



Experiencing the Fervor of the French Revolution

Experiential Exercise

Overview

In this **Experiential Exercise** students reenact three stages of the French Revolution by assuming the role of an individual in revolutionary France—a monarch, a noble lord, a member of the clergy, or a commoner. In the first stage, students live through the financial crisis during the era of Louis XVI. Then they experience the optimism of the moderate stage of the Revolution. Finally, they become engulfed in revolutionary fervor during the radical Reign of Terror. After each stage, the teacher debriefs the experience and then provides a historical summary of what actually happened.



Procedures at a Glance

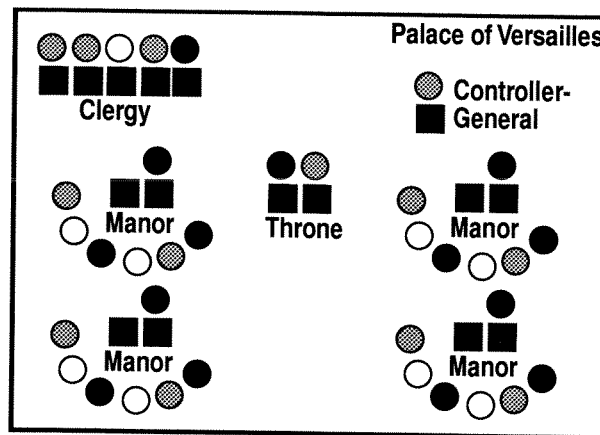
This activity allows students to experience the stages of the French Revolution by assuming the role of an individual—a monarch, a lord, a member of the clergy, or a commoner—in revolutionary France. Use **Role Cards 1.3A** and **Overhead Transparency 1.3B** to direct students through Stage One of the activity. Then debrief the experience with students, and use the information in the **Historical Summary** to provide factual detail about the first stage of the revolution. Repeat this process for Stages Two and Three. Use **Role Cards 1.3C** and **Overhead Transparency 1.3D** for Stage Two of the activity. Use **Role Cards 1.3E** and **Overhead Transparency 1.3F** for Stage Three of the activity.

Procedures in Detail

1. This activity allows students to experience the stages of the French Revolution by assuming the role of an individual—a monarch, a lord, a member of the clergy, or a commoner—in revolutionary France. For each of the three distinct stages of the French Revolution portrayed in this activity, students react in character to the sequence of events, discuss the experience, and then learn what actually happened. By participating in the activity, students will experience how different groups reacted and felt during the revolution.
2. The procedures for each of the stages have been divided into three sections: 1) guidelines explaining the steps to prepare for and direct students through the experience, 2) debriefing questions that enable students to make connections between the experience and the historical reality, and 3) a historical summary designed to provide students with factual details about the French Revolution. Expect executing each stage of the activity—preparing students, conducting and debriefing the experience, and providing the historical summary—to take at least two class periods. You may want to assign additional reading or other assignments intermittently as the activity unfolds.

Stage One: Experiencing France During the Reign of Louis XVI

1. Before class, arrange your classroom into this modified feudal structure:



- At the front of the class, set up two desks as thrones for King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette. Label the desks “Throne.” Set up another desk to the side and slightly behind them and label it “Controller-General.” On the wall nearest these desks, place a “Palace of Versailles” label.
- Create four manors by placing two desks together in four different areas of the room. Label each set of desks “Manor.” Put a stack of scratch paper and a pair of scissors in each manor.
- Set aside five desks to the right of the king and queen and label the area “Clergy.”

2. Make copies of **Role Cards 1.3A** in these quantities:

- **1 King Louis XVI**
- **1 Queen Marie Antoinette**
- **1 Controller-General**
- **5 Members of the Clergy**
- **4 Noble Lords**
- **24 Peasants**

(**Note:** With larger classes, increase the number of peasants. With smaller classes, decrease the number of peasants.)

