the Pope accepted the sale of church lands as final. Napoleon added the Organic Articles without consulting Rome, placing the church under state regulation. It ended the religious civil war and lasted until 1905. The Civil Code of March 1804 (the Code Napoléon from 1807) replaced some 360 local codes with one. It confirmed equality before the law, the end of feudalism and privilege, freedom of conscience, the security of property including former church and émigré lands, and equal inheritance among children. It was also conservative: it restored the authority of the father and husband, made divorce harder and favoured the employer's word in wage disputes (the ban on workers' combinations came from the Le Chapelier law of 1791, reinforced by the livret of 1803), and in 1802 slavery was restored in the colonies. The Code was exported to every conquered country.

From Consulate to Empire

A royalist plot in 1804 gave him the excuse to seize the Duc d'Enghien, a Bourbon prince living in neutral Baden, and have him shot, a warning that there would be no restoration. In May 1804 the Senate proclaimed him Emperor and on 2 December he crowned himself in Notre Dame in the Pope's presence. The Empire brought a court, a nobility, brothers on the thrones of Holland, Naples, Spain and Westphalia, and in 1810 marriage to Marie Louise of Austria.

Why it matters. Napoleon combined the achievements of the revolution with the methods of the ancien régime. The Code, the Concordat, the prefects, the Bank and the lycées gave France the stable, uniform, centralised state the revolutionaries had wanted and never built, while political liberty disappeared: no free elections, no free press, no opposition. Whether Napoleon was heir or betrayer of the revolution turns on which revolution you mean: that of 1789 (equality, property, careers open to talent), which he kept, or that of 1792-1794 (democracy and popular sovereignty), which he ended.

Key dates: December 1799 Constitution of Year VIII; 1800 prefects; July 1801 Concordat; March 1802 Amiens; August 1802 Consul for Life; March 1804 Civil Code; 2 December 1804 coronation; 1810 marriage to Marie Louise.

7. Napoleon's wars and fall, 1803-1814

Victory, 1805-1807

Napoleon's army was the army of the revolution: conscripted citizens, organised in self-contained corps that marched separately and concentrated to fight, led by officers promoted on merit, living off the country. About two million Frenchmen were conscripted between 1800 and 1815, and perhaps 900,000 died. War with Britain resumed in May 1803, and Nelson's victory at Trafalgar (21 October 1805) ended any hope of invasion. Napoleon had already marched the Grande Armée to the Danube, where he surrounded an Austrian army at Ulm and on 2 December 1805 destroyed the Austro-Russian army at Austerlitz. Prussia's army was crushed in a day at Jena and Auerstedt (14 October 1806), and Russia was beaten at Friedland (June 1807). At Tilsit (July 1807) Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I divided Europe: Prussia lost half its territory and Russia joined the Continental System.

The Continental System and Spain

Unable to beat Britain at sea, Napoleon tried to ruin its trade: the Berlin Decree (November 1806) and Milan Decree (1807) closed every port under French control to British goods. It hurt the Continent more than Britain, made French rule hated and drew Napoleon into two fatal commitments. To close Portugal he sent an army through Spain, and in 1808 deposed the Spanish Bourbons and made his brother Joseph king. Spain rose in revolt and a British army under Wellesley (later Wellington) landed in Portugal. The Peninsular War tied down 200,000 to 300,000 French troops until 1814 and showed that a people in arms could defeat Napoleon's methods: his Spanish ulcer.

Russia, Leipzig and the fall of France

Russia left the Continental System in 1810. In June 1812 Napoleon invaded with over 600,000 men, fewer than half of them French. The Russians retreated, burning as they went; Napoleon won the bloody battle of Borodino (7 September) and entered a burning, empty Moscow, but the Tsar would not negotiate. The retreat began on 19 October, and cold, hunger, Cossacks and the crossing of the Berezina destroyed the army; fewer than 100,000 recrossed the Niemen. In 1813 Prussia and Austria joined Russia and Britain in the Sixth Coalition, and Napoleon was defeated at Leipzig, the Battle of the Nations (16-19 October 1813). In early 1814 Napoleon fought brilliantly against three times his numbers, but Paris surrendered on 31 March, his marshals refused to fight on, and on 6 April 1814 he abdicated unconditionally at Fontainebleau. He was given Elba, and Louis XVIII was restored with a constitutional Charter.

Why it matters. Napoleon fell because of a war he could not end. His dominance depended on winning battles, and three things defeated him: British sea power and money, which kept every coalition alive; the Continental System, which made his rule hated and led him into Spain and Russia; and his enemies' learning from him, raising national conscript armies and finally combining against him. By 1814 France was exhausted by conscription and did not rise to save him.

