

Revolutions Across Time

Revolution—which is a sudden or significant change in the old ways of doing things—can occur in many areas, such as government, technology, or art. In Unit 5, you studied political revolutions in Europe and the Americas, in which people rebelled against unjust rulers to gain more rights. Each revolution led to major changes in governmental, social, and economic structures. In these six pages, you will gain a better understanding of those revolutions by examining their similarities and differences.

English Civil War and Glorious Revolution ►

In 1642, civil war broke out between those who supported Parliament and those who supported the king. Parliament won and set up a commonwealth, led by Oliver Cromwell. In time, he became a dictator. After his death, the monarchy returned, but tensions built anew. In 1688, Parliament ousted King James II, shown at right, in the Glorious Revolution and invited William and Mary to rule.



1642



1776

◀ American Revolution

After 1763, Americans began to resent British rule. Clashes such as the Boston Massacre, shown at left, took place. The colonies declared their independence in 1776. War ensued, and the United States won its freedom by defeating Britain.

1789

▼ French Revolution

Beginning in 1789, the French people rose up to overthrow their king. The uprisings included the march by hungry women shown below. Differing goals soon split the revolutionaries. Several years of terror followed. Napoleon restored order and eventually made himself emperor of France.





1791

▲ Latin American Revolutions

From 1791 to 1824, revolutions took place in Haiti, Mexico, and the huge Spanish empire that spread across Central and South America. By the end of that period, nearly all of Latin America had gained its independence from European control. One of South America's great liberators was José de San Martín, shown in the painting above.



Model of a Revolution

From his study of the French Revolution, historian Crane Brinton developed a model of the stages that revolutions often go through. The model below is based on his work. Compare it with the revolutions you learned about in this unit.

STAGE
1

Fall of the Old Order

Revolutions usually cannot occur until a ruler becomes weak. Often this weakness results in problems such as starvation and unfair taxes. Anger builds until the ruler is overthrown.

STAGE
2

Rule by Moderates

The people relax because they think they have achieved their goal. A moderate group rules. But simply overthrowing the old order rarely solves the problems that led to the revolution.

STAGE
3

The Terror

When people realize that the old problems still exist, they look for someone to blame. Radicals take control, push for more extreme changes, and execute "enemies of the revolution."

STAGE
4

Turn from Radical Rule

In time, the violence sickens people, and the use of terror ends. The former radicals adopt a more gradual plan for effecting change.

STAGE
5

Military Rule

The terror often kills most of a country's leaders. Then the turn from radicalism makes people doubt revolutionary ideals. A military leader steps into the gap and becomes dictator.

STAGE
6

Restoration

When the dictatorship ends, through death or overthrow, a power vacuum results. The order that existed before the revolution is restored.

Comparing & Contrasting

1. Which of the revolutions on the time line, besides the French Revolution, is most like the model? Explain.
2. Which revolution is least like the model? Explain.



Causes of the Revolutions

Each of the revolutions you studied in this unit had political, economic, and social causes, as shown in the chart below. Some of the causes mentioned on the chart are the subjects of the primary sources located on the next page. Use the chart and the primary sources together to understand the causes of revolution more fully.

	England	North America	France	Latin America
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> King claimed divine right. King dissolved Parliament. Parliament sought guarantee of freedoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonists accused British leaders of tyranny. Colonists demanded the same rights as English citizens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third Estate wanted greater representation. Louis XVI was a weak ruler; his wife was unpopular. American Revolution inspired political ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> French Revolution inspired political ideas. Royal officials committed injustices and repression. Napoleon's conquest of Spain triggered revolts.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> King wanted money for wars. King levied taxes and fines without Parliament's approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Britain imposed mercantilism. Britain expected colonies to pay for defense. Colonists opposed taxation without representation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wars and royal extravagance created debt. Inflation and famine caused problems. Peasants made little money but paid high taxes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peninsulares and creoles controlled wealth. Lower classes toiled as peasants with little income or as slaves.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Stuart kings refused to make Puritan reforms. Parliament feared James II would restore Catholicism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonists began to identify as Americans. Colonists were used to some independence. Enlightenment ideas of equality and liberty spread. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third Estate resented the First and Second estates' privileges. Enlightenment ideas of equality and liberty spread. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only peninsulares and creoles had power. Mestizos, mulattos, Africans, and Indians had little status. Educated creoles spread Enlightenment ideas.

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

- Analyzing Causes** What was the most frequent political cause of revolution? economic cause? social cause?
- Contrasting** How did the causes of the revolutions in Latin America differ from those of the other three revolutions?



◀ In the 1780s, many French peasants could not afford bread to feed their families. At the same time, Marie Antoinette spent so much money on clothes that her enemies called her Madame Deficit. The harsh contrast between starvation and luxury sparked the anger that led to the Revolution.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Political Cartoon, 1789

This French political cartoon portrayed the way the privileges of the First and Second estates affected the Third Estate.



DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Do you think a member of the First, Second, or Third Estate created this cartoon? Interpret the cartoon and explain who was most likely to hold the viewpoint conveyed.

PRIMARY SOURCE

INTERACTIVE

The English Bill of Rights, 1689

This excerpt from the English Bill of Rights attempted to justify the Glorious Revolution by describing the injustices King James II committed.

The late King James the Second, by the assistance of diverse evil counselors, judges and ministers employed by him, did endeavor to subvert and extirpate [destroy] the Protestant religion and the laws and liberties of this kingdom;

By assuming and exercising a power of dispensing with and suspending of laws and the execution of laws without consent of Parliament; . . .

By levying money for and to the use of the Crown by pretense of prerogative [privilege] for other time and in other manner than the same was granted by Parliament;

By raising and keeping a standing army within this kingdom in time of peace without consent of Parliament; . . .

