

Handout A: Student Document Packet

Introduction:

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Enlightenment or Age of Reason took hold in Western Europe. This intellectual movement asserted that human reason could solve problems, and it spawned new ideas concerning human nature and society, government, and politics. As these ideas spread through the increasingly literate populations of Europe and America, political unrest erupted into revolutions beginning with the American Revolution in the 1770s.

Directions:

Read the introduction to each document and carefully examine each source, completing the questions that follow. You will use the evidence from these documents to write a thesis statement (in Part III) to address the following prompt:

To what extent was there a connection between the American Revolution and revolutions in France, Haiti, and Latin America?

Part I: Document Analysis

Document 1: Image of the Boston Tea Party, from an engraving found in “The History of North America” 1789

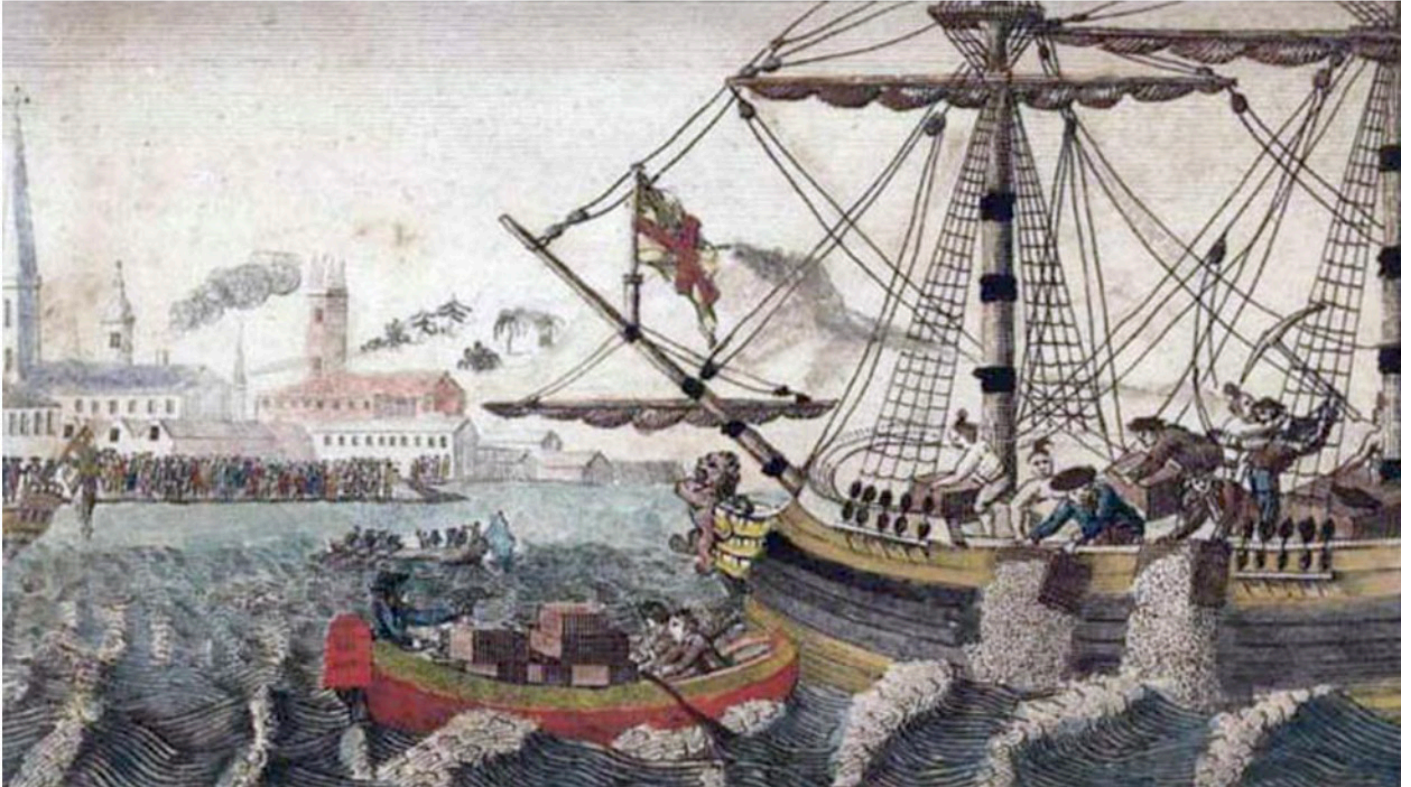
Source:

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/An_Economic_Interpretation_of_the_Constitution_of_the_United_States

Introduction:

After their victory in the French and Indian War (Seven Years War), the British tried to get their North American colonists to cover more of the costs of colonial defense and administration. This led to a series of reforms and taxes, which were met with widespread anger by colonists, particularly in New England. Tensions over these taxes were already high when Parliament passed the Tea Act in 1773.

