

The Storming of the Bastille Student Worksheet

Introduction:

By the summer of 1789, discontent among the lower classes of Paris had started to rise to a fever pitch. Food had been in short supply the entire year, sparking hundreds of small riots in the city. Meanwhile, debate in the Estates General (a meeting of the Three Estates) had also heated up, as delegates fiercely debated political reforms. King Louis XVI feared that this social and political turmoil might break out into full-blown conflict and consequently in July he ordered French troops into the city—ostensibly to maintain order, but in reality to launch a preemptive strike and prevent any uprising from taking place. Ironically, this action provided the spark that led a determined band of citizens to rise up and search for weapons. On July 14th, they headed for the Bastille. In addition to serving as the royal armory, it was also an infamous prison. Their storming and capture of the Bastille is widely considered to be the beginning of the French Revolution. While the storming of the Bastille didn't really accomplish a great deal militarily, it was of great symbolic importance to the common people of France. This lesson will allow you to learn more about events which took place at the Bastille.

All web links for this lesson can be found at:

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

Directions:

A Parisian Newspaper Account of the Fall of the Bastille

<http://thecaveonline.com/APEH/frrevdocuments.html#anchorbatille>

1. Why was this event important to the common people of France?
2. Why does the article refer to the governor as “treacherous”?
3. What did the author mean by saying “the citizens had become hardened to the fire”?
4. Why do you think the governor and some of his officers were killed by the citizens instead of being put on trial?
5. What is the meaning of the following sentence, found near the end of the article: “This glorious day must amaze our enemies, and finally usher in for us the triumph of justice and liberty.”
6. Do you feel the author of the article supported the people or the French nobility and the king? Explain.
7. Do you consider the actions of the citizens who stormed the Bastille as heroic, or do you think they simply gave in to a mob mentality? Explain.