

The french and their revolution by richard cobb book review example

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1: Book Information

This book is as a result of informative essays on the daily life during the French revolution. The essays are presented from a Master historian who had the gift of understanding some great historic events in terms of ordinary human relations. The author admired chronicles of daily life in Revolutionary France. He gathers the accounts into one volume with an enlightening introduction by his former pupil David Gilmour. In the book, the reader is able to not only meet history makers like Danton and Robespierre but is able to understand the occurrence of several events during the time of the revolutions. In the introduction part, Gilmour describes history as an event that involves a lot of actions and not only spending time in the archives retrieving information. He states that “ history has to be walked, observed, smelt, drunk and listened to.”

2: Why did you choose this book?

I chose this book since it gives a chronological flow of events from a renowned historian who has a lot of experience and knowledge about the French Revolution. The author amalgamated the events into short essays and presented the occurrences. Though is from Britain, he worked in France and got recognized by the award of the membership of the Legion h'Honneur. This book is as a result of his combined works on the past chronological accounts of the French revolution. Being a professor of modern history, he had a lot of experience on modern history. The period he worked in France also enabled him gather a wide variety of resources that enabled him give an elaborate and comprehensive account of the occurrences during

the French revolution. The wealth of knowledge possessed by this scholar were the main factors that inspired my choice as I was able to get a professional overview of the events that occurred during the French Revolution.

3: Summary of contents and conclusions

The book “ The French and their Revolution by Richard Cobb” is a collection of several essays written by Richard Cobb on the account of French Revolution. The work which are collected in this book are generally a representation of Richard Cobb’s works and include: “ his interest in counterrevolution, the individual and authority, popular protest, government repression, human motivation and social class.” The book also has some two appendices one identifying the figures used during the revolution and the historians involved while other appendix shows the association between the Gregorian calendars and the republican calendars. This book is very valuable as a tool for graduate studies.

This work is as a result a broad representation of Richard Cobb’s work that focuses on les petites gens, the influence it had on revolution and the influence of revolution to them. In the final accounts of his work, the author recounts the sad testimony of the unwed mothers making a declaration to identify their seducers and request for a place in the fondling hospital for their unborn children. The mothers state that the revolution is not important to them as their unwanted pregnancies.

The narratives cover different aspects of the French Revolution which can be summarized as follows:

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- i. The Revolutionary Mentality in France
- ii. Revolutionary Situations in France 1789-1968
- iii. The Officers and Men of the Parisian Armee
- iv. Paris and the Seine 1792-1802
- v. Popular Movements', Popular Protest, and Repression in France 1793-1818

- vi. The Pattern of Popular Protest 1795-1815.
- vii. The Popular Movement in Decline (1795-1818) and the Nature of Sans-Culotte Militancy

- viii. The Popular Movement in its Prime

- ix. the sources of counter-Revolutionary
- x. counter revolution and the environment
- xi. the biographical approach and the personal case history
- xii. living on the fringe of revolution

- xiii. a view of the street (seduction and Pregnancy)

In the appendix section, the following issues are covered

- i. revolutionary figures (Fractions and historians)
- ii. the revolutionary calendar (Introduction by David Gilmour)

About the author

Cob was the chair of the modern history at Oxford. He became well known in 1970s for his works on the social history of the French revolution.

4: If primary, what does it tell you about this period of the past; if secondary, author's qualifications.

This is a primary source as it gives an account of events from a first person's perspective. The author has used some reference materials that have helped him to carry out the analysis and the write the comprehensive essays. The author gives a clear depiction of how events took place during the time of the French revolution. He gives a clear account of how some women were subjected to harsh conditions and some became pregnant in the process. He also gives an account of some of the mothers who never saw any significance on the French revolution but were extremely worried about their unwanted pregnancies. He also gives the reader a chronological account of the events that occurred during the time of the French Revolution.

5: If primary, how does it help you to understand the past; if secondary, what is the author's approach?

The set of narratives represented in Richard Cobb's work makes it easy for anyone studying the history of the French Revolution to clearly understand the events that took place that led to the French Revolution and the reactions that were experienced during that time. The author was one of the greatest historians of the French Revolution. His unique contribution was to create the experiences of the common men and women of provincial France who took part in the turmoil of the late 18th century. The spontaneous imagination which was some of Richard Cobb's haul marks are epitomized in the selections of the extracts which were taken from his three major books in English. These narratives make up a logical whole which gives a revelation on the human face of the revolutionary army and the impacts they had.

6: If primary, what is author's view; if secondary, how convincing is author's approach?

The author's views the whole situation from a non-biased point of view. He attributed the revolution to the ill treatment that the French citizens were going through. He is however, not quick to support or oppose the revolution but from the writings he states categorically that the revolution was inevitable as the ruling class had tested the patience of the citizens for quite some time and now it was the chance of the citizens to react. He states that the nature of the internal affairs in France contributed towards the eruption of the French Revolution since it provided for a very conducive environment for the same. Some of the factors that contributed towards the revolution included the deteriorating economy and oppression that kept on testing the patience of the citizens. There are some civil disobediences that started emerging after the Tennis Court Oath. This paved way for the revolution.

7: What kinds of evidence are used by author?

The author uses quite a number of evidence to drive the point home. Based on the fact that he had worked in France and had several works written about the revolution, he is able to show the readers the factors that propagated the revolution. Some of them included the oppression and the economic stress that the citizens were going through that propagated their revolt. The author also states that the peasants revolted against the feudal lords thereby gaining freedom from the unfair contracts that were initially subjected to. After the national assembly had framed a constitution which could restore the social unrest there were a series of events that later took place. However, after a military coup had overthrown the existing

government, Napoleon Bonaparte put to end the revolution when he declared himself the First consul' of France.

8: How has your understanding of the topic changed as a result of reading this book?

This book has helped me gain more understanding about the French revolution and the occurrence of some events that I was not aware of. The author has arranged his narrations in a systematic manner that can help the readers follow step by step the occurrence of events and the events that led to the occurrence of the French Revolution. The book has also helped me understand the causes of the revolution and how the revolution started and the factors that were addressed. It has also helped me know how the revolution was brought to a halt and the effects it had to date to the population of France.

9: How does this book compare to treatment of this topic in the rest of the class or in what you have learned elsewhere?

Most of the materials that we have encountered both in class and outside classroom are written by historians who only have the theoretical knowledge of the French revolution but lack in adequate knowledge relating to the real occurrence. The author of this book is an experienced historian who has worked in France and produced several narratives that contribute towards the topic. The book is from a professional point of view as opposed to other narrations which are from unreliable sources with unconfirmed reports and information.