

ANALYZING RESISTANCE, COLLABORATION, & NEUTRALITY IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Directions: The French Revolution was one of the most shocking and tumultuous events in history. Its causes included the monarchy's severe debt, high taxes, poor harvests leading to a lack of food, and the influence of new political ideas and the American Revolution. It began as a movement seeking government reforms, however it turned radical and violent, leading to the abolition of the monarchy and execution of King Louis XVI.

You are going to analyze several key events from the French Revolution. For each one, you have to place yourself in the time period and make a choice on how you would respond. Would you:

1. Join the resistance
2. Collaborate with those in power
3. Act as if nothing had happened

If you choose to **resist**, you are joining those protesting against those in power in France. **Collaborating** means supporting the leaders in power. Finally, you could choose to ignore the events going on around you and **act as if nothing had happened**.

After reading about each event, take a couple minutes to think about how you would respond and the repercussions that decision might have. Then, circle your response, then briefly describe your reasoning



Name _____

ANALYZING RESPONSES TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Event	Response	Reasoning
The Storming of the Bastille	Resist Collaborate Ignore	
Women's March on Versailles	Resist Collaborate Ignore	
The Flight to Varennes	Resist Collaborate Ignore	
The September Massacres	Resist Collaborate Ignore	
The Executions of Louis XVI & Marie Antoinette	Resist Collaborate Ignore	
The Reign of Terror	Resist Collaborate Ignore	

Given the events that took place in the Revolution and in today's world, what does it look like when people:

Resist	Collaborate	Act as if nothing happened

What impact can that choice have on you as an individual and on those around you?

THE STORMING OF THE BASTILLE

On July 14, 1789, an angry crowd marched on the Bastille, a medieval fortress in Paris that was housed political prisoners. To many people in France, the Bastille was as a symbol of the monarchy's abuses and tyranny. Angry, unemployed, and hungry Parisians saw it as a place to vent their frustrations. The commander of the Bastille, Marquis de Launay and his troops resisted for a few hours before raising a white flag for surrender.



The Bastille's gunpowder and cannons were seized and the seven prisoners were freed. Launay was taken away to be arrested and tried by a revolutionary council, however he was instead pulled away by a mob and murdered. This dramatic action signaled the beginning of the French Revolution.

Decision: *Would you join the resistance and storm the Bastille, collaborate with the French monarchy in helping to end the violence, or act as if nothing had happened?*

WOMEN'S MARCH ON VERSAILLES

The Revolution had begun, and many people in France were hungry, unemployed and restless. On October 4, 1789, a large crowd of women demanding bread for their families gathered other angry Parisians, including hundreds of inspired National Guardsmen, and marched toward the Palace of Versailles.

The marchers believed the royal family was oblivious to their hardships. When they arrived, soaking wet from the rain, they demanded to see King Louis XVI. The king, aware of the danger, agreed to distribute food from the palace.

Some protestors discovered an unlocked gate and broke into the quarters of Queen Marie Antoinette who as an Austrian was particularly despised. In the chaos inside the palace, several protestors and palace guards were killed. Marie Antoinette escaped through a secret passageway.

The crowd demanded bringing the King and his family back to Paris to "live among the people". Louis conceded to their demands and agreed to go to Paris with the mob, believing it would only be a temporary inconvenience. The event, however, removed forever the aura of invincibility that once cloaked the monarchy.



Decision: *Would you join the resistance and March on Versailles, collaborate with the French monarchy in helping to end the violence, or act as if nothing had happened?*

THE FLIGHT TO VARENNES

The National Assembly, formed by the representatives of the Third Estate, was working on a new constitution for France. Their proposed limits on the King's authority appalled Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The Royal Family also felt like prisoners in their palace in Paris.

They decided to leave France and seek refuge in Marie Antoinette's home of Austria, hoping to eventually be reinstated on the throne as absolute monarchs. Before leaving, Louis wrote a manifesto denouncing the Revolution. He mistakenly thought that only radicals in Paris were promoting a revolution and that he was beloved by rural peasants and the common people.

On June 20, 1791, the royal family quietly left Paris in disguise. They managed to get within 30 miles of the border before being recognized in the town of Varennes. A postmaster recognized the king from his portrait on a coin. A crowd soon gathered, stopped the royal carriage, and forced the family to go back. The incident was devastating for the National Assembly. The King's attempt to flee and his denouncement of the Revolution came just as the new constitution was about to be implemented. Now they had to deal with a monarch who was against the constitution and very unpopular with the people.



Decision: *Would you join the resistance against the fleeing King, collaborate with the French monarchy in helping to end the violence, or act as if nothing had happened?*

THE SEPTEMBER MASSACRES

The King was widely viewed as a traitor for trying to flee the country. He was brought back to Tuileries Palace in Paris. On August 10, 1792 a mob attacked the palace and the royal family sought refuge under the Legislative Assembly's protection. Fearing further violence, the Assembly placed them under arrest.

