

LOUIS XVI

A re-creation of his 1792 trial for treason

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PURPOSE - 1

Few historians would disagree that the French Revolution stands as one of history's most significant events. Its happenings are so stirring, its impact so immense, and its characters so vivid, that writers, film makers, poets, and scholars have found the years 1789-1799 to be an immensely fertile ground.

The year 1789 was a watershed moment for France and Europe. An unruly mob broke into the Bastille on July 14, captured seven prisoners, and confiscated enough gunpowder to ward off the king's loyal troops. On that day, centuries of autocratic rule in France began to dissolve, and, as a result, the western world changed irrevocably. Like America less than 15 years before, the explosion of revolution advanced the bumpy course of freedom for the common man.

When the hated symbol of the Bastille fell, it signaled a need to destroy more so-called symbols of the old regime. Indeed, what followed was more like a bloodbath of murder and destruction. In 1793-94, the carnage reached its zenith when more than 20,000 were shot or decapitated. Perhaps one event moved the revolutionary fervor to a higher pitch from a moderate revolt to a radical one: the trial and execution of King Louis XVI, the most odious symbol of the Bourbon monarchy's corruption and greed. The reign of this particular Louis, as it turned out, was ill-timed.

Louis XVI was tried for treason before a revolutionary tribunal in the National Convention and executed weeks after he first defended himself. It had been more an arraignment than a trial. The radicals in the convention listened only to help them make up their minds, not about his guilt or innocence, but about whether to sentence him to die under the "slippery blade" of the guillotine or to allow him to live either in exile or in prison.

Your students are about to re-create this important trial. After doing so, they will perceive why you made the decision to spend a few hours on Louis' fate in the National Convention and its proper place in history. On this note, the French Revolution itself is the backdrop for the trial, and doing the trial re-enforces the dramatic events of that movement. Second, trials are people activities. That is, raw human emotions are displayed, confrontations are played out, and clear-cut decisions are made at the end. What better way to have your students introduced to the French history-makers of this era. They were all there—Louis XVI, Robespierre, Danton, Barère, Marat, and others. Only a very young Napoleon was missing.

Louis XVI



PURPOSE - 2



Important:

Be certain you spend some time making certain your students understand how American and French historical events influenced one another during the 1770s and 1780s ...

Finally, the trial itself needs to be studied not only because it kept the revolutionary fervor alive (by executing the king), but also because it just precedes the Reign of Terror, when the revolution rushed perilously beyond moderation to extremes.

Specifically, when your “citizens” role play Girondins and the Mountain in the convention, or major participants in the legal proceedings themselves, they will sharpen skills that include the following:

Knowledge

1. the differences between the American justice system and the French “tribunal” system Louis XVI faced in 1792-93
2. French political thought in the 18th century
3. major arguments which led to the guilt and execution of the French king, a symbol of the Old Regime
4. the major events of the French Revolution
5. acquaintance with the trappings of the Revolution, including the “spirit” of the movement, its anthem, colors, flag, and weapon of death—the guillotine
6. the movement of the Revolution from moderate to radical

Attitudes

1. appreciating the cataclysmic events French men and women, including the royal family, experienced
2. sensing how revolutionary zeal and its power can change a nation’s history.
3. appreciating that King Louis XVI’s guilt was not really in question and that the real issue in the convention was decided by the regicides who persuaded, or outnumbered the antiregicides
4. realizing how a nation’s mood can change from a moderation to radicalism

Skills

1. speaking clearly and forcefully before a group, in this case, the National Convention of revolutionary France
2. researching and logically sequencing/ordering evidence
3. sorting out evidence, analyzing a verdict, and formulating a proper sentence for the accused found guilty
4. working in a group to render a verdict



OVERVIEW

The trial of Louis XVI refocuses on an event within an event. Were it not for the French Revolution taking a radical turn (what do we do with this hated symbol of the Old Regime?), the king wouldn't have faced "The Mountain" in the National Convention, and your class wouldn't be re-creating this episode. Most schools require an analysis of the upheavals of the 18th and 19th centuries, and it is possible that a student would study the French Revolution more than once in a three to four year period. The author sees this as an opportunity not for repetition but for illustrating just how important this trial re-creation in "the best of times" and "the worst of times" really is. Your version of this event will be a watershed for your unit.



Be thinking about the possibility of having your students dress up for their late 18th-century characters. Ask yourself:

"Where might I go to help them find partial or complete period costumes?"

Students will be selected to play several roles:

- King Louis XVI;
- leaders of the National Convention;
- defense attorneys for the king; and
- several speakers who will present arguments for and against the execution of Louis, including evidence of his "treason" against the state.

As you follow the TRIAL PROCEDURE, you will note that this activity has four parts. Each of the four was actually days or weeks apart. But to re-create what happened in 1792-93 and to maintain continuity for your students, these segments have been structured to flow together so that the activity can be completed in one and a half to two class periods.

The four parts are as follows:

1. The king comes to the convention to hear and to answer the charges against him.
2. The king's brief defense is delivered by one of his attorneys.
3. Speeches on the king's guilt and sentencing are followed by three separate votes.
4. The king's dramatic execution under the blade of the guillotine (if found guilty, of course) is carried out.

Hopefully, all four segments will flow smoothly for you and your students. Even though Louis' name is attached to the trial, he is not the cornerstone of the activity. He does answer the charges early on. The trial's early dramatic focus is, and should be, on the various speeches on his fate delivered by the two major factions in the convention's ranks, the moderate Girondins versus the radical Mountain Jacobins. The past of French history catches up with its destiny in these well-delivered arguments.



SETUP DIRECTIONS - 1

1. **Major roles** Needless to say, it is important that you select good and responsible students to fill the roles in this activity, especially President Barère, De Sèze, and the delegates, who make speeches. Barère's role is central or key to a successful re-creation. An unprepared or less than serious re-enactor in this pivotal role could be the difference in whether or not the class has an indelible learning experience.
2. **Minor roles** The rest of the roles, notably the speakers in the convention who address the issue of regicide, should also be dependable and enjoy delivering a formal speech in front of their colleagues. Remember, there are no witnesses to testify for and against the king; so, these debates on the king's fate serve to sort out the "evidence" and express the various viewpoints.
3. **Note-taking** Everyone in your class should be accountable for what goes on, even those students who don't get selected for a role. *Stress that they **all** are members of the convention.* To insure understanding consider requiring *all* students while not on their feet speaking to take notes on key arguments and testimony. Cooperative learning and peer teaching can help here. Set aside some time at the end of or the beginning of key class periods. Allow pairs or trios of students to copy and supplement one another's notes.

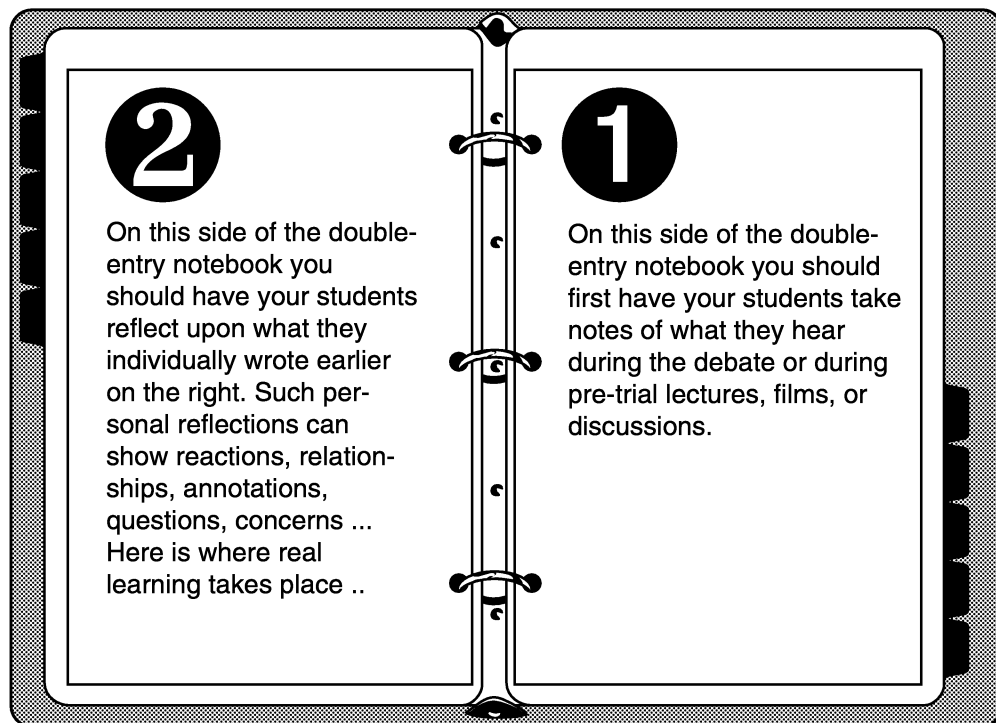
Research shows that the process of writing in the classroom is as important as the product...

*If you are serious about helping your students learn more through the writing process, please contact **Interact** about our powerful Responding cross-disciplinary writing program. Hints about Responding's power can be found at the right under*

1

and

2





SETUP DIRECTIONS - 2

! You might set up a table in your classroom during your students' study of the French Revolution. Include appropriate illustrations and books for students to browse through while you're building up to the trial.

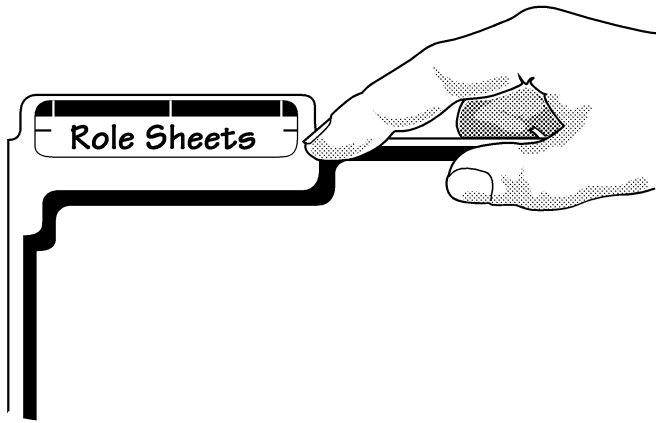
4. **Extra research** Encourage *all* participants to supplement your French Revolution instruction with some outside research of their own. Several appropriate books are listed in the bibliography.
5. **Room arrangement** A week before the trial, assign some students to make one or two tricolor flags to drape or hang in class during the activity. Another student or two could find a copy of the French national anthem "La Marseillaise" in a library or record store, make a copy for the activity and bring it in to be used. (One is included in this packet.) Another task for some volunteers: Have them make badges to wear representing the Girondins and the Jacobins. Each of the latter's badges has a *mountain* on it since most Jacobins sat in the upper tier of seats and benches in the Manège and were called the "Mountain." Radicalism became synonymous with the "Mountain," and often Jacobins were, or voted, with the "Mountain." Include too, if you wish to be historically accurate, badges with *P* on them. The *P* would stand for the "Plain," a large group from the largest section of the hall who usually voted moderate or who were uncommitted. Additionally, these same students might want to create cockade hats for French "citizens" to wear.
6. **Duplication** About a week prior to the trial, select students for the roles and duplicate the following materials to give to them when appropriate:
 - TRIAL PROCEDURE sheets (one per student, class set, or one to each major participant per class)
 - BACKGROUND ESSAY (class set, or one per student)
 - HOW TO MAKE A GUILLOTINE IN CLASS (one transparency .. or give 3 to 5 copies to one construction team)
 - FACTION PROFILE SHEET: THE GIRONDINS (10 per class)
 - FACTION PROFILE SHEET: THE MOUNTAIN/JACOBINS (10 per class)
 - FACTION PROFILE SHEET: THE PLAIN (10 per class)
 - PROFILE SHEET: KING LOUIS XVI, FORMER KING OF FRANCE
 - PROFILE SHEET: THE KING'S ATTORNEYS (two per class)
 - GIRONDIN SPEAKERS #1, #2: (one each per class)
 - MOUNTAIN SPEAKERS #1, #2, #3: (one each per class)
 - MINOR ROLES (one per class, or one per each role on sheet)



SETUP DIRECTIONS - 3

Set up several folders for the duplicated handouts several days in advance.

- LA MARSEILLAISE (transparency or class set)
- INTERROGATION OF THE KING (two per class)
- AFTERMATH OF THE TRIAL (class set, or transparency)
- DEBRIEFING (one per each character, plus one for the emcee)





TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 1

A week prior to the trial

1. As a motivator have a student demonstrate an already constructed guillotine.
2. Duplicate and hand out necessary materials to the students playing roles. (See Setup Directions.)
3. Arrange for any furniture additions or changes for your classroom.
4. If you want to involve some students in helping out with some flourishes (flags, anthem, and badges or armbands), instruct them at this time (see Setup Directions).



The BACKGROUND ESSAY here, as in all INTERACT publications, is vital to understanding the "Big Picture."

Day 1

1. Hand out BACKGROUND ESSAY and have everyone read it. Here are some options:
 - A cooperative learning team read-around or reader's theater version might be better than an oral or silent one. In some classes this might take all period, but, if it does, arrange to have major participants work on their roles while the remainder of the class reads the essay.
 - Consider teaching students to highlight and underline key ideas and facts in the BACKGROUND ESSAY. Such training can help students succeed in their future education and training. In any case, the information is vital in connecting all the events and the reason Louis XVI is on trial.
 - Of course, be sure you spend some time, too, reviewing why the class is re-creating the trial. (See Purpose and Overview sections earlier in this Teacher Guide.)
2. If you have time, show a brief excerpt from a video, film, or filmstrip on the French Revolution. Recommended are any of several versions of the storming of the Bastille, but especially the PBS mini-series of Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* shown in 1989-1990. If you select this, also show the end when Sidney Carton goes to the guillotine. Even Ronald Coleman's version done in the 1930s is worthwhile.

