

The Reign of Terror Name: _____ Prd: ___ Score: _____ /15

The Terror Phase of the French Revolution

Directions: **Highlight** the answer in the text on the left *before* answering the questions on the right.

The new leaders of the **French Revolution** began to give up the idea of a **monarchy** completely. Many of these leaders belonged to a Parisian political club called the **Jacobins**. They wanted a whole new way of life. They wanted to put into practice the ideas of the **Declaration of the Rights of Man**. (See 1st rdng.)

The leaders made plans to spread their ideas throughout Europe. The leaders of other European countries were horrified. Soon France was at war with Austria, Prussia, Great Britain & the Netherlands. In France itself, rebellion burst out in different parts of the country. Nine months after King Louis XVI was beheaded, his wife Marie-Antoinette was put to death! Government leaders were determined to punish all who spoke against them.

Georges Danton was one of the most popular leaders of the revolution. He was **energetic, bold & an outspoken defender of the rights of the people**. When foreign armies began threatening France, Danton **rallied the French**. He inspired them to defend their country.

But in time even Danton believed that the *revolution was going too far*. He had a rival, **Maximilien Robespierre, & Robespierre was calling for stronger action still! Robespierre was convinced that to get control, any action was justifiable! He wanted to get rid of anyone who disagreed with the revolutionary government...& this meant using the **guillotine!**

For 12 months, Robespierre decided who was an enemy of the country. Anyone he accused was usually beheaded! Hundreds died *each week* in what became known as the **Reign of Terror**. After a while, *no one* was safe ~ not even leaders of the revolutionary government!

Read what happened to one such French Revolutionary...It was April 3rd, 1794. The revolutionaries, wanting to make a complete break with the past, had invented their own new calendar: It was the 7th of Germinal, Year 2.

Applying past knowledge: A **monarchy** is defined as _____.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. total & absolute rule by 1 | c. rule by a king or queen |
| b. rule by a few | d. rule by the people |

Applying past knowledge: (Look back at your **Storm Over France** rdng.) What was the purpose of the **Declaration of the Rights of Man?**

- stating the principles of the revolution
- declaring the *Oath of the Tennis Court*
- declaring their independence
- naming their new leader



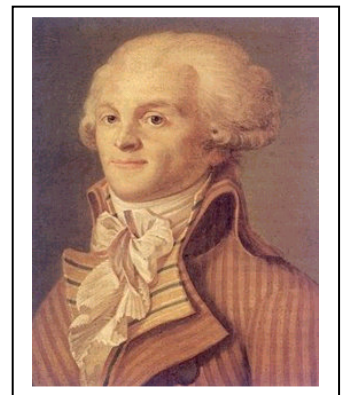
↑ Georges Danton

What *made Danton so popular* with his people?

Applying past knowledge: What other (clue: *cleverly dishonest*) **Renaissance man** believed it was alright to use **any means necessary to get what you wanted?** (Look back at your Renaissance rdngs.)

- Medici
- Shakespeare
- Machiavelli
- da Vinci

Why was this time period called the "Reign of Terror"?



↗ Maximilien Robespierre

"Georges Danton, you are accused of **treason** against the people of France..."

It was an unusually hot day for April. The Paris courthouse was jammed with spectators. George Danton, a tall, powerful man, stood in the prisoner's dock. "Me, a **traitor**?" he roared. "Citizens, you all know me! I've always worked for the people, never against them!"

Nicolas Herman, the president of the court, rang his bell. Robespierre had warned Herman **NOT** to let Danton begin a speech. They had hoped to shut him up by putting him in a group trial. He was in prison along with several friends & some criminals. But Danton was a hard man to silence!

*"Do you expect me to keep quiet when people are telling lies about me? What kind of men dare call me a **traitor**?"*

Some of the crowd started applauding. Herman rang the bell again. "Danton!" he shouted. "You won't get anywhere by trying to accuse the jury!"

