

FRENCH REVOLUTION

STUDY AND EXAM GUIDE

2ND EDITION

HTAV

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REVISION CHECKLISTS

AREA OF STUDY 1: CAUSES OF REVOLUTION (1744–4 AUGUST 1789)

Below are all of the key knowledge outcomes for Area of Study 1 (AOS1) in the VCE History Study Design. You may be required to answer a SAC or an exam question about any of these.

Revise each outcome carefully. Test whether you can explain it to another person or write about it in a practice exam question. Once you have revised each item, tick it off the checklist below.

There are four types of key knowledge outcomes. Basically, you need to be able to explain how each of the following *caused* the revolution. More specifically:

KEY KNOWLEDGE OUTCOME TYPE	WHAT YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO DO
 the events and conditions that contributed to the outbreak of revolution	Can you explain the causes and effects of each of these events? Can you explain how they were significant in bringing about a revolutionary situation?
 the ideas that played a significant role in challenging the existing order	Can you explain how these inspired the French people to challenge their government?
 the role of individuals in challenging or maintaining the power of the existing order	Can you explain how the actions of this person helped strengthen and/or weaken the government?
 the contribution of popular movements in mobilising society and challenging the existing order.	Can you explain how these groups gained the support of the French people and challenged the government?

Notes

Test

FRANCE AOS1 KEY KNOWLEDGE

Key Movements and Key Ideas



Nobility



Bourgeoisie



Urban workers of Paris



Peasants



Attack on feudalism



Enlightenment ideas: the critique of privilege, the critique of absolute authority, attack on the Church, claims to popular sovereignty, equality

TOPIC 1



Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette

Events and Conditions in the Ancien Régime That Contributed to the Outbreak of Revolution (1774–1789)





















Social conditions



Political conditions



Economic conditions

FRANCE AOS1 KEY KNOWLEDGE			Notes	Test
TOPIC 2 Impact of the Enlightenment Ideas (1774–1787)		Enlightenment ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Involvement in the American War of Independence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Jacques Necker and the <i>Compte rendu au roi</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Economic collapse and bankruptcy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOPIC 3 The Aristocratic Revolt and Demands for Reform (1787–August 1788)		Revolt of the Notables	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Marquis de Lafayette	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		The critique of absolute authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Day of Tiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Harvest crisis and food shortages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOPIC 4 Towards Popular Sovereignty (September 1788–June 1789)		The calling of the Estates-General and their regulation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		The <i>cahiers de doléances</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Political pamphlets, Abbé Sieyès's <i>What Is the Third Estate?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		The Réveillon Riots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Events of the Estates-General	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOPIC 5 The Revolution Materialises (July–4 August 1789)		Dismissal of Jacques Necker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Storming of the Bastille	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		The Great Fear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Night of 4 August 1789 (Night of Patriotic Delirium)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you want to achieve the highest marks on the exam, it is very helpful to gather and memorise a range of quotations that illustrate different **historical perspectives** (views of people at the time) and **historical interpretations** (views of historians) of the causes of the French Revolution. A good target would be to gather three quotations on each of the following:

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND INTERPRETATIONS		Notes	Test
FRANCE AOS1	Social, economic and political conditions that contributed to the outbreak of revolution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The significance of France's involvement in the American War of Independence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The role of Louis XVI in the development of revolution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Causes and significance of economic collapse and bankruptcy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The role and significance of Jacques Necker in the development of revolution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The causes and significance of the calling of the Estates-General	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The significance of the <i>cahiers de doléances</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The role of Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès in the development of revolution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The role of the nobility in the development of revolution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The causes of the night of 4 August 1789	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TOPIC 10: THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION AND THE CONSOLIDATION (MID-1794–26 OCTOBER 1795)