3. As students enter the classroom, randomly give each one a **Role Card 1.3A**. Tell them they are assuming the role of members of French society during the 1780s. Have students move to their places in the classroom. Have one lord reside at each of the four manors, and place peasants at each of the four manors so peasants are evenly distributed. Make sure students assume the sitting position appropriate for their roles: peasants on the floor next to their manor, lords and clergy in the seat of the desk, royalty atop the desk, thronelike. Tell students to carefully read the description of the character that appears in italics at the top of the role card. Answer any questions students have about their roles.
4. Project **Overhead Transparency 1.3B: Stage One: Experiencing France During the Reign of Louis XVI**. Cover it so only Step 1 is showing. This transparency outlines the five steps of Stage One. Tell students that the information on all role cards corresponds to the five steps outlined on **Overhead Transparency 1.3B**. As you reveal each step of Stage One, have students read the corresponding step on their **Role Card 1.3A** to find out what they need to do. Here are guidelines for you to follow for each step of Stage One:

Step 1: Read the background information on your role card. Allow students time to read the background information about France during the reign of Louis XVI.

Step 2: Discuss background information. Once all students have read the background information, project Slide 1.3A, which shows the Palace of Versailles. Ask students: **Who was King Louis XIV? When did he reign over France? What was the Palace of Versailles? How did Louis XIV use the palace to increase his power?** After students have answered the questions, project Slide 1.3B, a portrait of Louis XVI. Ask students: **Who was King Louis XVI? When did he reign? Who was the Queen of France during Louis XVI's reign? Where was she from?** At the end of this step, students should have a basic understanding of the absolute monarchy in France of the late 1780s. Provide any additional information necessary to help them understand the conditions in France in the late 1780s that bred revolutionary fervor.

Step 3: Peasants produce food. Have peasants use scratch paper and scissors to carefully reproduce the food token that appears on their role card. Remind peasants that food production was crucial to the stability and well-being of French society, and their primary function in society was to produce food. Tell peasants that if they do not reproduce the food tokens, they will “starve” and lose points for the activity. As peasants work, the rest of the students may quietly watch, talk among themselves, provide words of encouragement, or simply relax. This simulates the reality of French society at this time—peasants working extremely hard while the privileged elite engage in leisure activities. Expect some of the peasants to resent this inequity. Continue this step until each peasant has produced at least 20 food tokens. You may want to have peasants work for 15 minutes or more to accentuate the inequities in French society.

Step 4: Peasants pay taxes. Announce that the government will collect taxes and the Church will collect tithes. Tell the lord of each manor to collect all food tokens from peasants. Have clergy members go to each manor and take 10 percent of all food tokens as the Church’s tithe. Then have the Controller-General take 50 percent of the food tokens as the government’s tax and show it to the king and queen. Finally, tell the lord of each manor to keep half of the rest of the manor’s food tokens (to represent peasants’ payment for protection) and to evenly distribute the remaining tokens to the peasants (to represent food for survival). Expect some peasants to complain about the heavy taxation, but inform them that this was typical of the situation in France in the late 1780s. Tell students to keep their food tokens, which they will need during Stage Two of the activity. (**Option:** You may want to collect the food tokens and redistribute them during Stage Two to ensure they are not lost.)

Step 5: Controller-General makes emergency announcement. Have the Controller-General read this emergency announcement, which appears on Step 5 of that role card: *“Fellow citizens, though we have collected taxes this year, France is still in a grave financial crisis. The king and queen need the full support of French citizens to resolve this problem. I ask you, citizens, to consider how you can help your country.”* After this announcement is made, students should realize that serious measures may need to be taken to remedy the situation.

Connecting the Experience with History

1. After the experience, hold a class discussion centering on these questions:
 - How did it feel to be a monarch? The Controller-General? A noble? A member of the clergy? A peasant?
 - How does it feel to be “born” into a role you cannot change?
 - Who has the most power in society? Who has the least?
 - What are some of the advantages of organizing a society in this way? What are some disadvantages?
 - What do you think should be done to save the French nation?
 - In what ways do think your experience was different from the historical reality? In what ways do think your experience was similar?

Historical Summary

1. After the class discussion, use Slides 1.3C and 1.3D and the information below to review with students the conditions in France during the late 1780s and the call for a meeting of the Estates General. An understanding of these issues is necessary preparation for Stage Two of the activity.

