

The Reign of Terror Student Worksheet

Introduction:

The period between 1793 and 1795 is known as the Reign of Terror. Military threats from countries abroad who wanted to crush the new French Republic combined with rumors of a royalist counterrevolution and fresh financial woes to produce a sense of extreme crisis. The National Assembly created a body known as the Committee of Public Safety, and allocated it a great deal of power in hope of quashing these threats to the Republic. The Committee was dominated by a political faction known as the Jacobins, led by the charismatic Maximilien Robespierre. New laws were passed that allowed people to be put in prison without a trial, convictions to be passed down without any evidence, and the death penalty to be applied for a variety of crimes. Consequently, thousands of people went to the guillotine (including Marie Antoinette), all in the name of preserving “liberty” and protecting the Republic. In this lesson, you will assess the motivations behind and justifications for the Terror.

All web links for this lesson can be found at:

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

Directions:

Maximilien Robespierre: Justification of the Use of Terror

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/robspierre-terror.asp>

1. In the first section, why do you think Robespierre says virtue is the soul of democracy?
2. In the second section, what is Robespierre’s view of monarchy? Why do you think he holds this view?
3. In the third section, what are the reasons Robespierre lays out for using terror? How effectively do you think he makes his case? Explain.
4. After studying section four, would you label Robespierre a revolutionary? Explain your reasoning.
5. Would you want to live in a democracy as envisioned by Robespierre? Explain why or why not.

St. Just: Republican Institutes

<http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111just.html>

6. Why does St. Just claim that “Where you find large landowners you find many poor people”?
7. Why do you think St. Just believes that children above the age of five should “belong

to the republic”? Why do you think he goes into such detail about how children should be educated?

8. Why do you think St. Just puts such a high value on friendship?

9. Would you want to grow up and live in a republic as envisioned by St. Just? Explain why or why not.

10. What differences, if any, exist between Robespierre’s idea of a republic and St. Just’s? Cite examples to support your position.