

The French Revolution: The Catalyst of Modern Democracy in Europe Process Paper

I learned about the French Revolution in my world history class, but my interest in history in general and European history in specific was piqued long ago. This past summer I visited my relatives in Paris, the capital of France, and took advantage of this opportunity to tour many historical sites such as the Palace of Versailles and even the site of the former Bastille itself which came to symbolize the French Revolution. The exhibits at the Palace of Versailles really showed the opulence associated with reckless spending by aristocrats at the time which was discussed on my website. I also took a quick side trip to neighboring Monaco and Italy, both of which were also referred to in my project in connection with the spread of modern democracy from France to its neighbors and the incorporation of the Napoleonic Code into their civil codes and/or constitution during and after Napoleon's occupation. France was really at the forefront of modern democracy. When National History Day's 2023 theme is *Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas*, I could not help, but further research and write about *the French Revolution as the Catalyst of Modern Democracy in Europe*.

My research was based on both in-person visits to sites associated with the French Revolution and written resources. Textbooks from my world history class were the starting point. I then progressively broadened my research using materials at the library and on the Internet. My current and former History teachers were also a resource to tap into. However, the equally (if not more) important source was in-person visits to sites where the French Revolutions actually took place to view many historical artifacts/buildings along with accompanying commentaries.

My project started with textbooks from my world history class as the baseline. I then formulated my thesis/argument. Next, I focused on the principles behind the French Revolution, and reviewed the primary resources such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the Constitutions of 1791, 1793 and 1795, and the Napoleonic Codes. I expanded my review of neighboring countries' civil codes and constitutions - historical and modern. Finally, I performed the analysis and connected all the dots to support my thesis/argument.

My historical argument is that modern democracy in Europe has its root in the French Revolution where common people demanded Liberty, Equality, Fraternity through ideas credited to the Enlightenment such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

My topic is significant in history, especially in European history because the French Revolution was the catalyst of and the start of modern democracy in France and in Europe, respectively. The democratic ideals were not only cherished by French citizens, but also propagated throughout Europe as Napoleon conquered many neighboring countries, and they ended up being incorporated into their civil codes and/or constitutions to ultimately benefit their citizens as well.