Slide 1.3C: Noble and clergyman riding on the back of a peasant *Toward the end of the eighteenth century, France continued to spend much more than it received in income, taking out loans to pay for wars with England and government operations. By 1788 France spent half its annual budget for the interest payments on the ever-increasing national debt. In addition, 25 percent of the annual budget paid for military expenditures and 6 percent paid for the extravagant life-style of the king and his court at Versailles. With no other financial options available to the government, a sharp rise in taxes became inevitable. This new tax burden was born largely by the peasants, since the clergy and nobility were largely exempt from taxes. At the same time, the peasants were beset by poor harvests, and the price of bread soared.*

Slide 1.3D: The Meeting of the Estates General *Desperate to solve the financial crisis, King Louis XVI called for the Estates General to meet. This medieval representative body, which had not been convened since 1614, divided France into three orders, or estates: the clergy, nobility, and commoners.*



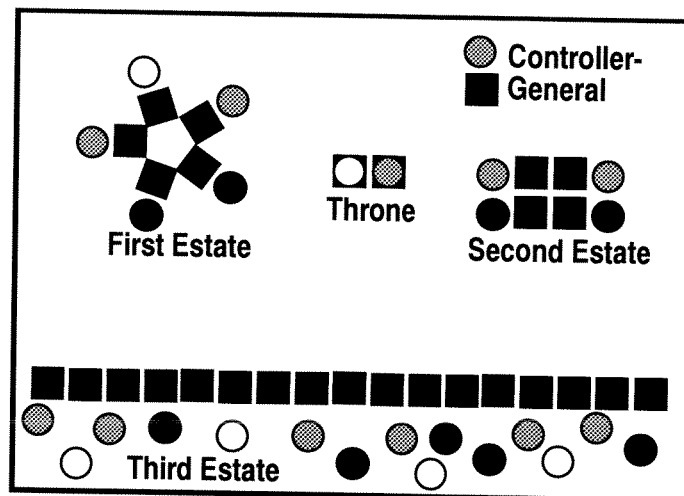
Idea for Class Notes: Have students take notes on the events in the Historical Summary. Then have them create a face representing the feelings of each of the groups featured in Stage One of the activity: monarchs, noble lords, members of the clergy, and peasants. For example, the expression on the peasant's face might show anger, frustration, and burden.



Idea for Student Response: Have students assume the role of the character they played in Stage One and write a journal account of the events they experienced as if they were living in France at that time. You may want to have students continue these journal accounts after they have experienced Stages Two and Three of the activity.

Stage Two: Experiencing the Meeting of the Estates General

1. Before class, arrange your classroom for the preparation and meeting of the Estates General as shown:



- At the front of the class, set up two desks as thrones for King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette. Label the desks "Throne." Set up another desk to the side and slightly behind them and label it "Controller-General."
- Place five desks in a circle on one side of the classroom and label them "First Estate."
- Place four desks together on the other side of the classroom and label them "Second Estate."
- Put the remainder of the desks in a row across the back of the room to create a separate "room." Label the area "Third Estate."

2. Make copies of **Role Cards 1.3C** in these quantities:

- **1 King Louis XVI**
- **1 Queen Marie Antoinette**
- **1 Controller-General**
- **5 Members of First Estate**
- **4 Members of Second Estate**
- **24 Members of Third Estate**

(**Note:** With larger classes, increase the number of members of Third Estate. With smaller classes, decrease the number of members of Third Estate.)

3. Give each student the **Role Card 1.3C** that corresponds with the role they assumed for Stage One of the activity. For example, students who played members of the Clergy in Stage One should be members of the First Estate. Similarly, the students who played Peasants in Stage One should be members of the Third Estate. Have students assume their places in the classroom. Have members of the Third Estate stand in their area to symbolize their lack of privilege. Allow the others to sit. Tell students to carefully read the description of the character that appears in italics at the top of the role card. Answer any questions students have about their roles. (**Note:** If you collected the food tokens after Step 4 of Stage One, redistribute them to students.)
4. Project **Overhead Transparency 1.3D: Stage Two: Experiencing the Meeting of the Estates General**. Cover it so only Step 1 is showing. This transparency outlines the seven steps of Stage Two. Tell students that the information on all role cards corresponds to the seven steps outlined on **Overhead Transparency 1.3D**. As you reveal each step of Stage Two, have students read the corresponding step on their **Role Card 1.3C** to find out what they need to do. Here are guidelines for you to follow for each step of Stage Two:

