- At the top is bourgeoisie or middle class.
- Consisted mostly of rural peasants
- Some were hired by landowners
- others were day farmers
- The poorest members of 3rd estate were urban workers
- Peasants paid most of the taxes

Financial Troubles
- French underwent deficit spending (When government spends more money than it receives)

National Debt Soars
- Louis XIV left France in deep debt
- The seven year war and the American Revolution strained the debt even more
- By 1789, half of the government's income from taxes went to paying the debt

Economics Reform Fails
- Louis XV, 1715-1774, put pleasure before business and led to more debt
- Louis XVI choose Jacques Necker as an advisor
- Necker proposed to reduce extravagant court spending, reform the government and abolish burdensome tariffs on internal trade
- Then proposed taxing 1st and 2nd estate he was forced out
- Crisis continues and the king summoned the Estates-General
- They hoped to bring the absolute monarch under the control of the nobles and guarantee their own privileges

Louis XVI Calls The Estates-General
- As 1788 came to an end Louis XVI ordered a Estates-General

Estates prepare a cahier of grievances. Many called for reforms such as fairer taxes, freedom of the press or regular meetings

Delegates Take the Tennis Court Oath
- Delegates to the Estates-General from the Third Estate were elected
- Only properties men could vote
- Delegates were the mostly lawyers, middle class officials and writers
- On May 1789 the Estates-General convened
- First and second Estate out voted Third Estate
- The third estate wanted votes counted by head
- In June claiming to represent the people of France the third estate declared themselves to be the National Assembly
- In fear the king would dismiss the assembly they locked and guarded the doors and moved to an indoor tennis court
- They took a oath called the "Tennis Courts Oath" swore never to separate and to meet wherever the circumstances might require until we have established a sound and just constitution
- Rumors of the king dissolving the Assembly

Parisians Storm the Bastille
- Paris seized the spotlight from the National Assembly meeting in Versailles
- 800 Parisians assembled outside of the Bastille