

Maximilien Robespierre



What happened after King Louis XVI was executed?

Key words:

The Terror – The name given to the regime led by Robespierre after the King's death

Jacobins – Radical group determined to save the Revolution by any means

Girondists – More moderate revolutionaries

The Guillotine



The guillotine was a machine for beheading people. It was designed to ensure that all executions were efficient and equal. Following the death of King Louis, the guillotine saw **17,000** people executed at the hands of **Maximilien Robespierre** for being in his mind, enemies of the revolution.



As well as 17,000 deaths by the guillotine, it is estimated that many thousands more were shot, drowned or killed in other ways. Anyone who was considered no loyal to the revolution faced death.

Is this what the French people will have hoped for? What are your thoughts?

Do you think Robespierre looks like someone who might hate the rich?

As with most things in History, judgements come down to **INTERPRETATIONS**. Today, you'll be presented different facts of Robespierre and you need to organise them into 'Good' or 'bad' (although in reality its not as simple as good or bad, for now, we'll work on that). We will use this information to argue our case overall...



“on the one hand Robespierre was an evil dictator who caused the deaths of nearly 20,000 innocent people. He was a ruthless murderer. We should remember him as the butcher of the Revolution”

“On the other hand Robespierre was a politician of great principles. Through every stage of the Revolution he was determined to defend the rights of liberty and equality for French people”



Essay planning:

Good	Bad
<p>Add any ideas or notes in here to support the argument of Robespierre being a good man</p>	<p>Add any ideas or notes in here to support the argument of Robespierre being a bad man</p>

First, lets learn a bit more about Robespierre:

He was elected President of the extreme Jacobin Club in 1790

Robespierre was a very jealous man, especially of his rivals

Robespierre was very particular about his appearance

His father and grandfather were successful lawyers

When his mother died in childbirth to her 5th child, Robespierre's father took to drink and abandoned his children

At school, Robespierre was hard working, he won a scholarship to a famous school in Paris



Robespierre wasn't the brightest student, but he was determined to do well. He was a loner who was generally disliked by his other students

In the early part of the Revolution, Robespierre wanted to abolish the death penalty

Robespierre was very serious, he had no interest in love or food.

He was elected to the Estates General in 1789. Although he had some extreme views, he was generally respected as he wanted France to be a fairer country

Robespierre was disturbed by bloodshed often hiding from the sans culottes

Robespierre refused to defend anyone he thought was guilty

At age 23, Robespierre left college with a Law degree. He became a very successful lawyer often defending the poor for free

What are your initial thoughts of Robespierre?

The start of Robespierre's Terror came in February 1793. The National Assembly, now called the Convention faced 3 major crises:

- 1) **War!** – The Convention declared war on Britain, Holland and Spain fearing they would soon invade to restore the monarchy, this was costly and ended in quick defeat
- 2) **Rebellion** – Many French people resented being conscripted to the army as well as being angry at the high taxes, they felt that things were no better than before and wanted the Monarchy back
- 3) **Food shortages** – adding to War and Rebellion, there were critical food shortages again, pushing prices up and a lack of bread. The sans culottes were becoming restless on the streets of Paris

What do you advise Robespierre to do?

The Terror



The Terror

The title 'The Terror' is written in a large, bold, red font with a white outline. Below the text, a thick, glossy red liquid is dripping down the page, creating a macabre and dramatic effect.

These crises led to conflict in the Convention between the radical Jacobins and the moderate Girondists. At first these two revolutionary groups had worked together, but no more! The Girondists did not want to introduce price controls or share the property and wealth out equally to the people. Robespierre blamed the Girondists for the current crisis and said they needed tougher and more extreme policies to save the Revolution.

In June 1793, Robespierre urged the sans culottes to rise up against the Girondists in the streets of Paris. 80,000 sans culottes and soldiers surrounded the convention demanding the arrest of all Girondist deputies. The Jacobins now controlled the convention.

Robespierre now had the power to do anything he felt necessary to save the Revolution. He said “The only way to establish a republic is to utterly destroy all opposition”. France would now be governed by the guillotine.

The Terror

Military Terror

On 23 August 1793 the convention issued a decree (Levée en Masse), forcing **all** French people to take part in the war effort, women, children, men and elderly. One way out was to be married, those men stayed back to make weapons. Many men rushed to get married leading to being classed as a traitor and maybe being executed.

Economic Terror

Robespierre thought the government should not interfere in the price of food, leading to it not being dealt with which resulted in the hungry sans culottes invading the Convention. As a result the Convention did set limits on the price of grain, salt, meat and wool. It also forced farmers to take their goods to market. Any farmer found hoarding grain or goods faced the death penalty.

The Terror

Religious Terror

The attempt to destroy Christianity in France was known as dechristianisation. Robespierre issued a new calendar without religious holidays and Sundays. Years would be dated not from the birth of Christ, but from the beginning of the republic (22 September 1792).

All over France churches were smashed, priests forced to marry and services brutally banned.



The Terror

Political Terror

The sans culottes pressed Robespierre to take action against anyone not supporting the Revolution. The Law of Suspects was passed meaning they could imprison ANYONE they felt lacked enthusiasm for the Revolution.

Citizens drew up lists of suspects, people went to bed dreading a knock on the door in the middle of the night. Suspects were brought to the Revolutionary Tribunal which quickly dealt with each suspect. There was no right to appeal. The Revolutionary Tribunal became a killing machine. Representatives-on-mission, backed by the army went all over the country, to the provinces arresting anyone they felt was against the Republic; dealing with them by any means necessary – eg Canon blasting 300 at once! Mass drownings (2000 victims hands and feet were tied, then forced onto barges, naked, face down, then holes were put into the barges in the middle of the rivers)

One of the Tribunal's first victims was the Queen, Marie Antoinette. In the Autumn of 1793 alone, 3000 people were guillotined.

The Terror



The Terror

The Great Terror

In the Summer of 1794, Robespierre became worried that the Representatives-on-Mission were out of control so he called them back to Paris and disbanded some of the revolutionary armies. Robespierre killed a man called Hébert as an extremist (and 18 of his men) who wanted more people accused of hoarding food. Another man who opposed Robespierre was George Danton. Danton and his followers were less extreme than Robespierre and wanted to stop The Terror. Robespierre had Danton killed. Danton said as he was passing Robespierre's house "you hide in vain, Robespierre. You will follow me".

10 June 1794 saw masses in the prisons waiting for trial so Robespierre passed a new law saying anyone could be labelled a 'public enemy' with one penalty – death!

Danton's execution – GRAPHIC

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qntOVgwb8W8&has_verified=1

The Terror

The END...

In the summer of 1794, many people felt it was time to end the Terror. Robespierre was accused in the Convention of setting up a dictatorship. Robespierre responded by attacking these people which led to Robespierre himself being labelled a 'public enemy'.

On 28th July, Robespierre and 21 of his supporters were guillotined. The Terror was dead.



The Terror

Using your notes regarding the Terror, and some revision (this lesson is on our website) you are going to answer the following essay question...

Robespierre thoroughly deserves his reputation as the butcher of the Revolution. How far do you agree?

Thinking back to our early discussion about interpretations differing, your conclusion to this essay will be critical in arguing your point.

However, this is a two sided argument so you need to consider evidence ON THE ONE HAND and evidence ON THE OTHER HAND...