Step 1: The king assembles the Estates General for advice. Have King Louis XVI read this announcement from Step 1 of his role card: *“French citizens, we are faced with a grave financial crisis that threatens to ruin France. We collect far less money than it costs to run this nation. We must either raise more money for the royal treasury or perish as a nation. I seek your advice and support. This is why I have assembled the Estates General. I instruct each of the Three Estates to decide and explain 1) whether they think the separate Estates should vote by order (each Estate, one vote) or by head (one person, one vote) and 2) how they propose France and its people can solve this horrible economic crisis.”* Have the rest of the class listen and kneel in reverent silence as he speaks. Make sure they applaud respectfully when the king finishes.

Step 2: The Three Estates prepare to meet. Allow students at least 20 to 25 minutes to prepare for the meeting of the Estates General. Each Estate must 1) decide whether to vote by head or by order, 2) draft a proposal to solve the financial crisis, 3) designate a spokesperson to present the proposal to the king and queen, and 4) create a banner with a slogan and a visual symbol representing their Estate. (**Note:** While historically inaccurate, having each Estate design a banner helps create unity and solidarity within each group.) These tasks are outlined for students on the role cards.

Allow the king, queen, and Controller-General to encourage members of the First and Second Estates to propose to vote by order and to continue taxation of the Third Estate, so they can maintain their privileges. Urge members of the Third Estate to propose to vote by head and more equitable taxation. After the king, queen, and Controller-General give their recommendations to the members of the First and Second Estates, have them relax, talk quietly, and watch while the groups prepare for the meeting. Have each Estate hang its banner on the nearest wall.

Step 3: Each Estate proposes a plan to save France. Have the spokesperson for the First Estate approach the throne, kneel before the monarchs, and present the Estate's proposal. Make sure the class listens respectfully during the presentation. Repeat this process with the spokespersons from the Second and Third Estates. After all proposals have been read, expect members of the Third Estate to be angered by the selfishness of the First and Second Estates. (**Note:** In reality, the proposals of each Estate were never formally presented to the king, but the interests of each Estate were well known within the government. This step provides students with a forum to present and learn the ideas held by each Estate.)

Step 4: The king proposes a plan to save France. Have the king read this statement from Step 4 of his role card: *"After hearing the wishes of each Estate, here is my plan. As established by long-standing precedent, I hereby proclaim that voting by the Estates General will continue to be by order. Furthermore, I strongly recommend that we continue our existing system of taxation in order to solve our dire financial crisis."* Have the rest of the class listen carefully and silently to the king's proposal. (**Note:** In reality, the king never announced a plan for how to solve the financial crisis to the Estates General. This step is included to show students that Louis XVI largely sought to preserve the status quo. In calling the meeting of the Estates General, for example, he always intended to adhere to the medieval tradition of voting by order. In addition, as a devout Catholic, he had no intention of shifting the tax burden to the clergy to solve the financial crisis.)

Step 5: The Estates General votes on the king's plan. As decreed by the king in the previous step, have the three Estates discuss the king's proposal for one or two minutes and then vote by order on it. The First and Second Estate should vote for the proposal; the Third Estate should vote against it. Thus, the proposal should pass by a 2 to 1 vote. Afterward, have King Louis XVI read the statements from Step 5 on his role card: "*The meeting of the Estates General is now over. Thank you for being here. France appreciates your courage and devotion.*" Expect increased anger and disbelief among members of the Third Estate. (**Note:** In reality, this vote never occurred. The Third Estate knew that a vote by order would go against them, so they refused to consider decrees proposed by the Estates General. Since students do not know this, we include this step to show them that the Third Estate was rendered powerless under this system.)

Step 6: Severe famine occurs. To represent the severe famine that occurred throughout the 1780s, make this announcement: "*A severe famine has occurred. Bread prices have doubled. Commoners are having extreme difficulty obtaining food.*" Then collect all but one of the food tokens from the members of the Third Estate. As supplies diminished, bread prices doubled in 1789, thus making the plight of the Third Estate more desperate. By taking food tokens from only the Third Estate but not the others—who could afford to pay higher prices food prices and thus did not go hungry—students should feel the desperation of the Third Estate.

