

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Seat \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Whitney High School  
9<sup>th</sup> Grade World History

Game Handout 1  
S. Rosenberg

The Guillotine Game

## The Three Estates

France in the late 1700s was the dominant country in Western Europe. It had the largest population, the most powerful army, a glamorous court, and a culture admired and copied by other nations. Yet violence and disorder swept the country between 1789 and 1799. This ten-year period, known as the French Revolution, brought great changes to France. The king and queen were beheaded, aristocrats and church leaders lost power and prestige, and the whole social order was reshaped.

The French Revolution ended when Napoleon Bonaparte came to power. The revolution and wars that resulted from it affected not only France but the rest of Europe as well. The revolution was just one of many similar revolts by people around the world who were dissatisfied with their government, the economy, and unfair social conditions.

**Social Inequality Was a Basic Cause of the French Revolution:** The people of France were divided into three "states," or social classes:

### First Estate

**Members:**

"upper clergy" (high-ranking church officials—archbishops, bishops, abbots) and "lower clergy" (local priest)

**Privileges:**

- a) owned 10% of the land in France despite making up just 1% of the population
- b) only aristocrats could belong to the upper clergy
- c) most members of the upper clergy were rich, lived in nice homes, and spent considerable time and money on leisure activities and entertainment; they often ignored their jobs
- d) the First Estate was not required to pay taxes; instead, clergymen donated money to the government, but never their fair share
- e) the lower clergy were from the middle class and were often poor; they worked hard to help the less fortunate

### Second Estate

**members:**

the nobility (aristocrats)

**privileges:**

- a) held the most important positions in the Church, government, and army
- b) were advisers to the king
- c) many were given gifts and pensions by the king
- d) paid little or no taxes
- e) lived on luxurious estates or with the king at Versailles
- f) nobles who owned estates allowed peasants to work on their land; they collected money and crops from the peasants
- g) nobles did little work, dressed in the latest fashions, and spent most of their time enjoying the good life
- h) the Second Estate owned 20% of the land despite making up only 1% of the population

- i) some nobles were much poorer than others and lived a simpler life

## Third Estate

### members:

peasants, city workers, farmers, and "bourgeoisie" (a "middle class" of lawyers, doctors, bankers, merchants, and professors)

### complaints:

- a) "The king (Louis XVI) rules by divine right and refuses to make needed reforms."
- b) "Ideas of the philosophes on government and individual rights should form the basis of French government."
- c) "The American Declaration of Independence contains many ideas on government and freedom that should be adopted by France."
- d) "The Church and nobility do not deserve special privileges."
- e) "Many peasants do not have enough to eat."
- f) "Clergymen and nobles do not have to pay taxes on land; therefore, the burden of taxation falls to the Third Estate."
- g) "It is not right to have a group of lazy aristocrats living in the same country with hard-working poor people!"
- h) "It is not fair that important Church, government, and army positions are given only to those born into wealthy families."

**Questions:** On a separate sheet of paper which will be turned in at the next class session. This will be the basis for class discussion.

- Write out each question, then underline or highlight it;
  - Answer the question immediately afterward. Each answer must be written up in at least a good, strong paragraph of at least three sentences;
  - Skip a line, then move to the next sentence
  - Question five (5) is answered on another paper which will be attached to your work when you turn it in;
  - Either dark inked pen or pencil is acceptable for this assignment. No typing is allowed.
1. Louis XVI, like other French kings, was an absolute monarch ruling by divine right. Why then would the First Estate give him their support?
  2. The Third Estate wanted France to have a government like that of Great Britain, where Parliament limited the power of the king. British citizens enjoyed many rights and freedoms. What is the difference between an "absolute monarchy" (which France had) and a "limited monarchy" (which Great Britain had)?
  3. If you were a member of the Third Estate, how would you feel about the system of taxation in France?
  4. As a French citizen of the Third Estate, would you be satisfied with the system of land ownership in France? Explain your answer.
  5. Assume that the signs on the next page are being carried by citizens demonstrating against conditions in France just before the outbreak of the French Revolution. Each Frenchman carries a sign protesting abuses of the government and special privileges given to the Church and nobility. Label each sign with a statement which you think would point out to King Louis XVI and the first two Estates the unfair conditions faced by the Third Estate. Draw facial expressions on the four demonstrators.