

1. The Enlightenment: A Shift Towards Reason

Starting in the late 17th century, people in Europe began viewing the world in a different light. Countries like France, England, Germany, Switzerland, and America started to value “reason” over religion. The invention of the printing press was the first change to grant the public access to important scientific ideas, like Isaac Newton’s theory of gravity and Galileo Galilei’s defense of the sun as the center of the solar system. These ideas challenged traditional Christian views. As a result, thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, Francis Bacon, John Locke, René Descartes began to question what it meant to be human. Other philosophers soon followed suit, and men like Voltaire, Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant expanded on previous thinkers’ ideas.

This ideological shift occurred over a period of about 250 years, and many countries experienced the Age of Enlightenment in different ways. In general, however, the Age of Reason led to many believing that rational thinking and scientific discovery could teach people more about themselves and reality than Christianity or religious explanations. The “enlightened” emphasis on human knowledge and rationalism was the seed that sprouted into many new movements and revolutions in the 18th and 19th centuries.

2. The Industrial Revolution

The Age of Reason or the Enlightenment brought about another enormous societal transformation: the Industrial Revolution. By the mid-1700s, the scientific and technological advancements that took place during the 17th century helped engineers and inventors design modern machines. Some of the new machines included the flying shuttle, the spinning jenny, the water frame, and the power loom. Tools like these allowed farmers, artisans, and craftsmen to produce a lot of goods at one time, whereas previously, they had to do everything by hand. Eventually, they began installing these machines in factories.

In Britain, the Industrial Revolution changed the landscape of the country rapidly. The shift to mass production in factories allowed Britain to send more goods abroad, where they were in high demand. They also began producing iron ore and steel. Once Thomas Newcomen and James Watt designed the steam engine, new industries emerged, and cotton mills, iron works, distilleries, and canals were built all over the country. People who had previously lived on farms in the country began moving to city centers to find work. This marked the beginning of “urbanization,” or the gathering of human beings in large, industrial clusters.

3. The Age of Revolution: 1760-1840

Both the Enlightenment Era and the early years of the Industrial Revolution had an enormous influence on society in the 18th century. Up until that point, most people lived under authoritative monarchical rulers. England and the American Colonies, France, Austria, Prussia (now Germany), Italy, Spain, Poland, and those controlled by the Ottoman Empire were all governed by a king. These monarchs and rulers believed in the “Divine Right of Kings,” which stated that God had intentionally placed them in a position of power. They believed that they deserved the throne and the wealth that came with it by birthright. Royal families and the aristocrats with whom they socialized lived in luxury, while the rest of the country’s people lived in poverty.

Thinkers during the Age of Reason claimed that all people were human and had rights. Low class workers and people without wealth began to question the “divine right of kings,” and many became far more

political. Meanwhile, industrialization and urbanization made those crowded in cities very unhappy with their living conditions. All of these changes led to a period historians identify as the Age of Revolution.

4. The Colonies: The First Wave of Discontent

Britain began colonizing the East Coast of the United States in the early 1600s. They drove the Native Americans out of their land and established settlements as far south as Georgia and as far north as Maine. For more than 100 years, the colonists relied on England for shipments of goods from the homeland, and they sent items like tobacco, cotton, and metalworks in return. They were more or less self-governed, which helped their relationship with the British to be fairly peaceable. However, in 1754, conflict broke out between France and Britain. This resulted in two wars: the French and Indian War in the Americas, and the Seven Years' War, which was fought across Europe between 1756-1763. After the fighting ended, King George III raised taxes on the American colonies to pay off the massive debt the British government owed to other powers in Europe. The American people were not happy.

The colonists decided to boycott British goods to demonstrate their discontent with the changes. Tensions flared. In 1770, the British army opened fire on protestors in Boston, killing 5 people. In 1774, when the British government placed a tax on tea coming from East India, the Americans dressed up as Native Americans, climbed on-board the trading ships, and dumped millions of dollars worth of tea into the Boston Harbor. Once George III sent more troops abroad and implemented the "Intolerable Acts," Americans declared war.