Key dates: 21 October 1805 Trafalgar; 2 December 1805 Austerlitz; 14 October 1806 Jena-Auerstedt; July 1807 Tilsit; May 1808 Spanish rising; June-December 1812 Russian campaign; 16-19 October 1813 Leipzig; 31 March 1814 Paris surrenders; 6 April 1814 abdication.

Historians' interpretations

Was the revolution a bourgeois revolution?

The classic interpretation of Georges Lefebvre and Albert Soboul, drawing on Marx, saw the revolution as class struggle: a rising capitalist bourgeoisie, excluded from power by a feudal aristocracy, overthrew it with the help of peasants and the urban poor and replaced a feudal society with a capitalist one based on property and legal equality. Revisionists, beginning with Alfred Cobban (1955) and continued by François Furet and William Doyle, replied that the deputies of 1789 were lawyers and office holders, not merchants or manufacturers; that nobles and bourgeois invested in the same things and shared one Enlightenment culture, forming a single elite of notables; and that the nobles themselves began the revolution in 1787-1788. Furet argued that the revolution was a political and ideological event in which the language of popular sovereignty, once released, drove it towards the Terror. The current consensus is that 1789 was not a bourgeois revolution in the Marxist sense, but that it did replace a society of privilege with one of legal equality and property.

Circumstances or ideology; heir or betrayer?

On the Terror, the circumstances thesis holds that it was improvised in 1793 against invasion, civil war and economic collapse and ended when the emergency passed; the ideology thesis, associated with Furet, holds that the Jacobin belief in a single general will made the elimination of opponents logical, as the Great Terror of 1794, when the war was being won, shows. Most historians now combine the two. On Napoleon, those who see an heir point to the Civil Code, the Concordat, careers open to talent, the security of the land settlement, the uniform administrative state and the export of these principles to Europe. Those who see a betrayer point to the destruction of political liberty, the police state, plebiscites in place of elections, the court and nobility, the restoration of slavery and the subordination of women in the Code. Geoffrey Ellis and Martyn Lyons argue that he was heir to the revolution's social and legal settlement and betrayer of its political ideals, and that his real legacy was the modern state.

Key terms and people

Term or person	Meaning
Ancien régime	The old order before 1789: absolute monarchy and a society of privilege.
Estates	The three legal orders: clergy, nobility and the Third Estate (everyone else).
Parlements	Thirteen sovereign law courts which registered royal edicts and could delay them.
Necker	Swiss banker, finance minister 1777-1781 and 1788-1790; his dismissal in July 1789 triggered the Bastille.
Sieyès	Author of What is the Third Estate? (1789); later a Director and planner of Brumaire.
Sans-culottes	Artisans, shopkeepers and workers of Paris; the popular force of the revolution.
Assignats	Paper bonds, later currency, issued from 1789 against church lands; almost worthless by 1796.
Refractory priests	Clergy who refused the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy; juring priests took it.
Émigrés	Nobles and others who fled France after 1789 and plotted counter-revolution from abroad.
Jacobins	The leading political club; by 1793 the radical republicans around Robespierre.

Girondins	Deputies around Brissot who pushed for war in 1792; expelled from the Convention in June 1793.
Montagnards	The Mountain: radical Convention deputies backed by Paris (Robespierre, Danton, Marat, Saint-Just).
Danton	Minister of justice in 1792, early leader of the Committee of Public Safety; executed April 1794 for urging mercy.
Marat	Journalist of The Friend of the People; murdered by Charlotte Corday, July 1793.
Robespierre	Lawyer from Arras, the Incorruptible; dominant member of the Committee of Public Safety; executed 28 July 1794.
Committee of Public Safety	Executive committee created April 1793; the effective government during the Terror.
Thermidor	The revolutionary month in which Robespierre fell (27 July 1794); hence the Thermidorian reaction.
Vendée	Region of western France whose peasants rose against the Republic in March 1793.
Directory	The five-man executive under the Constitution of Year III, 1795-1799.
Brumaire	The coup of 9-10 November 1799 that overthrew the Directory and brought Bonaparte to power.
Plebiscite	A yes or no vote of the whole male electorate, used by Napoleon in 1800, 1802 and 1804.
Prefect	Official appointed from 1800 to govern each department for the central government.
Concordat	Agreement of 1801 between Napoleon and Pius VII settling the position of the Catholic church.
Civil Code	The single code of civil law of 1804 confirming legal equality and property and strengthening paternal authority.
Continental System	Napoleon's attempt from 1806 to defeat Britain by closing European ports to its trade.
Peninsular War	The war in Spain and Portugal 1808-1814 that tied down and wore out French armies.

Exam practice

Questions in the style of the 9489 outline study essay. For each, argue both sides with specific evidence and reach a supported judgement.

