

Name: _____ Seat _____ Period _____ Date: _____

Whitney High School
9th Grade World History

Game Handout 2
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The Guillotine Game

The French Revolution & Game Rules

The French Revolution

The French Revolution began in 1789 when King Louis XVI tried to get the First and Second Estates (clergy and nobility) to pay their fair share of taxes. The country was nearly bankrupt because of money spent by French kings on foreign wars and extravagant living. But the two estates refused Louis' request. Instead, the nobles demanded a voice in governing France.

This clash between Louis and the clergy and nobility was just one of many conflicts that plagued France during the 1790s. A number of groups competed against each other in an effort to achieve their own special goals and interests. The result was violence, bloodshed, and foreign wars.

The French Revolution gave many people the chance to express frustrations that had built up over a long period of time:

1. The Third Estate wanted to end the practice of giving special privileges to the First Estate and Second Estate. The citizens of Paris attacked the Bastille, a fortress-prison, to get gunpowder for their muskets so they could defend the interests of the Third Estate.
2. Peasants in rural areas rebelled against the feudal lords and caused many of them to flee the country.
3. The "common people" of the Third Estate rioted and forced Louis to accept the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The king was also pressured into ending the system of feudalism which had allowed the rich to take advantage of the poor.
4. The government seized church lands belonging to the First Estate.
5. Louis and the National Assembly were at odds on many issues. Members of the lawmaking Assembly even competed against each other for political power.
6. At one point, the French people suspected that Louis was cooperating with Prussia and Austria, which had declared war on France in order to end the revolution and keep the king on the throne. These suspicions led to the execution of Louis and his wife, Marie Antoinette.
7. A Committee of Public Safety, led by Robespierre, sent thousands of political prisoners to their deaths in, what came to be known as the Reign of Terror. Revolutionary leaders soon turned on one another, and even Robespierre was executed.

The French Revolution finally ended in 1799 when Napoleon Bonaparte, an army officer, made himself dictator of France. As a result of the revolution, absolute monarchy was discontinued. "Nationalism," a love for one's country, united the French people and led to the defeat of those nations trying to return a powerful king to the throne. A new constitution gave citizens freedom of speech, press, and religion. Aristocrats lost their special privileges. Lands owned by the Church and nobility were taken over by the government and sold to the common people. And the "bourgeoisie," the wealthy, educated members of the Third Estate, were given important government and army positions.

The French Revolution affected other countries as well as France. People in many nations throughout Europe and around the world also demanded an end to absolute rule. They wanted the same liberty and equality that Frenchmen had won.

Use of the Guillotine

The guillotine was a machine used during the French Revolution to execute people by cutting off their heads. A weighted blade, setting between two grooved uprights, would drop into the victim's neck and cause instant death.

Similar machines had been used in Scotland, Germany, and Italy in earlier centuries. In France, the guillotine came to be the accepted form of execution. It had been tested successfully on sheep and the bodies of dead humans. Joseph Guillotin, a doctor and member of the French Assembly, suggested using the machine in all cases of capital punishment. He wanted everyone who was sentenced to death to die as quickly and painlessly as possible. Until then, only aristocrats had the privilege of dying this way.

But the guillotine soon became a symbol of mass executions during the Reign of Terror. An estimated 20,000 to 40,000 men, women, and children were beheaded. Crowds gathered in the town square and shouted insults at the victims. After an execution, two men would toss the body into a large red basket, while a third man would do the same with the head. When a well-known person was guillotined, the executioner would hold up the head and the crowd would cheer.

Rule for the GUILLOTINE GAME

In this game, the class will be divided into two teams. Team 1 will be supporters of Louis XVI and the First and Second Estates. Team 2 will be the Third Estate. Each side will try to gain control of the French government by guillotining political opponents on the other team.

Before starting the game, SiR will give a sign-up sheet numbered from 1 to 25 to Team 1. Each player will write their name after any number not taken by a teammate. Team 2 will do the same on a sheet numbered from 26 to 50. The numbers represent places in France where players hope to hide out and avoid execution by their enemies. Sign-up sheets will be collected by SiR.

Play begins when SiR asks a question about the French Revolution. The first person to raise their hand will be called on. If their answer is correct, they will choose any number from the other team's list. If the number picked locates the hiding place of one of the enemy according to the sign-up sheet then that person from the opposing team has been beheaded, and the team scores 1 point. The game continues in the same way until a total of 22 questions have been asked.

Whenever an incorrect answer is given, or the person called on does not answer immediately, the other team selects a number from its opponent's list.

If your team locates an enemy hiding place, circle the number of the beheaded victim on the map. Cross out numbers picked that do not locate hiding places. The team that executes the most political opponents wins the GUILLOTINE GAME.

