

PART 7 — *Social Change: 1688 - 1914*

POLITICAL REVOLUTIONS

15

IN EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS

1688 — 1850

THE BIRTH OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

COMMENTARY

Part Five, entitled *Social Change: Western Revolutions and Their Export*, contains three chapters, the first of which —Chapter 15 -- is a comparative study of five significant political revolutions that occurred in Europe and the Americas between 1688 and 1850. The second chapter in the section examines the Industrial Revolution, which began in Britain in the mid-18th century and spread to western Europe, the United States, and around the globe in the 19th and 20th centuries. Chapter 17 explores some of the momentous social effects of what has been called The Age of Revolution. A **revolution**, Spodek states in the introduction to Chapter 15, is a fundamental and often rapid change in the way systems operate —whether political, economic, intellectual or social (p. 478). The political upheavals discussed in this chapter, for example, did not just result in changes in the leadership of the countries involved, such as might be the case when the Manchu Qing Dynasty replaced the Ming Dynasty in China in 1644. They represented much deeper changes in the political structure of Britain, her American colonies and France, changes in the fundamental basis of authority and the avowed purpose and goals of the government. Similarly, the Industrial Revolution was not revolutionary simply because it resulted in the production of more goods, or because those products were made using automated machinery, rather than being hand-made. It was revolutionary because it brought about profound changes in the entire structure of the world's economy and society.

Chapter 15 begins with a general overview of political revolutions and a discussion of the common characteristics of the three major revolutions of the period: the **Glorious Revolution** (1688-89) in England, the **American Revolution** and War of Independence from Britain (1775-1783), and the **French Revolution** (1789-1799). As the text states, all three were democratic in the sense that they tended to increase popular participation in the government and claimed to establish governments of, for, and by the people -- or at least more of the people than had previously been the case. In so doing, they rejected the so-called **Divine Right of Kings**, replacing it with the concept of **government by consent of the governed** and a belief in inalienable **individual rights**. At the same time, however, all three revolutions sought to protect **private property**, while also promoting the power and efficiency of the state. These were potentially incompatible ideals, as the author notes, and were to lead to considerable conflict in the revolutionary period, especially in France. (Another such conflict was to become the cause of the American Civil War. What if, for example, one's property included slaves? Did the state have the power to free them?)

In addition to tracing how each of the three revolutions attempted to implement its ideals —and the degree to which it succeeded or failed to do so —the chapter describes the common intellectual foundations that underlay all of them, the **Scientific Revolution** and the political and social philosophy of the **Enlightenment**. The **rationalist** and **empirical** thinkers of the Enlightenment, such as **John Locke**, the French *Philosophes*, and **Adam Smith**, all believed that human society was governed by **natural laws**, which could be discovered and fully understood through the application of human reason and the acquisition of knowledge. Progress, prosperity, freedom: all were possible through enlightenment. In some respects, they advocated the application of the scientific method to social and political problems and, as the text points out, Enlightenment philosophy and the revolutionary scientific discoveries of **Copernicus**, **Galileo** and **Newton** were closely intertwined.

The chapter concludes with a somewhat critical view of the shortcomings of the American Revolution, and a closer examination of two other American revolutions which derived their inspiration (and, partly, their opportunities) from the (North) American and French examples. These are the slave revolt in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, which resulted in the creation of the independent nation of **Haiti**, and the Latin American revolutions of the period, c. 1810-1830, in which the **creole elites** in the American colonies of Spain and Portugal threw off European rule. Spodek

