**Revolution Dawns**

The clergy and the nobles had dominated the Estates-General throughout the Middle Ages and expected to do so in the 1789 meeting. Under the assembly’s medieval rules, each estate’s delegates met in a separate hall to vote, and each estate had one vote. The two privileged estates could always outvote the Third Estate.

The Third Estate delegates, mostly members of the bourgeoisie whose views had been shaped by the Enlightenment, were eager to make changes in the government. They insisted that all three estates meet together and that each delegate have a vote. This would give the advantage to the Third Estate, which had as many delegates as the other two estates combined.

Siding with the nobles, the king ordered the Estates-General to follow the medieval rules. The delegates of the Third Estate, however, became more and more determined to wield power. A leading spokesperson for their viewpoint was a clergyman sympathetic to their cause, the Abbé Sieyès, who argued, “What is the Third Estate? Everything. What has it been up to now in the political order? Nothing. What does it demand? To become something herein.” In a dramatic speech, he suggested that the Third Estate delegates name themselves the National Assembly and pass laws and reforms in the name of the French people.

After a long night of excited debate, the delegates of the Third Estate agreed to Sieyès’s idea by an overwhelming majority. On June 17, 1789, they voted to establish the National Assembly, in effect proclaiming the end of absolute monarchy and the beginning of representative government. This vote was the first deliberate act of revolution. Three days later, the Third Estate delegates found themselves locked out of their meeting room. They broke down a door to an indoor tennis court, pledging to stay until they had drawn up a new constitution. Their pledge was called the Tennis Court Oath.

12. Why was the Third Estate unhappy with the Medieval rules of the Estate’s General?

a.

b.

13. What was the National Assembly?

a.

14. What event lead to the en of the absolute monarchy and the start of a representative democracy?

a.

15. What was the Tennis Court Oath?