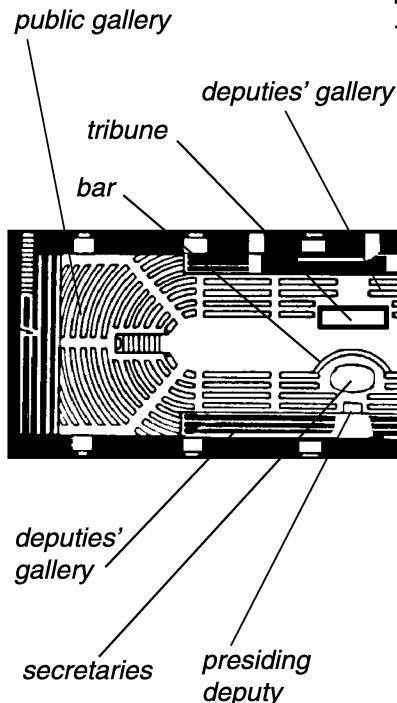
Day 2

1. You could schedule a Preparation Day to help those in need, and give time for creative students to make badges, etc. Furthermore, the students who will make speeches in the convention need time to make an outline, to practice their speeches, and to get into being a Girondin ... or a member of the Plain or the Mountain. Perhaps each faction could sit together, wear their own badges and cockade hats, and work up a club cheer or chant.



TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 2

Day 3



1. If you are more interested in *substance* than *mood* or *spirit*, then skip Day 2. This Day 3 is trial day, and you should have a smooth activity if you follow the sequence below.

- Before you actually begin (and de Thionville is recognized to speak—see TRIAL PROCEDURE), make sure the room is set up the day before to resemble the Manège of 1792 (It had been the riding academy of Louis XVI). The diagram at left shows the Manège as it was in 1792. Try to set up your classroom in a similar fashion. Several risers would elevate the convention delegates. A small table could be used for the tribune, where speakers made their arguments. Perhaps 2x4s and PVC plumbing pipe could be turned into a bar of justice similar to the one the king stood behind in 1792-1793.
- Make sure the TRIAL PROCEDURE is in the hands of all major participants (and/or perhaps taped to all desks in the room). Also ascertain who's absent and who needs a substitute and a profile sheet.
- Overview the trial's sequence and what you expect from each individual or group. (An observer's note-taking log could be provided for all non-participants, along with advice on how they—the deputies—should behave). Make it clear when and how you want bursts of loyalty and enthusiasm.
- Begin the trial, following the TRIAL PROCEDURE. Hopefully all speakers will not read their lines. Encourage them to "deliver" them as if the words are in their heads and hearts and not merely on paper.
- You will not complete the trial during this day; therefore, try to recess at an appropriate time (after the king's interrogation?).



The ultimate teacher woe: absenteeism of key students. A possible solution would be to have understudies for major roles.

Day 4

1. Make sure all students are in their proper places, all major participants are in class ready to fulfill their roles, and observers absent the day before are given materials.
2. Continue with the trial as specified in the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheet. Perhaps playing the "Marseillaise" will get them into the proper frame of mind. Or maybe try some "Mountain" chants.
3. If there is not enough time to execute the king after the verdict and sentencing, stage that event tomorrow.



TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 3

Day 5

1. With everyone gathered around to watch, stage the execution of the king using data from AFTERMATH OF THE TRIAL. Perhaps you could invite a few other history classes to observe and if so use a quad or open area of your school. Care must be taken as you “execute” the monarch with a homemade guillotine. If you feel like risk-taking, invite the principal and other officials, parents, or staff to the “Place de la Revolution.”

Day 6 (or 5): Debriefing and testing

1. Some sort of follow-up or debriefing activity should take place soon after the trial. This session could be a simple discussion about the issues raised during the trial (e.g., capital punishment, revolutionary zeal, the art of persuasion, justice under the laws, differences in French justice in the 1790s and United States justice today.) You could also discuss the lack of evidence which made no difference in the king’s case. As you do, make reference to the rights an American citizen has (e.g., speedy and public trial, right to an attorney, right to an appeal, etc.).
2. If you choose to debrief in some detail, use the handouts included in this packet. The 30-minute debriefing calls for six characters to discuss the trial at a “salon,” which is where such matters would be pondered in 18th-century France. If you have a plethora of good re-enactors, select different students days in advance to portray the peasant couple, the royalist, the merchant, the Paris official, and the outspoken feminist. Whoever plays the emcee should use the handouts to put together the usual television show format and patter. *The purpose of this salon show is to review the points of view expressed during the trial and to touch upon the conditions and tax system of France before 1789.*
3. Some accountability should be assessed. A test over the trial is not part of this Teacher Guide, but certainly 10 objective questions and a few short answer essays would be easy enough to create.



TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 4

Shortening the re-creation

Perhaps you want to spend only one to two days on this activity. If this is the case, eliminate the following:

- the faction profiles;
- the execution segment;
- the BACKGROUND ESSAY (especially if you are a strong and thorough “textbook teacher”; and
- the aftermath (you can recap the events which follow Louis’ death).

By doing the above, you can cut the trial days to half, or even to one full period in which you do the trial. (See Options grid presented below.)

The Trial of Louis XVI

Regular Option

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Prior to today, roles were given out and the room was arranged Background Essay Motion picture or video excerpt	Preparation Day King meets with attorneys Speakers prepare Construction teams meet Factions meet	Trial Day Review all materials and check for understanding Begin trial (through #7 or #13 on TRIAL PROCEDURE SHEET)	Continue trial until it is completed Stage the execution with a “safe” guillotine	Debriefing activity (with 7 characters + emcee) Review Administer your own test based on the trial

Shorter Option

Day 1	Day 2
Hand out roles Briefly prepare students for trial Review history of French Revolution up to c. 1792	Stage the trial Debrief as time permits



FLOURISHES - 1

Every teacher knows the value of extra effort or creative flourishes. Especially in historical trials, simulations, and re-creations, these embellishments enliven the activity, add fun and often excitement, and write it indelibly into both you and your students' memories.



*Here is your chance
to generate extra
enthusiasm from your
students as they
participate in this trial
...*

Here are some flourishes for the trial:

- Find a copy of *La Marseillaise* and play it before and after the trial. Pass out song sheets in English or French for the participants to sing. Practice it with them a few times.
- Make small badges for the different factions: Gironde, The Mountain, and The Plain. Perhaps a square one with a G, a triangle with a P, or a circle with an M (snow-capped mountain?).
- Make banners with "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" (or French equivalent), "Vive le roi," "Mort le roi."
- Make some tricolor flags to display and citizen cockade hats for some students to wear.
- When you stage the execution of the king, try to get a student to bring a small snare drum into class to accompany the intensity of the beheading ceremony. Also check with the instrumental music teacher for a small drum.
- Just before King Louis is requested to appear before the convention, have him playing chess with his "son" in the back of the room. After he is taken into the Manège, he should be accompanied by two or three guards. Likewise, when he is condemned to die by the convention, his lawyer should run to the back of the class to inform him of the delegates' decision. Perhaps a heartfelt last reunion with Marie Antoinette and his two children should be staged as he prepares to ride to the scaffold (in a large wagon or cart?).
- Emphasize the importance to all participants of not reading their parts or speeches. *Nothing separates an exciting and successful activity more than one that seems spontaneous compared to one where role players read verbatim from their profile sheets or TRIAL PROCEDURE outline.* Encourage students to study their roles. Tell them that getting into the historical personage's psyches is the ultimate quest.
- You might want to stage an escape attempt at the guillotine. Have a few students play royalists and instruct them on the side to plan an escape attempt. At some point in the execution, they might run up to the guillotine and grab the king, yell "Vive le roi," and disappear with Louis. Of course, their plot should be foiled before they reach the door or the perimeter of the crowd. Perhaps the plotting royalists can be beheaded also.



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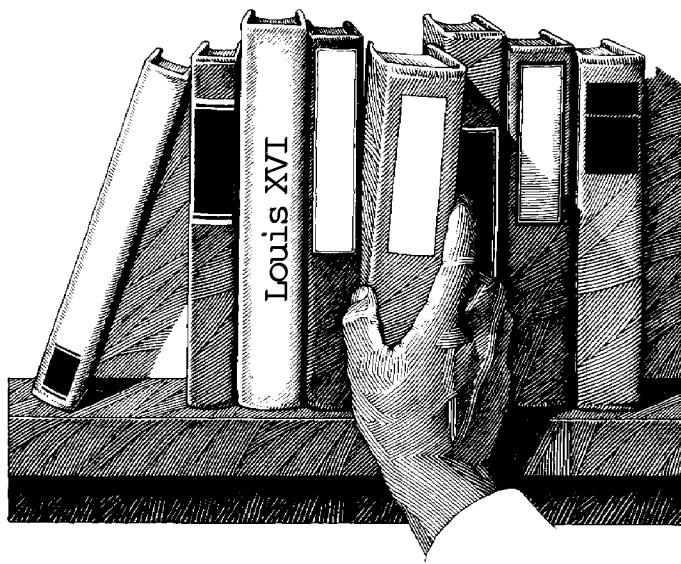
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* Suitable for young readers



Contact your friendly school librarian in advance of your beginning the unit. Ask that a **Reserve shelf: Louis XVI** be set up for your students a week or so in advance.



TRIAL PROCEDURE - 1

Directions: These sheets give order and procedure to the activity sequence. It does not copy the original trial of King Louis XVI but rather represents a facsimile of what happened in 1792-93. Action begins when De Thionville rises in the National Convention. (Everyone involved, except the king and his attorneys, who are outside, has already sat down and *is qu(iet).*)



President of the convention:
*Keep order
at all times!*

1. **De Thionville:** "Mr. President?" (*He is recognized*). "It is time for Louis Capet (Louie Capay) to fall under the national sword, the guillotine. The convention here ought to be both the jury of accusation and the jury of judgment for him."
2. **Saint Just:** (*Rises and says, "Mr. President?" He is recognized*) "I disagree with Monsieur de Thionville. The king should not be tried here in this body. In fact, he deserves no trial at all. Tyrants have a right to die, not to be elevated to the rank of citizen. We Jacobins maintain he is guilty of treason and deserves the blade!" (*Cheers from Jacobins/Mountain*)
3. **Robespierre:** "Mr. President." (*He is recognized as he rises.*) "We in this convention must be careful. If Louis is tried, he can, presumably, be found innocent. And if Louis can be presumed innocent and found so, what becomes of the revolution? To try Louis is to try the revolution! This is an absurdity. Let the guillotine do its job ... now!"
4. **President Barère** (*president of the convention*): "Nonetheless. The convention will now vote whether or not to try the king. Do I hear a motion?"
5. **Petion:** "Mr. President." (*He rises and is recognized.*) "I move that King Louis be judged by the National Convention."
6. **Anyone:** "Mr. President, I second the motion."
7. **President Barère:** "It has been moved and seconded that King Louis be tried by this body. All those agreeing to the motion say "Oui ("wee"). (*Pause to count*) All those opposed, say "No." (*Pause to count ... then announce*): "The ouis have it. King Louis XVI will be tried in this convention. Gendarmes, fetch the king from the temple now."

(It is recommended that what follows in the procedure be done the next day or after a five- to 10-minute delay.)

8. The king and his attorneys enter the area from a corridor or hallway. No one rises and it is respectfully quiet.
9. **President Barère:** "Louis Capet, you will stand at the tribune." (*Wait until he complies.*) "I announce to the assembly that Louis XVI is here now for trial. Representatives of the French people, you are about to exercise the right of national justice"



TRIAL PROCEDURE - 2

and the dignity of your session ought to correspond to the majesty of the French people. It is about to give, through you, a great lesson to kings, and a useful example for the emancipation of nations.

(Barère waves his hand, indicating that the king has his permission to sit)



President of the convention:
*Keep order
at all times!*

10. **President Barère:** "Louis, the French nation accuses you. The National Assembly decreed, on December 3, that you would be judged by it. We are going to read to you the *acte enonciatif*, or list, of crimes imputed to you. I must ask you not to rely on legal counsel to fashion a "yes" or "no" answer to the charges. That you must do on your own."
11. Barère begins the interrogation of the king, using handout: INTERROGATION OF THE KING. The question and answer exchange is between Louis and Barère. (After this segment, continue below.)
 - **Barère:** Louis Capet, do you have anything to add to your defense to the charges?
 - **Louis:** I do not respond to that name. I ask to see the accusations and the pieces of evidence that accompany them, and the right to choose a counsel to defend me.
 - **Barère:** And you shall have an opportunity right now to see the evidence. *(He motions the secretary to rapidly put papers/documents in front of Louis's face).*
 - **Louis** *(as he briefly sees these several documents):* "I don't recognize it" or "I don't know about it."
 - **Barère:** Do you recognize this as your own handwriting?
 - **Louis:** No.
 - **Barère:** Did you build a secret safe in the Tuileries?
 - **Louis:** I have no knowledge of it.