argues that in some respects all of these political revolutions were incomplete, in that the Enlightenment goals of political liberty, social justice and economic progress were not fully achieved.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- A. Political Revolution
 - 1. Revolution — a definition
 - 2. Common Characteristics of the English, American and French Revolutions
- B. England's Glorious Revolution, 1688
 - 1. Philosophical rationales
 - 2. Hobbes and the State of Nature
 - a. Thomas Hobbes and the social contract
 - b. King vs. Parliament: the English Civil War, 1640-1649
 - 3. The Bill of Rights, 1689
 - a. Glorious Revolution, 1688-1689
 - b. A new contract between monarch and Parliament
 - 4. John Locke and the Enlightenment
 - a. Government by consent of the governed
 - b. Government by property owners
 - c. FOCUS: Universal Suffrage vs. Property Rights
- C. Intellectual Revolutions in Science and Philosophy
 - 1. How Do We Know? -- historians and the Scientific Revolution
 - 2. What Do We Know? -- characteristics of the Scientific Revolution
 - 3. Copernicus, Galileo and the sun-centered universe
 - 4. Isaac Newton and the mathematical universe
 - 5. Revolutionary discoveries in medicine and biology
- D. The *Philosophes* and the Enlightenment in the Eighteenth Century
 - 1. Influence of the *Philosophes* on the American and French Revolutions
 - 2. The *Philosophes* and their ideas
 - 3. Characteristics of Enlightenment thought
- E. Revolution in North America, 1776
 - 1. Causes and nature of the American Revolution
 - 2. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights, 1789-1791
 - 3. How radical was the American Revolution?
 - a. The first anti-imperial revolution
 - b. Slavery and the Native Americans: the limitations of the American Revolution
- F. The French Revolution and Napoleon, 1789-1812
 - 1. Origins of revolution
 - a. Louis XVI (1774-1792) and the Estates-General
 - b. The Third Estate and the National Assembly
 - c. FOCUS: The Historiography of the French Revolution
 - 2. The revolt of the poor
 - a. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen
 - b. The National Assembly and the French Constitution of 1791
 - 3. International war, the Second Revolution and the Terror, 1791-1799
 - a. Jacobins and the National Convention
 - b. The Committee of Public Safety and the Reign of Terror (1793-1794)
 - 4. Napoleon in power, 1799-1812
 - a. The Civil Code and the Concordat
 - b. Careers open to talent
 - 5. The Napoleonic Wars and the Spread of Revolution, 1799-1812
 - a. Victory and defeat
 - b. SPOTLIGHT: Francisco Goya — Revolutionary Reality and Rhetoric

- G. Haiti: Slave Revolution and Response, 1791
1. Toussaint L Ouverture and the Haitian Revolt
 2. Abolition of slavery and the slave trade: historians debate the causes
 - a. Abolition of the slave trade in Britain and the United States, 1807-1808
 - b. The American Civil War and the abolition of slavery, 1861-1865
 - c. Historical debate on the causes of abolition
- H. The End of Colonialism in Latin America: Independence and Disillusionment, 1810-1830
1. Revolts of the creole elites
 2. Mexico
 3. Brazil
 4. Paraguay: the new historiography
 5. PROFILE: Simon Bolivar
 6. After independence
 7. Religious and economic issues
 - a. Church and state; racial inequality; neo-colonialism
 - b. SOURCE: An Epic Verse History of Latin America — Pablo Neruda s *Canto General* (1950)
- I. What Difference Does It Make?

IDENTIFICATION TERMS

For each term, students should be able to provide an identification or definition, an approximate date, a geographical location (if relevant) and —most important —a concise explanation of its importance in the context of the chapter. Terms that appear in the *Study Guide* are listed in **bold** font in the first column.

Third Estate	divine right of kings	Condorcet
Montesquieu	careers open to talent	Voltaire
Stamp Act	nation-state	enlightened despotism
social contract	natural rights	Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Committee of Public Safety	Charles I	Third Estate
Glorious Revolution	Oliver Cromwell	bourgeoisie
Code Napoleon (Civil Code)	Glorious Revolution	<i>Jacobins</i>
empiricism	(English) Bill of Rights (1689)	<i>sansculottes</i>
Toussaint L Ouverture	John Locke	Declaration of the Rights of Man & the Citizen
Encyclopedia	Scientific Revolution	Reign of Terror
creole elites	Enlightenment	Francisco Goya
Leviathan	Nicholas Copernicus	William Wilberforce
Principia Mathematica	Isaac Newton	<i>mestizos</i>
Paraguay	William Harvey	Simon Bolivar
Galileo Galilei	Carolus Linnaeus	<i>caudillos</i>
Bill of Rights (1791)	<i>philosophes</i>	

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading and studying Chapter 15, students should be able to:

1. Understand and explain the common features and underlying causes of the various political revolutions from 1688 through 1850.
2. Compare the English Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689 with the American Revolution of 1775-1783 and the English Bill of Rights (1689) with its American counterpart (1791).
3. Explain and compare the social contract as described by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
4. Understand the concepts of natural law and natural rights and the philosophical and intellectual connections between the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the political revolutions discussed in the chapter.
5. Describe how the American Revolution led both directly and indirectly to the French Revolution.
6. Explain the reasons for both the initial successes and eventual downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte.
7. Understand and explain the historiographical controversy concerning the reasons for the end of the slave trade and slavery and the reasons why this is an important question.
8. Describe the limitations and failures, as well as the virtues and successes, of the political revolutions in the Americas.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LECTURE TOPICS