5. The Revolutionary War

The first battle of the American Revolutionary War was fought in April 1775, at Lexington and Concord in the Massachusetts Bay Area. The British had raided an arms storage unit under the cover of night, which provoked the townspeople to form a militia army. After the first shots were fired, the American colonies assembled an army. George Washington was appointed the military commander. Fighting continued in the north for nearly a year, and the Americans seemed to be doing well. Although they suffered some major losses in the spring of 1776, Washington was able to rebuild moral, and they came back with higher energy and motivation to defeat the British.

After the Americans defeated the British forces in Battle at Saratoga, the French government decided to get involved. They aligned with the Continental Army of the colonists, which forced the British to keep more soldiers in England on the defensive. This was a major turning point, and the colonies became even more hopeful for victory.

The war eventually reached the southern coast, where General Cornwallis of Britain led his troops against against the continental soldiers, who were aligned with the French troops, led by General Marquis de Lafayette. After 5 years of fighting, Cornwallis surrendered to General Washington in September, 1781. The British then signed the Treaty of Paris in 1783, freeing the colonies to become the Continental States.

6. The First Constitution

At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, the colonists were fighting for their rights to representation in the British Parliament. However, by June 1776, the American people had a different goal in sight. They wanted their independence.

That summer, some of the most socially established men in the colonies gathered in a meeting called the Continental Congress. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and several others penned a document now known as the Declaration of Independence, in which they declared all men to be equal with the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”. It was inspired by the writings of an Englishman named John Locke. Unfortunately, this logic did not apply to women or slaves at the time.

The ideas established in the Declaration of Independence raised the spirits of the colonists, which then helped them win the war. Six years later, important American men gathered again to write the United States Constitution. They devised a government structure with three branches, as well as checks and balances to prevent tyranny. The document was signed on September 17, 1787 and eventually passed by all of the colonies. Two years later, James Madison introduced 19 amendments to the constitution that became known as the Bill of Rights.

7. France: Revolutionaries Stir

The American Revolution marked the beginning of a new nation on the continent of North America. In Europe, however, a different revolution would inspire nearly 6 decades of social and political change. This movement would later become known as the French Revolution.

For many years, France had been ruled by monarchs that were born into the Bourbon family line. In 1774, the same year that the colonists declared their independence, the last Bourbon king rose to the throne. His name was Louis XVI. He and his wife, Marie Antoinette, lived luxuriously in the beautiful palace of Versailles, located just outside of Paris. They fully believed in the Divine Right of Kings, and took advantage of their wealth and social status. The feudal system still existed at the time, which meant that the royal family possessed the majority of the wealth in France.

By the late 18th century, the French government was slowly going bankrupt. Louis XVI was taking out numerous loans from other nations in order to pay off his debts from the wars he’d fought with England. The king also refused to tax the aristocracy, which angered the general public. Within a few short years, conditions worsened and people began to go hungry. By 1787, talk of revolution rippled through the streets.

8. The Tennis Court Oath and the First Stages of Revolution

For many years, the “Ancien Régime” of France was divided into three groups, or estates. The first estate was made up of the clergy, the second of the nobility, and the third of the commoners, which was represented by 600 elected diplomats. In May 1789, King Louis XVI called a meeting between all three estates in an attempt to restore peace to French society. However, the “people’s estate” was not given a voice. Angered by the fact that the nobility and clergy ignored their requests, the entire third estate moved their meeting to an indoor tennis court, where they took an oath. They promised to stick together until the French government produced a constitution that protected their rights. At first, King Louis XVI did not adhere to their request.

Meanwhile, the famine known as the Great Fear was getting worse, and people in Paris were starving. On July 14, 1789, Parisians revolted and took over Bastille, the city jail and a symbol of royal power. Finally, the government responded. In August 1789, they declared an end to the feudal regime. The French clergy also presented the protestors with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a

document which granted liberty and equality to all people in France. However, the king refused to acknowledge these radical changes.

