

## **The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen Student Worksheet**

### Introduction:

After the fall of the Bastille, France experienced a period that has become known as the “Great Fear.” Throughout the summer of 1789, riots broke out in cities and peasants began to turn against the wealthy landowners in the countryside, destroying their property and threatening them physically as well. In Paris, members of the Third Estate set up a new city government that came to be known as the Paris Commune. Against this backdrop, the National Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1789. The document incorporated many Enlightenment ideas about natural rights and the true purpose of government, and also addressed areas of current concern at the time.

All web links for this lesson can be found at:

<http://www.socialstudies.com/worldlinks.html>

### Directions:

#### **The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen**

[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/rightsof.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp)

1. In your own words, paraphrase the message conveyed in the opening paragraph of the document.
2. Article one states that “Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.” What do you think is meant by this?
3. List some of the specific “rights of man” mentioned in the document. Which of these do you think the document portrays as most important? Explain your reasoning.
4. What do you think is implied by article three? To whom do you think this article was addressed?
5. In article six, the document states: “All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.” Paraphrase the meaning of this statement, and speculate as to whom it was likely directed.
6. What do you think the National Assembly hoped to achieve by writing and issuing this document?
7. Write two or three paragraphs in which you use evidence to either agree or disagree with the following statement:  
“The Declaration of the Rights of Man was more a list of specific grievances to be redressed than a broad statement of the basic rights of citizens.”