(Fifteen days later, the king and his lawyers returned to the convention to defend against the list of charges. To facilitate your re-creation of the trial, you may want to skip through #12 and #13 and go right to #14, perhaps with a moment's delay. Have a student carry a "15 days later" sign across the classroom.)

12. **President Barère:** "That is all, Louis Capet. The accused may go back to his quarters at The Temple."
13. The king is dismissed. Accompanied by his lawyers, he leaves the convention.
14. **President Barère:** "Louis and his defenders are at the door and are ready to appear at the bar. I forbid the members or



TRIAL PROCEDURE - 3



President of the convention:
*Keep order
at all times!*

spectators to make any noise or show any kind of approval. The king may enter the convention.”

15. (King Louis and his attorneys stride in and walk slowly to the tribune table across from the president, or presiding officer).
16. **President Barère:** “Louis, the convention has decreed that you would be heard today.”
17. **King Louis:** “My counsel will read you my defense.”
18. **President Barère:** “So be it. Which of your counsel will read the defense?”
19. **De Sèze:** “I will, Mr. President.”
20. **Barère:** “Very well. Proceed.”
21. (De Sèze then delivers the king’s defense or “plaidoyer” based on information on his profile sheet. He finishes by asking the king five to seven questions which elicit a “yes” or “no” response.)
22. **A royal supporter:** “Vive le roi!” (The king lives!)
23. **President Barère:** Thank you, Meseiur De Sèze. And let there be no more outbursts for the king in this convention.

(The convention then discusses the king’s fate for 12 days.)

24. **Barère:** “The convention must now decide the fate of our former monarch. The chair will listen.”
 - **A Girondin:** “The people commit an act of tyranny when it judges a man!”
 - **A Jacobin:** “No! It commits an act of justice when it assassinates a tyrant!”
25. At this point, several (six) short speeches will be given by Girondins and Jacobins regarding not so much the king’s guilt, but how the vote will happen and what the penalty should be. Barère should guide the convention through these speakers.

Speaker’s order:

 - Girondin 1
 - Girondin 2
 - Mountain/Jacobin 1
 - Mountain/Jacobin 2
 - Mountain/Jacobin 3
 - Thomas Paine (last speaker)
26. **Barère:** “It is now time for this convention to vote. As I see it, there are three separate issues and therefore three separate votes. One: Is the king guilty? Two: What should his punishment be? Three: Should we submit or appeal the king’s fate to the French people?”



TRIAL PROCEDURE - 4



President of the convention:
*Keep order
at all times!*

27. **Barère:** “Will the secretary of this convention read the questions and then call on each delegate to answer ‘Oui’ or ‘Non’ (‘wee’ or ‘no’) on the first two questions. Mr. Secretary?”
28. **Secretary of the convention:** “The first question before this convention is: “Is Louis guilty of conspiring against the liberty and attempts against the security of the state, oui or non?”
(Another student should record the responses by digit on a tallyboard. Once the vote is tallied and Louis is found guilty it should be announced).
29. **Barère:** “Thus the National Convention declares Louis Capet guilty of attempts against the liberty and of conspiracy against the general security of the state. Secretary, proceed to the next role-call vote.”
30. **Secretary:** “The judgment that will be rendered on Louis, shall it be submitted to the ratification of the people united in their primary assemblies all over France—oui or non?”
(Again each delegate votes and the tally is recorded and announced.)
31. **Barère:** “I declare, in the name of the convention, that the judgment against Louis Capet will *not* be sent to the people for ratification! Now we will take up the last issue—that of the king’s punishment.”
32. **Danton:** “President Barère, I wish to speak before a vote is taken.” *(He waits to be acknowledged.)* “We delegates have many choices to consider. I move that we consider only three. The first is banishment, but Louis Capet will remain a living symbol of corruption and tyranny. The second is prison and I again reject such a suggestion. Even in irons, and living on bread and water, he ... lives! The king’s punishment must be death by ... the blade!” *(Cheers from the Jacobins and Mountains)* “There should be no dealing with tyranny!”
33. **Robespierre:** “Mr. President, I call for the vote – and my vote is death to the king!”
34. **Saint-Just:** *(Leans up to get recognition):* “Since Louis XVI was the enemy of the people, of its liberty and happiness, I vote for death. Let this phrase, ‘I vote for death,’ be on everyone’s lips!”
35. **Barère:** “Mr. Secretary, have each delegate come forward to the tribune and vote on the king’s punishment. If you say ‘I vote for ... death’ or ‘life imprisonment’ or ‘banishment’ you may, if desired, explain your answer.”

(Each delegate comes forward to announce their option. Upon completion of the vote, the results will be announced. The secretary should tally each vote on the board.)



TRIAL PROCEDURE - 5



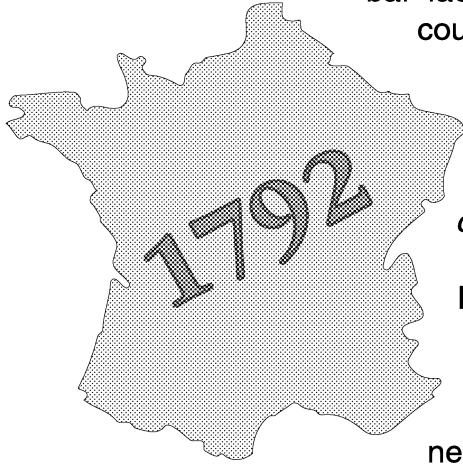
**President of the
convention:**
*Keep order
at all times!*

36. **Barère:** *(Secretary hands a slip of paper to Barère.)* "Citizens for the king's death, there were 361 votes; for imprisonment, 320 votes; for banishment, 8 votes. *(Dramatically)* I declare in the name of the National Convention, that the punishment it pronounces against Louis Capet is that of ... death by the guillotine! Will Louis Capet or his attorney come forward."
37. **De Sèze:** "Mr. President, I wish to read a letter from the king." (He is recognized and comes to the tribune. He then reads the king's letter from his profile sheet). *(The delegates show outrage ... booing.)*
38. **Malesherbes:** "Mr. President, I wish to speak also—on the king's behalf." *(He comes forward to the tribune and reads a short, awkward speech.)*
39. **Robespierre:** "Enough of this, Mr. President and fellow delegates. All that there is to do now is to decide the time and place for the tyrant's execution. Let us get on with it!"
40. **President Barère:** "I agree. Someone bring the king in. Mr. Secretary, bring in the guillotine and let's send our former king to his Maker!"

(Your teacher may want to stage the execution outside in the "Place de la Revolution" using the information in the AFTERMATH as the source for the execution. Following this, a debriefing activity should take place, simple or elaborate, according to time and student interest.)



BACKGROUND ESSAY - 1



Introduction As citizens of the New Republic champed on oranges and frozen ices amidst the revolution's new tricolor flag, the deposed Bourbon monarch of France, Louis XVI, stood at the bar facing more than 700 Frenchmen for crimes against his country. The year was 1792. History's greatest upheaval, the French Revolution, was nearing midstream, but in terms of violence the worst was only months ahead. *What brought one of western civilization's most cultured and advanced societies to this seemingly radical time? What caused this civilized nation to execute its king?*

French history France (and, of course, including its center, Paris) has always been revered for its culture and its long, colorful history in the West's journey to the modern world. Its favorable geographic position, located nearly equidistant from Germany, Italy, Spain, and England, meant that whatever happened within her borders was of concern to her neighbors. Indeed, the land of the Franks was not only Caesar's Gaul but also later medieval Europe's center. Frankish kings like Charlemagne ruled over serfs, and knights paid homage to their lords residing in stately castles.

Excesses of the Bourbon kings In the late middle ages, the rise of strong nation-states accompanied the consolidation of equally strong monarchies. In France, the Bourbon kings eventually held sway by proclaiming—like kings all over Europe—that they ruled by Divine Right. This meant that they were privileged and could use vast amounts of taxes taken from the lower classes to live a carefree, lavish, charmed existence. One Bourbon king, Louis XIV—the sun king—represents all that was glorious, and corrupt, about European rulers between 1600 and 1798. Louis' reign in particular was characterized by extravagance and luxury. Centered at the incredible palace and estate at Versailles, just south of Paris, it reflected the excesses of kingship with its sun king and his lazy nobles living off the taxes the rest of France paid.

The scientific revolution As Louis reigned autocratically from Versailles, history in the 17th and 18th centuries was taking a new direction. Men of science such as Copernicus, Leeuwenhook, Newton, Kepler, Galileo, and Vesalius were using the scientific method (and the new printing press) to enlighten the reading public. These men transformed the natural sciences and medicine. Their epochal discoveries about the physical world affected the thoughts of common men and philosophers living in the same era.



BACKGROUND ESSAY - 2

The Enlightenment Thinkers and philosophers of the 1600s and 1700s reexamined society in much the same way as the scientists did, using reason to discover natural laws that governed human behavior. Men like Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau advanced new ideas that validated human beings' ability to think for themselves and to govern themselves. Rousseau, for example, believing all people were equal, wanted all rank and nobility to be abolished. His travels around Europe led him to conclude the following, however: "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains." To many, Rousseau became the spokesman for the common people, and his views made the corrupt and arrogant kings of France seem out of step with reason.



The American Revolution The revolution that came to France might have been postponed had it not been for the American colonial revolt in North America. This war for independence (1775-1781) successfully waged by leaders such as George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, used French money and troops to defeat France's old enemy, Great Britain. Coming at a time when the economic system of France was beginning to collapse, the American Revolution increased the tax burden of the poor while at the same time provided patriots in France with an example of upheaval and a new spirit of democracy.

1789 By 1789, France was ripe for sudden change. The 200-year reign of Bourbon kings had sapped France of its wealth. It had frustrated and angered the common people on the farm and in the shops. Oppressive taxes and expensive wars had left Louis XVI with a legacy of problems.

The Estates-General The king was perplexed about what to do to solve these economic problems. He also was concerned about the unrest he sensed in his country. Consequently, he summoned a meeting of the Estates-General to help him deal with the enormous debts he faced. It was the first time in 175 years such a conclave was requested by a king. This body was made up of three voting blocs, each with a collective vote. The first estate, the clergy, almost always voted with the nobility, the second estate. The common people, 90% of France, comprised the third estate. As in the past the third estate was ignored, usually forcing them to disband. But this time they agreed to go to a nearby tennis court where they agreed to meet as a body until a new constitution for France was written. This was the first moderate step toward



BACKGROUND ESSAY - 3

revolution. When the three estates finally met, the body was renamed the National Assembly.

Daily throughout the year persons from hundreds of countries journey to Versailles to see how Louis XVI lived with Marie Antoinette ...

Louis XVI To be honest, the current Bourbon king, Louis XVI, was more sensitive to the plight of France in 1789 than any of his predecessors had been. But even modest reforms and a conciliatory attitude wasn't enough to reverse centuries of royal neglect. Moreover, this Louis, who came to the throne in 1774, was an indecisive and lazy ruler, and his wife, the arrogant Austrian, Marie Antoinette, insisted on a typically lavish lifestyle expected of royalty.



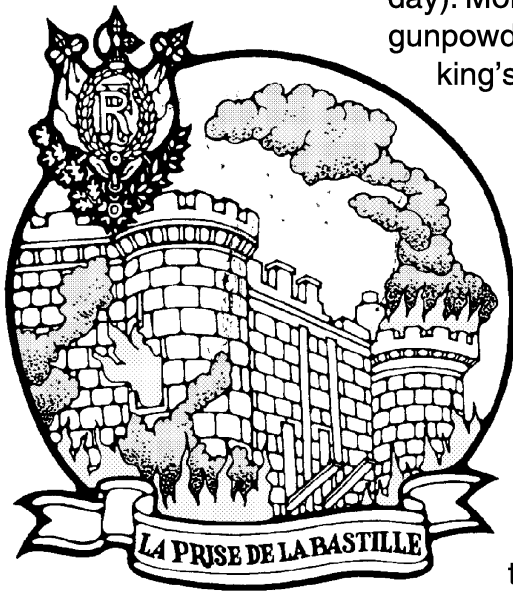
The figure on the horse is Louis—"the Sun King"...

Fall of the Bastille The new National Assembly had scarcely begun to work on a constitution in the summer of 1789 when the people of Paris and the peasants in the countryside took control of the situation and dramatically changed the course of European history. Their focus was the Bastille, a huge prison fortress in Paris which had become a hated symbol of despotic rule in France. On July 14, with talk of revolution in the air, a mob surrounded the prison to demand its surrender. Within minutes the angry crowd burst through the drawbridges and swarmed into the courtyard. Once inside, the mob began to liberate the stunned inmates.



BACKGROUND ESSAY - 4

(Contrary to popular thought, *only* seven prisoners were freed that day). More important, the mob confiscated the Bastille's supply of gunpowder to defend Paris and the National Assembly against the king's foreign troops.



The rebellion spreads Rebellion spread throughout France like wildfire. Many believed foreign armies were closing in on Paris and would next terrorize the countryside. Once the rumor was proven false, the peasants came out of hiding and began to break into the estates of the nobility with torches and pitchforks. As they did, they burned old feudal contracts as well as manor houses. In the capital, Parisians rioted over the lack of cheap food and turned their anger on the king and queen, who continued, mostly unfazed, to live in splendor at Versailles. Thousands of Parisian women then marched on the palace, ransacking the royal apartments. As a result the royal family agreed to leave Versailles and come to Paris for protection.