1. Using the concepts of empiricism, natural law and natural rights, explain the philosophical and intellectual connections between the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the political revolutions discussed in the chapter.
2. Present a survey of the political revolutions of the period and discuss their common origins, principles and outcomes, as well as the important differences among them.
3. Explain the political, economic and cultural causes of the American Revolution, stressing the importance of the English Revolution of 1688 and the Bill of Rights of 1689 as major background causes.
4. Compare and contrast the origins, course and consequences of the American and French Revolutions, as a means of explaining why the French Revolution took the radical and violent path that it did, as opposed to the more moderate political outcome in America.
5. Explain why the armies and ideas of the French Revolution and Napoleonic France were often well received by other European peoples at first and why so many people turned against France later on.
6. Contrast the revolutions in Haiti and Paraguay with the other revolts in Latin America, using the failure of the Paraguayan Revolution as a counter-point to explaining the political, social and economic limitations of other Latin American revolts.
7. Discuss the historical controversy over the reasons for the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in the western hemisphere.

TOPICS FOR ESSAYS OR CLASS DISCUSSIONS

1. Why was the European Scientific Revolution of the period c. 1500-1750 revolutionary? In what respects did it represent a fundamental change in European thought? What were its basic principles and assumptions? How might it be viewed as a precursor to the Enlightenment? Support your answer with specific examples of scientists, their discoveries and explanations of their significance.
2. In 1776, the signers of the American *Declaration of Independence* believed themselves to be defending the rights of Englishmen — as confirmed by the Glorious Revolution — against the arbitrary actions of King George III and the British Parliament. But as the text notes, the American Revolution was to prove far more radical than the English Revolution of 1688 had been. In what respects was the American Revolution in keeping with the ideas of the Glorious Revolution? In what respects did it go beyond the aims of 1688? Why was this the case?
3. The French Revolution began as a movement to establish a constitutional monarchy on the model of the English Revolution of 1688, but ultimately became even more radical and violent than the American Revolution. Why did this happen?
4. Debate: Napoleon Bonaparte is one of the most controversial figures in European history. When in power, he claimed to be consolidating, preserving and even expanding the policies and benefits of the French Revolution. Many of his contemporaries, however, as well as many subsequent observers, believed that many of his actions betrayed the principles of the revolution. A number of modern historians have called him a military dictator, or

even an Enlightened Despot. Whose Napoleon represents the real Napoleon? Cite specific examples and evidence to support your case.

5. It been argued that, even though the various Latin American revolutions resulted in the independence of the Spanish, Portuguese and French colonies and the establishment of republics on the model of the United States, in many respects those upheavals were the least revolutionary revolutions of the period. Would you agree or disagree with this assessment, based on the information presented in the text? To the extent that the argument is a valid one, might there have been any exceptions to the general rule?
6. Examine and assess the opposing explanations concerning the abolition of the slave trade and slavery itself during the period, c. 1770-1870. Considering the examples of the fate of slavery in various places, such as Haiti, the United States, Brazil and the British Empire, which historical explanation(s) seem(s) the most plausible?
7. Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau all based their theories of government on a social contract. What exactly was the nature of this contract, according to each writer? Who were the parties to the contract, as it were? What was the primary purpose of the contract? In what important respects did their respective views differ?
8. Group work: According to the text, the philosophy of the Enlightenment helped to inspire both the American and the French revolutions. Demonstrate the validity of this argument by comparing principal elements of Enlightenment thought with specific ideas expressed in the American *Declaration of Independence* and French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* and with specific laws or policies which were implemented as a result of each revolution.
9. Current events & issues: One of the most influential interpretations of the revolutionary period, c. 1688-1850, that of the American historian R. R. Palmer, views the era as the Age of the Democratic Revolution. Other commentators, such as the French historian Georges Lefebvre, however, have seen the various revolutionary movements more in terms of social class; as revolutions by and for men of property in pursuit of their own economic and political interests. Based on both the historical narrative in the text and any relevant primary source materials in the chapter, which view appears more accurate?
10. Group work: In the Spotlight section entitled Francisco Goya: Revolutionary Reality and Rhetoric, the text provides an excellent interpretation of the political uses of art during the revolutionary period. Write a similar commentary for the other famous paintings or prints from the revolutionary period reproduced in the chapter: for example, John Trumbull's group portrait of the *Signing of the Declaration of Independence*; Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Tennis Court* and *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*; the portrait of Simon Bolivar; and the French prints of the women's march on Versailles and the Haitian leader Toussaint L'Ouverture. What images and ideas are the works meant to convey? How are those messages illustrated by the poses and expressions of the figures? By their clothing and accessories?

