French Revolution Government & reign of terror
1792 to 1794

On 20 September 1792, under pressure from Robespierre and the Jacobins, the Legislative Assembly was replaced by a National Convention. (The term was taken from the Constitutional Convention which drew up the US Constitution in 1787.) The significance of this appeared two days later, when the Convention duly decreed the abolition of the monarchy and the creation of the French Republic with a new constitution. Theoretically, the legislature was now - for the first time in modern history - elected by universal male suffrage. In practice, only one-tenth of the electorate - the *sans-culottes* - ventured to vote.
REMEMBER

The Convention organized a determined resistance to foreign invasion, combined with action against those in France still loyal to the cause of monarchy.

By 1793 France was not only at war with most of the European states, a war which continued until 1799, but also in a state of virtual civil war - and with intensified civil war came mounting violence and extremism.

The map shows the invasion points of the First Coalition against France (Austria, Prussia, Holland, Britain, Spain and the kingdom of Sardinia) and the locations of internal resistance to the Revolution in 1792-3.
The Girondins, who dominated the Convention from September 1792, were ousted in May 1793 by the Jacobins under Robespierre with the help of 80,000 armed sans-culottes.

A further constitution was introduced in June 1793, more democratic than that of 1791, but it was suspended for the duration of the war.

The twelve months from July 1793 to July 1794 were known as the period of war government, revolutionary government, or simply the Terror.

Real power was vested in a so-called Committee of Public Safety, in effect a war cabinet of 12 members of the Convention.

The Committee took direct charge of mobilising France's material and human resources, fixing wages and prices, calling up and provisioning the army - and eradicating internal opposition.
The Committee of Public Safety

The Committee of Public Safety was set up in 1793 to control France and pass new laws. These laws were meant to protect the new government but upset many of the French people.

**New Laws passed**

- People were found guilty and put in prison without a trial.
- There did not need to be evidence of a crime.
- There was a death penalty for political crimes.
Robespierre Celebrates new Convention

June 8, 1794, wanted by Robespierre to recognize and celebrate his accession to the Revolution "The Feast of the Supreme Being at the Champ de Mars "  Demachy

He wanted to change the way people worshipped their Religion

Soon after he will fall from power ... so will his supporters!!!
The guillotine was adopted on expert advice and after experimentation on scientific and humanitarian grounds: as the quickest and least painful form of execution for victim, spectators and executioner alike (‘humanity requires that the death penalty be as painless as possible’). It applied the fundamental principle of mechanics: Newton’s law of gravitation. Newton’s law was infallible, and so was the guillotine: the falling bevelled blade never failed to decapitate and there would be no more botched executions.
In January 1793 Louis XVI was tried by the Convention for so-called crimes against the nation. Addressed by his surname (‘citizen Capet’) just like any other citizen, he was sentenced to death. He was guillotined in what became the place de la Revolution (formerly place Louis XV, now place de la Concorde). Marie-Antoinette, long defamed as ‘the Austrian bitch’ on suspicion of scheming for Austria’s interests, was guillotined in October.
Reign of Terror.
How the Reign of Terror began

The years in France from 1793 to 1794 were called the Reign of Terror. It was not very pleasant to live in France at this time.

The National Convention (the French parliament) was so worried about these problems that they set up a Committee of Public Safety in 1793.

The man in charge of this committee was called Maximillien Robespierre. The laws that he passed made France a frightening place to live and that is why this time was called the Reign of Terror.
Maximilien Robespierre - a hero?

The man who had the most power in France during the Revolution was Maximilien Robespierre. He was in charge of the Committee for Public Safety.

It was Robespierre who suggested many of the new laws which caused the Reign of Terror.

To many people, he was a hero because he attacked and executed the nobility in France.

Many people in France saw Maximilien Robespierre as ‘the greatest man in history’
Maximillien Robespierre - a villain?

It was Robespierre who suggested many of the new laws that caused the Reign of Terror.

This tells us that not all his ideas were liked by the French people.

To many people he was a cruel and hated leader because he tortured and murdered thousands of innocent French people.

Look at the picture below to see why so many people thought that he was a villain of the Revolution.

Many people in France now saw Maximillien Robespierre as ‘the most hateful man in history’.
The Terror:
Social Class of Victims

- Workers: 51%
- Peasants: 29%
- Nobles: 8%
- Clergy: 7%
- Upper Middle Class: 14%
- Lower Middle Class: 11%
The Terror: Variation Over Time

Sep 23-07:50
Robespierre overthrown July 1794
Robespierre executed - July 1794
The End of the Revolution

Although historians are agreed that the French Revolution started in 1789

They are divided on the end date-
- A few histories stop in 1795 with the creation of the Directory,
- Some stop in 1799 with the creation of the Consulate,
- while many more stop in 1802 when Napoleon Bonaparte became Consul for Life or 1804 when he became Emperor.
- A rare few continue to the restoration of the monarchy in 1814.
- Perhaps the best date is 1802 or 1804
In 1794 the revolution again changed, Turning against the Terror and its architect, Robespierre. The Terrorists were removed in a coup - Robespierre was shot and then guillotined, with his main supporters, in July 1794.

And a new constitution was drawn up which created, in 1795, a new legislative system run by a "Directory" of five men.
This remained in power thanks to rigging elections and purging the assemblies before being replaced, thanks to the army and a general called Napoleon Bonaparte, by a new constitution in 1799.

This new Constitution created three consuls to rule France.

Bonaparte was the first consul and, while the reform of France continued, Bonaparte managed to bring the revolutionary wars to a close and have himself declared consul for life.

In 1804 he crowned himself Emperor of France; the revolution was over, the empire had begun.
Consequences of the French Revolution:

There is universal agreement that the political and administrative face of France was wholly altered: a republic based around elected – mainly bourgeois - deputies replaced a monarchy supported by nobles while the many and varied feudal systems were replaced by new, usually elected institutions which were applied universally across France. Culture was also affected, at least in the short term, with the revolution permeating every creative endeavour. However, there is still debate over whether the revolution permanently changed the social structures of France or whether they were only altered in the short term.

Europe was also changed. The revolutionaries of 1792 began a war which extended through the Imperial period and forced nations to marshal their resources to a greater extent than ever before. Some areas, like Belgium and Switzerland, became client states of France with reforms similar to those of the revolution. National identities also began coalescing like never before. The many and fast developing ideologies of the revolution were also spread across Europe, helped by French being the continental elite’s dominant language. The French Revolution has often been called the start of the modern world, and while this is an exaggeration – many of the supposed ‘revolutionary’ developments had precursors – it was an epochal event that permanently changed the European mindset. Patriotism, devotion to the state instead of the monarch, mass warfare, all became solidified in the modern mind.