Rise of the Jacobins

• As the war intensified in 1793, and as Austrian and Prussian troops advanced, the French suffered a series of reversals. Foreign troops were close to penetrating French borders, and the French people began to panic.
• It was the job of the Committee of Public Safety to keep the ‘revolution’ safe from foreign and domestic threats. The Jacobins preyed on public fear and argued that there were traitors everywhere.
• Three Jacobins gained public support with their fiery speeches or editorials. Danton, Marat and Robespierre were all moving toward the same goal – a French Republic that truly was of the people – the common people. And the common people, or the sans-culottes (without knee-breeches), threw their support behind them.
• Georges Danton was a dangerous revolutionary who was a charismatic leader and gifted speaker. He became one of the leaders of the Committee of Public Safety, but tried to mend fences between the Jacobins and Girondists. The Jacobins turned on him and he was executed.
• Jean Paul Marat was a radical journalist who penned inflammatory editorials from his bathtub. (He had a skin condition...) In July 1793, he was assassinated by Charlotte Corday while sitting in his bathtub. His death began the Reign of Terror.
• Maximilien de Robespierre was a lawyer who led the Committee of Public Safety and the Jacobins. He commanded almost dictatorial powers during the Reign of Terror.

Reign of Terror (1793-94)

• The Reign of Terror lasted from the summer of 1793 to the summer of 1794. It was led, largely by Robespierre.
• As the Jacobins gained control of the National Convention in 1793, and hunted enemies of the revolution, the French troops started to defeat their enemies on the borders. Much of the public saw this as cause and effect. The Jacobins hunted enemies, the army succeeded.
• During this year, the guillotine, nicknamed ‘the National Razor’, was working overtime. Executions were a daily and public occurrence, and wealthy people bribed executioners to sharpen the blade.
• The Terror burned itself out in the summer of 1794 with the Grand Terror in which nearly 10,000 people were killed. It ended with the execution of Robespierre and the dispersal of the Jacobins.

The Directory (1795-99)

• In the wake of the Terror, the people of France were interested in a more moderate form of government.
• The Directory was established. It had three branches of government – executive, legislative & judicial.
• The executive branch was staffed by five Directors who were chosen by the legislative branch.
• The legislative branch was made up of two houses – an upper and lower house.
• Unfortunately, the Directory was plagued by inflation and corruption. Although the armies were successful under leadership of a dashing young general named Napoleon.
1. Why did the French people begin to panic in 1793 as the war intensified?

2. How did the Jacobins use fear to empower themselves?

3. How did the three Jacobins, Danton, Marat & Robespierre gain support, and what did they want to see established?

4. Describe the three Jacobin leaders...
   a. Danton --
   b. Marat --
   c. Robespierre --

5. When was the Reign of Terror? Who led it?

6. How/why did the French people see a connection between the work of the Jacobins and the success of the army?

7. What was 'the National Razor'?

8. What and why did the wealthy bribe the executioners?

9. What was the Grand Terror?

10. How did it end?

11. What type of government did the people of France want to see?


13. What successes & problems followed the Directory?
1. Why did the French people begin to panic in 1793 as the war intensified? 
Foreign troops were about to enter French borders.

2. How did the Jacobins use fear to empower themselves? 
They played on public fears and argued there were traitors everywhere, and also argued they needed more power to hunt down these traitors.

3. How did the three Jacobins, Danton, Marat & Robespierre gain support, and what did they want to see established? 
They gave fiery speeches and wrote editorials. They wanted to see the establishment of a Republic.

4. Describe the three Jacobin leaders... 
   - a. Danton -- a charismatic leader and gifted speaker, he tried to mend fences with the Girondists, and his party the Jacobins turned on him.
   - b. Marat -- a radical journalist who penned inflammatory editorials, he was assassinated by Charlotte Corday while sitting in his bathtub. His death began the Reign of Terror.
   - c. Robespierre -- a lawyer who led the Committee of Public Safety and the Jacobins. He commanded almost dictatorial powers during the Reign of Terror.

5. When was the Reign of Terror? Who led it? 
It lasted from the summer of 1793 to the summer of 1794. It was led, largely by Robespierre.

6. How/why did the French people see a connection between the work of the Jacobins and the success of the army? 
As the Jacobins gained control of the National Convention in 1793, and hunted enemies of the revolution, the French troops started to defeat their enemies on the borders.

7. What was ‘the National Razor’? 
The guillotine.

8. What and why did the wealthy bribe the executioners? 
To sharpen the blade, which had become dull after so many executions.

9. What was the Grand Terror? 
In the summer of 1794, nearly 10,000 people were executed.

10. How did it end? 
With the execution of Robespierre.

11. What type of government did the people of France want to see? 
A more moderate form of government.

It had three branches of government — executive, legislative & judicial. The executive branch was staffed by five Directors, the legislative branch was made up of two houses — an upper and lower house.

13. What successes & problems followed the Directory? 
The Directory was plagued by inflation and corruption.
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