9. The National Constituent Assembly

After King Louis XVI's refusal of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the revolution gained new steam. They stormed Versailles and captured the royal family. The National Constituent Assembly, which had been created after the Tennis Court Oath, managed to pass the constitution and effectively abolish feudalism. They redistributed the land that had previously belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, and they paid off their national debt. The National Constituent Assembly also tried to create a system in which power was shared between the king and the assembly. They still had not passed this into law when Louis XVI attempted to escape France in June 1791.

The revolutionaries managed to capture Louis XVI and bring him back to Paris, where he was held prisoner once again. He and Marie Antoinette concocted a secret plan to declare war on Austria in hopes that it would weaken the National Assembly. As a consequence, Austria, allied with Prussia, invaded France in July 1792. The revolutionaries were shocked. They believed that the monarchy had encouraged the war in order to be saved. As the foreign troops advanced toward Paris, the revolutionaries rose up once again.

10. The Reign of Terror

By September 1792, the revolution had reached a whole new level of violence. Parisian protesters were breaking into prisons, capturing nobles, and murdering them on the spot. On September 20, 1792, a new assembly called the National Convention met and abolished the monarchy. France became a republic.

Next, the National Convention put hundreds of aristocrats and royal family members on trial. Both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were found guilty of treason. They were executed by the guillotine, a machine used to behead criminals. After two years of unrest, a man named Maximilien Robespierre led the extremist revolutionaries and Parisian people into an era known as the Reign of Terror.

From September 1793-July 1794, the revolutionary government arrested over 300,000 people and executed 17,000 of them. Many others died of maltreatment in prisons or were unfairly killed without a trial. Robespierre and his government raised an enormous army, which eventually defeated the Austrian enemy in June 1794. Once France had won the war, however, the revolution lost many of its supporters. Maximilien Robespierre was captured and executed. The National Convention fell apart, and a new group, the Directory, took control.

11. The Rise of Napoleon

The Reign of Terror officially came to an end when a young general by the name of Napoleon Bonaparte came to the forefront. Bonaparte served throughout the war with the Austro-Prussia forces, and helped the French win several battles. He was promoted to commander of the French army, where he served in Italy in 1796. He helped the Italians expel the Austrians and was widely regarded as a hero.

In 1799, Bonaparte returned to Paris. The Directory was losing power. The aftermath of the French Revolution had produced great changes in Parisian and French society. Napoleon saw the opportunity to

establish a new type of leadership and appointed himself the First Consul of France. In essence, he made himself a dictator.

As dictator, Napoleon implemented a lot of changes to the government. He introduced the concept of meritocracy, so that aristocrats could no longer gain power simply for being wealthy. He established the Catholic Church as the official state religion, but allowed for religious freedom. He also made education free as a national right.

Napoleon is most remembered for his military prowess. From 1804-1812 the then-emperor of France led his army into war with Britain, Austria, and Russia. The French empire expanded into Spain, Italy, and as far west as Prussia and Austria. These conquests did not fail until Napoleon attempted to invade Russia. As he crossed the Russian border, Bonaparte's army ran out of supplies in the winter and either died of the cold or starved to death. He was exiled to the island of Elba in 1814 and fell from power completely.

12. A Push for Equality Spreads Across Europe

After Napoleon was sentenced to exile, the French empire fell apart. However, the 20-year saga of the French Revolution and the expansion of the empire had a lasting effect on other European nations. The world had watched as French revolutionaries had put an end to feudalism, write a constitution that gave rights to all men, establish a meritocracy, and brutally punish the bourgeois monarchy and aristocracy. The world had also watched as the objectives of the revolution produced yet another authoritative leader. Only this time, he was in the form of a former war hero.

The spread of Napoleonic empire also meant the spread of the ideas established during the revolution. In places like Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, the ideas of democracy, equality, and representation had a direct effect on the future of the country. People began fighting for their rights, and a few decades later, participated in their own revolutions.

