Unit 5 Quiz: The French Revolution
Guide to Responding

This guide is intended to help you evaluate your performance on the “Unit 5 Quiz.” It lists the most important terms and concepts that should appear in your answers.

Instructions: For each question, check whether the information listed below is included in your answer. If you find that some of your answers do not have the key concepts and terms listed here, go back to the relevant subunits (listed with each question) and review the information by either re-reading the materials or listening to the lectures one more time.

If your answers include terms and ideas that do not appear here and you are not sure whether they correctly answer the questions, use the sub-unit cross-references below to go back to the relevant course materials and check that your additional information is correct.

1. What were the phases of the French Revolution? What form of government was in place during each phases?

• Crisis of the Ancien Régime (August 20, 1786 – May 4, 1789) and the Estates General (May 4, 1789 – June 17, 1789) – France was ruled by a monarchy.
• National Assembly (June 17, 1789 – September 30, 1791) – France was ruled by a monarchy, but a new legislative body was formed to draft a constitution.
• Legislative Assembly (October 1, 1791 – September 20, 1792) – Constitutional monarchy.
• Revolutionary Republic (September 20, 1792 – October 27, 1795) – rule of the National Convention, but the period is further which is further divided into:
  o The Terror (September 5, 1793 – July 28, 1794) – rule of the Committee for Public Safety
  o Thermidorean Reaction (July 27, 1794 – October 27, 1795)
• The Directory (October 27, 1795 – November 10, 1799) – executive power rested with the five Directors.

Reference: Subunits 5.2, 5.1.1, and 5.3.1

2. What were the most important long-term and short-term causes of the French Revolution?

Bankruptcy of the French Monarchy:
  o The contrast between court opulence and widespread poverty of the population.
War expenses – internal and external debt.

Paralysis of the French state:
- Social structure based on privileges and inequalities.
- Obstacles to reform.
- Resistance of the parlements.

The public sphere:
- Subversive texts, the print, and new reading practices.
- New forms of sociability which change the horizon of what is thinkable.
- Shift from “the people” to “the public” – emergence of public opinion.

Secularization, desacralization, and the persistence of religion:
- The legacy of the Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and Wars of Religion.
- Symbols of royal power, changes in the meaning of public rituals.
- Jansenists, Jesuits, and criticism of the king.

Demographic, economic, and social factors:
- Population growth.
- Paris vs. the provinces.
- Socio-economic transformations, trade treaties with Britain.

Reference: Sub-subunits 5.1.1 and 5.1.2

3. What factors contributed to the eventual emergence of the Reign of Terror?

- Polarization that followed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.
- The king’s flight to Varennes and subsequent radicalization of politics.
- Execution of the king.
- Rebellion in the Vendee.
- War
- Conflicts in the National Convention, and the expulsion of the Girondins.
- “Federalist” revolts.
- Robespierre’s ideology and understanding of the revolution.
- Radicalization of political language (Furet).

Reference: Sub-subunits 5.3.1 and 5.4.2

4. On September 27, 1791, the National Assembly voted to grant citizenship rights to Jews. On what conditions did Jews gain access to French citizenship?

- To become French citizens Jews had to swear the Civic Oath and thereby renounce their communal privileges (to have their own communal laws, courts, and customs).
- Individual rights thus came at the expense of communal rights.
5. What were the most important legacies of the French Revolution?

• Republican and democratic forms of government that developed throughout the European continent over time.
• The tradition of human rights that drew much inspiration from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.
• Women’s rights movements, minority rights movements (initially carried out against the French Revolutionaries).
• Rationalization of government and social structures, and the bureaucratic centralization.
• Uniformity of weights and measures.
• Abolition of nobility, feudalism, and ancient privileges.
• Uniformity introduced into law (legal code), language, and currency.
• Levee en masse – total mobilization during the time of the Revolutionary wars.
• Further secularization.

Reference: Sub-subunits 5.3.1 and 5.5.2