**Student** **Handout 3.1.2 Modern World**

**Student roles: French Revolution Role Play**

Louis XVI Historical figure King of France.

You rule France, the cultural and scientific capital of the world, grandson of Louis XIV, the Sun King, who built the palace of Versailles, the most magnificent palace on earth. Like your ancestors, you are King by Divine Right and do not need to ask for anyone’s opinion on how to rule the country. In fact you and your ancestors haven’t called a meeting of the Estates General in 170 years. But so much money was spent on building and keeping up Versailles and on fighting foreign wars (most recently helping the American colonists fight off the British), that the kingdom is badly in debt. You need to call the Estates General so as to get it to agree to extra taxes. You respect the tradition of not taxing the nobles or clergy, but think that right now the nobles at least should pay something to help the kingdom. The third estate should certainly pay more taxes. You feel that the Estates General should vote separately, with one vote each as is traditional. Although you have to call the Estates General, you have no intention of giving up any real power to it and your allegiances lie with the first and second estates, because the third is just commoners.

Jacques Necker Financial Advisor to Louis XVI. Second Estate

You were the chief financial adviser to King Louis XVI from 1788-89. You advised the king to compromise to some degree with the Third Estate and also to consider taxing the First and Second Estates, although you did not push the issue. You believe the government deficit is much too high and spending must be brought down. You were fired because Marie Antoinette did not trust you and the king did not want to hear about compromises with the other estates. Perhaps since you are from Switzerland, where there is no king and people have some say in their government, you think that France might be better off if it had a limited, constitutional monarchy.

Cardinal Mondieu First Estate

You are one of the most wealthy and powerful men in France and you have gained most of your power through the church, which owns 10% of all the lands in France. You welcome the opportunity to be consulted by Louis in the Estates General, but you cannot accept the idea of paying more taxes. Already you give 2% of your income as a “free gift” to the state and you need the money to build more churches, give to charity and have a lifestyle befitting your rank in society. A lord of the church has to dress, eat and live well so that people won’t think him a peasant. You feel that the Estates General should meet as is traditional: separately with one vote for each estate. You wouldn’t want to meet with the rabble of the third Estate. God knows when they last had a bath and they don’t even wear wigs or stockings!

Duke of Conde Second Estate

You are one of the most powerful lords of France, the most powerful nation in Europe. You own large amounts of land and have many special rights and privileges, one of which is that you don’t pay any taxes. You are loyal to the King, but are worried by the calling of the Estates General, that he may ask you to pay taxes, which would be an insult to your noble status. Also you can’t afford to pay taxes because you spend nearly all of the money you get from your lands and peasants on keeping up appearances at the court in Versailles. You have to spend thousands on clothes, dozens of servants, paintings, throwing parties and decorating so that you don’t get mocked at court. You think that of course the Estates should vote separately with one vote each, as is traditional. You are surprised that the third estate is even allowed to come to Versailles, they are dressed like beggars (half of them don’t even have wigs or stockings!) and probably don’t even know how to read. You wouldn’t mind getting some concessions from the King, the way the English lords did, forcing him to get consent from the nobles and call the Estates General more often, but generally you want things to stay pretty much the way they are now.

Monsieur Bourgeois Third Estate

You are a wealthy merchant from Paris, but you are sick of paying so much taxes, while the nobility don’t pay any. You worked hard to make your money and the nobility just sit around, dance, eat too much and tell jokes at court. You are happy to finally get a chance to express your opinions to the King in the Estates General, but you are worried that the nobility will just overrule the third estate. You also know that a few of the nobles and some clergy agree with you, so you want all three estates to meet together, with one vote for each person, so those people can add their votes to yours. Your friends will be very disappointed if there aren’t some real changes. You know how bad the harvest was this year there have been riots demanding food in the city. You want to make sure that the government deals with things like this and think that the nobility should pay more in times of crisis.

