



**CALIFORNIA CONTENT
STANDARD 10.2.4**

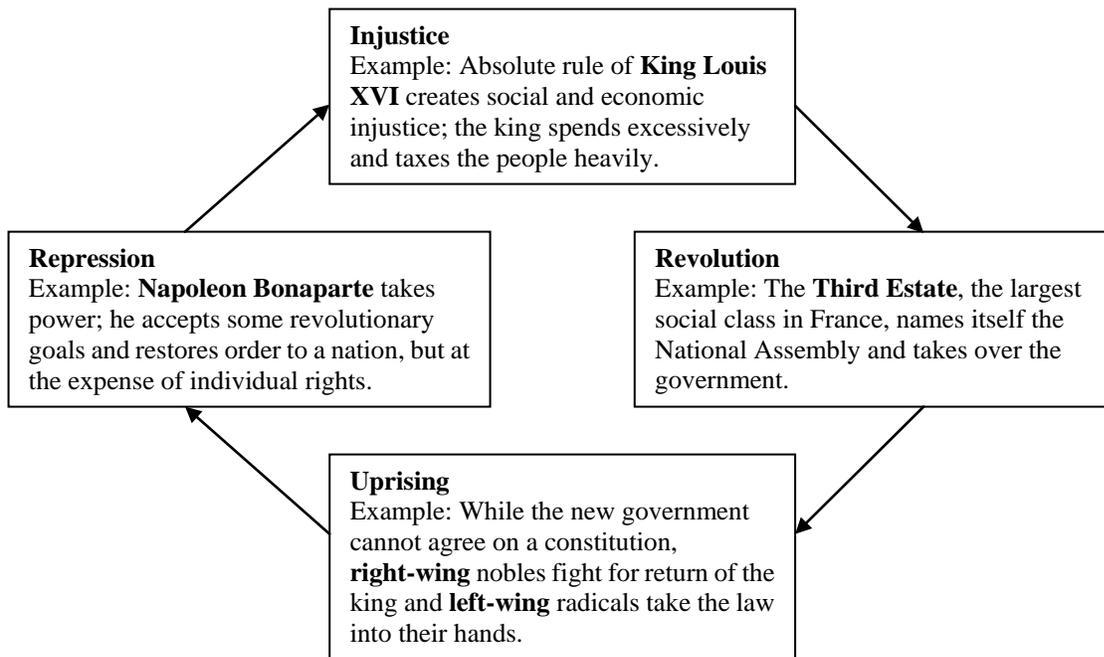
The French Revolution

Specific Objective: Explain how the ideology of the French Revolution led France to develop from a constitutional monarchy to democratic despotism to the Napoleonic empire.

Like the American Revolution, the French Revolution of 1789 erupted after years of yearning for freedom and justice. Unlike the American Revolution, the revolutionary movement in France ended not in democracy but in dictatorship. Revolutionaries succeeded in overthrowing the French **Old Regime** that had divided the people into three unequal social classes, or **estates**. But old problems of poverty and injustice remained.

Revolutionaries could not agree on solutions and fought to keep control of the country. A period in the early 1790s was known as the **Reign of Terror** for the mass executions carried out by the revolutionary government's **Committee for Public Safety**. Meanwhile, poverty and chaos wearied the nation. Stability came only after the military leader **Napoleon Bonaparte** seized control as dictator in 1799. His powers as dictator led again to instability, however, continuing for generations. France did not adopt a constitution that guaranteed representative government until 1875.

Cause and Effect in the French Revolution



After **Napoleon Bonaparte** seized control of France in 1799, he went on to expand his power across the continent. By 1812, he controlled much of Europe. However, any of the conquered lands rumbled with **nationalism**—loyalty to their own nations above all. Nationalists rose to throw off Napoleonic rule. As a result, Napoleon suffered series of significant military defeats from 1812 to 1815, when his empire came to an end at the Battle of Waterloo.