

Sabrina louis xvi ruling over everything in

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Sabrina HoProfessor DraperHistory 11028 November 2017The Enlightenment and The French RevolutionWhileit might be a robust statement, The Enlightenment was the first groundbreakingintellectual movement in European history.

Unlike its other predecessors, thisintellectual movement inspired change for the sake of the social welfare tobenefit the common person. For the first time, the ideals of Enlightenmentcaused everyone to apply rational thoughts to justify human existence in life. This caused many people in France, to realize their social welfareand political environment. Thus, it lead the French toquestioning the power of the French state, and eventually inspiring arevolution. So in simple terms, The reason why The Enlightenment wasgroundbreaking was because it the first intellectual movement to transform intoa revolution known as the French Revolution. Beforethe Revolution, the people of France lived in a restricted social and politicalsystem known as the Ancien Regime. There was legislative assembly partof government called “ The Estates General”. 1 With the purpose ofrepresenting everyone in France, The Estates General were divided into thethree Estates: The First, the Second and Third.

The First and Second Estateswere composed of wealthy nobles and the clergy. On the other hand, theThird Estate was comprised of commoners, (which was 98 percent of thepopulation during the time). Now keep in mind that France was still an absolutemonarchy with King Louis XVI ruling over everything in France. Thus the monarchhad overruling control over “ The Estates General” despite being a legislativeassembly2. King Louis XVIwould favor The First and Second Estates because the monarchy deep

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dependence from these two class groups for economical, political, and social support.

Thus, The Third Estate had none power at the assembly and instead became victims of cruel laws enacted by The First and Second Estates³. By the 1780s, France had a huge economic crisis by supporting the American Revolution, hence the nation was racking up a lot of national debt. Because of this, King Louis XVI and his royal government raised taxes to pay off the national debt. However, one of the social privileges of being part of the wealthy First and Second Estates was the fact they never had to pay taxes. As a result, the burden of paying taxes was left to the common people from The Third Estate⁴. Moreover, in 1788, a large famine plagued the entire nation that caused a food shortage⁵. By then the commoners of The Third Estate had enough, and the Revolution began with the goal of creating a new government based on the enlightenment ideals. Thus how the French Revolution began.

After the takeover of the Bastille on 14 July 1789, the “Declaration and Rights of Man and Citizen” was written by the newly formed National Assembly⁶. The authors were inspired by John Locke's idea of human rights and Rousseau's idea of a social contract. Locke believed people were born with natural rights of life, liberty, and property. Hence the role of the government was to protect one three basic natural human rights⁷.

Rousseau believed government was an agreement between the nation and its people⁸. Furthermore, Rousseau thought that if the standards of the agreement were not upheld by the nation, the people had every right to create

a new government for themselves, thus why it was considered it a social contract⁹. By incorporating these two Enlightenment ideals, the Declaration and Rights of Man and Citizen” would end up making social welfare of people a governmental responsibility. Thus being so significant because it changed the culture of the way citizens lived as they were ensured hope for once in their life. Unfortunately, The Declaration and Rights of Man and Citizen did not appeal towards the majority of people.

Thus the Constitution of 1791 was written in replacement and established a constitutional monarchy. Under this new constitution, France kept its Monarchy but the ruling power of government was given to the people. More importantly, it declared that the national government would be divided among individual branches¹⁰. This enlightenment ideal came from the great Philosophes Montesquieu’s who established the idea of limiting ruling within leading government positions. Montesquieu’s truly believed that every authoritarian role had limits on power. Hence he established the system checks and balances to uphold the separation of powers and ensure a stable government ¹¹. Remarkable as it was, this was a time in history where the government did not abuse power.

In fact it was the first time the power of government was limited. Hence why this document was so momentous. Despite all these changes from the Revolution, there was still one left one group that was unsatisfied: the Jacobins, led by Robespierre. The Group wanted a Republic because they hoped it lead to greater equality and fair representation to the people and used violence to achieve it¹². Nevertheless, there was one important aspect

of that the Jacobins tackled: the role of religion in government. The Jacobins also supported Voltaire's enlightenment ideal of scrutinizing the authority and power of the church. Because of the influence of these two ideals, many started to question the church authority over people¹³. This is very important to note because it was the first time in history the Catholic Church lost political influence and power after centuries of overpowering Europe.

These eventually transforming into religious institute it is known today instead of the political powerhouse it once used to be. Certainly, the enlightenment ideal's transformation into the French Revolution was the first of its kind.

Nevertheless as many know it was a very unsuccessful revolution that ended up with Napoleon. This was because there was no game plan to preserve the revolution. In the case of the French Revolution, too many ideas came out at once that ended up colliding each other.

Thus, ending up in pure chaos. Sure one could have all these bright ideals that can spark the emotions and revelations, but is it worth anything if cannot last forever?
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