

Introduction: The king prior to Louis XVI was not very smart about the country's financial situation. France was slowly approaching bankruptcy. Louis XVI needs money to keep the country running, but he cannot raise taxes by himself. So he has called a meeting of the Estates General, the French version of Congress, to ask for more taxes and money.

Procedure: Each group has several goals specific to their group, which they need to get turned into a law. A goal becomes a law when the Estates General votes and agrees to make it a law. Each estate only has one vote; it doesn't matter how many people are in the Estate, they all count as only one (1) vote. Since there are three Estates, there are only three (3) votes and there cannot be a tie.

Before each vote, you and your fellow members of the Estates-General will debate the goal. You can argue yes or no but you must take a side. You will receive a sheet explaining your side's goals-try to get these into law by proposing them and arguing for them.

Your teacher is the King's representative and will run the meeting, deciding which group will speak and when it is time to vote. You do NOT need to get your goals into law to get a good grade! Your grade is based on appropriate participation-join the debate and you will receive a good grade for this assignment. You are welcome to pretend to be angry, but please keep this debate clean and appropriate.

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The First Estate: Catholic Clergy

Description: You are leaders of the Catholic Church in France, including bishops and cardinals (but not priests; you are the leaders!). You are all very rich and own a lot of land in France. You do not pay any taxes, but you traditionally give 2% of your income to the King as a “gift.”

- You like King Louis XVI, Mary Antoinette and the Second Estate, because they are rich and powerful just like you.
- You don't hate the Third Estate but you think some of the poor are rude and should just be thankful for what God has given them.

Goals: a) Have a little land taken away from the farmers in the Third Estate and given to your Estate

b) Keep the tradition of no taxes but volunteering a 2% “gift”

c) Keep everything the way it is; change is bad

The Second Estate: Nobles

Description: You are the nobles in France, the rich and powerful in the nation. Your people are always the leaders of the army and the government, and you own most of the businesses in the country. Your parents were nobles, and your children will be nobles. There aren't many of you, but you are very rich and you own a lot of land in France. By law, you do not have to pay any taxes at all.

- You like King Louis XV and the First Estate because they're rich and powerful just like you.
- You hate the Third Estate because it's all a bunch of poor, lazy, commoners. Some of them, the Bourgeoisie, are now getting very rich from businesses and want to be nobles too. That's not how it works; you are noble because your parents were noble.

Goals: a) Make sure the Bourgeoisie don't get to become Nobles just because they have a lot of money

b) Keep having to not pay any taxes

c) Keep everything the way it is; change is bad

The Third Estate: Farmers

Description: You are the farmers of France and the largest group of people in the country. All of you are very poor, and not only because farming doesn't make a lot of money. By law, you have to pay 50% of your pay in taxes to the King, while the nobles in the Second Estate don't pay anything. You also have to pay a corvee, which is a tax paid by work instead of cash.

- You don't like King Louis XV but you will support him, because he is your king and you are honorable and loyal.
- You don't hate the First Estate because they are God's agents on Earth, and you are very religious.
- However, you hate the Second Estate because they are very rich and pay no taxes at all. They also own a lot of land, and you could use some more land to farm.

Goals: a) Reduce the percentage of taxes you have to pay

b) Force the Second Estate to start paying taxes

c) Get some more land to farm

The Third Estate: Urban Poor

Description: You are poor people that live in the big cities in France, especially Paris. Many of you have tiny apartments to live in but you are so poor, the only food you can afford is bread. Since you're so poor you do not pay taxes. However, you do pay the corvee, which is a tax paid by unpaid work instead of cash. Lately bread started getting more expensive, making it harder for you to survive.

- You don't like King Louis XV because he's rich and doesn't seem to care about your problems.
- You hate the First and Second Estates because they own the businesses that employ you but pay very little. Besides, they're very rich and powerful, and you're not.

Goals: a) Reduce the price of bread so you can buy more

b) End the corvee so you'll have more time to work and make money

c) Get the Second Estate to pay you more money in taxes

The Third Estate: Bourgeoisie

Description: You are the middle class in France, with some of you being very rich. However, since your family isn't considered "noble" you are classified as a peasant. That means you don't get the same rights as the Second Estate and have to pay a lot in taxes every year. You also have to pay the corvee, a tax paid by unpaid work instead of cash.

- You hate King Louis XV, the First Estate, and the Second Estate because they're all rich and arrogant. You especially hate how voting works in the Estates General, since the First and Second Estates always vote together against you.
- If you were invited to join the Second Estate, then things would be different and you wouldn't care about voting.

Goals: a) Leave the Third Estate and become part of the Second Estate

b) End the feudal system so you don't have to do manual labor

c) Change voting in Estates General so that every person gets 1 vote, not 1 vote for each Estate

P.S.....

You overheard some of your people talking about leaving this place. That's a great idea! The clergy and the nobles will never help the people! It's time to start your own Estates-General, one where the people can be heard!

Demand to speak to the whole Estates-General. Tell them you are creating a new Estates-General called the National Assembly. Invite the other Estates to participate but with one big change—because this new National Assembly would represent people, not groups, every person would have an equal vote. The first job of the National Assembly will be to create a Constitution for France, just like the Americans did. It will define and protect the rights of the people, not just the clergy and nobles. Call upon your other third estate members to rise up and join.

King Louis XVI is welcome to come watch but even the King cannot stop this. If the King tries to stop us, it will be **REVOLUTION**

King Louis Prompts

#1: I have assembled you here today because the fact is, France is poor. We have very little money to build up an army for protection, no money to build fortresses or palaces, and our people are dying in the streets. Today, I call upon the Estates General because I need the people to help me decide how to fix France. Traditionally, we have just taxed the third estate. I mean, if it works, it works, you know what I mean first and second estate? But, we gotta go through the motions and see what the people want. I am going to allow each estate 10 minutes to look over their goals and divide up who would like to argue each point. At the end of ten minutes, my assistant Miss Thompson will call our meeting to order.

Mrs. Siercks calls the meeting to order

#2. Please, remember, our goal is to come to a conclusion that will help all of our beloved country, France.

Listen to the people discuss, react to their proposals however you see fit.

#3. While you all have been deliberating amongst yourselves, I came up with my own little plan... I would like to propose that the third estate is taxed 80% of their income, and they are paid instead in bread and housing. We guarantee them a place to sleep and bathe, and food to eat, at least 4 loaves a week. The first and second estate will continue not paying taxes in return for protection of the third estate. As long as our food production remains stable, we should not have a problem. I strongly urge the estates general passes this plan.

The people vote on your plan

#4. I regret to announce that since our time has passed here in the Estates General, a famine has overcome our great country. As a result, we have lost up to 40% of the Third Estate to famine including many of the wives and children of the third estate representatives we have here today. Thankfully our first and second estates survived mostly unharmed due to their food storage. It's unfortunate the third estate was not intelligent enough to think of that for themselves. I'd like to give you all some time to come up with a plan to help curb this great loss. Take about 7 minutes to discuss, I'll be up here taking a bit of a nap if you need me....

Reflection

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Please answer the following questions in complete sentences:

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- 2. Why did King Louis XVI need a meeting of the Estates General?**
- 3. Why did someone in the Third Estate propose to leave the E.G. and create a new meeting called the National Assembly?**
- 4. Who paid taxes in pre-Revolution France? Who did not pay taxes?**

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