13. The Haitian Revolution

Haiti, which makes up one half of the island of Hispaniola, was colonized by Christopher Columbus in the 15th century. Columbus and his men enslaved the native Taino people and forced them to mine for gold. As a consequence, the Taino ethnic group died out. Colonists and traders replaced them with slaves from Africa. Haiti was initially controlled by the Spanish, but eventually France took over. By 1789, there were nearly 500,000 African slaves on the island, compared to the 50,000 colonists or free men of mixed race who ruled the island.

Conditions on the island were awful for the slaves. They were malnourished, beaten, and forced to work all day under the hot sun. In August 1791, a former slave named Toussaint l'Ouverture led the slaves in revolt. By 1798, L'Ouverture's army had defeated outside military forces from both France and Britain. He then went on to defeat the Spanish side of the island, Santo Domingo, as well. For several years, L'Ouverture served as the governor of Haiti and helped lead the island toward freedom.

In 1803, Napoleon sent over 40,000 French troops to put an end to the revolution. L'Ouverture was imprisoned and executed. However, one of his generals, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, continued the fight for another year. On January 1, 1804, Dessalines was finally able to declare Haiti an independent nation. The French recognized Haiti as the first independent black republic in the world.

14. The United Irishmen's Revolution

As in Haiti, the American and French Revolutions inspired other nations to fight for their independence. In Ireland, a group of men in Belfast and Dublin established the Society of United Irishmen in 1791. They wanted to reform the parliamentary system and free themselves from British rule. In 1795, two men named Lazare Hoche and Theobald Wolfe Tone sailed to Ireland from France, where they had been seeking help for their own rebellion among the peasantry in their homeland. The British responded to the threat by invading Ireland and sending troops to various cities around the country. The conflict got violent after that, and many Irish rebels were killed or forced to flee from locations like Antrim, Wexford, and Vinegar Hill. The British eventually defeated the rebellion and abolished the Irish Parliament. The attempt at a war for independence failed, and for more than 100 years after the first revolution, they were ruled by the British Parliament at Westminster.

15. The Serbian Revolution

Another nation that took their freedom into their own hands after the French Revolution was Serbia. Serbia had long been ruled by the Muslim Ottoman Empire. For many years, the Ottomans exerted control by increasing taxes, enforcing martial law, and eliminating "enemies of the state" who conspired against them. In February 1804, the Ottomans killed one such group of revolutionaries. Serbian nationalists were furious. Shortly thereafter they gathered together under the leadership of Karađorđe Petrović and vowed to fight for freedom of religion and Serbian representation. For 10 full years, the Serbian nationalists considered themselves free of Ottoman rule, and even established their own parliament and university in Belgrade.

Their sense of victory did not last for long. The Ottomans returned and subsequently crushed the rebellion in 1812, after the Russians withdrew support for the revolutionaries. They attempted to rise up twice more against the Ottomans before they were finally recognized as a principality in 1817. Miloš Obrenović received the title of Prince of Serbia, and the nation became its own entity.

16. Latin American Wars of Independence

The spirit of revolution also made its way to the southern half of the Western hemisphere. By the time the wave of rebellions broke out in Europe, many civilizations in Latin America had been living under Spanish, French, or Portuguese colonial rule for more than one hundred years. Mexico, Honduras, and the entire West Coast of South America was controlled by the Spanish, while the Portuguese owned Brazil and the French ruled over French Guiana.

Haiti was the first nation to liberate themselves from colonial rule, and Latin American countries were inspired by what had happened. Two men, Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín, were particularly important to the cause. For more than 10 years, they led territories in northern Latin America in their revolutionary fight for political independence. By 1821, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil had all gained their political freedom. The colonial powers were no longer able to exercise control over these new sovereign states. In 1823, the U.S. President James Monroe recognized their independence by publishing the Monroe Doctrine. This document promised that the United States would send military aid to any nation in the Western Hemisphere attempting to overthrow European colonial powers.

17. The Greek Movement: Freedom from the Ottoman Empire

Shortly after the Serbians were acknowledged as a principality, another civilization under Ottoman rule rebelled. The Ottoman Empire took over in Greece in the late 1400s and stayed for over 400 years. Although the Greeks were able to protect their culture through the Greek Orthodox Church during this time, but their rights were extremely limited under Ottoman rule.

