Aim: How did the relationship between the French people and the king change in the early stages of the Revolution?

July 1789: The Citizens of France stormed the Bastille

By early July, 30,000 of the king's troops are taking positions around Paris. To defend themselves the people form a new national guard. Rioters raid Paris' armories and make away with over 28,000 muskets. The only thing missing is gunpowder and the people know just where to get it. In the center of Paris there looms a massive stone dungeon notorious as a symbol of feudal rule, the Bastille. The prison houses the city stores of gunpowder and is legendary as a den of torture and unspeakable deaths. The Bastille, had been the great symbol of royal despotism. The great symbol up the kings of France running beyond the just limits of their own power. A symbol of horror for the people of France. Amidst the rioting there is a stunning outrage. Louis fires his finance minister, the people's beloved Jacques Necker, seen as too sympathetic to the masses. Hours after Necker is fired, word reaches Paris that their man on the inside has been ousted. There is nothing left but revolt.

On July 14th crowds band together identified themselves with a small cockade [a knot of ribbons] red and blue for the colors of Paris separated by white the color of the house of Bourbon. The Tres Colores [name for the modern French flag] is born. From the feverish crowd a voice cries out to the Bastille. Attacking the Bastille, means that the people with Paris are saying you cannot get rid of the new National Assembly. The people are acting, they're arming themselves and they are basically saying we take the side of the revolution. At the site of the approaching mob, the governor of the Bastille, Bernard De Launey, attempts to lock down the prison. He mounts a hopeless defense and the marauders [raiders] storm the fortress and tear into the guards with knives and pikes. Finally, De Launey surrenders but the enraged mob engulfs him dragging him through the streets. The jeering horde kicks and stabs at him until he shouts let me die. The crowd eagerly obliges. He is stabbed and shot and a revolutionary tradition is born. His severed head is paraded on a pike.
The deputies in the National Assembly do not immediately condemn this act of violence. In fact, they accept it and it was this acceptance of popular violence that in some people's view created a pattern that was to have catastrophic consequences for the unfolding of the revolution.

With the smoke still clearing over the Bastille, Louis XVI returns from a hunting trip. In his diary under the date July 14 1789, he writes "nothing," a reference to his unsuccessful hunt. An aid interrupts and breaks the news of the riots and the fall of the Bastille. Louis XVI asks "Is it a revolt?" "No sire" he replies, "it is a revolution."

Victory at the Bastille unleashes the irrepressible torrent of the revolution. The people have defied their king and won. There will be no turning back. As a symbol of the defeat of tyranny, the people, men, women, and children, dig in with bare hands and tear the Bastille apart brick by feudal brick.
August 1789: The Decree Abolishing the Feudal System is issued

The Decree Abolishing the Feudal System, August 4, 1789
A decree is an official order from a government. After the Fall of the Bastille, excitement spread throughout France and in some areas, members of the Third Estate took up arms against nobles and clergy members who for generations had controlled them through land ownership, rules restricting hunting on land to only members of the nobility, and taxes. The National Assembly reacted to the outrage of the peasants by abolishing the feudal system and all of the laws and customs that accompanied it.

ARTICLE I. The National Assembly hereby completely abolishes the feudal system...

ARTICLE III. The exclusive right to hunt and to maintain unenclosed warrens [network of rabbit burrows] is likewise abolished, and every landowner shall have the right to kill, or to have destroyed on his own land, all kinds of game, observing, however, such police regulations as may be established with a view to the safety of the public.

ARTICLE V. Tithes [one-tenth of annual earnings taken as tax to support the Catholic church and its clergy] of every description...are abolished, on condition, however, that some other method be devised to provide for the expenses of divine worship, the support of the officiating clergy, for the assistance of the poor, for repairs and rebuilding of churches and parsonages, and for the maintenance of all institutions, seminaries, schools, academies, asylums, and organizations to which the present funds are devoted.

ARTICLE XVII. The National Assembly solemnly [formally] proclaims the king, Louis XVI, the Restorer of French Liberty.
August 1789: The National Assembly issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

Context: The declaration was to serve as a reminder to society and the governing bodies that everyone had equal rights and that their duty was to serve all citizens, not just the social elite.

Excerpt from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, August 27, 1789

The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt [disgust] of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities [disaster] and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn [serious] declaration the natural, unalienable [not able to be given away], and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties ... Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices [protection] of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Articles:

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.

2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible [in law] rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

3. The principle of all sovereignty [supreme power or authority] rests essentially in the nation. No body and no individual may exercise authority which does not emanate expressly from the nation.

6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except
that of their virtues and talents.

9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty...

11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

13. A common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces and for the cost of administration. This should be equitably distributed among all the citizens in proportion to their means.

16. A society in which the observance of the law is not assured, nor the separation of powers defined, has no constitution at all.
Context: Marie Gouze (1748–93) was a self-educated butcher’s daughter from the south of France who, under the name Olympe de Gouges, wrote pamphlets and plays on a variety of issues, including slavery, which she attacked as being founded on greed and blind prejudice. In this pamphlet she provides a declaration of the rights of women to parallel the one for men, thus criticizing the deputies for having forgotten women. De Gouges was executed in 1793, condemned as a counterrevolutionary and denounced as an "unnatural" woman.

