

Student Essay

French Revolution

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French Revolution

The causes of the French Revolution are complicated. In general, the real causes of the Revolution must be located in the social structure of French society. As it had been for centuries, French society was divided into three Estates or Orders. The First Estate consisted of the clergy and the Second Estate the nobility. Together, these two Estates accounted for about 2%. At the bottom of this hierarchy was the vast Third Estate which basically meant everybody else, or 98% of the population. This social structure was based on custom and tradition, and was the law.

The political vision on social contract was the basic law of society for Rousseau. Liberty is a law you had to accept, and equality means that all are dependant on society and not on other individuals. The effect of the Enlightenment on the French Revolution has created a debate. But, in general, it can be said that there is no causal relationship between the philosophers of the Enlightenment and the outbreak of the French Revolution. The philosophers of the Enlightenment attacked the established order together with authority. Their ideas helped to produce what can only be called a revolutionary mentality.

The social content was based on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd estates. The 1st was made up of Nuns, Monks and Priests (all the clergy men). The 2nd Estate was made up of Nobility, and the 3rd was the poor tax payers, like farmers, peasants and city workers. The French Revolution actually starts when the Third Estate write a Declaration Of Man, like our Declaration Of Independence today. That will state that the people have just as much say as the government, but the Third estate (bourgeoisie) fought to not pay taxes, to farm their own food and have there own land.