

The Terror




"The Revolution eats its children"

Following the execution of the King, the Convention argued about how the country should be run and how the war should be fought. This debate became much more heated following a peasant uprising in La Vendée against compulsory military service. Two main groups emerged with very different ideas.

Group	Leader	Idea
The Jacobins	Jean Marat Max Robespierre Georges Danton	"We must suspend free speech and liberty so we can win the war. Otherwise, there will be nothing left to defend"
The Girondins	Madame Roland	"We must preserve the ideals of free speech and liberty at all costs. Otherwise the Revolution is not worth fighting for"

Discussion point: Which of these two views do you agree with most?

In the end, the Jacobins seized control of the Convention and expelled the Girondins. Their main leaders were as follows:

		
Georges Danton	Jean-Paul Marat	Maximilien Robespierre
"We must dare, and again dare, and forever dare."	"God has always been hard on the poor".	"Every Revolution eats its children"
He was known for his ugliness – he had been twice gorged by a bull, and trampled over by a herd of pigs as a child.	He was known as "The Toad" due to his ugliness. Suffered from conjunctivitis, migraines and tuberculosis and a rare disease that left his skin peeling off in lumps.	He was a talented lawyer with amazing energy, dedication and intelligence, but with a streak of absolute ruthlessness.

Questions:

Which of the three quotes listed above do you find the most striking? Explain your answer carefully.

What happened to each man?

Danton did not agree with Marat and Robespierre, who wanted the Girondins executed as "traitors to the Revolution" – so he was thrown out of the government. He felt Robespierre hadn't "got the balls" to arrest him, but he was wrong. He was sent to the guillotine. His last words were "Infamous Robespierre! The scaffold is calling for you! Your house shall be razed! You shall follow me!". He left instructions for his head to be held up for the crowd after his execution because "it's well worth a good look at!".



Marat was soaking himself in a herbal bath to relieve his sores when he was visited by Charlotte Corday, a woman who claimed to have details about a planned rebellion. Whilst he was jotting down notes, she stabbed him through the heart with a butcher's knife.



Robespierre reacted to the death of Marat by declaring "Let Terror be the order of the day". During "The Terror" 40,000 people were guillotined in just a few months. He then totally lost it, calling himself "The Incorruptible" and organising a bizarre "Festival of the Supreme Being" in which he seemed to suggest that he was a God! In July 1794 (the "Coup de Thermidor"), police came to arrest Robespierre himself, who had part of his jaw shot off as he tried to escape. He was then carried, half conscious, off to the Place de Revolutions in Paris and was guillotined, facing upwards. A wax mask was made of his face [right] by Madame Tussaud, who exhibited her work in London and later opened a museum.



Debate: Who was the most evil of the Jacobins?

Your teacher will divide you into three groups – 1, 2 and 3. Each group will then be divided into two smaller groups: A & B. Your tasks are outlined below:

	A	B
Group 1	For Danton	Against Marat
Group 2	For Marat	Against Robespierre
Group 3	For Robespierre	Against Danton

Next lesson, you will have a debate about who the most evil of these three men were. Using any sources available to you, produce
 "A's" should produce a case trying to convince the jury that your allocated character deserves to be remembered in a positive way.
 "B's" should produce a case trying to convince the jury that your allocated character deserves to be remembered in a negative way.

Using any sources available to you, write the speech following this format:

Paragraph 1: His public life: things he has done for the Revolution

Paragraph 2: His personal life: his personality and family life

In the debate, the "prosecution" and "defence" points will be heard in turn for each man. Each person will then have one vote: "A's" will be able to vote for the person they think is the most guilty; "B's" for the most innocent. The "innocent" votes will be subtracted from the "guilty" votes for each man to give him an overall score. The person with the highest score will be the most guilty.



Robespierre is executed.
What is it trying to say about him?
Is this likely to be true?



Marie-Antoinette waiting to be executed. By Jacques-Louis David.
Does this drawing fit in with what you know already about the Queen?
Does it make you more or less sympathetic for her?