The Tea Act was intended as much to retain the power to tax the colonies on British goods as it was to collect revenue. In protest, on December 16, 1773, the Sons of Liberty dumped ninety thousand pounds of tea worth £10,000 into Boston Harbor.



A 1789 depiction of the Boston Tea Party.

Questions:

1. What caused the event depicted in this image?
2. What were the effects of the event depicted in this image?

Document 2: Images of the Storming of the Bastille, 1789

Sources:

- [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Siege_of_the_Bastille_\(Claude_Cholat\).jpg#/media/File:Siege_of_the_Bastille_\(Claude_Cholat\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Siege_of_the_Bastille_(Claude_Cholat).jpg#/media/File:Siege_of_the_Bastille_(Claude_Cholat).jpg)
- https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacques_de_Flesselles.jpg

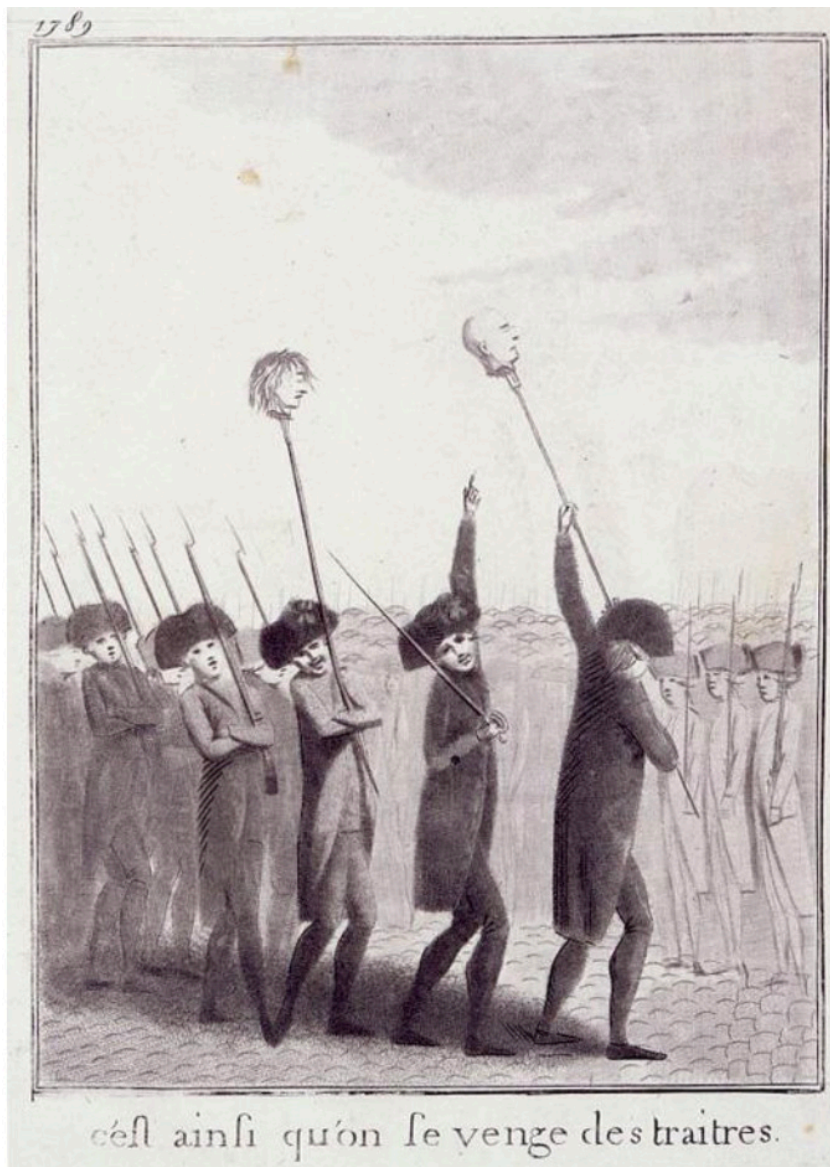
Introduction:

