

Declaration of the Rights of Man

Thirteen years after the American Revolution began, members of the Third Estate revolted against the absolutist policies of Louis XVI. Just as the American revolutionaries issued the Declaration of Independence, the French wrote their own plan for what they hoped would be a new government in France.

DIRECTIONS: Read the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” below and jot notes on your bellringer about the big ideas the Third Estate wanted to accomplish by revolting. After viewing the video in class, answer the question: Was the French revolution successful?

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights; social differences may be based only on general usefulness.
2. The aim of every government is to preserve the natural and absolute rights of man; these rights are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression.
3. The source of all power exists in the nation; no group, no individual may exercise authority that does not come from the nation.
4. Liberty consists of power to do whatever is not harmful to others; such limits may be determined only by law.
5. The law can only prohibit that which is harmful to society; nothing can be prevented if it is not written into the law.
6. Law is the expression of the general will of the people; all citizens have the right to consent personally or through representatives. Law must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens are equally acceptable for public offices, positions and employments.
7. No man may be accused, arrested, or detained except in the cases determined by law, and according to the forms prescribed.
8. The law is to establish only penalties that are absolutely and obviously necessary; and no one may be punished except by virtue of law established and made known prior to the offense.
9. Since every man is presumed innocent until declared guilty, all unnecessary severity in the arrest of the accused must be repressed by law.
10. No one is to be disturbed because of his opinions, even religious, provided he does not disturb the public order established by law.
11. Free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Consequently, every citizen may speak, write, and print freely, subject to responsibility for the abuse of such liberty in the cases determined by law.
12. A public force (army, police) is necessary to guarantee the rights of man and citizen; such a force, therefore, is established for the advantage of all and not for the particular benefit of those to whom it is entrusted.
13. A common tax is required to maintain a public force, but it must be paid equally on all citizens in proportion to their means.
14. All citizens have the right to decide (either by representative or directly) as to the necessity of a public contribution (taxes).
15. Society has the right to require public officials to account for their administration.
16. The law must be assured to be observed, or there is no constitution at all.
17. Since property is a sacred right, no one may be deprived of it unless public necessity obviously requires it, and upon condition of just payment for the loss.