Chapter 7 Section 1
Causes of the French Revolution

Setting the Stage: In the 1700s, France was the envy of all the world. Scholars flocked to Paris to witness firsthand the culture and intellect that sprung from the city. France boasted a huge population, and the ideas of the Enlightenment were spreading like wildfire. But looks can be deceiving, and France was in actuality a powder keg ready to explode.

The Old Regime
The people of France were divided into one of three large social classes, or _______________. These estates provided privileges to some and hardships to others.
First Estate: ________________
Second Estate: ________________
  - Owned 20% of the land
  - Disliked ______________________ ideas because they threatened their high status and power in French society.
Third Estate: This estate was further broken down into 3 groups
1. bourgeoisie – enlightened and ____________________________
2. Urban workers – lived in poverty, often out of work, often went hungry
3. peasants – largest group in France, paid high taxes

The Third Estate was eager for a change in the class system of France

Enlightenment Ideas
The ideas of equality and liberty of the Enlightenment began influence many in France. Some looked to the revolution in America as inspiration to make similar changes in France.

Economic Troubles
France’s ______________________ was growing rapidly, putting a strain on their food supply. To add to the problem, a devastating __________________ led to food shortages and caused the price of bread to double. People were starving and the government was slow to fix the problem.

Extravagant Spending by the King
The king of France, _____________________, did little to help his country. He and his wife, Marie Antoinette, continued to spend their riches on parties and gambling. France also borrowed money to help __________________ win their revolution in an effort to defeat their rivals, the British. All of this put a huge financial strain on the country.

Weak Leadership
With all of these issues, a strong leader may have been able to help guide his country to prosperity. Louis XVI was not that leader. Louis’ youth and inexperience, as well as his Austrian wife, made him a target of his people. He quickly lost the favor of his people.