Reforms Later that summer the National Assembly, amid reports of peasants pillaging the countryside, voted to end feudalism, serfdom, church tithes, and the special privileges of the clergy and nobility. In effect, the old regime of the Bourbons had evaporated in weeks. On August 27, 1789, the National Assembly adopted a set of revolutionary ideas called *A Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. Among other things, this document, borrowing language from Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence*, declared "men are free" and guaranteed freedoms of speech, religion, and equal justice. In 1791 the National Assembly had created a limited monarchy, whereby the king ruled with a more powerful assembly. Likewise, the church was changed. Its lands were taken over, and its priests were elected by property owners in the new 83 departments which made up the new France.

The king tries to escape Louis reluctantly approved the sweeping changes. But few were satisfied with what the National Assembly had achieved. Many radicals wanted a republic, and the king alive still represented the old monarchy. In 1791, Louis, growing alarmed at this attitude, tried to flee from Paris with his family. The queen's brother, the Austrian emperor, had promised to help. As the group headed for the eastern border, members of the royal family were recognized at Varennes and brought back to Paris.



BACKGROUND ESSAY - 5

War changes France Many Frenchmen supported the king and urged Austria and Prussia to invade France. A successful war would restore Louis to the throne. Meanwhile, radical leaders in France, members of the Jacobin club, wanted war but for a different reason. They hoped hostilities would unite the country as Frenchmen defended their homeland. Within months enemy armies approached Paris. All over France people were determined to continue the revolution and not let foreigners crush the many achievements gained during the previous two years. They rallied to defend France, chanting “Liberty, equality and fraternity!” to the strains of the newly composed hymn of the revolution, *The Marseillaise*.

Louis XVI’s fate With all the changes in France, one symbol of the old order remained – the king. In September 1792 the National Convention abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic. Yet the royal family continued to live in luxurious seclusion in a Parisian building called The Tower. Convention radicals called The Mountain, who sat in the highest seats in the Manège—the building where they met—mustered enough support to bring the king to trial. Charges were easy to find. For example, the king had tried to encourage foreign armies to invade France and put him back on the throne. Clearly, to the Jacobins who made up the “Mountain,” Louis was a traitor!

The king’s trial The stage is now set to re-create Louis’ day in court. All of you will have some part in deciding the king’s fate. You will hear evidence and emotional pleas from both the regicides (radicals who want to kill the king) and the anti-regicides. The former group came mostly from “The Mountain” and the Jacobin club; the last group, who want the king to live after his obvious conviction of treason, are members of the more moderate Gironde. It will be these two factions who will try to win over “The Plain” faction and carry the day as your class role-plays real people involved in an event destined to alter history. Furthermore, you will learn more about “history’s most important convulsion.” Will you be shouting “Vive le roi!” or “Mort le roi!” as you listen to the king’s attorneys: Danton, Robespierre, Barère, Saint-Just and even the American revolutionary Thomas Paine? France awaits your verdict. Louis is staring at the guillotine. Will you send him to it, or will you save him from it?

“Liberty ...
Equality ...
Fraternity ...”



CONSTRUCTING AND USING A GUILLOTINE IN CLASS - 1

1. **Origin of the guillotine** Most adults are familiar with one of history's most famous weapons—the guillotine. Yet most would find it difficult to give the weapon's history. Although a similar-working and similarly effective weapon of execution was used in ancient times in Scotland, England, and other European countries prior to the French Revolution, it was in France during the 1790s that it became the feared instrument of death known throughout the world. It was “invented” or adapted to the violent times of the revolutionary era by Dr. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin. While serving in the National Assembly, he devised a killing machine to accommodate the vast numbers sentenced to die. After experimentation on dead bodies, the machine was set up on April 25, 1792, and within months the “Louisette” or “Louison” became the guillotine.

Its advantages were immediately obvious. The guillotine was fast, “clean,” and gave executioners a chance to hold up the physical results of a decapitation, which almost always produced cheers from onlookers. The machine was in place just in time to be used on King Louis XVI in January 1793. Through the decades, its shape and blade made it an odious symbol of capital punishment. Called the “widow-maker,” the guillotine's “slippery blade” severed thousands of heads until 1981 when French legislators abolished the death penalty.



2. **How to construct a guillotine** To serve as an instrument of death for Louis XVI after his classroom trial, you (and the rest of the committee) will need to construct a simplified version of the real thing. Try to find pictures of the guillotine in books or periodicals at a library. As an aid to your structure, note these suggestions:
 - Use 2"x4s" or 4"x4s" as the frame, cutting 1/2" grooves into the side pieces.
 - Use a 4'x4'x1" plywood base.
 - Use 2"x4s" as buttresses to the frame (two on each side).
 - Build the “blade” out of Styrofoam or thin cardboard, so there is no real harm to the student who volunteers to be King Louis XVI.
 - The blade should be activated by pulleys and descend two to four feet before “striking” the king's head, which is secured in a pillorylike structure (also set in the half-inch grooves).
 - Your guillotine should not be remotely dangerous, despite your anger at the king.
 - Use a basket below to “catch” the king's head.



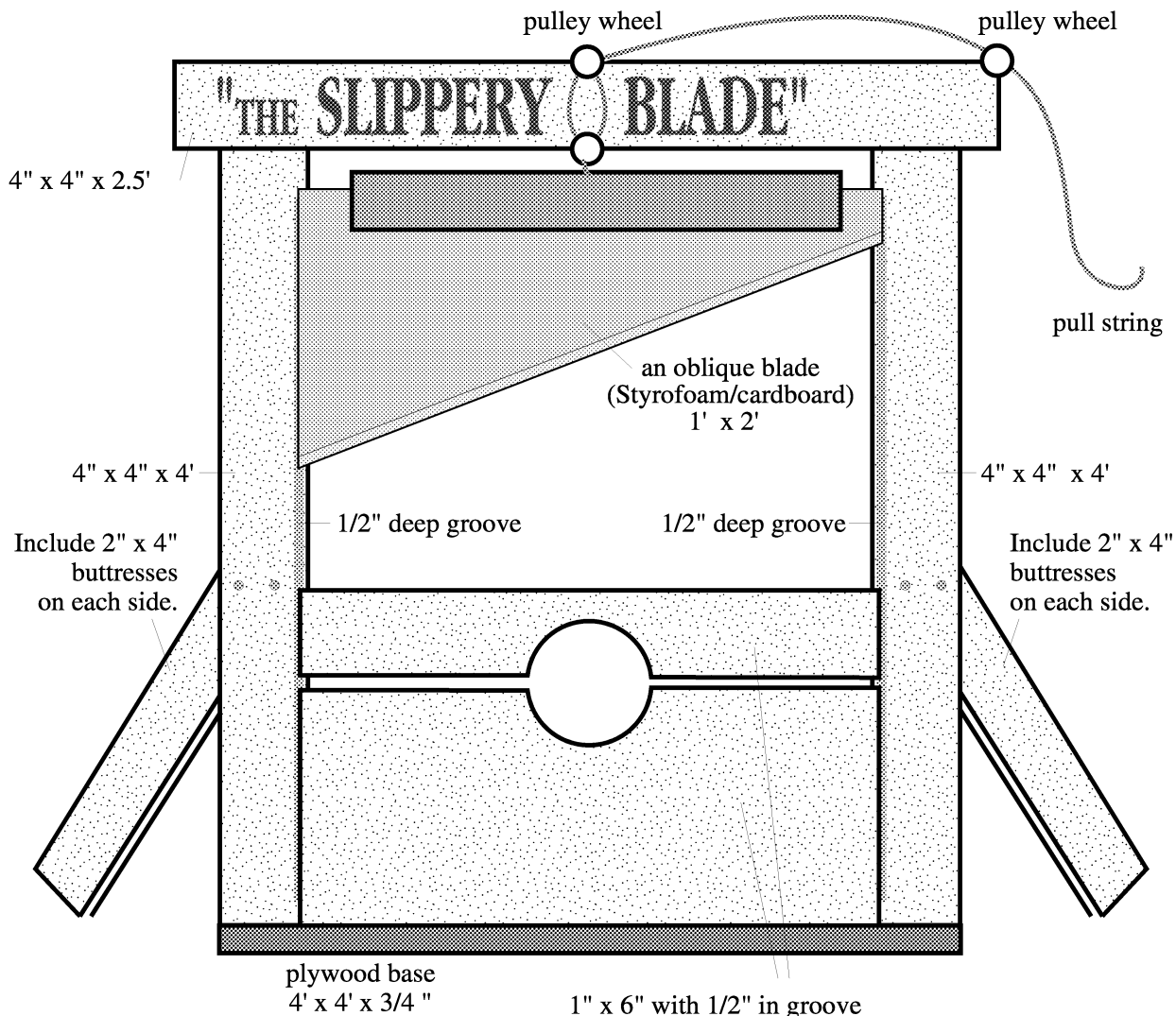
CONSTRUCTING AND USING A GUILLOTINE IN CLASS - 2

- Place the guillotine on the floor and use boards to get Louis' body level with the opening.

Remember:

Caution should be your watch-word. You must not come close to embarrassing or injuring anyone.

3. **How to use the guillotine in class** To begin with, you should read over the re-creation's aftermath to understand the events surrounding the king's execution. Stage your version like the one described in the handout. As you do, be very careful, but be dramatic. If you have the time, draw out the history-making event. Pretend you are cutting his hair and "tying" his hands. Then place the king on the planks with head in the pillory opening. Use a drum-roll to accompany the tension. Really hate him? Make him face (upward) the "slippery blade." One more realistic touch. Place a Styrofoamed-filled mask in the basket beforehand, so you can reach down and pull out Louis's "head" to show the anxious crowd, ready to shout—"Death to the king! ... Long live the Republic!"





FACTION PROFILE: The Girondins - 1

Girondins, or Girondists, were men who made up a *moderate* faction in the convention. They came to power in 1792 and declined in influence following the execution of the king in January 1793. At the same time they lost power in the legislature, their bitter rivals, the “Mountain,” or Montagnard, gained strength and emerged as the stronger Jacobin Club. Radicals of the Jacobin faction guided revolutionary France through the Reign of Terror in 1793-1794.

The Girondins, many of whom came from the department of the Gironde, were originally called “Brissotins,” after a famous spokesman and journalist. The ranks were composed of lawyers, writers, and professional men bound together by moderate wealth, common political beliefs, friendship, and ambition. Like the “Mountain,” Girondins were dedicated to the principles of the revolution. Most members of the Girondins saw themselves as an elite and superior group and therefore had little in common with the masses of French people. In a sense, they were incapable of dealing with crises they helped to create.

Unlike modern political parties, the Girondins had no party machinery, no party funds, no party discipline on voting, and, in some cases, no particular platform for the party to enter in as. At most, Girondins were men who merely shared political ideas and were friends.



Your role as a Girondin

You have been selected to be a member of the Girondins in this upcoming convention. Your biggest challenge is to withstand the verbal attacks of the “Mountain,” a faction made up of Jacobins who sit high up in the benches above the proceedings and who seek radical solutions. In this case, their solution is death to the king.

While there are many issues upon which to differ with the Jacobins, the crucial issue is the fate of the king, Louis XVI. So that you and your fellow Girondins make a respectable showing in the convention against the Jacobins, a list of suggestions is given immediately below to help you:

- Meet as a faction before the trial and discuss strategy, make badges or armbands (with a prominent **G** on them), and compose a conservative, “classy” chant and handshake.
- Make sure all Girondins are of one voice in the convention; that King Louis XVI may be found guilty of treason, but the king does not deserve to be executed! Make sure you have parceled

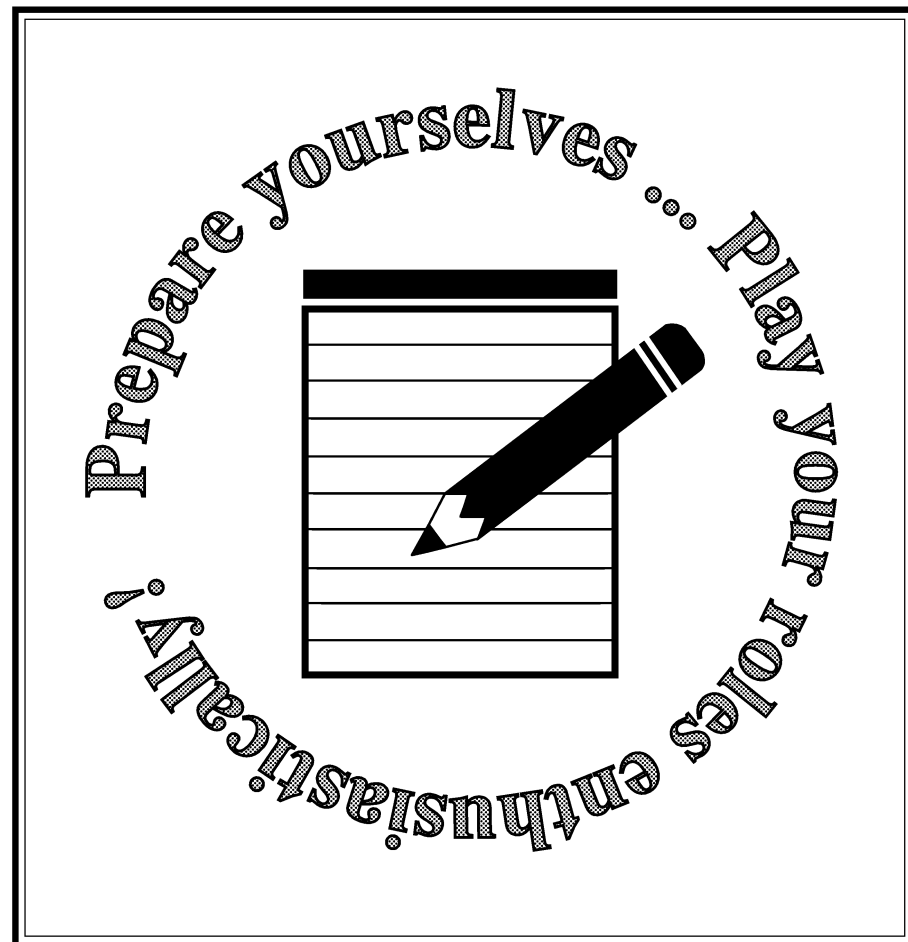


FACTION PROFILE: The Girondins - 2

out all roles for speakers to responsible students, if this action hasn't already been done by your teacher. There are several, if brief, speeches to be made clearly bearing the stamp of the Girondin beliefs. These speeches are given during the debate over the king's fate. All of you should be concerned that Girondins are represented by prepared and able classmates.