There was a fear that foreign and royalist armies would attack Paris and that the inmates of the city's prisons would be freed and join them. Radicals called for preemptive action, especially journalist Jean-Paul Marat, who called on draftees to kill the prisoners before they could be freed. The action was undertaken by mobs of National Guardsmen and tolerated by the city government, the Paris Commune, which called on other cities to follow suit.



By September 7, 1792, half the prison population of Paris had been executed: some 1200 to 1400 prisoners. Of these, 233 were Catholic priests who had refused to submit to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, a Revolutionary law to take power away from the Catholic Church. The great majority of those killed were common criminals. The massacres were repeated in many other French cities.

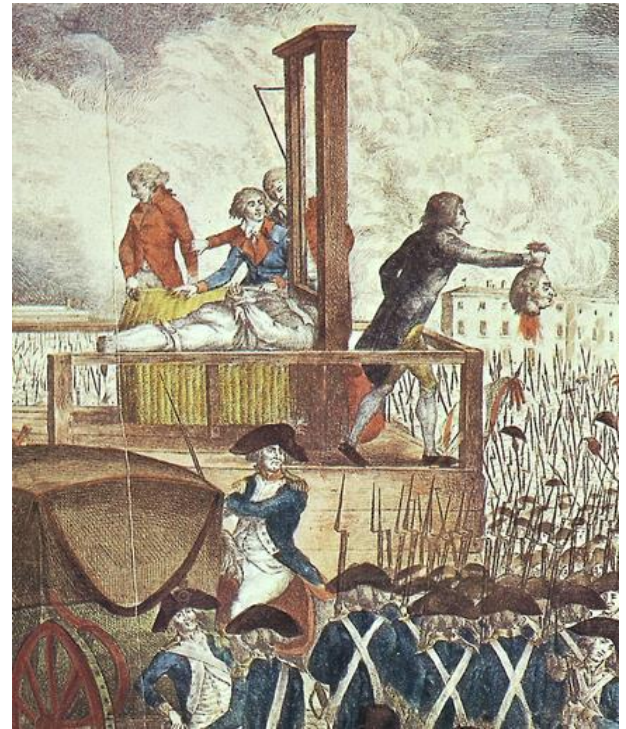
Decision: *Would you join the resistance in the September Massacres, collaborate with the French monarchy in helping to end the violence, or act as if nothing had happened?*

THE EXECUTIONS OF LOUIS XVI & MARIE ANTOINETTE

Following the arrests of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the National Assembly disbanded and was replaced with a new political body named the National Convention. Its first act was to declare France as a republic on September 21, 1792. Louis was charged with treason.

A brief trial was held and the verdict was unanimous: Louis was guilty. The vote on the death penalty was closer but it passed.

On January 21, 1793, Louis was driven through the streets of Paris to a guillotine and decapitated. Marie Antoinette had a short trial next. She was accused of numerous crimes, many of them based on rumors. On October 16, she too was found guilty and guillotined the same day.



Decision: *Would you join the resistance and call for the royal family's execution, collaborate with the French monarchy in helping to end the violence, or act as if nothing had happened?*

THE REIGN OF TERROR



The new National Convention was dominated by the Committee of Public Safety. Maximillian Robespierre was its leader and established himself as the leader of the so-called Reign of Terror.

Robespierre wanted to rid France of all enemies of the Revolution and to protect the “virtue” of the nation. From September 1793 to July 1794, an estimated 16,000 people were guillotined. Many radicals were executed along with moderates. Most leaders of the French Revolution were now either dead or had fled the republic. Opposition to Robespierre grew both in the Committee of Public Safety and within the National Convention.

When popular Committee member George-Jacques Danton was executed and Robespierre proclaimed himself as the leader of a new religion caused much resentment. On July 27, 1794, Robespierre was arrested. He was guillotined the following day.

Decision: *Would you join the counter-resistance against Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety, collaborate with the Committee in ridding France of “its enemies”, or act as if nothing had happened?*

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Teacher Notes

You can access a [Google Docs version of this lesson by clicking here](#). The Google Docs version uses online sources for students to research each event as opposed to the printable readings here.

Before starting the lesson, I think it's important to review the meanings of "resist" and "collaborate". Often students will get confused and describe how they would "resist" a protesting group. Whereas we want them to understand that the protestors are the resistance.

Also, you might want to note that the group in power flips after the execution of Louis XVI. In the early events, the "resistance" is against the monarchy. During the Reign of Terror, the "resistance" is against the Revolutionaries.

For the lesson itself, I cut up the readings along the line and place them at stations around the room. Students are split up and are given 5 minutes at each station to read and think about their response. I stress this to the students to really think about their decision before writing it down.

I set a timer for 5 minutes and don't let them move on until the timer is up. After all students have completed the stations, I have them return to their table groups to talk about their responses and have some students share so we can have a brief class discussion.

Finally, they complete the bottom portion based on the readings and our class discussion.

Obviously, every response will vary widely so there is no "key" possible for the chart. The final questions on the worksheet make for great class discussions and ways to connect to current events and protests that might be going on across the world.

Here are some additional resources you might enjoy for teaching the French Revolution:

