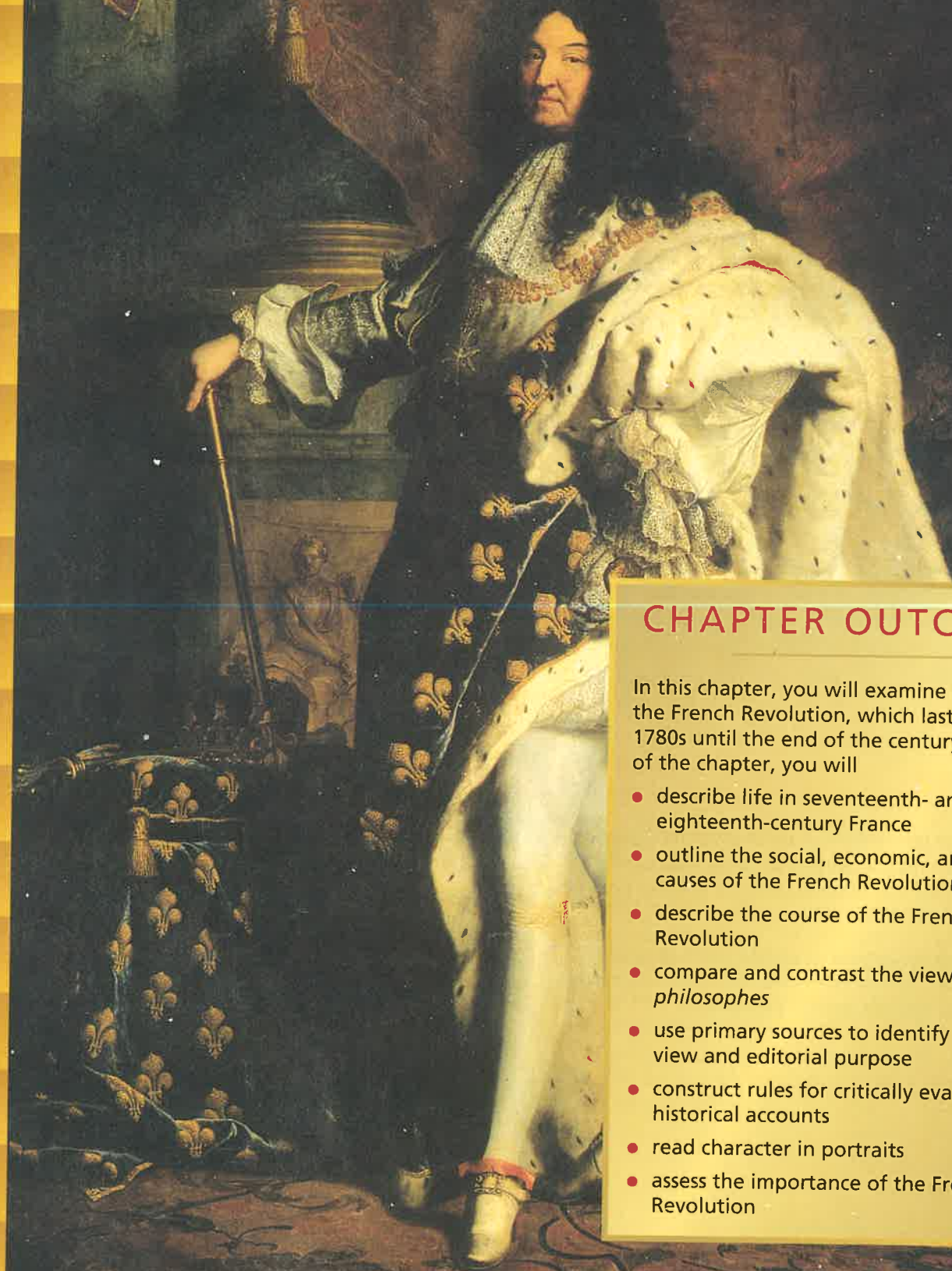


# 3 REVOLUTION IN FRANCE



## CHAPTER OUTCOMES

In this chapter, you will examine the period of the French Revolution, which lasted from the 1780s until the end of the century. By the end of the chapter, you will

- describe life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France
- outline the social, economic, and political causes of the French Revolution
- describe the course of the French Revolution
- compare and contrast the views of the *philosophes*
- use primary sources to identify point of view and editorial purpose
- construct rules for critically evaluating historical accounts
- read character in portraits
- assess the importance of the French Revolution



## Emilie: A Tale of the French Revolution

*This fictional story is set in Paris during the height of the French Revolution—an event you will read about in this chapter, and one that shaped the modern world. The story captures the turbulent atmosphere of the period, when ordinary citizens would suddenly find themselves in danger because of their political beliefs. Emilie is a member of the moderate Girondist Party. As the story opens, she has just escaped execution by members of the more radical Jacobin Party, who have seized control of the revolution and believe the Girondists must be put down.*

Emilie was not alone in the darkness. The sewer was alive with animal sounds. Fingers squeezing against the slimy bricks, she pulled herself deeper

into the narrow passage. She heard shouts, splashing, and curses—guards searching other sewers—then only the metallic dripping of water and the scuffling of rats.

Her escape was a miracle. A friend of **Charlotte Corday**, she had been sentenced to the **guillotine**. But the **tumbrel** carrying her to certain death broke an axle and collapsed.

Emilie knew it was a miracle that she had escaped the guillotine.







The sewer was alive with sounds ... and danger.

Cheered by the other prisoners, Emilie broke free, scrambled across the bridge, and jumped into the Seine. Musket-balls peppered the water as she swam to a gaping sewer out-fall.

The tunnels were illuminated at intervals by grates overhead. At length, Emilie lay down, pulled herself into a ball, and fell asleep. Nightmarish images caused her to jump and start as she slept; beads of sweat formed on her brow and upper lip. She woke to the sound of voices, and caught the faint odour of baking bread. **Ravenous**, she saw a low opening in the wall and crawled through.

Emilie saw patterned metal

above her. Carefully, she pushed herself upward. The grate was slightly domed, and she could see quite well. In one corner, there were sacks of flour. In another, Emilie could see freshly baked loaves and a large water barrel.

With one hand, Emilie tested the grate. It moved easily. She listened, but there were no sounds other than the soft roar of the ovens. She pulled herself up. Quickly she went to the water barrel, took a dipper and drank deeply. Her thirst quenched, Emilie ate broken bread from a basket. Then, clutching two loaves, she turned away.

"Citizen," a voice called out.

"Where do you think you're going with my bread?"

In a flash of panic, Emilie thought of the drain. She could slide down the tunnel and escape—but to what? Perhaps she could bluff. Surely a common thief would be safe from the guillotine. Boldly, she turned to face a burly older man, who was dusted with charcoal and flour.

"Citizen," she said. "I was hungry. You charge too much for your goods."

"Come, come, Citizen," said the man. "Thieves don't come out of the drains. You are the Girondin who escaped yesterday. Even this baker can put two and two together."

Emilie looked frantically about the room, but the baker stood between her and the door. There was no escape. Emilie surrendered. Her legs gave way and she collapsed to the floor.

"There are no Jacobins here, Citizen," the baker said, with a hint of impatience. "I'm not going to turn you over to the Committee—but it is not safe for you to be seen. Take your bread and eat. And take a jug of water. There is a room behind the wood bin. Stay in there until I call you."

He showed Emilie into a small room, its floor littered with sacks. A tiny, high window let in the cool dawn light.

The baker closed the door, piled wood against it, and went back to his work. Emilie pulled sacks into a pile and sat against the wall. On the other side of the wall, from time to time, she could hear people talking. Now and then, a woman would sing or hum bits of folk song, and there were the sounds of a working



The baker opened the the door and found Emilie with several loaves of bread.

bakery. Hungrily, she ate her bread and drank water from the jug.

Emilie dozed through the day falling, at intervals, into restful, dreamless sleep. It was early evening when she woke. The tiny window was almost dark. She could still hear the sounds of the street.

The baker returned late in the evening, after the street above had grown silent. Emilie heard the wood being removed, and then the door opened. She stood upright against a far wall. In a moment, the baker came into the room, followed by a tall, haggard-looking woman carrying a candle.

"Citizen," said the baker, "my name is Jacques." He tilted his head in the direction of the woman. "Citizen Anne-Marie, my wife." The woman motioned Emilie to follow.

Anne-Marie led Emilie up the narrow stairs to a room in back of the shop. Emilie saw a

metal tub of steaming water, and a small table with brushes and a mirror. Some clothes hung on hooks nearby. For the first time, Anne-Marie spoke.

"You must wash and change quickly, citizen. Choose any dress and take another as a change. Make haste!"

Anne-Marie waited outside the door while Emilie washed and changed. Jacques had set a table with bread, cheese, eggs, and wine. Both watched as Emilie ate her meal—her first in many hours. Anne-Marie rolled up spare clothes and stuffed them into a cloth bag.

Jacques told Emilie that she was near the Marais, one of the wealthier areas of the city, and that her escape had been widely reported. A few months earlier, he said, they probably would have turned her over to the police as a counter-revolutionary. But much had happened. Their daughter, whose clothes Emilie was wearing, had been

denounced as a traitor, and arrested. With no news of her since **Ventose**, they assumed she was dead.

Anne-Marie fussed a little over Emilie, straightening the shawl that she had draped around the girl's shoulders, and pushing the hair from her face. But they did not ask her to tell them her plans or where she was going. They gave her some **assignats**, enough for a few days travel. Jacques gave her an official-looking paper. It was, he told Emilie, a pass that had belonged to his daughter, and it had been signed by Robespierre. With luck, it would allow her to leave the city.

Then they led her out the back door. Emilie pulled the shawl closely over her head and set off down the alley. No one took any notice of Emilie as she dodged between the carts. To all appearances, she was just another young woman going about her business.



That night, as she had on many others, she slept in a doorway, arising at the first light of dawn. She judged it was better to try her escape in the bustle of early evening, when many people were leaving the city for the country. During the day, she constructed a story: She was a young wife whose husband had fought at Valmy, and she had had no news of him. She would find the army, and search for him.

As evening came, Emilie joined the crowds of people moving towards the gate. She waited as revolutionary guards checked papers. As she approached the barrier, she started up a conversation with another woman and talked about the weather. She took her pass from her apron pocket.

"How is it," the guard asked, "that you present a pass signed by Citizen Robespierre? He has been arrested, and may already be dead."

Emilie's heart sank. "Citizen, I asked for a pass to try to join my husband, who is with the army, and I was given this one. How could I, a young wife,



The guard scrutinized Emilie's pass.

question such a pass? May I not go through?"

The guard raised the barrier. "Bonne chance, citizen." Emilie walked into the twilight. She was out of the city and, for the moment, safe.

**revolution:** an overthrow of the government and social system of a country, usually by force

**Charlotte Corday:** a Girondist who assassinated a leading Jacobin, Jean-Paul Marat

**guillotine:** an instrument for beheading by means of a heavy blade

**tumbrel:** a cart with sides, used to take prisoners to the guillotine

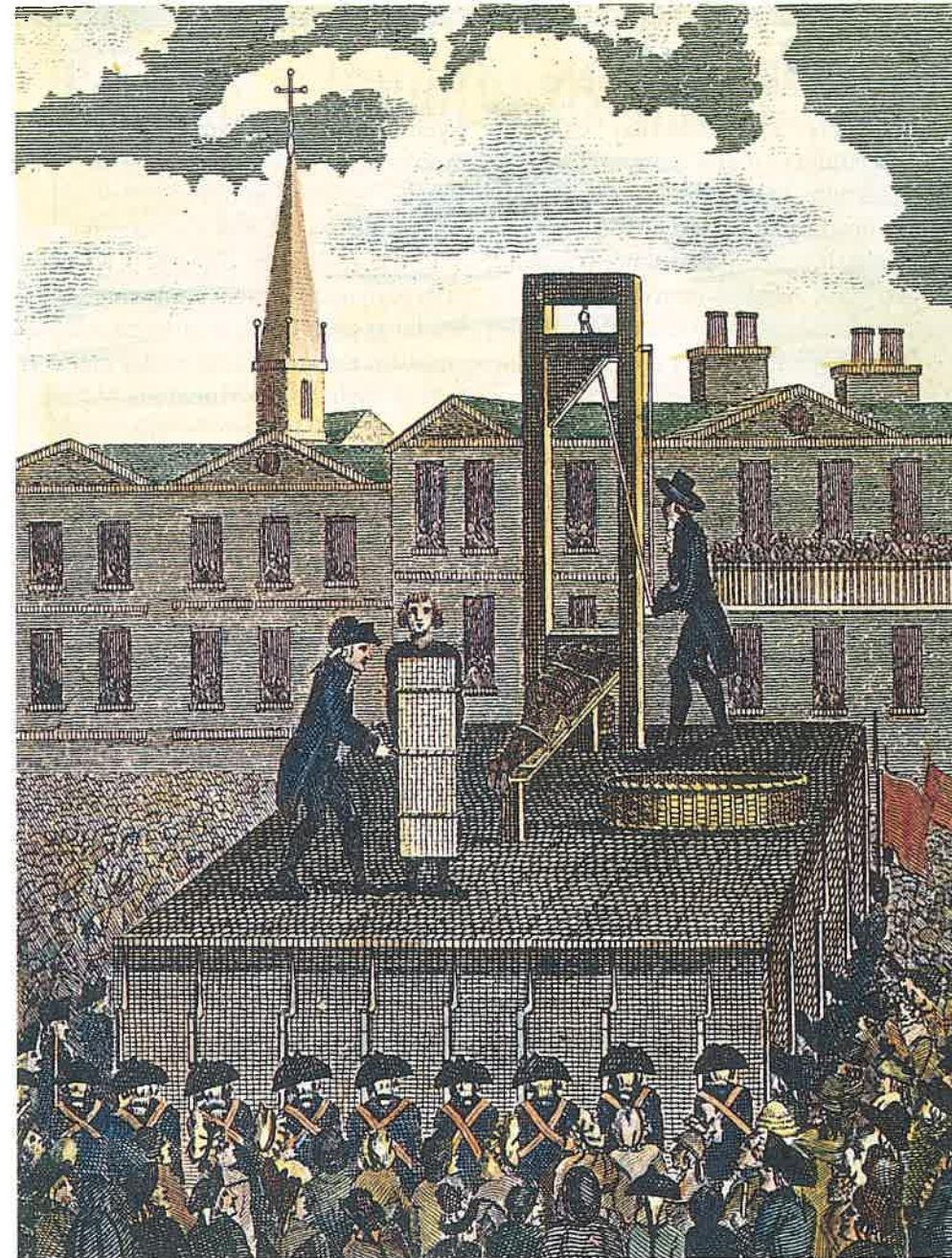
**ravenous:** seriously hungry

**Ventose:** the name of the sixth month in the Revolutionary Calendar

**assignats:** certificates of money in Revolutionary France

## ACTIVITIES

1. Name some personal characteristics that allowed Emilie to survive her ordeal.
2. Why were the baker and his wife sympathetic to Emilie?
3. Do you think Emilie was out of danger once she passed through the gates of Paris? Explain.
4. Emilie had to concoct several stories in order to escape execution. During periods of terror or revolution, many ordinary citizens must resort to fabricating stories in order to save their families and loved ones. Can you give any examples from other periods of history when this might be necessary? Is it ethical to lie in these circumstances? Explain.



*Experience teaches us that, generally speaking, the most perilous moment for a bad government is when it seeks to mend its ways.*

—ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

*O, Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!*

—MADAME ROLAND, ABOUT TO BE GUILLOTINED, IN 1793

While revolutions are often beneficial in the long run, these quotations suggest that they can be difficult to endure. During periods of revolution, countries lack stability and many people do things they would never do under other circumstances. In this climate, revolutionaries sometimes turn on each other. After you finish this chapter, think about the French Revolution and the fate of people such as Madame Roland, and decide: Was the revolution worth all the suffering it caused?

## TIME LINE

- 1763 • SEVEN YEARS' WAR ENDS
- 1774 • LOUIS XVI BECOMES KING
- 1776 • AMERICAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
- JAN 1789 • THE ESTATES GENERAL SUMMONED
- JUNE 1789 • TENNIS COURT OATH
- JULY 14 1789 • FALL OF THE BASTILLE
- AUG 1789 • ALL FEUDAL PRIVILEGES ABOLISHED
- OCT 1789 • OCTOBER DAYS
- 1790 • CIVIL CONSTITUTION OF THE CLERGY
- 1791 • FLIGHT TO VARENNES
- AUG 1792 • MONARCHY OVERTHROWN
- OCT 1792 • CONVENTION MEETS
- JAN 1793 • LOUIS XVI EXECUTED
- SEP 1793 • REIGN OF TERROR BEGINS
- OCT 1793 • MARIE ANTOINETTE EXECUTED
- JULY 1794 • FALL OF ROBESPIERRE; THERMIDOR PERIOD BEGINS
- 1795 • DIRECTORY MEETS