

Short Answer Questions

Q.1. How did American war of Independence add more debt to France?

Ans. The French army supported thirteen colonies of America in their war of independence against Britain. It added more than one billion livres (unit of currency in France) that had risen to more than two billion livres with ten percent interest on loans.

Q.2. Which social groups emerged as 'middle class' in 18th century France?

Ans. The social groups who earned their wealth through an expanding overseas trade and from the manufacture of goods such as woollen and silk textiles that were either exported or bought by the richer members of society.

Q.3. Which proposal of the third estate was rejected by Estates General?

Ans. The third estate demanded that voting should be conducted by the assembly as a whole, in which, each member would have one vote. But the king rejected this proposal and therefore members of the third estate walked out of the assembly in protest.

Q.4. Who was Mirabeau?

Ans. Mirabeau was born in a noble family, but was convinced of the need to do away with a society of feudal privilege. He brought out a journal and delivered powerful speeches to the crowds assembled at Versailles.

Q.5. Describe the French division of society.

Ans. The French society was divided into three Estates:

(i) First Estate: It comprised of the church and the clergy. They enjoyed certain privileges by birth. They were exempted from paying taxes to the state.

(ii) Second Estate: In the second estate, were the nobles and other rich members. They were also exempted from paying taxes. They also enjoyed feudal privileges. These included feudal dues from the peasants.

(iii) Third Estate: About 90 per cent of the population was peasants. They were obliged to work in the fields of their landlords as well as in their houses,

and also serve in the army. They were paying all direct taxes like 'taille' and a number of indirect taxes were also levied on articles of everyday consumption like salt or tobacco.

Q.6. What was the role of the philosophers in the French Revolution?

Ans. Ideas of having a society based on freedom and equal laws and opportunities for all were put forward by the French philosophers.

(i) John Locke: Locke wrote, 'Two Treatises of Government'. In this book, he criticised the divine and absolute rights of the monarch rulers.

(ii) John Jacques Rousseau: Rousseau had written his viewpoints in his book, 'The Social Contract'. He had put forward the idea of formation of a government based on a social contract between people and their representatives.

(iii) Montesquieu: His ideas were proposed in his book, 'The Spirit of the Laws'. According to him, there should be a division of power between the three important organs—the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.

The ideas of these philosophers were discussed by common people in salons and coffee houses and inspired them to fight for their rights.

Q.7. What do you know about the 'Estates General'?

Ans. 'The Estates General' was a political body to which the three estates sent their representatives. In France of the Old Regime, the monarch did not have the power to impose taxes to his will alone. Rather he had to call a meeting of the Estates General to pass the proposals for new taxes. However, it was the monarch alone who could decide when to call a meeting of this body.

Q.8. Elucidate the contribution of Mirabeau in the formation of the National Assembly.

Ans. Mirabeau was born in a noble family but was convinced to do away with a society of feudal privileges. On 20 June, the third estate assembled in the hall of an indoor tennis court in the grounds of Versailles. Mirabeau brought out a journal and delivered powerful speeches to the crowds assembled at Versailles.

Q.9. How did peasants protest against the feudal lords or nobles of France?

Ans. There were rumours that the landlords of the manor had hired some people to destroy the ripened crops. Being afraid of the situation, peasants in

several districts seized hoes and pitchforks and attacked chateaux (castles belonging to the noblemen). They looted hoarded grain and burnt down documents containing records of mamorial dues.

As a result, a large number of nobles fled from their homes and migrated to the neighbouring countries.

Q.10. How was the National Assembly recognised and how did it start exercising its powers?

Ans. When people revolted, Louis XVI finally gave recognition to the National Assembly and accepted the fact that his powers now would be checked by a Constitution. On 4 August, 1789, the National Assembly passed a law abolishing the feudal system of obligations and taxes. Members of the clergy too were forced to give up their privileges. Tithes were abolished and lands owned by the Church were confiscated by the government. As a result, the government acquired assets worth 2 billions livres.

Q.11. Differentiate between Active and Passive Citizens.

Ans. (i) Active Citizens: Only men above 25 years of age who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a labourer's wage were given the status of active citizens. Only they had the right to vote.

(ii) Passive Citizens: Whereas, the remaining men as well as all the women of France, who were not entitled to vote were called Passive Citizens.

Q.12. What rights were provided by the French Constitution?

Ans. The Constitution began with a Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Rights such as the right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, equality before law were established. These rights were considered as natural rights, which belonged to each human being by birth and could not be taken away.

It was the duty of the government to protect these natural rights of the citizens.

Q.13. What do you know about the political clubs formed in France?

Ans. Large sections of the population believed that the revolution had to be carried further, as the Constitution of 1791 had given the rights only to the richer section. So, political clubs became important for the people who wished to discuss government policies and plan their own forms of action. The most successful of these clubs was the Jacobin Club. Women too formed their own clubs to get the right to vote.

Q.14. What was a 'Directory'? Why was it removed from France?

Ans. After the fall of Jacobins, a new Constitution was formed which denied the right to vote to non-propertied men. It provided two elected legislative Councils, who appointed a Directory, an executive made up of five members. However, the directors often clashed with the legislative councils and were finally dismissed. With this, political instability emerged in France which gave rise to a military dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte.

Q.15. How did women suffer in France?

Ans. Most of the women had to work for a living. They worked as laundresses or seamstresses, sold flowers, fruits and vegetables or were employed as domestic servants. They could not get education or job training. Working women had also to take care of their families, that is cook, fetch water, queue up for bread and look after children. Their wages were also lower than men.

Q.16. Which laws were made to improve the status of women in the French society?

Ans. In the beginning, the revolutionary government introduced laws to improve the lives of women.

- (i) Schooling was made compulsory for all girls.
- (ii) Their fathers could no longer force them into marriage against their will.
- (iii) Divorce was made legal and could be applied for, by both men and women.
- (iv) Women could now be trained for jobs, could become artists or run small businesses.

Q.17. What was the immediate cause of the French Revolution?

Ans. A severe winter had meant a bad harvest, the price of bread rose, often bakers exploited the situation and hoarded supplies. After spending long hours in long queues at the bakery, crowds of angry women stormed into the shops. At the same time, the king ordered troops to move into Paris and on 14th July, the agitated crowd stormed and destroyed the Bastille.

Q.18. How did the French people ultimately get the right to vote to all citizens?

Ans. In the summer of 1792, the Jacobins planned an insurrection of a large number of Parisians who were angered by the short supply and high prices of food. On the morning of August 10, they stormed the palace of Tuileries, massacred the king's guards and held the king hostage for several hours. Later the Assembly voted to imprison the royal family. Elections were held.

From now on, all men of 21 years and above regardless of wealth, got the right to vote.

Q.19. When had France become a Republic?

Ans. The newly elected assembly was called the 'Convention'. On 21st Sep. 1792, it abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic.