

**Extending the Lesson
Innovations and Revolutions
Revolutionary Change**

After reading the article on pages 105 – 106, answer the follow questions.

1. What time period was the era of revolution and change?

2. Who wrote the *Two Treatises of Government* and how important was the book in forming people's opinions about governmental power?

3. What factor determines whether a revolution is violent of non violent?

4. Why did Locke write his book (what was he defending and why)?

5. Who wrote *The Spirit of the Laws* and what did this author argue about government power?

6. How did Voltaire and Rousseau help to frame the discussion about a free press and people having their own nation?

REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE: What caused the American and French Revolutions, and what political ideas spread as a result?

The late 1700s was a time of turmoil and war, both in Europe and in Europe's American colonies. American colonists grew angry at England's policies, and in 1776 they declared independence. In 1789 the people of France, frustrated with their government, launched a revolution that changed European society.

What ideas led to the American and French Revolutions?

In *Two Treatises of Government*, written in 1690, the English philosopher John Locke argued that all people had certain natural rights and that when a government stopped protecting people's rights, the people had a right to overthrow it. He was one of the first writers to suggest that people had a right to stage a political revolution—a rapid overthrow of a society's government.

Revolutions can be violent or nonviolent. It often depends on whether or not political leaders use force to stay in power and whether or not the military supports them. Locke did not think revolutions had to be violent. He wrote his book to defend the Glorious Revolution of 1688, a nonviolent revolution. In 1688, England's Parliament removed King James II from power peacefully and asked William and Mary to take the throne. Parliament also required William and Mary to accept the English Bill of Rights, establishing the principle that English subjects had certain basic rights.

During the Enlightenment, many writers discussed the nature of government. In *The Spirit of Laws*, French writer Baron de Montesquieu concluded that the best government divided power among different branches. Voltaire stressed the need for a free press and freedom of religion. Jean-Jacques Rousseau helped develop the idea of nationalism—that people with a common culture ought to have their own nation.

What were the causes and events of these revolutions?

American Revolution The mid-1700s were a time of war in Europe. These wars left Britain deeply in debt. In 1764 to raise money, the British put new taxes on colonial trade goods. To enforce the taxes, the British created special courts without juries to try smuggling cases, and authorized the use of general search warrants. Mass protests took place, and the colonists boycotted British goods. In 1766, and again in 1770, the British repealed these taxes, but the situation remained tense.

In 1773 colonists raided a British tea ship in Boston Harbor to protest the Tea Act. The British shut down the harbor, banned town meetings, and authorized the quartering of troops in private homes. These acts enraged Americans, and led British troops and colonial militia to clash at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. On July 4, 1776, American leaders issued the Declaration of Independence, using language derived from Locke's writings. The turning point came in 1777 when the American victory at the Battle of Saratoga convinced France to join the war. After losing the decisive Battle of Yorktown in 1781, the British surrendered in 1783.

In 1789 American leaders drafted a new constitution. Following Montesquieu's ideas, the new government was divided into three branches. To win ratification, political leaders added the Bill of Rights, guaranteeing freedom of religion, speech, and press, the right to petition and assemble, to bear arms, to trial by jury, and to be protected against unreasonable searches and arrests.

French Revolution Wars in the 1700s left France, like Britain, deeply in debt. Clergy, nobles, and the wealthy were exempt from most taxes, so the tax burden fell to the peasants, who owed fees to the nobles in addition to the taxes.

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Causes of Major Revolutions

War/Tyranny	Poverty/Class Conflict	New Ideas	Anti-Colonialism
American Revolution, 1770-1788			
Yes; cost of colonial wars led to British taxes on the colonies; many colonists felt the king violated their rights	No	Yes; idea that people had certain natural rights, including the right not to be taxed without representation	Yes; Americans wanted to control their own affairs
French Revolution, 1789-1804			
Yes; cost of France's wars forced king to call for a change to the tax system; many viewed the king and aristocracy as tyrants	Yes; high food prices, taxes, and unemployment; peasants and middle class resented the power and privilege of the aristocracy and clergy	Yes; ideas of democracy and republicanism convinced many that the people should control the government	No
Mexican Revolution, 1810-1821			
Yes; Napoleon's conquest of Spain led to rebellion in New Spain; war broke out between the revolutionary groups	Yes; poverty of mestizos and Native Americans led to demands for change; middle class clashed with upper class and opposed changes desired by mestizos	Yes; idea of nationalism led many to rebel against France's control of New Spain	Yes; Mexicans rebelled against French and Spanish control
Chinese Revolution, 1911-1912			
Yes; civil war erupted between nationalists and communists, but the Japanese invaded; revolutionaries wanted to eliminate the emperor and overthrow landlords	Yes; peasants paid high taxes and faced poverty and frequent famines; peasants resented wealth and power of landlords	Yes; ideas of democracy, republicanism, socialism, and communism influenced many Chinese to support revolution	No

New taxes could be imposed by the Estates General, an assembly of the clergy, nobles, and commoners.

In July 1788, the French king, Louis XVI, called a meeting of the Estates General. French commoners were known as the Third Estate. Both the nobles and Third Estate's leaders had been influenced by Enlightenment ideas and the American Revolution. Nobles demanded a new constitution increasing the power of the Estates General, but the Third Estate's leaders rejected the idea. Using Rousseau's ideas, they announced that only the Third Estate represented the French nation and the will of the people.

Riots and protests erupted across the country. The economy was in recession, food prices were very high, and many people were out of work. The Third Estate's leaders declared their meeting to be a National Assembly, abolished class privileges, and issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. The Declaration made all citizens equal and guaranteed their rights to liberty, property, security, and freedom of thought and religion.

Over the next decade, various groups in the National Assembly struggled for power. Thousands of people, including the king, were executed. War with Austria, Prussia, and Britain enabled the French general Napoleon Bonaparte to gain power, and in 1799 he seized governmental control. Napoleon restored order, introduced a new constitution, codified the laws, and created a modern bureaucracy. His armies fought Austria, Prussia, Britain, and Russia and spread revolutionary ideas across Europe.

What political ideas were spread?

The American and French Revolutions gave birth to the idea of nationalism—that a people with a common identity

ought to have their own nation. A few decades after the American Revolution, most of Spain's American colonies declared independence. In Europe, nationalism led to the unification of Italy in 1861 and the creation of a German Empire in 1871. By 1878, Greece, Serbia, and Romania became independent. From 1945 to 1975, the peoples of India, Indochina, Indonesia, Africa, and the Middle East gained independence.

These revolutions also contributed to the spread of democratic and republican ideas. The idea that people have certain basic rights was accepted, and the idea that monarchs and aristocrats should control the government was rejected. Democratic revolutions swept across Europe in 1848, and in 1917 the Russian Revolution began as an attempt to create a democratic government. Although the Revolutions of 1848 failed and the Russian Revolution led to a communist regime, the idea of democracy gained support. By the early 1900s, political reforms in much of Western Europe created societies that were more broadly democratic and representative than ever before.