Step 7: The Third Estate responds to the situation. Ask the Third Estate each of the questions below. Have the remainder of the class listen quietly to their responses. Allow members of the First and Second Estates to respond only to the final question.

- **Describe what happened at the Estates General.**
- **How does it feel to be a member of the Third Estate?**
- **Do you agree with the results of the Estates General? Explain.**
- **Which groups had the most power during the Estates General? The least power?**
- **How did you feel when the famine occurred? Why?**
- **What options do the members of the Third Estate have to change their status?**
- **How many people of the Third Estate would now vote to meet apart from the privileged orders as the true representatives of the people of France and start their own government? Why?**
- **How many people of the First and Second Estates would support the members of the Third Estate who wish to start a new government? Why?**

- Count the number of students who vote to meet as a separate governmental body. Usually, most, if not all, members of the Third Estate and a few of the members of the First and Second Estates vote to meet as a separate body. Then announce that a revolution has begun. Tell all revolutionary students to hold one hand out in front of them and repeat the actual Tennis Court Oath as follows: *“I swear an oath to God and nation never to be separated until we have formed a solid and equitable Constitution as our constituents have asked us to.”* (**Option:** You may want to take students out to the tennis court at your school to recite the Tennis Court Oath.)

Connecting the Experience with History

- After the experience, hold a class discussion centering on these questions:
 - How did it feel to be a monarch during the meeting of the Estates General? The Controller-General? A noble? A member of the clergy? A peasant?**
 - For those who voted to meet as a separate body, how did it feel to take that action?**
 - For those who chose not to become part of the revolutionary movement, how did it feel to see so many people move toward revolution?**
 - Who might have the most power in society after the meeting of the Estates General? Who might have the least?**
 - What questions do you have about the similarities between your experience and the historical reality? About the differences?**

Historical Summary

- After the class discussion, use Slides 1.3E, 1.3F, and 1.3G and the information below to review with students the events that were outgrowths of the meeting of the Estates General: the Tennis Court Oath, the Storming of the Bastille, the March on Versailles, and the Constitution of 1791. An understanding of these events is necessary preparation for Stage Three of the activity.

Slide 1.3E: The Tennis Court Oath *In the actual meeting of the Estates General, the Third Estate refused to conduct any business until the king broke tradition and ordered the three Estates to sit together as a single representative body. When it became clear that the Estates General would meet and vote as separate orders, the Third Estate adopted the title National Assembly and declared itself the true representative body of France. On June 19th a majority of the clergy voted to join the Third Estate. On June 20, 1789, members of the National Assembly, excluded from their hall in Versailles because of “repairs,” moved to a large indoor tennis court in town and swore the famous Tennis Court Oath, pledging never to disband until they had written a new constitution for France.*

The National Assembly later established a constitutional monarchy, which the king accepted in July 1791. All lawmaking power was placed in the hands of the National Assembly, which was elected by the wealthier half of French males. The king remained the head of state and could veto any law passed by the assembly. In an attempt to solve the financial crisis, the newly elected government seized the land of the Catholic Church and the land of any nobles who fled France.

Slide 1.3F: The Storming of the Bastille *By July 1789 about one fourth of the people of Paris were unemployed, and the bread prices soared so high many people were left without food. As rumor spread that the king's troops were coming to sack Paris, angry crowds seized arms for defense of the city. On July 14, 1789, hundreds of people marched to the Bastille, a medieval fort and prison, to search for gunpowder. The commanding officer of the Bastille refused to relinquish the gunpowder and fired on the crowd, killing 98 people. The soldiers finally surrendered hours later, and the revolutionary crowds took the Bastille. As the news spread across France, peasants began to rise in spontaneous revolt against their lords. The storming of the Bastille symbolized the beginning of the French Revolution.*

