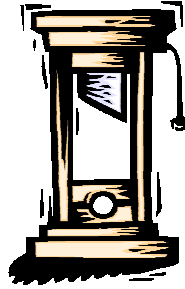


Understanding the French Revolution



Understanding this major event can be difficult, because different political factions held power at different times, and because there was continual warfare going on with other major European nations. But if you look at how different social groups fared during this revolution, you can easily see who benefitted from it—and who didn't.



Losers
(lost power)

1. **clergy** lost their tax-exempt status, their levy of 10% of the crops, much of the church land, and their seats in the Estates General (with 1/3 of the voting power)
2. **aristocracy** lost their tax-exempt status, a lot of the land they collected rent on, and their seats in the Estates General (with another 1/3 of the voting power)
3. **15,000 to 40,000 casualties** of political violence (many, but not all, of whom would have been members of the aristocracy)

Winners
(gained power)



1. **bourgeoisie** acquired a huge amount of political power, which they didn't have before, in the creation of the new national assemblies (for the first time, not dominated by the aristocracy), and the decimation of the aristocracy and clergy as political forces
2. **serfs** who were tied to land were freed; rents on lands that the nobles didn't own outright were abolished

Although the Congress of Vienna in 1815 saw the re-establishment of the Bourbon dynasty, the traditional aristocratic and church powers in France never regained the power that they held before, and the non-aristocratic classes in France continually struggled to establish a constitutional republic, which finally happened in 1870.