1. To what extent was the financial crisis the main cause of the outbreak of revolution in France in 1789?
2. How far was Louis XVI responsible for the collapse of the ancien régime?
3. 'The constitutional monarchy of 1789-1792 failed because of the war.' How far do you agree?
4. To what extent was the Terror of 1793-1794 a response to circumstances rather than the result

of Jacobin ideology?

5. 'The Directory fell because of its own weaknesses rather than the ambition of Napoleon Bonaparte.' How far do you agree?
6. How far did Napoleon betray the principles of the French Revolution in his rule of France, 1799-1814?

1. Financial crisis as the main cause. For: the deficit forced the king to call the Notables (1787) and the Estates-General, without which the Third Estate had no forum; the bankruptcy of August 1788 removed the crown's freedom of action; the crisis exposed privilege, since the only solution was to tax the exempt orders. Against: the Enlightenment supplied the language (national sovereignty, equality) that turned a tax dispute into a revolution; resentment of privilege by the bourgeoisie and of feudal burdens by the peasantry gave it mass support; the harvest failure of 1788 put the Paris crowd on the streets; Louis XVI's indecision let each crisis deepen. Judgement: the financial crisis explains the timing, not the nature, of the revolution; other monarchies survived bankruptcy.

2. Louis XVI's responsibility. For: he abandoned reforming ministers (Turgot 1776, Calonne 1787) under court pressure; he gave no lead on voting in the Estates-General and then tried to reverse 17 June at the royal session; he moved troops and dismissed Necker in July 1789, provoking the Bastille; his rejection of the revolution culminated at Varennes. Against: he inherited a bankrupt state that could not be reformed without the consent of those who profited from it; the parlements and the Notables, not the king, blocked reform in 1787-1788; the harvest failure was beyond anyone's control. Judgement: structural weaknesses brought the ancien régime down, but Louis's character turned a crisis that might have ended in reform into a revolution; a decisive king in 1787 or June 1789 could have emerged as a constitutional monarch.

3. The war and the failure of the constitutional monarchy. For: the war made the king's vetoes on priests and fédérés look like treason; the Brunswick Manifesto directly provoked 10 August; the war created the fédérés and the insurrectionary Commune that overthrew the king. Against: Varennes had already shown that the king did not accept the constitution; the Civil Constitution of the Clergy had alienated the king and much of the country before the war; the Constitution of 1791 was flawed; the Girondins chose war partly to expose the king, so the war was a symptom of the breakdown of trust rather than its cause. Judgement: the war decided the timing of the monarchy's fall, but the constitutional monarchy was already failing because the king would not work it.

4. Terror: circumstances or ideology. For circumstances: the machinery of the Terror was created in March-April 1793 in response to the Vendée, Dumouriez's defection and invasion; the Law of Suspects and the Maximum followed the Federalist revolts and sans-culotte pressure; most executions took place in the rebel areas; the Terror ended once Fleurus removed its justification. For ideology: the Great Terror of June-July 1794 came after the military crisis had passed, driven by the Law of 22 Prairial and Robespierre's doctrine of virtue; the Jacobin idea of a single general will treated all opposition as treason, so the factions were destroyed one after another. Judgement: circumstances explain why the Terror began and was accepted, ideology explains why it continued past the emergency and turned on the revolutionaries themselves.

5. The Directory's weaknesses or Napoleon's ambition. For weaknesses: the Constitution of Year III had no way of resolving conflict between Directors and councils; the regime annulled elections it lost (Fruktidor, Floréal, Prairial), destroying its own legitimacy; it depended on the army from Vendémiaire onwards and so trained the generals in politics; corruption and the bankruptcy

of the two-thirds lost it the propertied classes; the coup was planned by Sieyès. For ambition: Bonaparte had already made foreign policy at Campo Formio and sent troops to Paris for Fructidor; he abandoned his army in Egypt to return at the moment of crisis; after Brumaire he set aside Sieyès's plan and took real power as First Consul. Judgement: the Directory had made its replacement by a stronger executive almost certain, but the form of that replacement, a military dictator who became emperor, was the work of Bonaparte's ambition.

6. Napoleon as betrayer of the revolution. For betrayal: he ended political liberty (rigged plebiscites, a powerless legislature, Fouché's police, newspapers cut from 73 to 4); he created an emperor, a court and a hereditary nobility, the very things 1789 destroyed; he restored slavery (1802) and the Code subordinated women and workers; wars of conquest contradicted the revolution's renunciation of them. Against: the Civil Code made legal equality, the end of feudalism and the sale of church and émigré land permanent; careers were genuinely open to talent; the Concordat ended the religious civil war on the state's terms; the centralised state of prefects and lycées fulfilled the revolutionaries' aim of a rational, uniform nation. Judgement: Napoleon was heir of the social revolution of 1789 and betrayer of the political revolution of 1792; he kept equality and abolished liberty.