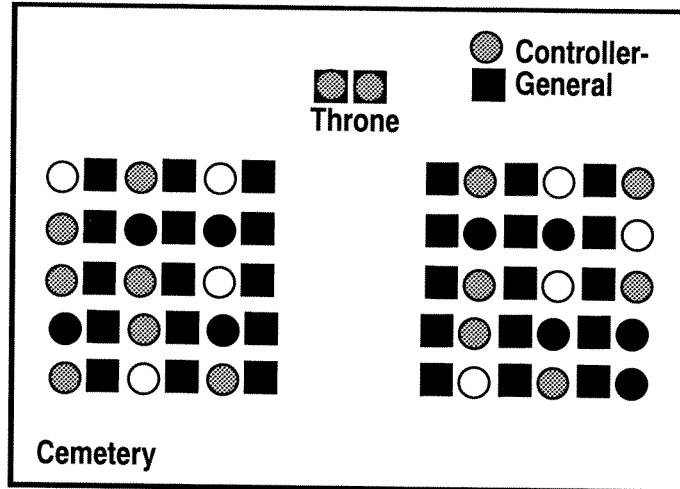
Slide 1.3G: The March on Versailles *As the financial crisis heightened in the months following the Storming of the Bastille, unemployment and hunger increased. On October 5th, 7,000 desperate women marched the 12 miles from Paris to Versailles to demand bread. The women invaded the palace and killed several guards. The king promised to give them bread immediately and to accompany them back to Paris with his family. The heads of two nobles, stuck on pikes, led the way, followed by the unarmed royal guard. The king and his family never returned to Versailles.*



Idea for Class Notes: Have students take notes on the events in the Historical Summary. Then have them create a face representing the feelings of each of the groups featured in Stage One of the activity: monarchs, First Estate, Second Estate, and Third Estate. For example, the expression on the monarchs' face might show concern and anxiety.

Stage Three: Experiencing the Radical Republic

1. Before class, arrange your classroom for the meeting of the National Assembly and the emergence of a radical republic as shown:



- Arrange all but three desks in parliamentary-style rows as diagrammed.
 - At the front of the class, set up two desks as thrones for King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette. Label the desks “Throne.” Set up another desk to the side and slightly behind them and label it “Controller-General.”
 - Label the back corner of the room “Cemetery.”
2. Make copies of **Role Cards 1.3E** in these quantities:
 - **1 King Louis XVI**
 - **1 Queen Marie Antoinette**
 - **1 Controller-General**
 - **5 Members of National Assembly: Clergy**
 - **4 Members of National Assembly: Noble**
 - **23 Members of National Assembly: Commoner**
 - **1 Member of National Assembly: Robespierre (2 pages)**

(Note: With larger classes, increase the number of Members of National Assembly: Commoner. With smaller classes, decrease the number of Members of National Assembly: Commoner.)

3. Give each student the **Role Card 1.3C** that corresponds with the role they assumed for Stage Two of the activity. For example, students who played members of the Second Estate in Stage Two should be Members of National Assembly: Noble. Similarly, the student who played King Louis XVI in Stage Two should assume that role for this stage. Assign the role of Robespierre to one of the students who played Member of Third Estate in Stage Two. (**Note:** You may want to choose a confident, dynamic student to play Robespierre, who has a critical role during Steps 4, 5, and 6 of this stage. You may also want to meet briefly with the student—perhaps even before class—to review what he or she must do in Steps 4, 5, and 6.) Have students assume their place in the classroom. Tell students to carefully read the description of the character that appears in italics at the top of the role card. Answer any questions students have about their roles. (**Note:** It is important for students playing members of the National Assembly to recognize that they are all now considered supporters of the revolution, even if they did not vote to support it in Step 5 of Stage Two.)
4. Project **Overhead Transparency 1.3F: Stage Three: Experiencing the Radical Republic**. Cover it so only Step 1 is showing. This transparency outlines the seven steps of Stage Three. Tell students that the information on all role cards corresponds to the seven steps outlined on **Overhead Transparency 1.3F**. As you reveal each step of Stage Three, have students read the corresponding step on their **Role Card 1.3E** to find out what they need to do. Here are guidelines for you to follow for each step of Stage Three:

Step 1: King Louis XVI recognizes the National Assembly. Have King Louis XVI make this speech announcing his support of the new constitution, from Step 1 of that role card: *“French citizens, as your king, I recognize the Constitution of 1791, which abolishes noble privileges and allows the National Assembly, as a representative body of the people, to make laws for France. I recognize your power, and I recognize the new limitations on mine.”* Make sure the rest of the class listens in respectful silence. Have the National Assembly applaud at the end of the speech.