As with Latin America, Serbia, and Haiti, the American and French Revolutions served as an example of how Greeks could win back their independence. Greek nationalists became stronger and won the support of Russia, Britain, and other Great Powers, like France, Austria, and Prussia. In February 1821, the people revolted. Soon, fighting broke out in Macedonia, Crete, and central Greece. The Ottomans invaded and fought fiercely to maintain control, but when the British, Russian, and French armies arrived in 1827, the Ottomans could not defend their territory. Their navy was defeated, and the army of the great empire was forced to retreat from the area. The revolution had been bloody, but the Greeks had won. Many historians mark the Greek War for Independence as the turning point for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

18. Revolutions of 1820

Ironically, it was the fight for independence in Latin America that caused Spain to rise up in popular revolt as well, rather than their revolutionary neighbors in France. In January 1820, a few Spanish generals that were being sent to South America by the Spanish government decided to take action. They were angry about the amount of time, money, and energy Ferdinand VII was spending on controlling South America. The rebellious faction of army generals also wanted a constitution. They marched on Madrid and refused to back down until Ferdinand VII granted their request. However, their success was short lived. In April 1823, France declared war, invaded Spain, and restored Ferdinand VII to his throne.

In July of 1820, members of the Carbonari, or the Italian army, also started their own revolution. They rose up against Ferdinand I and demanded their own constitution. The movement did not meet much success, and as a result, Italy broke off into two opposing parties. The Austrian Prince Clemens von Metternich then invaded in 1821 and defeated the new revolutionary government.

Both of these revolutions exhibited the general lack of support that the rebellious parties had among everyday people. Nationalism had risen in popularity, but European royal powers were still strong and able to stamp out popular opposition.

19. Revolutions of 1830

About 10 years after the revolutions of 1820 in Spain, Italy, and Greece, another wave of revolt broke out. After Napoleon was exiled in 1815, the aristocrats of France restored the monarchy, and the nation was once again led by a king. In 1830, the king of France, Charles X, attempted to dissolve the powers of the representative electorate and the press. The general public violently opposed these changes, and banded together in an uprising known as the July Revolution. Charles X was forced to abdicate from the throne. He was replaced by a new “king” who volunteered himself for the position. Though he himself had taken part in the French Revolution of 1792, he proved to be quite similar to every monarch that had come before him. However, he did help break the French monarchy away from the Roman Catholic Church. He also passed a law to *elect* nominated representatives, instead of letting them inherit positions.

This second revolution in France gave hope to other European countries once more. Shortly thereafter, Poland attempted to separate from the Russian Empire. The revolt failed almost immediately. Similar

rebellions in Italy and Germany also failed. However, Belgium did manage to assert its independence from the Netherlands, and Greece was finally recognized as a sovereign state in 1832.

20. 1848: The Spring of Nations

As you have seen, the French Revolution greatly impacted people all over the world, inspiring other rebellious groups for more than four decades after it began to lead their own insurrections. Despite the fact that many nationalists and rebels fought hard for their independence, however, few were successful. The wave of rebellion known as the Spring of Nations ultimately suffered a similar fate.

The first event to spark the wave of protest took place in Sicily, Italy in 1848. Italian citizens attempted to overthrow the Austrian monarchy who controlled them for a second time, only to fail, again. The Bourbons in France invaded and took over after their initial uprising. A few months later in France, then-king Louis Philippe abdicated the throne in response to anger over his controlling policies. The Second French Republic was established to replace the monarchy. The French display of their desire for a democratic society yet again had a domino effect, and by the end of the year, other countries had begun to erupt in violence. Germany, the Habsburg Austrian Empire, Denmark, Belgium, and Ukraine, among others, all rose up against their autocratic and authoritative rulers. However, each revolution the powerful European monarchs managed to crush these various revolutions once again. The fight for democracy had not yet been won.

