

The Tale of Two Cities and the French Revolution

I. Brief Historiographical Survey (Four Major Interpretations)

- A. Senseless Violence and Destruction
 - Edmund Burke, *Reflections of the Revolution in France*, 1790
- B. Rise of Liberty: *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*
 - Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, 1837
- C. Marxist, Class Struggle
 - Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution*, 1939
- D. Revisionist
 - Alfred Cobban, *The Myth of the French Revolution*, 1955

II. Myths and Realities of Its Origins

A. Political

1. Despotic Rule of the Bourbon Dynasty?
2. Illogical Character of French Government?
3. Wars of the French Kings?
4. Lack of Decisive Leadership at Crucial Times

B. Social and Economic

1. Rise of the Middle Class and Their Opposition of Mercantilism?
2. Survival of Privilege?
3. Inequitable System of Taxation?
4. Inability to Solve the Credit Crunch
5. Bad Harvests during 1780's

C. Intellectual

1. Contribution of Philosophes?
2. American Revolution?
3. Education
 - a. Grub Street Writers — Scandal and Slander
 - b. Lawyers and Civil Servants

III. Phases

- A. 1787–1789 – financial crisis; calling of Estates General
- B. 1789–1791 – establishment of National Assembly
- C. 1791–1794 – radical phase leading to reign of terror (1793–1794)
- D. 1795–1799 – Directory / moderate reaction

IV. Significant Results