"I'm not accusing anyone! I'm defending myself! I've devoted my life to this country. I helped to make the republic. I helped organize an army to fight our foreign enemies. I created the Committee of Public Safety to rout (defeat) our enemies here at home. And then I tried to hold it back when it went too far. Yes, citizens, *it went too far!* The republic was safe. The foreign enemies were driven back. But the committee went on sending hundreds, even thousands of people to the guillotine. It wasn't just nobles, priests, & rebels who were killed! People were being hunted down for other reasons. Because they were suspected! Because they were disliked. Because they were people like me ~ Danton!"

The crowd cheered! The prosecutor passed a note to Herman. The prosecutor passed a note back. Both men looked uneasy. Robespierre had warned them that Danton must be found guilty, or they would go on trial. Herman quickly declared the court closed for the day.

What is **treason**? _____

(Look it up in the dictionary if you don't know it!)

Making inferences: (**Look back on page 1.)

How did Danton predict his own fate?

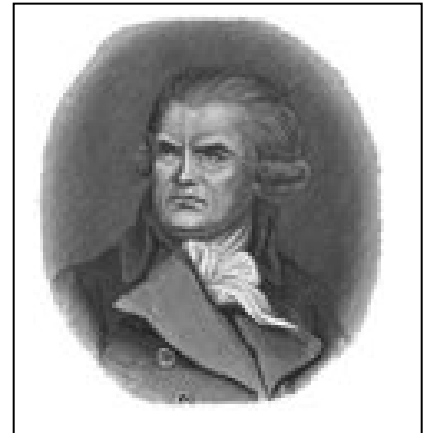


By definition, a **traitor** is: _____

(Use that dictionary!)

How did Danton defend himself?

- claimed to have organized an army to fight enemies
- helped create the republic
- created the Committee of Public Safety
- tried to protect his countrymen
- all the above
- only a, b, & c



Drawing conclusions: **Why** would the prosecutor **NOT** want Danton to go to trial? _____

During the next two days of the trial, Danton was *not* given a chance to speak. But he was told that he could give a final speech of defense. However, when the time came, he was hustled out of the dock. He stopped to roar for the last time. "*You are murderers!*"

Then he called on someone who had carefully stayed away from the trial. "**Robespierre!*" His voice could be heard far out in the streets. "*You, too, will go to the guillotine! You will follow me, Robespierre!*"

After Danton left, the jury found him guilty & sentenced him to death! That afternoon, three wagons rolled away from the jail. They headed for the public square where the guillotine was set up. Danton sat in one of the wagons with his friends. He tried to cheer them up.

At the scaffold, Danton had a long wait. The sun was setting as he walked to the guillotine. For a moment he stopped, suddenly afraid. Then he said, "Come on, Danton ~ no weakness!" He turned to the executioner. "Show my head to the crowd afterward. It's worth the trouble!"

He laid down. The executioner fastened his neck in the slot & the blade came swishing down!

Now Robespierre was master of the revolution ~ but not for long! He pushed the Reign of Terror so far that no one was safe! A tavern keeper was killed for selling bad wine. Priests died simply because they were priests.

By July 1794, the other leaders of the revolution turned against Robespierre. He tried to shoot himself but was carried, bloody & screaming, to the guillotine... The Reign of Terror was over.

About 40,000 French people had been executed in the past year. Only $\frac{1}{6}$ th of them were nobles. Now the French reacted again the ideas that started the Terror. They took to heart the words of Madame Roland, who died in the Terror. "Oh liberty," she cried, "What crimes are committed in your name!" The people were tired of the violence. They were ready for any moderate government now ~ one that could give them peace & quiet.

Making inferences: Why would the "Reign of Terror's **weapon** of choice be the guillotine?

Reflections: What was Danton's *prediction of Robespierre*?

Making inferences: Why would Danton suggest his head be *shown to the public*?

Drawing conclusions: What was *so ironic* about ***Robespierre's death**?

BONUS: Applying math skills to history:

Only $\frac{1}{6}$ th of the 40,000 people executed during the Reign of Terror were nobles.

Therefore, how many French commoners died? (Show work & solve.)

Drawing conclusions: Why were the people ready for a moderate government now?