21. The Eureka Rebellion

The Age of Revolution was not just limited to Europe and the Americas. In the east, people had begun to recognize the appeal of democracy as well. One such nation was Australia. Australia had long been under the rule of the British Empire, who mined gold and traded with other Southeast Asian nations from ports like Victoria on the island in the Pacific. For many years, Australian miners and traders were frustrated by their lack of representation in the Legislative Council of Britain. After a digger named James Scobie was murdered in October 1854, however, their frustration turned to aggressive anger. They grouped together to petition to the governor for some type of compensation and threatened to revolt if they were not answered. Instead of receiving some form of legal response, the British government sent in troops.

Shortly thereafter, the angry diggers organized themselves into military groups. On December 3, shots were fired on their meeting place and a brief battle between the British army and the Australian militia fighters ensued. An estimated 27 people died, the majority of them Australian workers. After that, the British government agreed to reforms and more democratic representation for the gold miners.

22. Life During the Age of Revolution

The period between 1775-1848 might not have changed the quotidian life of everyday people around the world, but for those who participated in the revolutions, it was a period of great social upheaval. People living in the Americas, Europe, Haiti, and Australia began to question their role in society during the Age of Enlightenment. Throughout the 18th century, the common people grew tired of the unjust distribution of wealth and suspicious of the intentions of royal monarchies. Many people had moved to urban centers to find work, and they were suffering as a result. With little to no public sanitation, low wages, high pollution rates, and frequent food shortages, their lives were becoming increasingly more miserable.

These conditions pushed people to the edge. The violent conflicts that broke out all over the world forced many men to leave their homes in order to join the revolutionary cause. People gathered in cafes and bars or on street corners to discuss issues like democracy, equality, and liberty. They joined protests and trained for battle in whatever locations they could find. Although women often stayed at home to raise children or manage their homes, they supported the fight by keeping things in order while their husbands and sons joined militia armies. Enlightenment and Revolutionary thinkers continued to write, publish, and incite the general public. Although their everyday lives were still burdened by the weight of poverty, many people felt the electricity of change charge through the air.

23. Children during the Age of Revolution

The late 18th and early 19th centuries represented a period of great unrest for many areas of the world. While men who participated in revolutionary rebellions typically left home to fight, most children stayed home with their mothers. However, for those families living in big cities, it was not uncommon for children to go to work with their parents. They helped in factories or around the city centers, either cleaning the streets, selling newspapers, breaking up coal, or sweeping chimneys. Some children started working as young as four years old, and they rarely made much money.

In places like Paris and Boston where violent rebellion became a widespread phenomenon for many years, children also practiced “fighting” in the streets. They picked up weapons and played “war” or actually fought each other in gangs. Many adults began to call on mothers to “control their children,” especially young men who were eager to take part in the revolution. This era was often very dangerous for young children living in cities where battle broke out between the government and the militia armies. In those locations that were not touched by the rebellions, children carried on with their daily lives. They attended school, learned to tend the house, and played outside with friends and toys.

24. The Aftermath of the Age of Revolution

When the Age of Revolution finally came to an end in 1848, the world had undergone an intense transformation. The Holy Roman Empire had been effectively dissolved under Napoleon. New nations had been drawn onto the map, and in general, average citizens all over the world began to value the potential power that liberalism and republicanism could grant them. Documents like the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen also encouraged people to reevaluate their social class system. This led to the rise of thinkers like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who would eventually write the outlines of the ideology known as Communism. At the time, they defined communism as the eventual demise of the capitalist system.

The Age of Revolution also forced people to reconsider the long-term practice of slavery. According to the philosophies of the revolutionaries, all men were equal, so many liberals began to support the abolition movement, which championed the end of slavery.

Nonetheless, the hopeful objectives of these revolutions did not all end happily. Most rebellions were actually squashed, and right-wing aristocrats and powerful monarchs maintained their power over the working class. In fact, in Britain, Prussia, Austria, and Russia, monarchs limited the rights of the people to such a degree that they were less free than they were before the revolutions. It would be several more decades before these powerful ruling classes were finally abolished for good.

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