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Since the Middle Ages, France had been ruled by an absolute monarchy with very limited input from the Estates General, a body of deputies from the three estates or orders of French society—nobles, clergy, and everyone else. In the summer of 1789, a fiscal crisis, caused in part by support of the American Revolution, prompted the French king, Louis XVI, to call for the first meeting of the Estates General in 175 years. The king needed money to address the crisis, and the third estate—the only estate that paid taxes—was unwilling to give any more. As the Estates General met, rumors swirled around Paris that the king and the nobles would attack the people. Prompted by these rumors, a Parisian mob approached the medieval prison called the Bastille, looking for gunpowder to defend themselves. The Bastille was built in the fourteenth century to protect Paris from foreign invaders. By 1789, it served as a royal prison and was symbolic of the king's power. In the summer of 1789, the prison was largely empty, but Parisians were on edge, between rumors of attacks and general hunger caused by poor harvests. The Bastille fell to the mob on July 14, 1789. The commander and soldiers within the prison were killed. Today, Bastille Day is celebrated every year in France as a national holiday.



A 1789 painting of the storming of the Bastille, by Claude Cholat, an eyewitness to the attack.



An engraving, c. 1789, depicting the heads of Jacques de Flesselles, a provost of Paris, and the Marquis de Launay, the governor of the Bastille, on pikes. The caption reads “Thus we take revenge on traitors.”

Question:

1. Compare the painting of the storming of the Bastille with the image of the Boston Tea Party in Document 1. How are these events similar? Different?

Document 3: U.S. Declaration of Independence, 1776, and the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, 1789

Introduction:

By 1776, the colonial militia had already engaged with the British army at Lexington and Concord. Thomas Paine had published *Common Sense* and the Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, appointed a committee of five to draft a Declaration of Independence. The committee, in turn, assigned the task of writing the document to thirty-three-year-old Thomas Jefferson, given “the elegance of his pen.” On July 2, Congress approved the resolution calling for independence. Eleven years later, delegates again met in Philadelphia, ostensibly to revise the government proposed under the Articles of Confederation. Instead, the delegates created a new Constitution for the United States, the preamble of which appears below. Together, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are referred to as the Founding documents.

Text
<p>Declaration of Independence, 1776</p> <p>We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.</p>
<p>Preamble to the U.S Constitution, 1789</p> <p>We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.</p>

Questions:

1. Explain the purpose of these documents.
2. How do these documents reflect the influence of John Locke?

Document 4: Declaration of the Rights of Man, 1789

Source:

https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp

Introduction:

Frustrated by the inefficiency of the Estates General, called by King Louis XVI in May 1789, members of all three estates created a new National Assembly. The king, fearing their intentions, locked them out of their meeting room. The National Assembly nevertheless met on a nearby tennis court and swore to create a new constitution for France. When news of the fall of the Bastille reached the National Assembly, it only strengthened their resolve. The resulting Declaration of the Rights of Man was adopted in August 1789. Thomas Jefferson, primary author of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, was serving as U.S. ambassador to Paris at the time and offered his opinion to those drafting the document.

Text
Approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789
The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties; in order that the acts of the legislative power, as well as those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all political institutions and may thus be more respected, and, lastly, in order that the grievances of the citizens, based hereafter upon simple and incontestable principles, shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all. Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:
Articles:
1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.

Question:

1. What evidence of the influence of John Locke, if any, exists in this document? Of the influence of the American Founding documents? Explain.

Document 5: The Haitian Constitution of 1801

Source:

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/modules/fulllist/second/en213/syllabus2017-18/haitian_constitution_1801.pdf

Introduction:

News of revolutionary events in France destabilized the colonial regime of Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), a small French colony on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. Saint-Domingue had been an important and extremely profitable sugar-producing colony since France seized the land from Spain in the 1670s. By 1789, Saint-Domingue was one of the richest colonies in the Americas, but this wealth depended on slave labor. Sugar agriculture demanded large investments of land, machinery, and enslaved persons, who outnumbered all other residents of the island (planters, mixed-race population, free whites, and free blacks). The events of France's revolution created a vacuum in the colony, and violence broke out among the island residents. A slave rebellion on the north of the island gained momentum, escalating into a revolution under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, himself a former slave. The following constitution was sent to France by L'Ouverture in 1801. France's attempts to reclaim Saint-Dominique were unsuccessful, and in 1804, the republic of Haiti officially declared independence.

