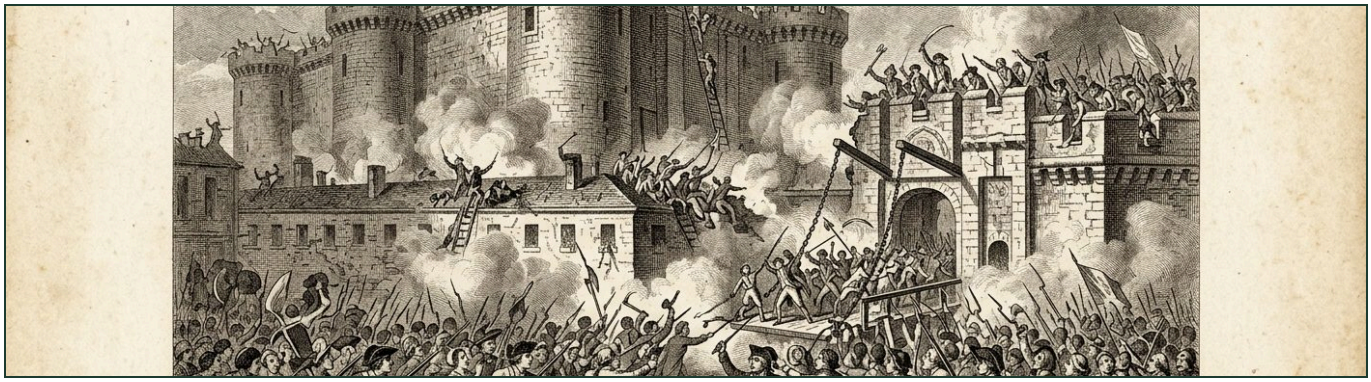


1789 – 1799

French Revolution Timeline

The French Revolution overthrew the monarchy and transformed France, spreading ideas of liberty and equality that changed politics across Europe and the world.

1789 — **The Estates-General Meets**

King Louis XVI calls the Estates-General — France's parliament of clergy, nobility, and commoners — for the first time since 1614.

> **Why it mattered:** *France faced bankruptcy and a starving population; the meeting was the last attempt to solve the crisis within the old order — it quickly spiraled out of royal control.*

1789 — **The National Assembly**

The commoners' representatives, locked out by the king, declare themselves the National Assembly and vow to write a new constitution.

> **Why it mattered:** *It was a revolutionary act — ordinary citizens claiming the right to govern France rather than be governed. The old order had cracked.*

1789 — **Storming of the Bastille**

On July 14, a Paris crowd storms the Bastille prison — a hated symbol of royal tyranny — and releases its prisoners.

> **Why it mattered:** *The fall of the Bastille became the symbol of the Revolution. France still celebrates July 14 as Bastille Day.*

1789 — **Declaration of the Rights of Man**

The National Assembly adopts a declaration proclaiming that all men are born free and equal with rights to liberty, property, and security.

> **Why it mattered:** *Inspired by the American Declaration of Independence, it articulated the Revolution's ideals and influenced human rights documents around the world for generations.*

French Revolution Timeline *continued*

1792 — **France Goes to War**

France declares war on Austria and Prussia; a mob storms the royal palace and King Louis XVI is arrested.

> **Why it mattered:** *The war radicalized the Revolution — moderate voices lost control as the crisis deepened, setting the stage for the most violent phase.*

1793 — **The Reign of Terror**

Radical leader Maximilien Robespierre leads the Committee of Public Safety, executing thousands accused of being enemies of the Revolution.

> **Why it mattered:** *About 17,000 people were officially executed — including King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette — showing how a revolution built on liberty could turn into tyranny.*

1794 — **The Terror Ends**

Members of the National Convention, fearing they were next, arrest and execute Robespierre, ending the Reign of Terror.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Revolution pulled back from extremism, but France remained unstable — governments rose and fell as the country struggled to find a stable new order.*

1795 — **The Directory**

A five-man committee called the Directory takes power, attempting to bring stability to post-Terror France.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Directory was corrupt and ineffective — France still faced war, inflation, and unrest. The stage was set for a military strongman to take over.*

1798 — **Napoleon's Campaigns**

General Napoleon Bonaparte wins a series of spectacular military victories in Italy and Egypt, making him the most famous man in France.

> **Why it mattered:** *Napoleon's military fame and political skill positioned him perfectly to step into the power vacuum left by the Directory's failures.*

1799 — **Napoleon's Coup**

Napoleon seizes power in a coup on November 9, ending the Revolution.

> **Why it mattered:** *Napoleon ended the Revolution's political chaos but preserved many of its reforms — and then spread its ideas of legal equality and nationalism across Europe through his conquests.*