Pére Tréspauvre First Estate

You are a poor parish priests and scholars, who works with many poor peasants and townspeople and sympathize with them. You know what a bad year this is and have seen many people in your town dying of starvation, because there was a bad harvest. You think that the government should do more for the poor and not waste so much money on fancy clothes, art and luxuries at Versailles. You have read some of the Enlightenment ideas and while you don’t like their anti-religious ideas, you do agree with their criticisms of the government and on the need for more freedom and especially more equality. You think that the rich nobles and clergy should have so many privileges and should be taxed more and the common people taxed less. You are excited by the opportunity to be in the Estates General and feel a responsibility for something to happen here that will make life better for your parishioners back home and to improve the government. You think that the common people and the third Estate deserve more of say than the other two. You feel more at home with the third estate commoners than with the rich and powerful lords of the church.

Baron de Montesquieu Historical figure Third Estate

You are a French noble and have inherited a position as head of a local court. You have studied ancient and modern history and traveled and particularly admire the government of Britain. You like how they have a balance of power between the king and parliament. In your book The Spirit of the Laws how an ideal government would have “checks and balances” between three branches of government: executive, legislative & judicial, in order to prevent one branch from becoming too powerful and abusing their power to oppress the people. You think that the aristocracy have an important role to play in checking the power of the king.

Voltaire Historical figure Third Estate

You are the most famous writer in France. You have written plays, epic poems, novels, essays on science, philosophy and religion, histories, and thousands of letters. You love to make fun of those in power in the government and church, even though you have been thrown in prison for doing so several times. Your favorite sayings are “I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it” and “Crush the damned thing” speaking of the Catholic church. You visited England and admire its government which allows more freedom of speech and religion than France and where the king’s power is limited by the Parliament. You don’t oppose monarchy, but think that monarchs should be “enlightened” and work for the good of their people and that if they don’t, there should be some way of changing monarchs.

You are from a middle class family (your father was a lawyer), but you got a good education and through your writing (and crafty business deals), you became very rich. You also like to act like a nobleman, calling yourself “de Voltaire” and hanging out with nobles and kings (you are friends with the King of Prussia and have corresponded with the empress of Russia). But you think that some nobles are stupid and that nobility should be based on people’s intelligence rather than inheritance.

Jacques Paysan Third Estate

You are a small landowner and you are sick up paying so much in taxes every year. Especially this year, when the harvest was terrible, but you still had to pay taxes. You have seen many families living near you starving to death this year and you will never forget it. It burns you up that so many people are starving, the nobles and church take their money and then they don’t pay any taxes. You aren’t well educated, but you are sick and tired and not going to take it any more.

Abbé Sieyes Historical figure First Estate

You are a member of the First Estate from the noble class but because you read many of the Enlightenment books about liberty, equality and the rights of all, you now identify with the third estate. You were elected in Paris to represent the First Estate but want to leave the First Estate and join the Third Estate. Recently you wrote a popular document: “What is the Third estate?” which says: “What is the Third Estate? Everything. What has it been in the government up until now? Nothing What does it demand to be? Something.”

Count Mirabeau Historical figure Third Estate

You are a noble, but couldn’t get elected by the second estate, so you got elected by the Third Estate and have been elected to the National Assembly. You have read the writings of the Enlightenment thinkers and want to see the government change to be more like that of England, where there is a Parliament that has more power than the King. You are a great speaker and through your speeches and leadership role in the National Assembly, you have become famous throughout France. Lately the King has begun sending you money to keep you friendly to him. You don’t mind the money (your mistress always wants new dresses), but also you think there is a place for a king and don’t want to get rid of him completely. You think that too much change would cause chaos. The people need the king as a symbol of the country and of tradition.

Georges Danton Historical figure Third Estate

You are also a lawyer have read all the great works of the Enlightenment. You especially love Rousseau. You hate the nobility and want to get rid of their privileges. You are very excited about being in the Estates General as a chance to try to put Enlightenment ideas into reality and reform the government. You think that France would be better off like the new American colonies as a republic, with no hereditary rulers. Also you think that violence might be necessary to get rid of the privileges of the aristocracy, but you don’t mind.

Marie Antoinette Wife of Louis XVI, sister of the Hapsburg King of Austria.

You were born into the Hapsburg family and married off to Louis XVI when you were only 15. Although you were initially well received at Versailles, you eventually became hated because you are from Austria, the traditional enemy of France and because of your extravagant ways. You were nicknamed “Madame Deficit” because of your spending on clothes, parties and gambling (you lost almost $1.5 million playing cards in one year alone!). You push around Louis XVI, your indecisive and slow witted husband. You convinced him to fire Necker who was impudently suggesting that you spend too much money and was suggesting that your friends the nobles start paying taxes. Your brother the King of Austria is an absolute ruler and doesn’t take any crap from his people. You think Louis shouldn’t take any either.