- Girondins were not rich snobs; these types were pretty much swept away by the earlier excesses of the revolution. But your views are more conservative than those held by Jacobins (on the left) and the Plain—"The Swamp" (who were in the middle). So ... act like Frenchmen who are superior and have control over their destinies.

Give me a **G**! Give me an **I**! Give me a **R**!





FACTION PROFILE:

The Mountain/Jacobins - 1

Jacobins, like the Girondins, were a group of political men who took a leading role in the French Revolution. The original Jacobin Club was part of the Club Breton, which sent delegates to the National Assembly in early 1789. Within months, the chain of events from July to October caused the membership ranks to swell. Many of the new members came from the Paris Commune, and this change seemed to radicalize the club over the next few years. Because the group met often in a Dominican, or Jacobin, convent, this “Society of the Friends of the Constitution” adopted the shorter name.

Jacobins, despite not having more than 500,000 members at the height of their influence, were extremely powerful. Originally, Jacobins supported a constitutional monarchy, with King Louis XVI salvaging some, if not much, power. Seeing this a failure and with France fighting for its life, Jacobins became more radical. They wished to overthrow the monarchy and institute a democratic republic. This new democratic spirit gained them new members including people from the sans-cullottes (without breeches), which meant artisans and shopkeepers.

For the most part, Jacobins occupied the highest seats in the convention of late 1792. These Jacobin radicals who shouted from above the Girondins and The Plain had outstanding leadership in Robespierre, Danton, and Swamp. Unlike modern political parties, the Jacobins had no party machinery, no rigid platform, no real discipline on voting as a bloc. In this case, however, the issue of the king’s fate united them against the conservative Girondins and the uncommitted Plain.



Your role as a Jacobin/“Mountain” member

You have been selected to be a member of the Jacobins who sit in the high benches in the National Convention. Your main objective is to get the convention to find Louis XVI guilty of the charges and get the deputies to vote to execute him at the guillotine. You can achieve these two objectives if you select your best orators to persuade the rest of the men to vote with your group on this issue. A few suggestions are listed below:

- Meet as a political faction before the trial and discuss strategy, make badges, or armbands (with a J or mountain scene on them), and compose a radical chant and clever handshake.
- Make sure Jacobins/Mountain members are of one voice in the convention: that is, King Louis XVI is guilty, deserves no mercy, and must be beheaded by the “slippery blade” of the guillotine. Alive, the king represents the old regime’s corrup-



FACTION PROFILE: The Mountain/Jacobins - 2

tion and extravagance. Dead, the new republic of France can move forward. All of you should be concerned that Jacobins are represented by fully prepared, responsible, and able classmates chosen by your faction unless the teacher has already done this.

- Jacobins are radicals. They are willing to spill blood (preferably the royal family's) to achieve their goals. The revolution cannot be completed until *your* agenda is completed. Your speakers have to out-persuade the arguments of the Girondins, who want to spare the king's life even if he is found guilty of treason. In both cases, the two factions have to convince the moderates, the Marais ("The Plain") to vote one way or another.
- When all of you vote for regicide, each should say, "Regicide—a king must die, so a republic can live!"

Give me a **J**! Give me an **A**! Give me a **C**!





FACTION PROFILE:

Deputies of the Plain - 1

Members of this faction known as The Plain (or “the Swamp”) were mostly uncommitted deputies who attended sessions of the convention in late 1792 and early 1793. Among its ranks were the “san-culottes”—those who wore long pants (“no breeches”), as differentiated from the aristocrats who generally wore short breeches with long, silk stockings. In a sense, members of The Plain were the common people, those who worked at various jobs to make a living: shopkeepers, merchants, and even farmers. Because of your common origins, few of you were formally educated; therefore, in the ensuing debates have no real influence on the king’s guilt or innocence except the final vote. Thus, it will be up to the Girondins and Jacobins to persuade The Plain to vote with either of these factions.

The Jacobin Club, considered to be the radicals who want the king found guilty and executed, will sit in the high benches in the convention (The Mountain). Below the Jacobins, the more moderate Girondins will sit. Lower down on the debating floor will be The Plain, called that because as a group or faction its members will watch and listen on benches level with the debates.



Your role as a Plainsman

You have been selected to be a member of The Plain in this upcoming convention session. Your major responsibility is to listen carefully to the persuasive speeches given by Girondin moderates and Jacobin radicals. The issue in the historic session is the guilt/innocence of King Louis XVI and his possible sentencing. Therefore, *listen and take accurate notes from information you hear*. Hopefully, all of you in this group will be able to sort out truth from distortion, lies, and opinion. The king deserves his day in court, as does any French citizen.

During the speeches, consider at least two very important questions:

- Is there enough evidence to convict King Louis XVI of the charges listed?
- If found guilty, are the charges severe enough to have you vote for the death penalty? (This penalty would mean he will have his head severed by the sharp blade of the guillotine.)

So that the deputies of The Plain grace the proceedings honorably and vote wisely after careful and thoughtful listening, here is a brief list of suggestions to help you:

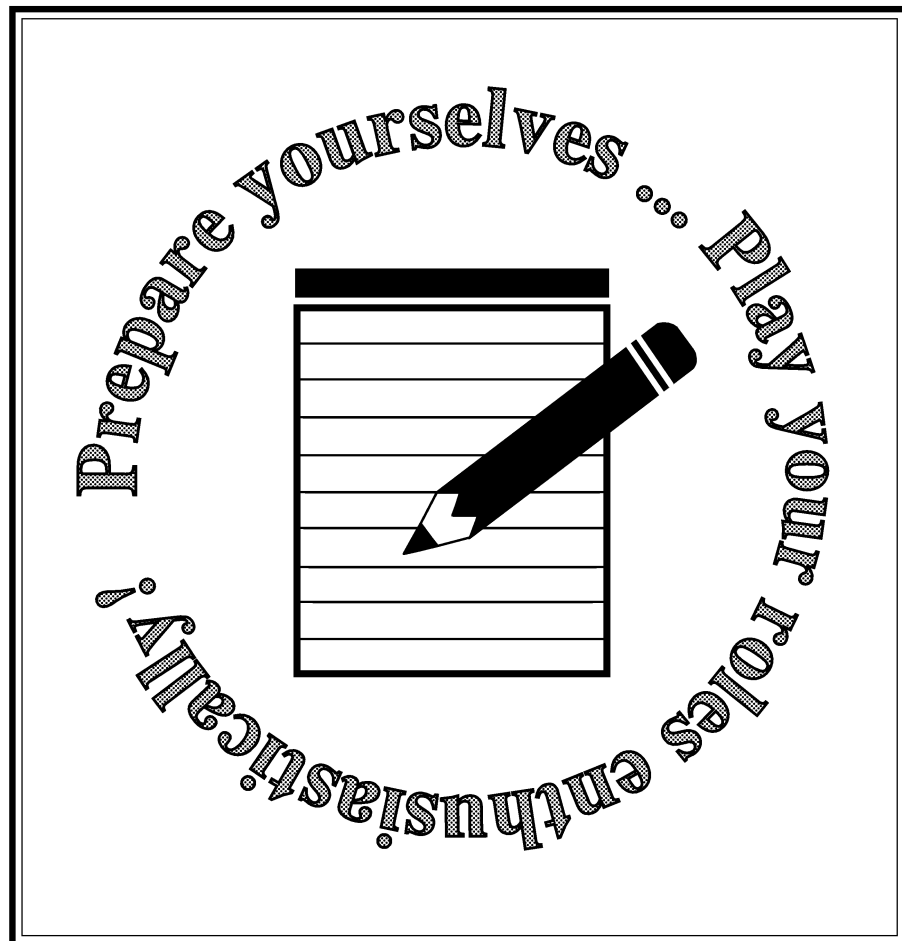
- Meet as a faction before the trial and discuss how your group will react to the aggressive tactics of the Girondins and



FACTION PROFILE: Deputies of the Plain - 2

Jacobins. Make it clear that The Plain is open-minded and fair. Only clear, logical and well-documented arguments will convince the rank and file of The Plain to take sides in these debates.

- Although there are no assigned speeches for The Plain, one or two of you might want to compose brief speeches to be delivered at the beginning of the session. These could signal to the deputies present of your neutrality and open-mindedness. Let the president of the convention know if one or more Plainsmen wish to speak.
- Others of your faction might create some hard questions for both sides and ask these at the appropriate times during the debates.
- Once the speeches of the Girondins and Jacobins have been given, some of you in the Plain might want to persuade others in this faction to vote either with the Girondins or the Jacobins—once convinced by these debates on the king's fate.
- If you have time, make up a chant for the Plain, a handshake, or even some badges with **P** or **S** on them.

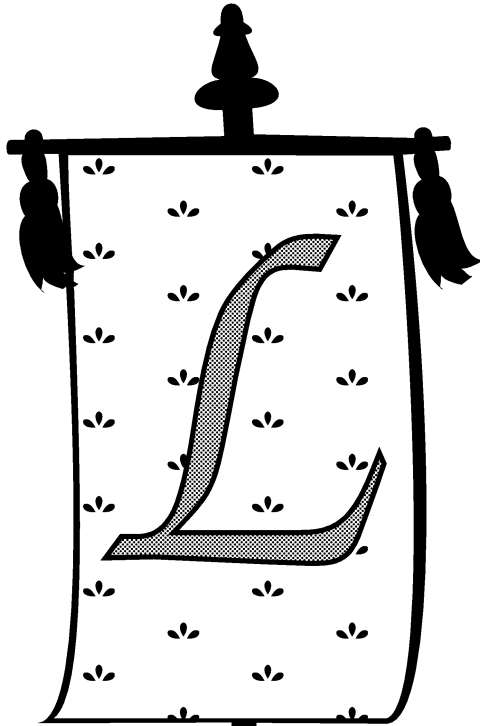




PROFILE SHEET: King Louis XVI - 1

Who you are

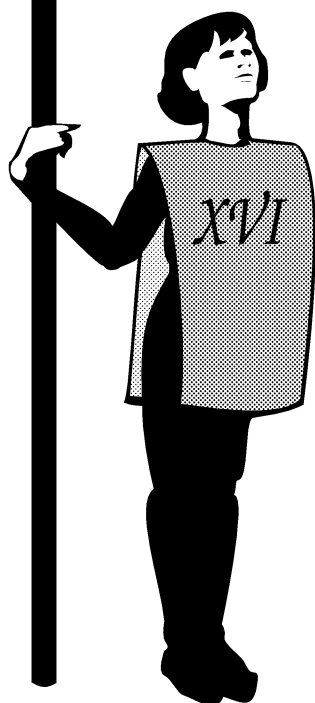
You are the last in the line of Bourbon kings to sit on the throne of France. Born in 1754, you were an excellent student with special interests in history and geography. Nonetheless, you were not prepared to be an effective or strong ruler. In a sense, your reign in France was ill-timed; perhaps few kings could have satisfied the revolutionary stirrings in Europe in the late 18th century.



Does this give you any idea about how you could enter the classroom with all the honor and respect an 18th-century king deserved?

Hmmm ...

Why not find a classmate who will help you by ... ?



Many people believe you were weak-willed, immature, and incapable of sound decisions. Once the revolution broke out, this seemed to be true. Being stubborn as well, you missed opportunities to compromise and accept reforms that were needed in a country rampant with poverty and injustice. Furthermore, it didn't help to have an arrogant wife at your side, the aristocratic Marie Antoinette, whom you had married in 1770. Her actions and words before and during the revolution made you seem like a wimp with no backbone to control a headstrong wife—from Austria no less!

Dress and bearing

While it is true you are the “center of the storm” in this trial, it is not exactly true that you are the major participant. Others—mostly radicals in the convention—will have more to do and say, mostly *not* on your behalf. Nevertheless, you do have several actions to take:

- Find a “king’s costume,” wig, and create a royal persona to exhibit during the trial.
- Bear up to your station as a nation’s king by not begging, sniveling, or groveling. Historians agreed that the most impressive and regal behavior of your life was displayed in these anxious-ridden days.
- Prepare for your role carefully. Read all the handouts you are given and give serious thought as to how you could carry out your role realistically and cleverly. ***Above all, be a KING!***
- Whatever happens, be a good sport. After all, you can be beheaded only once!