Step 2: The Controller-General describes the financial crisis. Have the Controller-General make this speech, from Step 2 of that role card: *“French citizens, though we have a new constitution, we have the same financial crisis. We don’t have enough money to even pay the interests on our loans. In addition, Austrian troops have invaded France, and we need money for our armies. The National Assembly must pass legislation immediately to raise money for our great country.”* Make sure students listen carefully and quietly as the Controller-General delivers the speech. This step is included to remind students that even though the revolution has begun, France continues to face major financial problems.

Step 3: The National Assembly discusses and proposes solutions. Have members of the National Assembly discuss among themselves solutions to the financial crisis. Several possible solutions are listed on Step 3 of their role cards. After members of the National Assembly informally discuss possible solutions for two or three minutes, call any member to kneel before the monarchs and make their proposal. Once a proposal is made, conduct a simple voice vote on it. If a proposal is approved, ask the king if he accepts the proposal. As instructed on Step 3 of his role card, the king will veto any proposal by saying, *“I exercise my constitutional right to veto that proposal.”* Repeat this process several times, or until the National Assembly has become sufficiently frustrated by the king’s refusal to accept their ideas. This step allows students to recognize that given the king’s obstructionist behavior, the Constitution of 1791 still did not afford French citizens enough power to make desired changes.

Step 4: Robespierre announces a revolutionary plan. Before you begin this step, discreetly give Robespierre **Student Handout 1.3G: Secret Document**. Have Robespierre stand and dramatically read from Step 4 of his role card: *“French citizens, we have just uncovered secret documents from the royal palace that prove beyond a doubt that the king is a traitor. He attempted to leave France. He collaborated with the Austrian enemy. He conspired to stop the revolution and take back his power. I hold the proof in my hands. See for yourself!”* Make sure students listen to his proclamation carefully. Allow members of the National Assembly to examine the secret document as “proof” that the king and queen are traitors. Then have Robespierre continue reading from his role card: *“French citizens, revolutionary brothers and sisters, we have been tricked by this wicked king. I propose we sell off the church lands, tax all citizens equally, fight the Austrians with revolutionary spirit, and put the king on trial for treason. Raise your hand if you’re in favor!”* Expect most members of the National Assembly to raise their hands in support of Robespierre.

Step 5: The National Assembly puts the king on trial. Have Robespierre ask members of the National Assembly: *“Who will speak in defense of this wicked king?”* Allow the king to speak on his own behalf. If supporters of the king emerge, allow Robespierre and his followers to call them “traitors.” After any speeches have been made on behalf of the king, have Robespierre call for a vote on whether the king is guilty of treason by saying: *“Who votes to convict the king as guilty of treason?”* Most students will vote to convict the king. (**Note:** Make sure either you or Robespierre notes who supported the king. This information is needed for Step 6.) When the king is convicted, announce that he has been sentenced to death. Turn off the lights, and project Slide 1.3H, which shows a guillotine. Escort the king to the “Cemetery” area of the classroom to symbolize his execution.

Step 6: Robespierre leads the radical republic. Have Robespierre read this speech from Step 6 of his role card, which announces the Republic of Virtue and ushers in the Reign of Terror: *“Revolutionary brothers and sisters, the problem with France is that there are too many traitors. If we execute all traitors, we will have a Republic of Virtue and then will be able to continue the revolution. To all traitors of the Revolution, terror is now the order of the day. I ask you revolutionary citizens of France to write a new constitution that will save France.”*

As students begin discussing a new constitution—a bogus task that is included simply to keep them busy while Robespierre carries out the Reign of Terror—have Robespierre identify traitors to his cause that he wants “executed.” Robespierre may choose the queen, the Controller-General, nobles and clergy, supporters of the king, or anyone who bothers him by not working on a new constitution or by challenging his authority. Once a traitor has been pointed out, turn off the lights, project Slide 1.3H (the guillotine), and escort the traitor to the “Cemetery” to symbolize his or her execution. Allow Robespierre to “execute” six to eight students. As the Reign of Terror occurs, most students will likely appear anxious, scared, or shocked. Those who protest or question Robespierre’s authority should be “executed.”

