

## **The Three Estates Student Worksheet**

### Introduction:

In French society, the people were divided into three categories called estates. Each estate had specific roles and privileges. The First Estate consisted of the nobility/aristocracy, the Second Estate was the Church, and the Third Estate included most of the rest of French society—the peasants and the “common people.” The Third Estate, the poorest group, provided most of the nation’s taxes. Tax dollars were used to pay for wars, to pay for the kings’ palaces, to support the wealthy lifestyle of the aristocracy, and to pay for other public projects.

All web links for this lesson can be found at:

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

### Directions:

#### **Political Cartoon on the Three Estates**

1. Describe the scene depicted in the cartoon. Who do you think the various people represent?
2. In a few sentences, summarize the message you think the artist is trying to convey.
3. How is the height of each group used to convey the cartoon’s message?
4. Which estate do you think the artist feels is the most important? Explain your reasoning.
5. How effectively do you think the cartoon conveys the artist’s message? Explain your reasoning.

#### **“What Is the Third Estate?”: Abbe Sieyes**

6. Why does Sieyes believe that the Third Estate is the one that “sustain[s] society”? Briefly paraphrase his argument.
7. At one point Sieyes states, “Meanwhile they have dared to impose a prohibition upon the order of the Third Estate. They have said to it: ‘Whatever may be your services, whatever may be your abilities, you shall go thus far; you may not pass beyond!’” What do you think he is referring to here? Explain.
8. In the public function section, why does Sieyes claim the noble class does not really belong to the nation?
9. Why does he conclude the third estate is “the whole”?
10. Do you agree with his point of view? Explain.

11. Do you think Sieyes would have agreed or disagreed with the message conveyed in the political cartoon you viewed earlier in this lesson? Explain your reasoning.