KEY KNOWLEDGE	CHALLENGE	GOVERNMENT RESPONSE	OUTCOME
Fall of Maximilien Robespierre <i>(July 1794)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of General Security differed about the allocation of responsibility. ▶ Robespierre gave a speech on 26 July 1794 (8 Thermidor Year II) in which he denounced a plot directed against him and threatened unnamed deputies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Convention voted overwhelmingly in favour of Robespierre's arrest. ▶ The Convention's troops captured Robespierre and several of his supporters, including Saint-Just; they were guillotined the same day (28 July 1794). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Reign of Terror gave way to the Thermidorian Reaction. ▶ Robespierre was thereafter blamed for the Terror.
Continuity and change in French society Thermidorian Reaction <i>(from July 1794)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Convention wished to punish the Robespierrists and dismantle the machinery of the Terror. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Within a month of Robespierre's fall, the central institutions of Terror and revolutionary government had been dismantled by the Convention. ▶ The Jacobin Club in Paris was closed and symbols of radicalism, including the busts of Marat placed in public spaces after his assassination, were destroyed. ▶ Changes were made to the composition of the Committee of Public Safety, the Law of 22 Prairial was repealed, and the members of the Revolutionary Tribunal were arrested. ▶ Over the rest of 1794, only forty executions by guillotine were carried out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Sans-culottes</i> lost their influence. ▶ Some royalists and émigrés returned to France. ▶ Moderate deputies became the new leaders of France.
Constitution of Year III <i>(enacted 22 August 1795)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A revised constitutional system was needed for the republican France that emerged from the Terror. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The new constitution was enacted on 22 August 1795. ▶ A bicameral legislature (two-chamber parliament) was established, with elections held every year. ▶ The lower house was the Council of Five Hundred (membership restricted to men over thirty years of age). ▶ The upper house was the Council of Ancients (comprising 250 men over forty years of age). ▶ The executive (government) was the Directory of Five. ▶ The electoral law restricted voting rights to men of property aged over twenty-one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The constitution achieved a stable republican government focused on restoring secure living conditions. ▶ France returned to a system in which the ownership of property granted certain rights and privileges.

VIEWPOINT

KEY QUOTATION

Napoleon Bonaparte (1795)

HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE

France soon returned to normal after the Terror.

'The memory of the Terror is no more than a nightmare. ... Everyone appears determined to make up for what they have suffered.'

Donald Sutherland

HISTORICAL
INTERPRETATION

After the fall of Robespierre, the new leaders of the Republic hoped to consolidate revolution and return to a stable government.

'The Thermidorians hoped to persuade the nation that by forgetting most of the recent past and attempting to re-introduce the rule of law, the nation could make a fresh start.'

Peter McPhee

HISTORICAL
INTERPRETATION

Robespierre became a scapegoat for the Terror.

'As soon as [Robespierre] died ... people rushed to vilify [criticise] him.'

Peter McPhee

HISTORICAL
INTERPRETATION

After 1795, wealth once more determined political and social status.

'Property was the basis of the social order.'

Noah Shusterman

HISTORICAL
INTERPRETATION

The end of Robespierre's leadership ushered diminished influence of *sans-culottes* and paved the way for a gradual return to the normality of everyday life.

'The deaths of Robespierre and his allies [meant] a return to more moderate policies from the government, and less emphasis on virtue and equality. It would mean less influence from the sans-culottes, and more influence from the wealthier classes. Soon the Convention would dismantle the Revolutionary Tribunal and free the suspects still in prison.'

Peter McPhee

HISTORICAL
INTERPRETATION

The Constitution of Year III was a dramatically different document to its revolutionary forerunners and closed the revolutionary chapter.

'The constitution [of 1795] marks the end of the Revolution.'



b) Using Source 6 and your own knowledge, explain how the critique of absolute authority challenged the existing order. (5 marks)

UNPACKING THE QUESTION

- The key knowledge outcome assessed by this question is the critique of absolute authority.
- The verb 'explain' means you need to give a step-by-step explanation of a historical process.
- The scope of the question is how the critique of absolute authority challenged the existing order, so you should focus on providing a summary of the ideas that challenged the unrestrained power of Louis XVI.
- The question instructs you to use Source 6. You will need to select 1–2 feature(s)/quotation(s).
- The question instructs you to use 'your own knowledge'. This means you need to extend beyond the points in the sources and include other points. To get full marks, you will need some specific evidence (such as laws, facts, dates, statistics, quotations, etc.).