PROFILE SHEET: King Louis XVI - 2

What you will say

As you carefully read the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheets, you will no doubt gather that your guilt is a foregone conclusion, regardless of the evidence or what you do or say. So ... bear up to the inevitable. You *will* be executed by the guillotine at the end of the activity. But the manner in which you carry off your role may win you sympathy from both your detractors and critics.

What you say—the exact words and phrases—are on the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheets. Speak your role courageously and forcefully.



Special note: Don't memorize the words or phrases or read them verbatim off notes.

When you are called as a witness, just answer “No” to all questions except #3.

Once you are found guilty of the charges—mostly treason—you will be taken back to “The Temple” to meet with your family. From this sorrowful goodbye, you will be whisked away to “La Place de la Revolution” to face the guillotine’s blade. (Actually, you will face down.)

- As you are escorted to the blade, someone will try to bind up your hands. When this happens, angrily say: “Tie me? No! I shall *never* consent to it. Do what you are ordered to do, but you shall not tie me up. Give it up, I say!”
- Your words were to no avail. The executioner will tie them up behind your back anyway. You reply: “Do what you wish: I shall drink the cup to the dregs.”
- Then as the executioner pushes your body down on the bench, say: “I die innocent of all crimes of which I am accused. I forgive the authors of my death and I pray to God that the blood you are about to spill may never fall upon the head of France...” (Your voice will be cut off, by the louder drum beat and the cheers, as your head rolls into a basket near the guillotine.)



THE KING'S ATTORNEYS - 1

You two students have been selected to role play the king's attorneys, Malesherbes and De Sèze. Your job will not be an easy one. In fact, you have very little chance to change the deputies' minds or the historical verdict. But accept the challenge, put on a "good show," and do the reading and work below to ensure that the king has his day in court.

General strategy

Read all of the materials given to you. Consider especially the TRIAL PROCEDURE, which will inform you when you are to make comments or deliver important speeches. **Important:** Highlight your copy carefully with a bright colored marker.



Obtain a highlighter. You will be amazed how using a highlighter will help you concentrate on key ideas while you are preparing your strategy ...

1. Be convinced that the king is not guilty of the lengthy list of charges and doesn't deserve by any means to be executed.
2. The charges are exaggerated and unfair. The king's error is his time in history—now, 1792. There were far more extravagant Bourbon monarchs before Louis XVI. Make a clear distinction between the brief reign of this king (since 1774) and his ancestors' long reigns.
3. The revolution has begun a radical stage, and if these proceedings are not halted now, who knows how much bloodshed will result. The deputies must respond with fairness, justice, respect for French law, international reputation, and reason.
4. The king is an unfair symbol of corruption. Radicals in Paris have focused on the king because he remains the only leftover from the old regime. No true civilized nation would murder its monarch for his ancestors' greed and neglect.
5. Louis XVI is not the only king in Europe. France under him is no worse off or better off than other nations under a monarchy. Why should France suddenly lose world-wide respect by condoning mob action against a gentle man who loves his people dearly? Drastic actions by this convention would be a blot on France's illustrious history as a civilized nation.
6. Louis is a good man, and he has been a good ruler for France. He has made some remarkable changes. Will it be his misfortune to be the wrong ruler in the wrong country at the wrong time?
7. If the king is found guilty, his execution will benefit no one. Killing one symbol cannot erase centuries of so-called misrule. France can spare his life and then use his expertise in governing. Or France can allow him to live with his family in exile in another nation, say, for example, in England or the United States.



THE KING'S ATTORNEYS - 2

Reading from the TRIAL PROCEDURE

Some of your responsibilities will be to read from the trial sequence on the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheets. Several times you will respond to the action of the trial with comments or speeches. Review this handout several times and know *exactly when* you will say something. One major part is when De Sèze, the sharper and younger of the two defense counsels, delivers a *plaidoyer* (or defense) and then asks the king to respond to some important questions. At another time in the procedure, Louis responds to the charges read by president of the convention, Barère. As his lawyer, you should help the king prepare answers, even though the dialogue should be faithfully followed. (Perhaps you can help him develop a manner and tone to his answers so that they will deflect the guilt?)

*Speak passionately
about a king whom you
love and respect.*

Delivering the king's defense speech or plaidoyer

This will be a highlight of your role in the trial. This plaidoyer amounts to a legal pleading, and over the years it had become a flamboyant, dramatic, and passionate plea. Attorney De Sèze actually delivered the plaidoyer after going days without sleep in preparing the text. Below are some guidelines for your plea taken from De Sèze's 1793 version.

"Citizen representatives of the nation, the moment has come when Louis, accused in the name of the French people, can make himself listened to in the midst of the people themselves..."

- Inviolability (protection of the king) has been fundamental to governments which have monarchies. (The king cannot be tried like a common citizen, which he is not!)
- The Constitution of 1791 specifies that the king would lose his inviolability only if he refused to swear an oath to the constitution, or revenged an oath, or led an invading army against his country, or failed to oppose an invasion.
- None of these cases applies to Louis' situation.
- There is no positive law that could be truly and fairly used against Louis.

"Citizens, I will speak to you here with the frankness of a free man. I search among you for judges, and I see only accusers."

- You want to pronounce on Louis' fate, yet you have already declared your views as his accusers, and those views are well known all over Europe.
- This assembly has taken away any rights that Louis should possess as a Frenchman. He has thus become an enemy alien among his own people, a man without a country, a man without



THE KING'S ATTORNEYS - 3

rights. He is in effect an outlaw merely because he has inherited the throne of France.



"Citizens, the claims and charges against the king are weak and unfair."

- It was Louis himself who "began" the Revolution with the calling of the Estates-General in 1789. At that time he was hailed by the people as the restorer of French liberty.
- Once he abdicated the throne, he accepted the constitution of 1791. This revenge on the king is unworthy of a great and generous nation.
- Because his favors are now so limited, he was incapable of being the all-powerful tyrant, accused of in the list of charges.
- If he vetoed many acts by the legislature, it is because Louis as king was given such veto power. Thus, he cannot now be judged for his use of authority within the constitution.



"Citizens, much of the so-called evidence is untruthful and was illegally gathered."

- Louis had a right not to recognize these documents, and his rejection of this evidence does not make him guilty.
- Many of the accusations in the list of charges were contrived to reveal a pattern of counterrevolution started by the king! These same accusations can be used to reveal a generous king wanting to use public funds to help his people.



"The incident of August 10 in the Tuileries should not be used to make the king a traitor."

- The king used the attack to protect and defend himself, his family, and the monarchy.
- When one searches for treasonous behavior by the king that day in August, one cannot find a scrap of evidence. He is not responsible for any bloodshed that occurred. He was in effect at the time a prisoner of the Legislative Assembly in the Tuileries.
- What would most of you do if an excited and armed crowd was marching on you? Probably you would do what Louis did - defend himself and his family! He is not the "author of bloodshed!"
- The events of this revolution has coarsened all of you. There is no "sentiment of humanity" among you. He deserves compassion, rather than an accusation of high treason.



THE KING'S ATTORNEYS - 4



"Citizens, I conclude with this plea to you."

- When he became king of France at 20 years old, he gave to the throne the example of character with no wicked weaknesses and no corrupting passions.
- Louis throughout his reign was economical, just, severe in personal economy.
- He was ever the constant friend of the people. He wanted the abolition of servitude. He carried out needed reforms when he was told, "The people wanted liberty: he gave it to them."
- Think how your decision will be judged by history. As you do, consider what I have said in defense of our beloved king, acquit him on all charges. He is not guilty!

Questioning or examining the king

This segment did *not* actually take place in the trial. *Immediately* after the plaidoyer, the king *did* give a brief speech on his defense. For this re-creation, however, it might be more effective if De Sèze called the king as a witness to ask him to briefly answer these questions.

Seven Questions

???

"Mr. President, I would like to call the king of France, Louis XVI, to the tribune to answer to the main charges." (*Hopefully, the president will allow it....*)

- **Question 1:** "Your highness, did you ever do anything to your nation or to your people that might be considered treason?" (He will say no to all of your questions – except #3.)
- **Question 2:** "Did you ever initiate or condone bloodshed or any act which might lead to violence?"
- **Question 3:** "Sire, did you call a meeting of the Estates-General in the summer of 1789 in hopes that this deliberative body might bring about needed reforms to France?"
- **Question 4:** "Did you ever enter into secret correspondence with exiled royalists with the thought that these letters might encourage invasions of foreign armies into France?"
- **Question 5:** "Did you in any way provoke the insurrection of August 10 with the purpose of spilling French blood?"
- **Question 6:** "Were you, sire, a horrible and inefficient ruler of France these nearly 20 years—an uncaring, unfeeling monarch who didn't place the worth of this subjects over personal concerns?"
- **Question 7:** "Your majesty, are you guilty of any traitorous acts?"

(*Thank the king and tell the president you have completed your defense*)



THE KING'S ATTORNEYS - 5



Reading the king's letter and pleading for the king's life

This last responsibility of you two attorneys comes at the very end of the trial after the votes by the convention (#25 on the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheet).

- **De Sèze:** Read the king's letter.

"I, Louis XVI of France owe to my honor, I owe to my family, *not* to accept a judgment that accuses me of a crime that I did not commit; consequently I declare that I give notice of the appeal to the nation itself of the judgment of its representatives. By this letter I give special power to my defenders of this convention to take the verdict to the nation at large; or put before the deputies a two-thirds majority requirement before conviction and execution can be carried out."
- **Malesherbes:** Deliver a confusing painful plea for the king's life. Be distraught, shaken, and on the verge of sobbing.

"I am not capable of improvising ... I see with sadness that I have not had a moment to present my case for the king to touch the deputies emotionally. Citizen, excuse my difficulties ... will you not allow me to present ideas to you in this place tomorrow? I need more time to plead for Louis' life, more time to plead for clemency."



GIRONDIN SPEAKER #1

General

Many deputies spoke in the convention on the issue of the king's guilt. To simplify and shorten this section of the trial there will be two Girondin speakers and three Jacobin speakers. Below you will find an outline of the speech *you* will deliver at the appropriate time (read the TRIAL PROCEDURE and make note of the order). The information is a combination of data used by two real Girondins, Salles and Vergniard, in the convention.



Strategy

By supporting an appeal to vote by the people of France, the king's trial will be delayed ... the king will be saved ... Paris radicals will be thwarted ... and moderate, reasonable principles will prevail.

Main idea

The king's guilt rests with the sovereignty of the people, not this convention. There should be a national vote on the king's guilt. A simple yes or no would be just.

Specific points

1. Sovereignty belongs to the people of France.
2. Allowing the French people to decide the king's fate would assure the king an impartial judgment, which would be impossible here in Paris.
3. This convention is not competent to try the king.
4. Elected officials are but an imperfect expression of justice. Only the entire body of the French nation can judge its monarch.
5. Radicals in Paris must not dictate the future of France. Primary assemblies all over France can reverse a dangerous trend.
6. Only in the provinces/departments is the true home of republicanism. The Paris radicals must be rebuked. The departments are the only barriers against a reign of terror.
7. A reign of terror, in which no Frenchman or Frenchwoman is safe, could begin with our king's guilt and execution.
8. Save the true spirit of the revolution. Don't let the radical Mountain decide the king's fate without justice.



Yes, dress for your part!

Characterization

Like the other main Girondin speaker, you are a moderate in viewpoint, but you still should wear revolutionary attire, which would include a cockade hat in red, white, and blue. Speak passionately. *Try not to read any notes verbatim.* Last, make sure you are heard!



GIRONDIN SPEAKER #2 - 1

General

Many deputies spoke in the convention on the issue of the king's guilt. To simplify and shorten this section of the trial, there will be two Girondin speakers and three Jacobin speakers. Below you will find an outline of the speech you will deliver at the appropriate time. (Review the TRIAL PROCEDURE and make note of the order.) The information is a combination of data used by the real Girondins, Brissot and Gensonne.



Strategy

By supporting an appeal to vote by the people of France, the king's trial will be delayed ... the king will be saved ... Paris radicals will be thwarted ... and moderate, reasonable principles will prevail.

Main idea

The radical Jacobins in this convention are against an appeal to the people because the result would expose these radicals' real purpose.

Specific points

1. The king should be tried all over France—in the departments—by a simple yes or no vote as to his guilt.
2. The Jacobins seem to want class warfare by encouraging permanent insurrection. Not wanting to appeal to the French people would make this obvious.
3. The Jacobins want to avoid the people's sovereignty because they truly despise the people around France, especially outside of their beloved Paris where they can dominate.
4. It is important that we vote to allow the people to decide. The king is not an ordinary citizen and deserves to be treated in a different manner. Justice demands a national plebiscite.

This trial is bad for France and allows our enemies, those who wish to invade and occupy France and pretend our revolution never happened, to see how radical we've become.

1. We must not allow the "Mountain" to get their wishes: to find the king guilty and behead him as an example of corruption and extravagance. This action would be wrong.
2. The enemies of France would see that an appeal to the people would show that no particular faction in this convention decided the king's fate. It came from all over France—a unified France with moderate principles. Try the king in this convention and we play into the hands of our enemies.



GIRONDIN SPEAKER #2 - 2

3. We must be careful and not let the Jacobins dominate these proceedings. The king deserves justice from every French man. A vote in all the departments would be right and just.



Characterization

Like the other main Girondin speaker, you are a moderate in viewpoint, but you still should wear revolutionary attire, which would include a cockade hat in red, white, and blue. Speak passionately. *Try not to read notes verbatim.* Last, make sure you are heard!