Olympe de Gouges, *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen* (September 1791)

To be decreed by the National Assembly in its last sessions or by the next legislature.

Preamble

Mothers, daughters, sisters, female representatives of the nation ask to be constituted as a national assembly. Considering that ignorance, neglect, or contempt for the rights of woman are the sole causes of public misfortunes and governmental corruption, they have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of woman: so that by being constantly present to all the members of the social body this declaration may always remind them of their rights and duties...

In consequence, the sex that is superior in beauty as in courage, needed in maternal [motherly] sufferings, recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of woman and the citizeness.

1. Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on common utility.

2. The purpose of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of woman and man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and especially resistance to oppression.

3. The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially in the nation, which is but the reuniting of woman and man. No body and no individual may exercise authority which does not emanate expressly from the nation.

6. The law should be the expression of the general will. All citizenesses and citizens should take part, in person or by their representatives, in its formation. It must be the same for
everyone. All citizenesses and citizens, being equal in its eyes, should be equally admissible to all public dignities, offices and employments, according to their ability, and with no other distinction than that of their virtues and talents.

9. Any woman being declared guilty, all rigor is exercised by the law.

11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of woman, since this liberty assures the recognition of children by their fathers. Every citizeness may therefore say freely, I am the mother of your child; a barbarous prejudice [against unmarried women having children] should not force her to hide the truth, so long as responsibility is accepted for any abuse of this liberty in cases determined by the law [women are not allowed to lie about the paternity of their children].

13. For maintenance of public authority and for expenses of administration, taxation of women and men is equal; she takes part in all forced labor service, in all painful tasks; she must therefore have the same proportion in the distribution of places, employments, offices, dignities, and in industry.

16. Any society in which the guarantee of rights is not assured or the separation of powers not settled has no constitution. The constitution is null and void if the majority of individuals composing the nation has not cooperated in its drafting.

Postscript

Women, wake up; the tocsin [alarm] of reason sounds throughout the universe; recognize your rights... Enslaved man has multiplied his force and needs yours to break his chains. Having become free, he has become unjust toward his companion... Let us pass now to the appalling account of what you have been in society; and since national education is an issue at this moment, let us see if our wise legislators will think sanely about the education of women... .
**October 1789: Women from Paris marched to the Palace at Versailles, captured Louis XVI and his family, and forced them to come to Paris.**

*Narrator:* Word reaches Paris that the king has thrown a party at Versailles [and] that the decadent royals threw the new *Tres Colour* flag, symbol of the Revolution, to the ground and trampled it underfoot. Marat [publisher of a popular revolutionary newspaper] is enraged. He reports the insult in his paper just as a new threat breaks. The king has again ordered troops to move into positions around Paris.

With the coup at the Bastille still smoldering in the minds of the people, Marat frantically urges them to take action.

[Actor playing Marat speaking] “People love Paris, it's time to open your eyes! Wake up!”

October 5th- dawn breaks to the fury of ringing the bells. Women gather near City Hall to protest the shortage of bread and now fear of the approaching royal troops mixes with anger as news at the King's offensive party circulates through the crowd. Soon, thousands are marching to Versailles, pikes and guns in hand. The women are taking their complaints to the king.

*Historian:* “The core of the crowd was made up of the famous *Poissardes*, the fearsome fish ladies of the central markets who were known for their brawny build and their fearlessness. They were equipped with large knives for scaling fish. They were hugely muscular because they carted boxes. You didn't want to tangle with these ladies.”

*Historian:* “These are women of the poor quarters. These are poor women who have been affected by the increased price of bread [and] the scarcity of products who suddenly begin to realize that the must act. It is quite extraordinary how these ordinary women, probably most them couldn't even write their name, suddenly act as the protagonists of the historical process.

*Narrator:* Inside the palace, word of the approaching crowd angry with reaches the Queen's chambers. Legend has it that it is at this moment that Marie Antoinette matters the most famous line she never said.

*Historian:* Marie Antoinette did not say, “Let them eat cake.” That is a myth. Marie Antoinette unfortunately probably never even noticed the poor people of her country long enough to make such statement.

*Narrator:* As the mob of women gathers outside the gates, Louis understands that the revolution can no longer be ignored. It is being brought to his front door. He agrees to sign the *Declaration*
of the Rights of Man. Yet the crowd continues to grow throughout the night. By morning 20,000 people are camped outside the royal palace. To close the centuries of distance between the king and his subjects the angry mass demands the king and queen move to Paris. Indecisive as ever, Louis is weak to respond. His hesitation would provoke a fury in the crowd and put the lives of the royal family in grave danger.

Historian, William Doyle: When they don't get instant compliance with what they want, it really looks as if they're going to massacre the Queen.

Narrator: A wave of women break into the royal palace screaming for the blood of the queen. They massacre the guards, decapitate them, and impale their heads on pikes.

Historian: They were like banshees screaming throughout the house, “Give me her entrails! Give me her head! I wanna leg! I want an arm!” I think that they had grown so frenzied that if they had encountered her, they probably would have torn to pieces.