UNPACKING THE SOURCES

- This will tell you that this is a primary source—a set of key legal ideas that exist in France according to the Paris Parlement (nobility). This proclamation made in the leading high court in France is addressed to the French public at large, but it challenges the king's powers directly. The date of the source (3 May 1788) indicates that it was produced during the period of the revolt of the Notables known as the Aristocratic Revolt, which united the nobility of the sword (Assembly of Notables) and the nobility of the robe (*parlements*) in their challenge of the absolute authority of the king. The source was produced about three months before the king's agreement to convoke the Estates-General, and before his recall of Jacques Necker to head the ministry. This demonstrates the pressure put on the monarchy to summon the institution dormant since 1614.
- Quickly skim the source to get a general understanding of what it is about.
 - » This seems to be a list of things that magistrates say limit the king's absolute power. You will want to discuss that aspect, as it challenges the ancien régime's foundations.
 - » Magistrates stress that the attempt to abolish the *parlements* forces them to declare the key constitutional principles that govern the monarchy in France, which supposedly bound even the king. Thus, his powers are not absolute.
 - » Magistrates claim that they are charged with maintaining these fundamental tenets of law, which challenges the power of the monarch to legislate at will.
 - » Magistrates reiterate that the king rules in accordance with the laws, which reminds the public that the king, who is sovereign, is also subject to the law.
 - » Clearly, they position themselves as guardians of the public order in France, which suggests that they do not accept the unlimited and absolute exercise of the king's authority.
 - » You will want to identify the motives of the magistrates and highlight that this is a continuation of their push to gain a greater role in the politics of France, as well as part of the Aristocratic Revolt.
 - » Use key 'new language' used in the document, such as 'nation' and 'citizens'.
- Then, closely re-read the source. This will ensure that you have not missed anything and will allow you to select useful quotations. Underline or highlight three short quotations that reveal a way the magistrates criticised and challenged Louis XVI. Look for quotations of less than ten words in length.

GATHERING EVIDENCE FROM YOUR OWN KNOWLEDGE

- The nobles were the first group to challenge and critique the king's absolute authority by demanding an Estates-General to decide on fiscal reforms, rather than simply accepting the will of the king. This is evident in Source 6, when the magistrates assert 'the right of the nation to grant taxation freely in an Estates General'.
- By drawing on the idea of the 'nation', the magistrates also critique the king's position as sovereign. Traditionally, the king embodied the nation and, as such, his decisions went unquestioned. The magistrates now challenged this by calling for a meeting of all three orders and asserting that it was their 'right' to do so. Succumbing to such demands would make the sovereign king look weak.
- The magistrates and the king had previously butted heads in 1787, with the king exiling (15 August) and then recalling magistrates (15 September) of the Paris Parlement who challenged his authority by demanding an Estates-General. By refusing to register much-needed loans and issuing public protests, such as Source 6, the magistrates attempted to destabilise the king's position and weaken his absolute power.
- The way that Louis XVI responded to criticisms such as Source 6—by 'parading a show of royal authority but then shrinking from enforcing it' (Schama)—only hardened the resolve of the nobles and other sections of society to continue to critique and challenge the king.

ANSWERING THE QUESTION

Writing tip: The best responses will smoothly integrate quotations from the sources and meaningfully connect these to your argument. For example, 'The magistrates became increasingly bold in their challenges to Louis XVI's power, which is evident in Source 6, as they go so far as to assert that it was "the right of the courts ... to verify the king's legislation", seemingly ignoring the king's absolute authority'.

Practise starting a sentence with a quotation, and ending it with an explanation of what the quotation refers to. Then, practise starting a sentence with your own fact, and ending with a quotation that backs this up. You can see examples of both strategies in the sample response below. Try using some of these connective phrases in your own writing:

The source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... captures the idea that exemplifies the belief that reflects the fact that however, in reality but this is misleading, because ... 	Your factual knowledge
Your factual knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... reflected in the source by described in the source as depicted in the image as highlighted by the source through ... 	The source

SAMPLE RESPONSE, WITH CONNECTIVE PHRASES HIGHLIGHTED

Public criticism and defiance of Louis XVI served to weaken his position as an unquestionable monarch. In Source 6, the magistrates assert that they had the right 'to verify the king's legislation', **suggesting that** the king could not legislate at will. **This was misleading, as in reality** Louis XVI was entitled to do so. The Paris Parlement had previously challenged the existing order by calling the king's actions 'illegal' (19 November 1787). Louis's 'catastrophic' (Doyle) response that the registration of loans was 'legal because I will it' made him appear to be a despot, thus, destabilising his own position. Criticisms of the use of royal power throughout 1787–1789 ultimately weakened the king to the extent that his position as absolute monarch was successfully challenged during the Estates-General of 1789. (130 words)