

Discuss the reasons that France was ripe for a revolution in the years leading up...

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Introduction The French Revolution could be considered as a turning point in the history of Europe in terms of magnitude and intensity. Starting from the storming of the Bastille in 1789 the revolutionary spirit spread like wildfire across the whole of France. The revolution was a result of long borne grievance and resentment that eventually converted into deep hatred for the two self-declared spear heads of the nation, the church and the king. The revolutionaries belonged to what is commonly called 'the third Estate' comprising of the peasants, the artisans, the workers and the intellectual middle class. It was under the motivation, guidance and inspiration of the bourgeois that the French revolution took place.

Reasons that led to the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789

There have been a lot of debates and discussions as to what led to the French revolution. Critics vary in their analysis of the true cause behind the revolution. According to Hunt (p 5), the middle-class intellectuals were the masterminds of the revolutionary plot as this particular social class was economically well-off, socially aware and educationally advanced. The bourgeoisies were against feudalism and absolutism and stood for democracy. Furet is of the opinion that one of the many reasons of the French Revolution was a change in the mindset of people for a newer and liberal kind of political establishment. On one hand the increasing exploitation of the third Estate with the drainage of the royal treasury spent on mindless luxury of the nobility, levying heavy taxes on common people at whim and on the other the coming into sense and socio-economic status of the bourgeois were reasons for the mass outburst. Moreover, it was a

revolution where women too played significant roles as the social status of women was as good as nothing (Levy et al). There was a demand for the declaration of the rights of man that was behind the radical decision to storm Bastille in 1789 (Hunt et al p 653, Lualdi p 50-52). However, there was no attempt to reform the older policies to uplift the general scenario of the ailing land and its people.

### Sieyes' theory on the third Estate

Joseph Sieyes has provided a vivid and detailed description of the function and potential of the third Estate thereby nullifying any requirement or presence of the other two Estates that of the King and the Church. He has defined his own class system that is not based on the paradoxical concept of hierarchy but on an innovative concept of work sequence. According to him peasants should ideally belong to the first class because agriculture is the basis of any nation. Next he puts the workers or the labourers in the second class who provide finesse to the raw material and then the merchants as the third class who reach out the finished products to the consumers. Sieyes also condemns the authoritative institutions, the monarchy and the church, for being despotic and unworthy. He challenges them with the third Estate and claims that the latter has all the ingredients to rule the nation. Sieyes' theory which was loosely based on the concept of a socialistic, republican state has indeed become true for every nation all over the world. His approach is not rational and appropriate but most significantly humanitarian in nature. But on the other hand he is a ruthless politician and thinker who believed that any hindrances on the path of prosperity should be eliminated (Hancock, p

130). This explains the reason behind dispensing death penalty to the royal members.

### Conclusion

In conclusion it could be said that the French Revolution is a landmark as it upholds the principles of democracy and liberty. It made way to other revolutions where people refused to compromise with exploitation and united in protest. The revolution also witnesses the kind of devastation brought about by an enraged mass. In spite of a series of hopes and disillusionments there have been path-breaking theories like that of Sieyès which have enriched the political and social institutions till today.

### Works Cited

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