TEXT RESOURCES (Spodek, 2nd ed.)

Timetables, charts and graphs:	The Age of Revolutions, 1640-1850	(p. 479)
	Major Discoveries and Inventions, 1640-1830	(p. 482)
	French Revolution — Key Events	(p. 500)
Maps:	The growth of the United States	(p. 493)
	The empire of Napoleon	(p. 503)
	The revolution in Haiti	(p. 507)
	Liberation movements in Latin America	(p. 510)
Large photographs or illustrations:	An eyewitness representation of the execution of Charles I	(p. 481)
	Signing of the Declaration of Independence [Trumbull]	(p. 492)
	The Oath of the Tennis Court [David]	(p. 495)
	Hall of Mirrors, Versailles	(p. 498)
	Women marching on Versailles	(p. 499)
	Napoleon Crossing the Alps [David]	(p. 501)
Execution of the Defenders of Madrid [Goya]	(p. 505)	
SPOTLIGHT:	Francisco Goya: Revolutionary Reality and Rhetoric	(pp. 504-5)

PROFILE:	Simon Bolivar	(p. 512)
FOCUS: 483)	Universal Suffrage vs. Property Rights	(p.
	The Historiography of the French Revolution	(p. 496)
SOURCES:	An Epic Verse History of Latin America	(p. 514)

ADDITIONAL PRIMARY SOURCES (*Documents Set & www.prenhall.com/Spodek*)

15-1	Parliament takes control: England's <i>Bill of Rights</i> of 1689
15-2	Crusader for prison reform: John Howard of England
15-3	A new order proclaimed: The <i>Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen</i>
15-4	The Sea-Green Incorruptible : the mania of power
15-5	Jakob Walter's war: the instinct for survival [from <i>Diary of a Napoleonic Foot-Soldier</i>]
15-6	Simon Bolivar: Latin America's dynamo [from <i>Selected Writings of Simon Bolivar</i>]
www	The Shoe on the Other Foot: Enslaved Haitians Rise in Revolt

AUDIO-VISUAL RESOURCES (videos, DVDs, CD-ROM and websites)

***Amistad*: Steven Spielberg, DreamWorks, 1998. [video; 155 minutes, color]**

There are some annoyingly misleading historical inaccuracies in Spielberg's film, but it still provides excellent images of the cruelties of the slave trade, as well as a subtext on the conflict between property rights and human rights and a view into the reasons for the trade's abolition.

***Danton*: Andrejs Wajda, RCA Home Video, 1987. [video; 137 minutes, color]**

This drama, starring Gerard Depardieu, provides an excellent insight into the power struggles and ideological tensions within the French Revolution that led to the Reign of Terror.

***History of Astronomy*: <http://aibn55.astro.uni-bonn.de8000/~pbrosche/astoria.html> [website]**

This German web-page contains information [in English] on famous astronomers, their equipment, and their discoveries.

***History of Science, Medicine and Technology*: <http://www.jhu.edu/~phil/relfold/histsci.html#theTop> [website]**

Sponsored by Johns Hopkins University, this site includes information on all aspects of the subject.

***Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Retreat to Romanticism*: Films for the Humanities & Sciences. [video; 25 min., color]**

Examines Rousseau's views on French society, his association with other *philosophes*, and the development of *The Social Contract*.

***John Locke*: Films for the Humanities. [video; 52 minutes, color]**

This video explains Locke's political and social philosophy and sets it in its historical context through reconstructed episodes and conversations from Locke's life.

***Napoleon*: <http://www.ping.be/~ping5895/> [website]**

Includes biographical information on Napoleon and many of his contemporaries, texts of Napoleon's papers, historical articles, and links to other websites.

***Napoleon Bonaparte*: Films for the Humanities & Sciences. [2 videos; 110 minutes, color]**

This survey of important stages in Napoleon's career was filmed on-site in Corsica, Egypt, Paris, Spain and Russia. An excellent short narrative.

***Originals of Early American Documents*: <http://www.law.emory.edu/FEDERAL/conpict.html#const> [website]**

A collection of important texts: includes the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.