French Revolution Notes

Causes
1. **Enlightenment** - ideas led many French to question traditional society (old laws and customs were called the Old Regime)
2. **English and American Examples** – inspired by the successful examples of challenging authority
3. **Political** – under absolutism most people were denied basic rights and any say in government
4. **Social** - society was broken into 3 classes 1st Estate = clergy, 2nd Estate = nobility, 3rd Estate = most of society from middle class to peasants lacked rights and say in government
5. **Economic** – the 3rd Estate paid most of the taxes

A. The French Revolution is divided into four phases:
   1. **Moderate Phase** (1789-1791) led by the National Assembly which turned France into a constitutional monarchy
   2. **Radical Phase** (1792-1794) the Committee of Public Safety led by Maximilien Robespierre was a period of escalating violence called the Reign of Terror
   3. **Reaction Phase** (1795-1799) under the Directory was a reaction to extremism
   4. **Age of Napoleon** (1799-1815) consolidated many changes brought by the Revolution.

Moderate Stage
1. Impact of the storming of the Bastille = National Assembly issued the Tennis Court Oath which promised to create a limited monarchy in France
   a. Declaration of the Rights of Man
      - modeled after the American Declaration of Independence it provided:
        - All men were born free and all males were equal before the law, religious freedom
        - Its principles were captured in the slogan Liberty, Equality, Fraternity
   b. Constitution of 1791 established a limited monarchy and gave the legislative assembly the power to make laws and collect taxes
   c. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity was the slogan of the French Revolution

2. Split of the National Assembly
   a. Right – felt the revolution had gone far enough or wanted to turn the clock back
   b. Center – supported moderate reform
   c. Left – the radicals or Jacobins wanted to abolish the monarchy and bring major changes
      - this group gained the upper hand in government and eager to spread the revolution will declare war on Austria, Prussia, and Britain

Radical Stage
A. In 1792, to fight tyranny and spread the revolution, France declared war on Austria, Prussia, and Great Britain
   - the war went badly
B. 1792 the Radicals took control of the Assembly and ended the monarchy
   1. 1793 the king, Louis XVI was executed for treason which led France into the Reign of Terror
2. The Committee of Public Safety led by Maximilien Robespierre used violence to keep the revolution safe from suspected threats.
   - thousands of people were executed
   - the Reign of Terror ended with the execution of Robespierre

C. Moderates took over in 1795 and established a five-man Directory which was weak and inefficient

**Napoleonic Stage**

A. Napoleon Bonaparte rose quickly in the military and in 1799 he overthrew the Directory in a coup d’etat (revolt by military leaders to overthrow a government)
   - three years later he will take the title “Emperor of the French”

B. Napoleon Brought Reform to France
   1. Political = Napoleonic Code was a legal code that included many Enlightenment ideas such as legal equality of citizens and religious toleration
   2. Social = University of France – was a government supervised public school system
   3. Economic = Napoleon controlled prices, supported new industry and built roads and canals

**End of an Era**

A. The Defeat of Napoleon
   1. Napoleon’s wars made France the most powerful nation in Europe
   - his defeat in Russia weakened his armies and led to his total defeat at Waterloo

B. The Impact of the French Revolution
   1. Napoleon’s armies spread the ideas of democracy and opposing social injustice and inequality
   2. Napoleon stirred nationalism in people who were under the control of a foreign ruler
   - especially in the Italian and German states
   - in Latin America, the colonies will seek independence from Spain because Napoleon had deposed the king.