

## Was the French Revolution Worth Its Human Cost?

### ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), a Russian prince, revolutionary, and anarchist, argues that the French Revolution eradicated both serfdom and absolutism and paved the way for France’s future democratic growth.

NO: History professor Simon Schama counters that not only did the French Revolution betray its own goals, but it produced few of the results that it promised.

From Mitchell, Joseph R. and Helen Buss Mitchell, eds. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Western Civilization*. Guilford, Connecticut: McGraw–Hill Ryerson, 2000.

### PART ONE:

This debate has largely been constructed for you through the *Taking Sides* format but while the “Yes” and “No” sides have been articulated this does not mean that you should be limited to the ideas outlined by Peter Kropotkin and Professor Schama. It is strongly recommended that you augment or verify the arguments of both sides with the material you received and that we examined in class. Further, you are required to consult four other sources on the French Revolution to prepare for the debate. You may use up to three legitimate/academic electronic sources but one of your sources must be in print.

You must submit a “Works Consulted” page in MLA format on the date of your debate – either March 1<sup>st</sup> or March 2<sup>nd</sup>. This will count as part of the “Thinking” (research) and “Communication” (required MLA format) part of your mark.

### PART TWO:

The debate – this portion of your mark will be derived from you and your team’s performance in the debate. All four categories of the Achievement Chart will be evaluated in Part Two (see “Debate Structure” and the

“Debate Rubric”). See “Debate Teams” for the date on which you will debate.

### **PART THREE:**

For this, the final component of the assignment you will construct original opening and closing arguments for the side that you were assigned. These arguments should be original but may reflect the lessons learned from the debate itself. That is, since your arguments are not due until Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> you may reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your team’s Opening and Closing Arguments and take this opportunity to build on the perceived strengths and address the weaknesses you identified. A separate rubric for your opening and closing arguments will be distributed.

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## DEBATE STRUCTURE

**Learning Objectives – As a result of this assignment students will learn:**

- More in depth information about a topic from the history of Western Europe,
- How to investigate an issue from multiple perspectives,
- How to make a claim and support it with evidence,
- How to use sources to build credibility in an argument,
- How to present opening and closing arguments in a debate,
- Strategies for creating strong rebuttals,
- How to organize notes in a debate.

### **Task:**

Teams will consist of five members each. Every person will have an opportunity to speak for 2–3 minutes. The debate will begin with opening arguments by each side. After each side has established its case, each team member will take a turn at refuting the opposing side's perspective and building its own case. The following are specific preparation and debate guidelines.

### **Preparation:**

1. Review/study all the material you've gathered for your topic, as well as, your lecture notes and text. Find all the evidence you can to support your point of view on the topic. Make note cards which contain quotes, statistics, expert testimony, etc. on your side of the topic.
2. Do the same thing for the opposing side. In other words, what do you think the other team will be saying to support its point of view. What evidence do you think they will use? Anticipate how they will present their case. Also, anticipate what the other team may say to rebut your arguments.
3. Work together as a team. Develop one set of note cards to be used during the debate. Sort similar quotes and data into categories. It will be easier to draw on what you need during the debate if your materials are organized.

### Opening Arguments:

1. Welcome the opposing team with respect and enthusiasm
2. Provide an overview of your position on the topic
3. Clearly define your position. Be decisive. Show conviction.
4. Provide supporting material (e.g. statistics, citations, quotations, definitions, etc.) to back up your position. This shows that your position is based on an educated perspective.
5. Describe your understanding of how your position and the quote/data you've just offered are related. In other words, tie your point of view on the topic to the material you've given.
6. You may want to offer a challenge to the opposing team, but challenges should be used sparingly and only when you feel the argument you've just presented is **so strong** that there is very little question that it can be successfully refute.

### Body of the Debate:

1. Keep track of the points made by the opposing team and try to respond to or rebut each point.
2. Consider assigning the role of record keeping to a few team members. Their job is to record all your team's points that were NOT argued away effectively by the opposing side. Also keep track of all the points made by the other team that your team DID effectively refute. These records will help during the few minutes your team will have to prepare your closing arguments.
3. Keep your arguments new and inspired – resist repeating arguments. Look for other ways to creatively illustrate your points.
4. Be creative – creativity shows confidence in your position. Just make sure your creativity is relevant to the situation.
5. If your opposition knocks down your points – be resilient. Let go of them. Don't feel defeated. Show your confidence. Try a new tactic.
6. This is a team effort. Keep your mind on the whole and ensure that your speech contributes to the overall perspective and position of your team.

### Closing Arguments:

1. The purpose of the closing statements is to put together all the strongest points of your team and present them with complete conviction. You want to dispel any residual feeling of failed points or points won by the other team.

2. If you've kept a record of points made, use it now to construct a statement of how your opening position was proven by your team.
3. Closing statements are truly a creative and important process. The right kind of creative flourish at this point can wrap up your argument beautifully.

**Timeline of the Debate:**

Opening Arguments:  Speaker #1 team one. Speaker #1 team two	Flip a coin to see who goes first. Each speaker gets two minutes to give opening remarks.
Team Huddle	2 minutes (during this time, the team determines its line of argument, gets data to support it from note cards, decides who will speak next)
Speaker #2 (team 1)	2-3 minutes (speaker tries to refute arguments from opening statements of opposing team. Then builds own case.)
Team huddle	2 minutes
Speaker #2 (team 2)	2-3 minutes (speaker tries to refute arguments from speaker #1. Build own case.)
Team huddle	2 minutes
Speaker #3 (team 1)	2-3 minutes
Team huddle	2 minutes
Speaker #3 (team 2)	2-3 minutes
Team huddle	2 minutes
Closing Arguments:  Speaker #5 from team two. Speaker #5 from team one.	Each team gets two minutes to close.

Debate referees will debrief the debate. They will provide feedback to the participants and discuss the merits of each case and announce a winner.

## Debate Referees: Guidelines

During the debate, referees fulfill the important responsibility of tracking the content and process of the debate. At the end of the debate, they confer and come to a consensus about the debate winner.

Here are some questions to keep in the back of your mind as you listen carefully to each "team" presentation:

1. How strong was the opening statement?
2. Did they make use of all of the sources available to them?
3. Did they present a variety of points?
4. Were the points relevant to the debate topic?
5. Were the points brief and succinct?
6. Did the team rotate speakers? Did they honor time guidelines?
7. Did the team use quotes and statistics accurately?
8. Did you see evidence of respect for the opposing team?
9. How strong was the closing statement?

Take notes during the debate, recording the arguments and data of each side. Use the two-minute huddle time to record as much specific information as you can. Identify those arguments that were successfully refuted and those that were not on both sides. Following the closing statements, use your notes and the questions above for assessing the presentation of both teams. Confer with the other referees and come to consensus concerning the winner of the debate.

Adapted from "Debate Assignment" [http://flightline.highline.edu/vropp/speech100/debate\\_assignment.htm](http://flightline.highline.edu/vropp/speech100/debate_assignment.htm)

## Debate Teams:

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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