Yes, dress for your part!



MOUNTAIN SPEAKER #1: Saint Just

General

Many deputies spoke in the convention on the issue of the king's guilt. To simplify and shorten this section of the trial, there will be two Girondin speakers, and three Mountain/Jacobin speakers. Below you will find an outline of the speech you will deliver at the appropriate time (review the TRIAL PROCEDURE and make note of the order, especially when you rise and speak). The information below was used by Saint-Just, a Jacobin who like the rest of his ilk, sat higher up in the Manège, like a "mountain."



Strategy

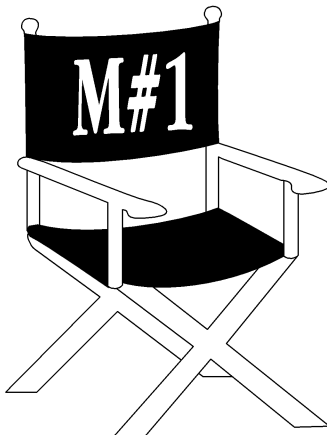
To tear apart any defense of the king and gain support in the convention for Louis' guilt and execution.

Main idea

The king's defense by Monsieur De Sèze was impressive in style, but his arguments are weak and full of inaccuracies.

Specific points

1. "The Revolution begins when the tyrant is done for," and Monsieur De Sèze has failed to reverse our support for the tyrant's death.
2. De Sèze has given us no evidence of Louis' virtues in any documents or confiscated papers.
3. There were and are no projects to reform France; nor were there or are there any planned actions to cleanse the corrupt court over which he ruled.
4. Louis had no intention of ever cooperating with the revolution once it exploded in July 1789 at his wicked prison, The Bastille.
5. The king has done nothing to lessen the inherent tyranny of his kingship; he refused to mend the monarchy's corrupt and wicked ways.
6. The trial has been fair, the truth has been exposed, and the price must be death.
7. End your speech with ... "The king has to die so a Republic can live!"



Yes, dress for your part!

Characterization

Try to come up with a persona that makes you resemble a radical. Speak louder than a Girondin and with more passion. Pace up and down with impatience. Stick to your convictions.



MOUNTAIN SPEAKER #2: Robespierre - 1

General

Many deputies spoke in the convention on the issue of the king's guilt. To simplify and shorten this section of the trial, there will be two Girondin speakers and three Mountain/Jacobin speakers. Below you will find an outline of the speech you will deliver (*Please do not **read** it*) at the appropriate time. (See the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheet and make note of the order, especially when *you* rise and speak.) The information was used by Maximilien Robespierre, one of the charismatic and powerful leaders of the Jacobins, who sat high up with the "Mountain" in the Manège.



Strategy

To tear apart any defense of the king and gain support in the convention for Louis' guilt and execution.

Main idea

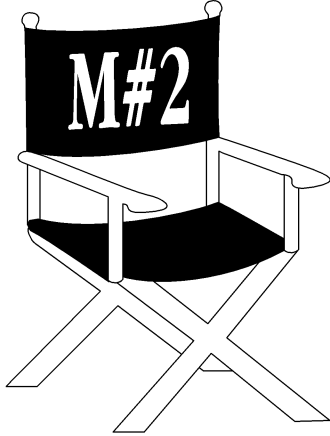
An appeal to the people all over France would only complicate procedures and delay the trial indefinitely.

Specific points

1. The trial was fair, if a bit unorthodox. The king has had his days in "court," and there is nothing further his attorney, De Sèze, or he, has to say to his defense.
2. Any other criminal with such convincing evidence (documents, letters, a secret safe, etc.) would have been condemned in 24 hours. Do the Girondins want even *more* illuminating evidence?
3. The appeal to the people is a delay strategy politically motivated by the Girondins. In doing so, they attack—once again—the city of Paris and the Jacobin party.
4. Girondins have held on to a myth—that the people of France will come to the primary assemblies in large numbers to support the king. In truth, attendance would be poor and dominated by a few threatening men.
5. Giving sovereignty to these assemblies all over France would be an invitation to royalists and conservatives to reassert themselves and undermine the ideas and actions of the convention and the glorious revolution.
6. All this would take months to reach a decision, to say nothing of just how to put into the hands of 44,000 assemblies the evidence we have just seen.



MOUNTAIN SPEAKER #2: Robespierre - 2



Yes, dress for your part!

7. Any delay would put the revolution in jeopardy. The Gironde wish to destroy tyranny by keeping the tyrant alive. I say, "The king has to die so a Republic can live!"

Characterization

Try to come up with a persona that makes you resemble a radical. Speak louder than a Girondin and with more passion. Pace up and down with impatience. Stick to your convictions.



MOUNTAIN SPEAKER #3: Barère

General

Many deputies spoke in the convention on the issue of the king's guilt. To simplify and shorten this section of the trial, there will be two Girondin speakers and three Mountain/Jacobin speakers. Below you will find an outline of the speech you will deliver (*not* read) at the appropriate time (see the TRIAL PROCEDURE and make note of the order, especially when *you* rise and speak). The information was used by president of the convention Bertrand Barère, who despite his position was clearly a regicide.



Strategy

To emphasize the points of the previous two "Mountain" speakers and drive home the point that the king must be executed.

Main idea

We have delayed the inevitable long enough let's get on with judging this king.

Specific points

1. Louis has received a fair trial. Everything in this trial in the convention has been done openly and judgment will soon be reached by the ritual of a roll-call vote. Few criminals would ever receive this amount of justice.
2. The appeal to the primary assemblies all over France is politically motivated by the desperate Girondin's appeal to passion for the king's dignity.
3. We must kill the king—both his personal body and the political body he represents.
4. We might have to break the tyrant's law to send this king to the guillotine and to his Maker.
5. You deputies must not shrink from your dreaded responsibilities of judging a despotic king.
6. Let us save the republic, the revolution, by sending this corrupt king into posterity.
7. We must set aside our factional differences whether we are Girondins or Jacobins or Plainmen. I implore all Frenchmen to use reason to decide what must be done.
8. End your speech with: "Citizens, the king must die so that a Republic can live!"



Yes, dress for your part!

Characterization

Try to come up with a persona that makes you resemble a radical. Speak louder than a Girondin and with more passion. Pace up and down with impatience. Stick to your convictions.



MINOR ROLES - 1

The brief descriptions below were written to help several students who play smaller but essential roles. Cut these into slips to be handed out and tell each re-enactor just when he/she will perform the assigned role. (You may wish to give a copy of the TRIAL PROCEDURE to some of these role players.)

De Thionville

You read the opening lines of the trial, asking the convention to bring the king to trial.

The secretary of the convention

You put together some official looking document to show the king the evidence/letters against him. Help bring the king into the convention. You have a few lines to speak in the TRIAL PROCEDURE. You also tally the three separate votes on the chalkboard or message board. And you help Louis' attorneys escort the king out of the convention as needed.

Danton

You read the lines given to you in the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheet. Add emotional support and enthusiasm to Jacobin speakers as they try to get the deputies to vote for the king's conviction and execution.

Sanson

You are Paris' official executioner so you are in charge of executing the king at the guillotine. Perhaps you could also organize a small committee to build a guillotine. (See HOW TO MAKE AND USE A GUILLOTINE IN CLASS.) If you were to wear an appropriate costume with a full black mask, you would add drama to the event as you, *restrained and carefully*, operate the apparatus under teacher supervision. A final suggestion: Read the PROFILE SHEET: King Louis XVI.



MINOR ROLES - 2

Thomas Paine

An Englishman who wrote a stirring pamphlet to encourage Americans to separate from Britain in 1776, you actually attended the convention while the king was on trial. Before giving a brief speech in the assembly, you should write it, using these ideas:

1. Removal of the king from the throne, and not his execution, is all that is necessary, for the success of the revolution. Bloodshed is abhorrent.
2. These decisions of guilt and sentencing should be taken to the people of France, and not be the responsibilities of the Paris radicals who sit in this convention.
3. If he is found guilty, France can show mercy and justice by sending the king and his family to America for exile. There's no reason to guillotine the king.

Saint Just

You read lines from the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheet.

Petion

You read lines from the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheet.



LA MARSEILLAISE

The information, music, and lyrics are taken from *Songs That Changed the World*, edited by Wanda Willson Whittman, New York: Crown Publishers, 1969. When Claude Rouget de Lisle wrote it in 1792, France was fighting invasion, and refusing, as a later lyric would put it, to "bow down to Burgundy." Although played to welcome revolution at the Finland station, it began as a war song calling for enemy blood.

G D D7 G7 C Am D7

G G D7 G D D7

G D D7

G G7 C A7 D Gm

D Daug7 Gm D G

D G D G D

G C G C[#]dim D D⁹ G D7 G

Arise, ye sons of France, to glory!
Your day of freedom bids you rise!
Your children, wives and grandsires hoary-
Behold their tears, and hear their cries!
Behold their tears, and hear their cries.

Shall hateful tyrants, mischief breeding,
With hireling hosts, a ruffian band,
Affright and desolate the land
While peace and liberty lie bleeding?
To arms, ye sons of France!
To arms, your ranks advance!
March on, march on! All hearts resolved
On liberty or death!

Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrive.
Contre nous de la tyrannie
L'étendard sanglant est leve.
Entendez vous dans les campagnes

Mugir ces ferores soldats/
Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras
Egorger vos fils, vos compagnes:
Aux armes, Citoyens!
Formez vos bataillons,
Marchons, machons,
Qu'un sang impur
Abreuve nos sillons!

A suggestion:

Ask the music teacher in your school to help you either find a copy on record or cassette tape, or help you and your class sing it in French or English. The end product can be recorded and played during intervals in the trial.



INTERROGATION OF THE KING - 1

At least a day before the trial this handout is to be given to King Louis XVI and to Bertrand Barère, the President of the convention.

This exchange should occur as #11 on the TRIAL PROCEDURE sheet. Louis should give only short answers, but they can be a little longer than the information below.

Barère's Questions

Begin: "Louis, the French people accuse you of committing a multitude of crimes ..."

1. Did you not suspend meetings of the Estates-General and post armed guards?
2. Did you *not* order troops to march on Paris and in the days before the fall of the Bastille, did you not speak as a tyrant?
3. Did you not delay decrees abolishing personal servitude and delaying recognition of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen at the same time doubling your bodyguards and summoning the Flanders regiment to Versailles? And as this happened, did you not encourage these troops to insult the national anthem and the nation?
4. Did you not try to flee the country in April 1791?
5. Did you not spend public money for purposes of corruption?
6. And the massacres in August, 1792, in Paris. Are you not responsible for French blood on this occasion?
7. Louis, did you not work to overthrow the Constitution of 1791?
8. We have proof that you sent money abroad to raise troops to invade France. How do you defend this accusation?
9. Did you not use money to encourage counter-revolutionary activity?
10. On August 10, 1792, you gathered troops at the Tuileries. *Why?*

Questions & Answers



INTERROGATION OF THE KING - 2

Questions & Answers

11. You are responsible for shedding French blood!
12. Louis Capet, are you not a traitor to France?

Louis' Answers

*(Do not read these answers. Speak them **passionately**.)*

1. I had the power to do these actions, etc.
2. I was king of France. I decided whether troops marched or not. But I never approved of shedding blood, etc.
3. I did what I had to do. And I would never encourage such mockery. You are false, sir, etc.
4. That accusation is absurd. The journey to Varennes was merely a trip—for pleasure with my family, etc.
5. The reverse is true. I found greater pleasure in giving money to the needy.
6. That event's outcome cannot be attributed to me, etc.
7. No. I followed my ministers, and in doing so, executed all orders proposed by them, etc.
8. My brothers did that. I disavowed all their actions when I discovered this fact, etc.
9. Monsieur, I am no counterrevolutionary, nor did it enter my head to engage in such action, etc.
10. My chateau was menaced and since I was a constitutional authority I had to defend myself—and my family I might add, etc.
11. No! Monsieur, it was not I!
12. King Louis answers the main charge, etc., in some detail.



AFTERMATH OF THE TRIAL (1793-1815) - 1

His final day ...

When the vote for Louis's execution was over, history left us with perhaps some of the most dramatic scenes ever. Immediately after the results of the third *appel nominal* were announced, Malesherbes, the king's attorney, left the Manège and rushed to the king's apartments in The Temple. Sobbing and facing the monarch in a semidarkened room, he told the king of the convention's decision. Louis stared at his royal legal servant and said:

"In two hours I have been trying to think of, in the cause of my reign, anything I did that deserved the slightest reproach from my subjects. Alas, M. de Malesherbes, I swear to you with all the sincerity of my heart, as a man who is about to appear before God, I have always wanted the happiness of the people."

Louis prepares to die As Malesherbes departed, the king sent for a copy of Hume's *History of England* in order to read about the similar death of England's Charles I. He was, in effect, now preparing for his own death. He then asked for a three-day reprieve; the convention replied that he would be executed within 24 hours.

Dramatic moments The next several hours are filled with dramatic moments. The king was given his last meal. He ate well: chicken wings, puree of turnips, a piece of sponge cake, and glasses of wine. Briefly he was allowed to visit with the grief-stricken queen and their two children. At 12:30 a.m. he returned to his private apartment and slept soundly until 5 a.m. As he slept, the revolutionary government prepared for his death in the Place de la Revolution (now called the Place de la Concorde).