By violating the freedom of election of members to serve in Parliament; . . .

And excessive bail hath been required of persons committed in criminal cases to elude the benefit of the laws made for the liberty of the subjects;

And excessive fines have been imposed;

And illegal and cruel punishments inflicted.

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

According to this document, how did King James II take away power from Parliament? How did he violate the rights of citizens?

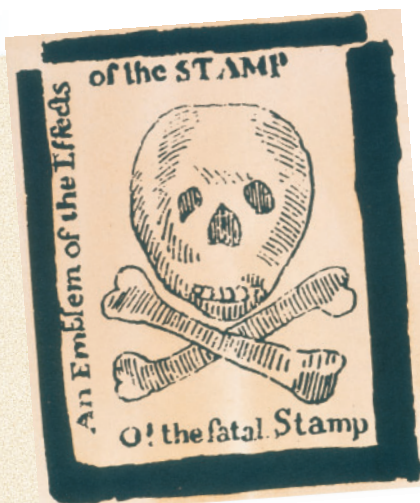
PRIMARY SOURCE

Political Cartoon, 1765

This political cartoon expressed an opinion about the Stamp Act. The act was a British law that required all legal and commercial documents in the American colonies to carry a stamp showing that a tax had been paid.

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

What opinion does this cartoon express about the effect of the Stamp Act on the American economy?



Comparing & Contrasting

1. How are the opinions expressed by the three primary sources similar?
2. Reread the excerpt from the English Bill of Rights. Based on this document, what causes could you add to the chart on page 708?



Effects of Revolutions

The chart below shows political, economic, and social effects of the various revolutions. The primary sources on these two pages describe the political outcomes that three different revolutionaries expected to achieve. Use the chart and the primary sources together to understand the effects of revolution more fully.

	England	North America	France	Latin America
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A constitutional monarchy was established. The Bill of Rights increased Parliament's power and guaranteed certain rights. The overthrow of a monarch helped inspire American revolutionaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The United States gained independence. The Constitution set up a republican government. Revolutionary ideals continued to inspire groups seeking political equality. The American Revolution inspired later revolutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Revolution led to a succession of governments: a republic, a dictatorship, a restored monarchy. It created expectations for equality and freedom that sparked later uprisings in France. It inspired later revolutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly all colonial rule in Latin America ended. New countries were established. Representative government was slow to develop. The military or the wealthy controlled much of the region until the late 1900s.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because it was answerable to taxpayers, Parliament encouraged trade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The removal of Britain's mercantilist policies allowed free enterprise to develop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Revolution and ensuing wars with Europe devastated France's economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upper classes kept control of wealth. Many places kept the plantation system.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> England remained Protestant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ideals of the Revolution continued to inspire groups seeking social equality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The French feudal system was abolished. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of Latin America continued to have a strong class system.

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

- Contrasting** Which revolutions had positive economic effects, and which had negative? Explain.
- Recognizing Effects** What common political effect did the revolutions in North America and Latin America achieve?

PRIMARY SOURCE



Thomas Paine

In this excerpt from the pamphlet *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine described the ideal government he wanted to see set up after the American Revolution.

But where, say some, is the king of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal Brute of Great Britain. . . . Let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the charter [constitution]; let it be brought forth placed on the divine law, the Word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know, that so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law *ought* to BE king, and there ought to be no other.

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

What did Paine believe should be the highest power in a new American government?

INTERACTIVE

PRIMARY SOURCE

Simón Bolívar

“The Jamaica Letter” is one of Simón Bolívar’s most important political documents. In this excerpt, he discussed his political goals for South America after the revolution—and his fear that South Americans were not ready to achieve those goals.

The role of the inhabitants of the American hemisphere has for centuries been purely passive. Politically they were non-existent. . . . We have been harassed by a conduct which has not only deprived us of our rights but has kept us in a sort of permanent infancy with regard to public affairs. . . . Americans today, and perhaps to a greater extent than ever before, who live within the Spanish system occupy a position in society no better than that of serfs destined for labor. . . . Although I seek perfection for the government of my country, I cannot persuade myself that the New World can, at the moment, be organized as a great republic.

INTERACTIVE



DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Why did Bolívar believe that South Americans were not ready for a republican form of government?

PRIMARY SOURCE

Maximilien Robespierre

In a speech given on February 5, 1794, Robespierre described his goals for the French Revolution. In this excerpt, he explained his reasons for using terror.

It is necessary to annihilate both the internal and external enemies of the republic or perish with its fall. Now, in this situation your first political maxim should be that one guides the people by reason, and the enemies of the people by terror.

If the driving force of popular government in peacetime is virtue, that of popular government during a revolution is both virtue and terror: virtue, without which terror is destructive; terror, without which virtue is impotent. Terror is only justice that is prompt, severe, and inflexible; it is thus an emanation of virtue; it is less a distinct principle than a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to the most pressing needs of the patrie [nation].

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Why did Robespierre believe the use of terror against his enemies was necessary?



INTERACTIVE

Comparing & Contrasting

1. Judging from the information on the chart, which revolutions resulted in the establishment of representative government, and which resulted in a return to tyrannical rule?
2. How do the political goals of the revolutionary leaders quoted here differ?
3. Compare the types of government set up in the United States, France, and Latin America after their revolutions. Did Paine, Robespierre, and Bolívar achieve the political goals quoted? Explain.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Revolutionary activity continued after the period covered by this unit. Two major 20th-century revolutions were the Russian Revolution (see Chapter 30) and the Chinese revolution and civil war (see Chapter 30 and Chapter 33). Read about one of these revolutions either in this textbook or in an encyclopedia. Then create a chart comparing that revolution with either the American Revolution or the French Revolution.