Step 7: The Reign of Terror ends. Read to the class this statement to inform students about the scope of the Reign of Terror: *Robespierre and his followers led this stage of the revolution for almost two years. During that time, France successfully defended itself against invading European armies. However, approximately 40,000 French men and women were executed for “treason.” Treasonous acts included saying, “Down with the Republic” and possessing a book with the king’s seal on it. Given these facts, what do you want to do to Robespierre?* Allow students to discuss Robespierre’s fate. Expect most students to immediately urge his execution. If this occurs, quickly turn out the lights, project Slide 1.3H (the guillotine), and escort Robespierre to the “Cemetery.”

Connecting the Experience with History

1. After the experience, hold a class discussion centering on these questions:
 - Describe what you observed in this stage of the activity.
 - Why did the National Assembly turn against the king?
 - How did you feel when Robespierre gave his initial speech and showed the secret document?
 - How did you feel when the King was executed?
 - How did you feel toward Robespierre during the Reign of Terror? How did you feel when classmates were executed?
 - How did you feel when Robespierre was executed?
 - What do you think occurred in France after Robespierre was executed?
 - In what ways do think your experience was different from the French roles you played? In what ways do think your experience was similar?

Historical Summary

1. After the class discussion, use the Slides 1.3I through 1.3K and the information below to review with students the events that correspond with students' experience in Stage Three and what occurred in France after the Reign of Terror.

Slide 1.3I: The Execution of Louis XVI *On June 21, 1791, the royal family attempted to flee France, but was caught a few miles from the French border and returned to Paris. The king agreed to sign the Constitution of 1791 and then proceeded to veto key revolutionary decrees. A new, more radical government, the National Convention, was popularly elected in September 1792. France fought to preserve the Revolution in “a war of people against kings” against Austria and Prussia. In November 1792 incriminating royal documents were found that showed that the king was negotiating secretly to restore his authority and thwart the Constitution. The National Convention overwhelmingly voted to convict Louis XVI of treason and then voted to sentence him to death in January 1793 by one vote (361 of the 720 members). Just before he was guillotined, he declared calmly, “I die innocent of all the crimes of which I have been charged.” The Queen was executed in October 1793.*

Slide 1.3J: Opponents of Robespierre’s rule being taken to the guillotine during the Reign of Terror *Now at war against every major European power, the National Convention, led by Maximilien Robespierre, called for drastic measures to save France from “enemies of the nation.” By the spring of 1794, a fervently patriotic army of one million had successfully defeated the united European armies on all fronts. At home, Robespierre and his fellow republicans believed that French citizens would have to be taught the virtues of the new Republic. The National Convention established 1792 as Year One of the Republic and created an entirely new calendar with new months, weeks, and days. Robespierre set up special revolutionary courts, responsible only to him, which tried citizens for treason against the revolution. Crimes ranged from saying, “Down with the Republic” to maintaining a book with the king’s seal on it. For those not deemed virtuous enough for the Republic, terror was the order of the day. In two years, roughly 40,000 French men and women were executed, often by guillotine. Finally, in July 1794, after the Reign of Terror had wiped out many of Robespierre’s own friends, Robespierre himself was executed by guillotine.*

Slide 1.3K: The Coronation of Napoleon Bonaparte *After five years of disastrous rule by a five-man executive called the Directory, Napoleon Bonaparte ruled France as dictator and emperor for 15 years, from 1799 to 1814. Napoleon turned France into a centrally controlled police state where revolutionary ideals of freedom of speech and press were constantly violated. Yet Napoleon maintained many moderate reforms of the revolution, abolishing feudal privileges and securing the advances of the middle class and the peasantry. Napoleon’s armies took most of continental Europe until losing decisively in Russia. He abdicated in 1814.*



Idea for Class Notes: Have students take notes on the events in the Historical Summary. Then have them create a face representing the feelings of each of the groups featured in Stage Three of the activity: monarchs, members of the National Assembly supporting Robespierre, victims of the Reign of Terror, and Robespierre. For example, the expression on the victim of the Reign of Terror face might show fear and terror, with blood dripping down the neck.