The last day Louis was awakened on the final day of his life at 5 a.m. At 6 a.m. he heard Mass. Two hours later, he was escorted along the same routes of December 11 and 26 when he faced his accusers in the Manège. En route in the coach, the king read prayers silently and aloud. Religion had always been important to the 38-year-old monarch. As the coach wound through the crowded streets, a monotonous beat of drums could be heard in the distance. As the coach neared its destination, an escape plot was broken up by guards. Twenty thousand people had gorged the execution site to witness the execution, and as Louis stepped out, many murmured: "There he is! There he is!" After the king was escorted up the six-foot-high scaffolding, the executioner, Sanson, cut the king's hair. Louis nodded for the drums to stop. Oddly, the drummers obeyed. At this point, a few in the crowd urged Sanson to do his duty quickly. But the king spoke:



AFTERMATH OF THE TRIAL (1793-1815) - 2

The slippery blade ...

"I die innocent. I pardon my enemies, and I hope that my blood will be useful to the French, that I will appease God's anger..."

A general motioned abruptly that the drums should roll and in doing so drowned out whatever words the king said after the phrase, "God's anger." Few wanted to hear a long speech.

The slippery blade Sanson quickly pushed the king out onto the bench, strapped him to the planks, and slid him through what had become known as the "widow's window." As the blade of the guillotine fell, the only words heard within 10 feet of the instrument came from the king's confessor, who said: "Son of Saint Louis, mount to heaven." The king uttered a frightened cry as the blade sliced cleanly through his neck. The head fell into the basket. Sanson grabbed it and held it up to the crowd. As he did so, there were shouts of "Long live the republic! Long live liberty! Long live equality!" Others chanted: "The king is dead!" Some tossed hats into the air. A few ran to the scaffolding to dip their handkerchiefs in the king's blood. (Interestingly, these "grim souvenirs" of that day were kept as cherished relics during the next century.) By 10:22 a.m. January 21, 1793, it was all over.

War continues The king's life was extinguished, but the work of revolutionary France continued. What followed as a result of the king's execution has almost no parallel in European history. Of course, when news of Louis's death spread throughout Europe, shock and horror were universal sentiments, especially in palaces where other monarchs ruled. War for France continued, and in almost every battle the fervor of the French soldiers led to victory over Austria or the Netherlands or Prussia or Great Britain, or even Spain. It seems most countries were determined to extinguish the flame of radicalism.

The terror Within France all was not so secure. Hardships, food shortages, and fear of foreign invasion had led to several uprisings, especially in southern France. Because of this condition, and so that the revolution would not be untracked, the National Convention took drastic measures, creating a Committee of Public Safety with dictatorial powers. It began a campaign against what it considered enemies of France. This campaign, known as the Reign of Terror, lasted from July 1793 to July 1794.

Robespierre Chosen to lead the committee was Jacobin leader Maximilien Robespierre. Determined to set up a "Republic of Virtue," Robespierre's ideas became French law. However, his radicalism, inflexibility, and narrow-mindedness went too far. Agents were sent throughout France to root out traitors. Without



AFTERMATH OF THE TRIAL (1793-1815) - 3

The terror wanes ...

much evidence, suspected individuals were arrested and imprisoned. During the Reign of Terror, trials convicted and sent to the guillotine between 20,000 and 40,000 men, women, and children. One victim was the king's widow, Marie Antoinette. Many of the condemned were aristocrats and clergy but most were common people (peasants, merchants, and laborers), whom the revolution was supposed to benefit.

The terror wanes To deal with foreign invasion, the committee organized the entire nation for war—raising, drilling, and equipping the new armies. A national law made every French male eligible for a draft. Its efforts were successful. France continued to be victorious on the several battlegrounds. But as military success came to France, support waned for the Reign of Terror and the committee's direction. Robespierre was arrested, quickly tried, and executed. As he died, so did the Reign of Terror.

The Directory From 1794 on, France went through a cooling off or reaction period and the convention drafted another constitution that reflected a more conservative mood. As Thomas Jefferson wrote: "The generation which commences a revolution rarely completes it." So it would be in France as the new government, the Directory, guided France until 1799. During this time, problems again vexed France, and many who had been happy to get rid of the king in 1793, now longed for a strong leader to bring order to France.

Napoleon That strong leader soon emerged. He was the Corsican, Napoleon Bonaparte. By 1804, he had absolute power in France. Usually a wise ruler, Napoleon knew France would never stand for a return to the old regime. Thus, as emperor he continued to carry out the reforms of the revolution. Under his direction over the next decade, a strong, united France emerged. France became the symbol of change, and the legacies of the revolution were realized.



DEBRIEFING - 1

You can omit this segment if you are short of time and you want to move on. But realize that this activity clarifies the various viewpoints presented in the trial.

Before the trial Below are five profiles of French people who might have witnessed the events and heard the stirring words in the king's trial. Select five different students if you have a surplus, and hand them these roles to play a few days *before* you want to debrief the activity.

After the trial Set up the front of your room to resemble a television panel show format: a round table (or semi-circle) to showcase a lively discussion (or postmortem analysis) of Louis' ordeal. Such discussions in the Enlightenment transpired in a salon—that era's equivalent to a modern coffee house or literary

group. In your debriefing each character will address one aspect of the trial, the king, or the causes which originally brought the monarch to trial. One additional role, that of an emcee, should also be selected.

Perhaps you could play this role. Write up the usual emcee patter to introduce the show's concept and individual guests. Then direct these pivotal questions (and some follow-up questions if need be) to the guest panelists.





DEBRIEFING - 2



Note well:
The master of ceremonies should meet in advance with the students portraying the debriefing roles so that everyone is confident about what he/she is to say...

GUEST 1:

French peasant and wife, Pierre and Christine Hibert

Q In your opinion, did King Louis deserve his fate? Were conditions under which you lived prior to 1789 really that bad?

GUEST 2:

Royalist/monarchist, Marquis Cèsar Hanriot de Garat

Q Sir, you heard the heated arguments in the convention just prior to the king's sad execution. Review those arguments used by his attorney, De Sèze, and tell us why anyone, including his lawyer, could defend his highness in light of what the peasant couple has shared with us.

GUEST 3:

Merchant from the Vendè, Jean Baptiste Tissot

Q Monsieur Tissot, can you make a case that the king's actions and even his execution were not center-stage issues, but rather that the deep political rivalries between the Girondins and the Mountain decided the monarch's fate? Sir, was Louis a pawn in this convention?

GUEST 4:

Paris official, Jacques Dumont

Q Monsieur Dumont, are you pleased—even overjoyed—that the king has now met his Maker? What were the Mountain's best arguments for regicide that convinced the convention's majority to vote to have him beheaded?

GUEST 5:

Liberated women for female rights, Olympè de Gouges

Q Mademoiselle de Gouges, we've heard of your willingness to defend the king as his attorney to show the convention how capable women can be. For now, however, would you share with us your knowledge of the tax system which overburdened the common people—and led to the revolution and Louis' death?



DEBRIEFING PROFILE: GUEST 1

French peasant and wife, Pierre and Christine Hibert

Questions & Answers

Question you will be asked

In your opinion, did King Louis deserve his fate? Were conditions under which you lived prior to 1789 really that bad?

Your outlined response

The king, by doing very little to reverse centuries of royal abuse, deserved to lose his head. We wish we could have released the rope that dropped the slippery blade onto Louis's neck. He was no friend of French peasants.

Peasants throughout France lived in squalor for centuries, usually in one room houses made of clay and straw with dirt floors and thatched roofs. The presence of animals gave the dwelling the smell of a stable.

Food was meager and provided little nourishment. Most often it was a plain soup that tasted like dishwater. Small chunks of moldy bread might accompany the soup.

Because of such unattended conditions, many were forced to steal, to beg, and even to murder. Many women sold their bodies as prostitutes. Children became pickpockets.

The king and his arrogant foreign queen never addressed the widespread problems of his people. Calling for a meeting of the Estates-General in July 1789 hardly excused his lack of attention since his reign started in 1774.

When the cry of "We want bread" was voiced throughout the country, it was met by that Austrian alley cat queen of Louis, when she replied: "Let them eat cake." How uncaring!

Even if there was bread to buy, the wages we receive from our landlord is woefully lacking. I receive 15 sous a day, and bread costs 14 1/2 sous a pound! What coins we might have left would be greedily taken by the unfair taxes we had to pay to feed the aristocracy's lavish lifestyle in estates and palaces. Mademoiselle de Gouges will speak about taxes in a few minutes.

We have been oppressed, taxed, and starved. Louis's execution was deserved! We support the revolution. I only wish Christine and I—moi—could have pulled the rope!



DEBRIEFING PROFILE: GUEST 2

Royalist/monarchist, Marquis Cèsar Hanriot de Garat

Questions & Answers

Question you will be asked

Sir, you heard the heated arguments in the convention just prior to the king's sad execution. Review those arguments used by his attorney, De Sèze, and tell us why anyone, including his lawyer, could defend his highness in light of what the peasant couple has shared with us.

Your outlined response

The king is *not guilty* of all these "crimes" he is accused of, and the convention was wrong, even barbaric in the way it reached the decisions it did.

The king is an unfair symbol of all that ails France. No truly civilized nation would dare murder its monarch for his ancestors' greed and neglect.

This trial was unfair. The king was basically denied his rights that any other Frenchman has. He was, in fact, an alien and an enemy ... in his own country, according to the deputies.

The king was punished when in fact he started the "revolution" by calling for the advice of the Estates-General in 1789. Was he not hailed by the people as the restorer of French liberty?

Once Louis abdicated his throne and royal power, he accepted the Constitution of 1791. For his acceptance and willingness to cooperate, he is found guilty and beheaded!

Louis was an example of strength, honesty, economy, and liberty throughout his reign. *He is **not** guilty of bloodshed and treason!* What this convention has done to a fine monarch is a blot on French history.

In one fell swoop, the convention has destroyed tradition, upset our society, and released radicalism onto the continent of Europe. I wonder ... What do other Europeans think of France now?

Louis was executed by dangerous men because he symbolized the old regime of which he was not a part.



DEBRIEFING PROFILE: QUEST 3

Merchant from the Vendè, Jean Baptiste Tissot

Questions & Answers

Question you will be asked

Monsieur Tissot, can you make a case that the king's actions and even his execution were not center-stage issues, but rather the deep political rivalries between the Girondins and the Mountain decided the monarch's fate? Sir, was King Louis a pawn in this convention?

Your outlined response:

The king was merely a sideshow during his trial. The rivalry between the Gironde and the Montagnards ("Mountains") was the real battle and focus.

Louis's guilt or innocence became the issue only as the two parties vied for power to influence the course of revolution. The Girondins represented moderation; the Mountain represented radicalism, chaos, destruction.

Evidence was either fabricated or circumstantial. The Mountain wanted the king to die before the trial even began.

The radical Mountain, Robespierre, Marat, and Danton, have now taken control of the revolution. With the Girondins having no say, who knows what direction France is headed.



DEBRIEFING PROFILE: GUEST 4

Paris official, Jacques Dumont

Questions & Answers

Question you will be asked

Monsieur Dumont, are you pleased—even overjoyed—that the king has now met his Maker? What were the Mountain’s best arguments for regicide that convinced the convention’s majority to vote to have him beheaded?

Your outlined response:

Yes! The king was guilty of the crimes as charged. He deserved to be executed.

Louis was a tyrant, just like his ancestors. The Bourbon monarchs were corrupt, arrogant, extravagant, and wicked.

It was justice that the fate of the king never went to the people. An appeal would have needlessly delayed the trial.

The king got a fair trial in the convention. He heard the charges against him, had his attorney defend him, and even had a chance to respond to charges. After his day in court, the deputies found him guilty.

The Republic will now reap benefits from Louis’s death. It can move on to more important issues.



DEBRIEFING PROFILE: GUEST 5

Liberated woman for female rights, Olympe de Gouges

Questions & Answers

Question you will be asked:

Mademoiselle de Gouges, in your opinion was France economically ripe for a revolution that eventually led to Louis's death?

Defend the king as his attorney to show the convention how capable women can be but for now, would you share with us your knowledge of the tax system which overburdened the common people—and led to the revolution and Louis's death?

Your outlined response:

Centuries ago, the tax burden in France was shared by all classes. But over the years, the heaviest burden was placed on the common people. In general, the rich nobles paid none, nor did the church.

As time went on, new taxes were piled on top of already crushing taxes. It seems the reason for many newer taxes was to pay for the increasingly luxurious lifestyles of the king and his nobles—jewels, lavish balls, hunting, gambling, and banquets. And this was in addition to the centuries of warfare the taxes had to pay for.

The taxes were hated by the common people. The most famous taxes were:

- **Gabelle** A tax on salt. Only the government was allowed to produce and sell salt. And everyone had to buy it and pay taxes on it.
- **Taille** A tax on land and each peasant who owned land had to pay a certain part of the land's value. Usually this tax was excessive.
- **Capitation** A tax on income, or a poll tax, levied on city dwellers.
- **Tithe** An amount of money levied by the church, usually 10%.
- **Corvee** The enforced and unpaid labor on the king's roads and other "public works." Later, a tax replaced the work or labor.

In summary, the tax system France accepted eventually caused anger, frustration, and it sparked generations of Frenchmen and women who would be ready to follow a new path, even if that path would be strewn with the blood of patriots and kings. In Louis' case, he could have avoided his fate by being a reformer, which he chose characteristically not to be. Someone had to pay the price of the ill feelings. It was King Louis XVI.

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