Pierre Sansculotte Third Estate

You are a simple citizen of Paris. You don’t have much extra money and are therefore strongly opposed to any new taxes. It drives you crazy to think that the nobles don’t pay any taxes at all. You haven’t read much, but you have heard about how in America they got rid of King George, saying “no taxation without representation.” You are wondering why you and your countrymen have put up with that for so long.

Marquis de LaFayette Historical figure Second Estate

You are a member of the nobility and serve in the military, but you are a strong believer in the ideals of the Enlightenment. A dozen years ago, you went over to the American colonies and fought with the Americans against the English. You became friends with Washington, Jefferson and Thomas Paine and came to believe strongly in their ideals of liberty, democracy and equality. You came back to France hoping to see an improvement in your own government and you are very excited about the calling of the Estates General as an opportunity to reform the government. You have some loyalty to the King, but you would like to see a government more like that of England, where the King has limited powers and there is an elected representational body which holds the real power. You find many of your fellow nobles very backward, still clinging to their medieval privileges and rights. You think that those need to be done away with and that people should be promoted for their skills, rather than their birth. You are hoping to work with the third estate in some way, because many of the people there have more your way of thinking.

Jean Paul Marat Historical figure Third Estate

You are a doctor turned newspaper editor (your newspaper is called “The Friend of the People”). You hate the current system where the king and aristocrats have so much power. You idolize the poor people of Paris, known as the “sans-culottes” (without breeches) because they wear long trousers rather than the breeches and silk stockings of the rich.

You will later say “In order to ensure public tranquility, 200, 000 heads must be cut off.” You will eventually bestabbed to death in your bath by someone who was opposed to your policies.

Olympe de Gouges Historical figure Third Estate

You are described in the textbook. You want to get rid of the great inequality of French society and promote freedom and equality for men and women. You strongly support the Revolution and the rights of all people. Yet you also sympathize with Marie Antoinette and don’t think that she should be punished for the wrongs of the king, even if she is Austrian (France declared war on Austria in 1791).

Maximilien Robespierre Historical figure Third Estate

You are a lawyer and you have read all the great works of the Enlightenment. You especially love Rousseau. You hate the nobility and want to get rid of their privileges. You are very excited about being in the Estates General as a chance to try to put Enlightenment ideas into reality and reform the government. You think that France would be better off like the new American colonies as a republic, with no hereditary rulers. Also you think that violence might be necessary to get rid of the privileges of the aristocracy, but you don’t mind.

Seigneur Ecoutemoi Second Estate

You are one of the most powerful lords of France, the most powerful nation in Europe. You own large amounts of land and have many special rights and privileges, one of which is that you don’t pay any taxes. You are loyal to the King, but are worried by the calling of the Estates General, that he may ask you to pay taxes, which would be an insult to your noble status. Also you can’t afford to pay taxes because you spend nearly all of the money you get from your lands and peasants on keeping up appearances at the court in Versailles. You have to spend thousands on clothes, dozens of servants, paintings, throwing parties and decorating so that you don’t get mocked at court. You think that of course the Estates should vote separately with one vote each, as is traditional. You are surprised that the third estate is even allowed to come to Versailles, they are dressed like beggars (half of them don’t even have wigs or stockings!) and probably don’t even know how to read. You wouldn’t mind getting some concessions from the King, the way the English lords did, forcing him to get consent from the nobles and call the Estates General more often, but generally you want things to stay pretty much the way they are now.

Madame le Chien Second Estate

You were the lady in waiting for Marie Antoinette- basically her servant but best friend as well. You share many of the same political ideas with Marie Antoinette and believe that the King should be able to rule absolutely. You don’t trust the Third Estate and of course would be horrified by the Revolution. You also believe that the First and Second Estate should be exempt from taxes and should be given more privileges than the Third estate- after all, that is how God intended it.