Narrator: Terrified for her life, Marie escapes to Louis’ apartments moments before the women break into her chambers and tear her bed to shreds. The king and queen are now at the mercy of the mob and what the mob wants is a little attention from their king.

Historian, William Doyle: the only way that women can be pacified is for the royal family to agree to go to Paris because once they're in Paris then they can ultimately be made to do what the people of Paris want.

Narrator: They march, 60,000 strong, leaving Versailles with carts and wagons overflowing with flour from the King’s storehouses flanking the royal carriage all the way to Paris.

Evelyne Lever: The king and queen were forced to go back to Paris with the heads of their guards, who had been massacred in the Chateau. Their heads had been a cut-off. This is really completely unbridled violence. The heads were then made up with makeup and paraded at the head of the cortege with the king and queen following.

Narrator: The king and queen must make their new home in the Tuileries Palace. They will never see Versailles again.

Historian, William Doyle: “Once the royal family moves to Paris, they are the prisoners of Paris. They know it. Everybody else knows it. There are great limits to what they can do or even dream of doing. They all the prisons of the capital city, there is no doubt.
Narrator: Versailles is abandoned and the assembly moved to Paris. Power is now with the people. France will have democracy, new laws, and a remarkable and unforgiving form of justice will make its debut on the revolutionary stage: the guillotine.

September 1791: The Constitution of 1791 is issued

The Constitution of 1791, September 3, 1791
The Constitution of 1791 was the first constitution written during the French Revolution. The preamble [introduction] to the Constitution was the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Below, is only the section describing government organization.

TITLE III: OF PUBLIC POWERS
3. The legislative power is delegated to a National Assembly, composed of temporary representatives freely elected by the people, to be exercised by it, with the sanction [approval] of the King, in the manner hereinafter determined.

4. The government is monarchical; the executive power is delegated to the King, to be exercised, under his authority, by ministers and other responsible agents in the manner hereinafter determined.

5. The judicial power is delegated to judges who are elected at stated times by the people.
Aim: How did the Third Estate react to their frustration with the King Louis XIV?

May 1789: Estates General is convened

Context: By this time, the frustrations of the Third Estate had increased. Below, is an excerpt from "What is the Third Estate?" written in the last months of 1788 by French politician Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyes, and published at the very beginning of 1789. In this pamphlet, focused on the resentments and shaped the demands of the Third Estate.

Excerpt from What is the Third Estate? by Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès

The plan of this book is fairly simple. We must ask ourselves three questions.
What is the Third Estate? Everything.
What has it been until now in the political order? Nothing.
What does it want to be? Something.


Gone is the day when the three orders were moved by the single thought of defending themselves against ministerial despotism [the rule or practices of a tyrant] and were ready to unite against their common enemy [...] The fear of seeing abuses reformed alarms the aristocrats [a noble] more than the desire for liberty inspires them.... They are afraid now of the States-General [Estates-General] for which they were lately so ardent [passionate].... They no longer require anything: fear has provided a constitution for them. [...] The Third Estate must, moreover, recognize the danger that unless it improves its status it cannot simply remain as it is. Not to go forward is to go backwards. [...] In this situation, what remains to be done by the Third Estate if it wants to take possession of its political rights in a way that will serve the nation? There are two methods of achieving this aim. By the first method the Third Estate must meet separately; it must not cooperate with either the nobility or the clergy and it must not vote with them either by orders or by heads. [...] From the second point of view, the Third Estate is the nation. In this capacity, its representatives constitute the whole National Assembly and are seized of all its powers. As they alone are the trustees of the general will, they do not need to consult those who mandated them about a dispute that does not exist.

Source: Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyes. “What is the Third Estate?”
**June 1789: Members of the Third Estate made the Tennis Court Oath**

**What is the National Assembly?**
On June 10, 1789, Abbé Sieyès moved that the Third Estate proceed with the demonstration of its own powers and invite the other two estates to take part, but not to wait for them. They proceeded to do so two days later. Then they voted to declare themselves the National Assembly, an assembly not of the Estates-General but of "the People." They invited the other orders to join them, but made it clear they intended to conduct the nation's affairs with or without them.

In an attempt to keep control of the process and prevent the Assembly from convening, Louis XVI ordered the closure of the Salle des États where the Assembly met. Weather did not allow an outdoor meeting, so the Assembly moved their deliberations to a nearby indoor tennis court, where they proceeded to swear the Tennis Court Oath (June 20, 1789), under which they agreed not to separate until they had given France a **constitution**. A majority of the representatives of the clergy soon joined them, as did 47 members of the nobility.


*Excerpt from the Oath of the Tennis Court (June 20, 1789)*

The Assembly quickly decrees the following:

The National Assembly, considering that it has been called to establish the constitution of the realm, to bring about the regeneration of public order, and to maintain the true principles of monarchy; nothing may prevent it from continuing its deliberations in any place it is forced to establish itself; and, finally, the National Assembly exists wherever its members are gathered.

"We swear never to separate ourselves from the National Assembly, and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the realm is drawn up and fixed upon solid foundations."

Source: “The Tennis Court Oath.”