Text
The representatives of the colony of Saint-Domingue, gathered in Central Assembly, have arrested and established the constitutional bases of the regime of the French colony of Saint-Domingue as follows: . .
TITLE II. Of the Inhabitants
Art. 3. – There cannot exist slaves on this territory, servitude is therein forever abolished. All men are born, live and die free and French.
Art. 4. – All men, regardless of color, are eligible to all employment.
Art. 5. – There shall exist no distinction other than those based on virtue and talent, and other superiority afforded by law in the exercise of a public function. The law is the same for all whether in punishment or in protection. . . .
TITLE V. Of Men in Society
Art. 12. – The Constitution guarantees freedom and individual security. No one shall be arrested unless a formally expressed mandate, issued from a functionary to whom the law grants the right to order arrest and detention in a publicly designated location.
Art. 13. – Property is sacred and inviolable. All people, either by himself, or by his representatives, has the free right to dispose and to administer property that is recognized as belonging to him. Anyone who attempts to deny this right shall become guilty of crime towards society and responsible towards the person troubled in his property.

Questions:

1. Compare this document with Document 3: U.S. Declaration of Independence, 1776; the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, 1789; and Document 4: Declaration of the Rights of Man, 1789. How are they similar? Different?
2. Based on your knowledge of the American Revolution and the introductory text to Documents 4 and 5, compare the contexts for the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions.

Document 6: Simon Bolivar, “Jamaica Letter,” 1815

Source:

<https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-2-the-colonial-foundations/primary-documents-with-accompanying-discussion-questions/document-2-simon-bolivar-letter-from-jamaica-september-6-1815/>

Introduction:

By 1800, Spain still controlled a vast amount of territory in the Western Hemisphere: Florida, Mexico, Central America, and much of South America. Napoleon’s invasion of Spain and Portugal led to a crisis that undermined the authority of royal colonial officials in Spanish colonies: Spanish colonial elites felt no loyalty to French invaders and wanted to govern their own affairs. Simon Bolivar, a wealthy, charismatic Venezuelan planter, emerged as the leader of the independence movements in South America. In 1815, Bolivar wrote this letter to the Governor of Jamaica, explaining his thoughts on the background and prospects for the South American independence movement. By 1830, patriot forces had overturned the Spanish and Portuguese empires in North and South America.

Text
We [Spanish colonies] have been harassed by a conduct which has not only deprived us of our rights but has kept us in a sort of permanent infancy with regard to public affairs. . . .
Americans today, and perhaps to a greater extent than ever before, who live within the Spanish system occupy a position in society no better than that of serfs destined for labor, or at best they have no more status than that of mere consumers. Yet even this status is surrounded with galling restrictions, such as being forbidden to grow European crops, or to store products which are royal monopolies, or to establish factories of a type the Peninsula [Spain] itself does not possess. To this add the exclusive trading privileges, even in articles of prime necessity, and the barriers between

American provinces, designed to prevent all exchange of trade, traffic, and understanding. In short, do you wish to know what our future held?—Simply the cultivation of the fields of indigo, grain, coffee, sugar cane, cacao, and cotton; cattle raising on the broad plains; hunting wild game in the jungles; digging in the earth to mine its gold—but even these limitations could never satisfy the greed of Spain.

So negative was our existence that I can find nothing comparable in any other civilized society, examine as I may the entire history of time and the politics of all nations. Is it not an outrage and a violation of human rights to expect a land so splendidly endowed, so vast, rich, and populous, to remain merely passive?

As I have just explained, we were cut off and, as it were, removed from the world in relation to the science of government and administration of the state. We were never viceroys or governors, save in the rarest of instances; seldom archbishops and bishops; diplomats never; as military men, only subordinates; as nobles, without royal privileges. In brief, we were neither magistrates nor financiers and seldom merchants—all in flagrant contradiction to our institutions.

Questions:

1. What grievances does Bolivar list against Spain?
2. Compare Bolivar's grievances with those listed in the previous documents.
3. What documents or influences seem to be reflected in Bolivar's writing?

Part II:

1. What patterns did you see across these documents?
2. Were there similar causes to the revolutions, based on these documents?
3. In what ways did the documents list similar grievances?
4. To what extent did you see evidence of John Locke?
5. Based on these documents, did these revolutions follow a similar path? Explain.
6. What information do you not have in these documents that would help you address the prompt?

Part III:

On the basis of your analysis of the documents, write a thesis statement that answers the following prompt:

To what extent was there a connection between the American Revolution and revolutions in France, Haiti, and Latin America?