Marquis de La Bretonne Second Estate

You are a member of the minor nobility, but you are a writer and intellectual and strong believer in the ideals of the Enlightenment. You met and admire Voltaire, are friends with the Abbé Sieyes, have read widely and agree with the philosophes in admiring the government of England. You are very excited about the calling of the Estates General as an opportunity to reform the government. You don’t think much of the King (you find the court at Versailles stupid and a waste of money) and find many of your fellow nobles very backward, still clinging to their medieval privileges and rights. You think that those need to be done away with and that people should be promoted for their skills, rather than their birth. You are hoping to work with the third estate in some way, because many of the people there have more your way of thinking.

Monsieur Leroi Third Estate

You are a wealthy merchant from Lyon, but you are sick of paying so much taxes, while the nobility don’t pay any. You worked hard to make your money and the nobility just sit around, dance, eat too much and tell jokes at court. You greatly admire the King, but think that he lets the nobles get away with too much. You are worried that the nobility will just overrule the third estate. You also know that a few of the nobles and some clergy agree with you, so you want all three estates to meet together, with one vote for each person, so those people can add their votes to yours. Your friends will be very disappointed if there aren’t some real changes.

Monsieur Le Maire Third Estate

You are the mayor of Marseilles and you have learned a lot about government and think that the monarchy needs to change a lot. You hate the nobility and want to get rid of their privileges, because even if they are stupid, they get into important positions and mess things up. You worked your way up and think everyone should have to. You are excited to be in the Estates General, but worried that the nobility will just overrule the third estate. You also know that a few of the nobles and some clergy agree with you, so you want all three estates to meet together, with one vote for each person, so those people can add their votes to yours. Your city will be very disappointed in you if there aren’t some real changes.

Monsieur Lafleur Third Estate

You are a wealthy cloth manufacturer, but you are sick of paying so much taxes, while the nobility don’t pay any. You worked hard to make your money and the nobility just sit around, dance, eat too much and tell jokes at court. You greatly admire the King, but think that he lets the nobles get away with too much. You are worried that the nobility will just overrule the third estate. You also know that a few of the nobles and some clergy agree with you, so you want all three estates to meet together, with one vote for each person, so those people can add their votes to yours. Your friends will be very disappointed if there aren’t some real changes.

Jacques Soldat Third Estate

You are a lieutenant in the army, but you are frustrated because men from the nobility keep getting promoted over you. You hate how even stupid members of the nobility can take top positions in the army. You feel loyal to the king, but want to see the nobility’s privileges abolished. You would like to see an enlightened despotism, like that of Frederick the Great, but where the King’s advisors were the most thoughtful people, not necessarily the nobles.

Monsieur L’Avocat Third Estate

You are a lawyer and you have read all the great works of the Enlightenment. You hate the nobility and want to get rid of their privileges, because even if they are stupid, they get into important positions and mess things up. You worked your way up and think everyone should have to. You are very excited about being in the Estates General as a chance to try to put Enlightenment ideas into reality and reform the government. You agree with Montesquieu and Voltaire’s ideas about government, but you are not very attached to the King, you think that France would be better off like the new American colonies as a republic, with no hereditary rulers.

Rousseau Historical figure Third Estate

You are originally from Switzerland and grew up rather poor, but moved to France to try to be a writer. Partly for this reason you resent and hate the wealthy and the nobles. Also you like the way that in Swiss villages, common people can be involved in making decisions. You would like to see that kind of direct democracy elsewhere. You wrote a book called “A Discourse on Inequality” in which you argued that the rich and nobles don’t deserve all their advantages. They only have land because one of their ancestors stole it. You would like to see a new kind of government where everyone had a chance to participate and decisions would be based on what is the “general will” of the people.

Robert Turgot Financial Adviser to Louis XVI ( 1774-1776) Second Estate

You were the first financial adviser to Louis XVI that argued that mercantilism should be abolished. You were a physiocrat- a believer in reduced taxes, less regulation, and all the ideas embraced by those who supported “lassez faire”/ You got the King to sign an edict in January 1776 that abolished some monopolies and the special privileges of the trading companies. You also abolished the forced labor of the peasants- the hated corvee. You were eventually able to limit the budget by 60 million livres and reduce the interest on the debt from 8.7 million livres to 3 million. Unfortunately for you, you suffered the same fate that Necker would: the opposition of the Second Estate and Marie Antoinette. Voltaire wrote of your firing: “The dismissal of this great man crushes me…since that fatal day, I have not followed anything…and am waiting patiently for someone to cut our throats.”

