Causes of the French Revolution DBQ Documents

Historical Context: The French Revolution of 1789 had many long-range causes. Political, social, and economic conditions in France contributed to the discontent felt by many French people—especially those of the third estate. The ideas of the intellectuals of the Enlightenment brought new views of government and society. The American Revolution also influenced the coming of the French Revolution.

Directions: Using the information from the documents and your knowledge of world history, write an essay answering the prompt below. Be sure to:
- Explain the causes of the French Revolution
- Use at least 5 documents in your response.
- Include specific historical detail

PROMPT: Evaluate the three main causes of the French Revolution.

Document 1: This excerpt is adapted from Travels in France by Arthur Young, who traveled through France from 1787 to 1789.

In the south of France there is a taille [tax on the land and its produce]. There is an injustice in levying the amount each person must pay. Lands held by the nobility are taxed very little. Lands held by commoners are taxed heavily.

September 5, 1788: The poor people seem very poor indeed. The children are terribly ragged.

June 10, 1789: The lack of bread is terrible. Stories arrive every moment from the provinces of riots and disturbances, and calling in the military, to preserve the peace of the markets... The price of bread has risen above people's ability to pay. This causes great misery.

July 1789: ...I was joined by a poor woman who complained of the hard times. “The Tailles and feudal dues [rents owed the lords] are crushing us,” she said.

Document 2: This diagram illustrates the three estates in 1789 and the land each held during the Old Regime.
**Document 3:** These excerpts from cahiers (lists of grievances about the king, taxing, and voting in the Estates General) brought to the Estates General...

That the king be forced to reform the abuses and tyranny of lettre de cachet.
That every tax... Be granted [by the Estates General] only for a limited time.
That the tailles [a tax on land] be borne equally by all classes...
The meetings of the Estates General... Shall be scheduled for definite times...
In order to assure the third estate the influence it deserves because of its numbers... its votes in the assembly should be taken by head...

**Document 4:** In *The French Revolution*, historian Albert Mathiez claims that leadership fell to the middle class with their knowledge of the ideas of the Enlightenment.

The Revolution had been accomplished in the minds of men long before it was translated into fact...
The middle class... was sensitive to their inferior legal position. The Revolution came from them—the middle class. The working classes were incapable of starting or controlling the Revolution. They were just beginning to learn to read.

**Document 5:** Lord Acton suggested another point of view.

The conditions of France alone did not bring about the overthrow of the monarchy... for the suffering of the people was no greater than they had been before. The ideas of the philosophes were not directly responsible for the outbreak... [but] the spark that changed thought into action was supplied by the Declaration of American Independence... the American example caused the Revolution to break out.

**Document 6:** Comte D’Antraigues as quoted in an excerpt from *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*.

“The Third Estate is the People and the People is the foundation of the State; it is in fact the State itself; the other estates are merely political categories while by the immutable (unchangeable) laws of nature the People is everything. Everything should be subordinated (inferior) to it... It is in the People that all national power resides and for the People that all states exist.”
Document 7: The Political and Social System in France

The Political and Social System in France

1st Estate  2nd Estate

Taxes
3rd Estate

Document 8: Excerpt from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789).

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights; social distinctions can be established only for the common benefit.
2. The aim of every political association is the conservation of the imprescriptible rights of man; these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression...
4. Liberty consists in being able to do anything that does not harm another person...
10. No one may be disturbed because of his opinions, even religions, provided that their public demonstration does not disturb the public order established by law.
11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man: every citizen can therefore freely speak, write, print...
16. Any society in which guarantees of rights are no assured nor the separation of powers determined has no constitution.
From Documents to Essay: DBQ Planner

Requirements:
Your Introduction Should Include:
- A hook/attention grabber. A quote or an interesting fact are good go-to's.
- A sentence of context. Briefly explain the topic you are writing about to the reader (who, what, where, when, why, how)
- Your thesis sentence. In the thesis sentence, the author expresses his or her opinion and introduces key ideas.
- A statement of organization. Give the reader a road-map to your essay and introduce your main points. (e.g. “This essay will explore the affects of China's One-Child Policy on women's education, opportunities, and human rights.”)

Each of your 3 Body Paragraphs Should Include:
- A topic sentence. Use sentence frames below.
- At least 2 "EARS"
  - Evidence Sentence. Use sentence frames below.
  - Analysis Sentence. Use sentence frames below.
  - Relate-to-thesis Sentence. Use sentence frames below.
- Cite your documents by either mentioning the doc in the sentence or parenthetically (e.g. Doc C.)
- Use outside information (anything you learned in class to support)
- Concluding sentence/transition to next paragraph

Your Concluding Paragraph Should Include:
- Restate your thesis (not word for word)
- Review briefly your main points
- A “call to action”—tell the reader what they should do or think.

Sentence Frames (You may need to adapt the wording to fit your purpose.)

Topic Sentences:
- One _____ effect of the _____________ was ________________.
- One reason it began in _____________ was ________________.
- One main cause of _________ was ________________.

Evidence (E):
- For example, ___________ states that "___________________________.”
- As stated in ___________, “___________________________.”
- The graph shows demonstrates that ________________.
- The chart shows that ________________.

Analysis (A):
- This shows that ________________.
- This fact illustrates ________________.
- Because of this, ________________.
- This means that ________________.

Relate to Thesis (R):
- This proves that ________________.
- This demonstrates the ________________.
- This reveals the ________________.