Bishop Adieu First Estate

You are the younger son of a noble family and believe very strongly in the Catholic Church, in your opinion, the most important institution in France. You welcome the opportunity to be consulted by Louis in the Estates General, but you cannot accept the idea of paying more taxes. Already you give 2% of your income as a “free gift” to the state and you need the money to build more churches, give to charity and have a lifestyle befitting your rank in society. A lord of the church has to dress, eat and live well so that people won’t think him a peasant. You feel that the Estates General should meet as is traditional: separately with one vote for each estate. You wouldn’t want to meet with the rabble of the third Estate. God knows when they last had a bath and they don’t even wear wigs or stockings!

Simon Malt Third Estate

You are a poor peasant. You toil day in and out from dawn until dusk. You barely make enough food to feed your family of seven. You have been overtaxed, and are tired of lining the pockets of the wealthy nobles and receiving nothing in return. You are now also being asked to pay more taxes to pay for a war (American Revolution) that is thousands of miles away, that has nothing to do with putting bread on your table. You have had enough!

Frere Jesuit First Estate

You are a poor parish priests and scholars, who works with many poor peasants and townspeople and sympathize with them. You know what a bad year this is and have seen many people in your town dying of starvation, because there was a bad harvest. You think that the government should do more for the poor and not waste so much money on fancy clothes, art and luxuries at Versailles. You have read some of the Enlightenment ideas and while you don’t like their anti-religious ideas, you do agree with their criticisms of the government and on the need for more freedom and especially more equality. You think that the rich nobles and clergy should have so many privileges and should be taxed more and the common people taxed less. You are excited by the opportunity to be in the Estates General and feel a responsibility for something to happen here that will make life better for your parishioners back home and to improve the government. You think that the common people and the third Estate deserve more of say than the other two. You feel more at home with the third estate commoners than with the rich and powerful lords of the church.

Marie LeBeouf Third Estate

You are a poor peasant. But you have taught yourself to read. You have read the works of Mary Wollstonecraft and are tired of being the property of your husband, a poor peasant farmer. You have started your own small school to educate young women to read and write. You are fed up with the traditional social order.

Jacques Esparrow Third Estate

You are a poor peasant. You toil day in and out from dawn until dusk. You barely make enough food to feed your family of seven. You have been overtaxed, and are tired of lining the pockets of the wealthy nobles and receiving nothing in return. You are now also being asked to pay more taxes to pay for a war (American Revolution) that is thousands of miles away, that has nothing to do with putting bread on your table. You have had enough!

Marc Chevre Third Estate

You are a cheesemaker. You toil day in and out from dawn until dusk. You barely make enough money to feed your family of five. You have been overtaxed, and are tired of lining the pockets of the wealthy nobles and receiving nothing in return. You are now also being asked to pay more taxes to pay for a war (American Revolution) that is thousands of miles away, that has nothing to do with putting bread on your table. You have had enough!

Jean Pain Third Estate

You are a baker. You toil day in and out from dawn until dusk. You barely make enough money to feed your family. You have been overtaxed, and are tired of lining the pockets of the wealthy nobles and receiving nothing in return. You are now also being asked to pay more taxes to pay for a war (American Revolution) that is thousands of miles away, that has nothing to do with putting bread on your table. You have had enough!

Beau Mer Third Estate

You are a poor peasant farmer. You toil day in and out from dawn until dusk. You barely make enough food to feed your family of seven. You have been overtaxed, and are tired of lining the pockets of the wealthy nobles and receiving nothing in return. You are now also being asked to pay more taxes to pay for a war (American Revolution) that is thousands of miles away, that has nothing to do with putting bread on your table. You have had enough!

Marie Bebe Third Estate

You are a poor peasant. You learned the practice of Midwifery in order to support yourself and your five children. Your husband died of Tuberculosis and left you with nothing but debt. The Church keeps promising to help you, but you have fallen further into debt. Now the church wants more money from you and the state wants more in taxes. You don’t know what to do.