**The French Revolution**

**What was the French Revolution?:**

France was wracked by a revolution which radically changed the government, administration, military and culture of the nation as well as plunging Europe into a series of wars. France went from a largely 'feudal' state under an [absolutist](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/governmentandlaw/a/What-Was-Absolutism.htm) monarch, through the French Revolution to a republic which executed the king and then to an empire under Napoleon Bonaparte.

**When was the French Revolution?:**

Although historians are agreed that the French Revolution started in 1789 they are divided on the end date. A few histories stop in 1795 with the creation of the [Directory](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glThe-Directory.htm), some stop in 1799 with the creation of the [Consulate](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glconsulate.htm), while many more stop in 1802 when Napoleon Bonaparte became Consul for Life or 1804 when he became Emperor. A rare few continue to the restoration of the monarchy in 1814. This site prefers 1802.

**The French Revolution in Brief:**

A medium term financial crisis, caused partly by French involvement in the [American Revolutionary War](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/warsinnorthamerica/a/americanrevwar101.htm), led to the French crown first calling an [Assembly of Notables](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glAssembly-Of-Notables.htm) and then, in 1789, a meeting called the [Estates General](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/thefrenchrevolution/a/hfr3.htm) in order to gain assent for new tax laws.

The [Estates General](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glEstates-General.htm) was composed of three ‘Estates’: the clergy, the nobility and the rest of France. This '[Third Estate](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glThird-Estate.htm)', informed by long term doubts over the constitution of France and the development of a new social order of [bourgeoisie](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glBourgeois.htm), declared itself a [National Assembly](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/thefrenchrevolution/ig/Pictures-from-the-French-Revolution/The-National-Assembly-Reshapes-France.htm) and decreed the suspension of tax, taking French sovereignty into its own hands.

After a power struggle which saw the [National Assembly](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glNational-Assembly.htm) take the [Tennis Court Oath](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/thefrenchrevolution/ig/Pictures-from-the-French-Revolution/The-Tennis-Court-Oath.htm) not to disband, the king gave in and the Assembly began reforming France, scrapping the old system and drawing up a new constitution with a [Legislative Assembly](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glLegislative-Assembly.htm). This continued the reforms, but it created divisions in France by legislating against the church and declaring war on nations which supported the French king. In 1792 a[second revolution](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/thefrenchrevolution/tp/Frenchrevtimeline.htm) took place, as Jacobins and [sansculottes](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/Sans-Culottes.htm) forced the Assembly to replace itself with a[National Convention](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glNational-Convention.htm) which abolished the monarchy, declared France a republic and in 1793 executed the king.

As the [Revolutionary Wars](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/napoleonicwars/a/The-French-Revolutionary-Wars-War-Of-The-First-Coalition.htm) went against France, as regions angry at attacks on the church and conscription rebelled and as the revolution became increasingly radicalised the National Convention created a [Committee of Public Safety](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glCommittee-Of-Public-Safety.htm) to run France in 1793.

In 1794 the revolution again changed, this time turning against the

This remained in power thanks to rigging elections and purging the assemblies before being replaced, thanks to the army and a general called [Napoleon Bonaparte](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/bonapartenapoleon/a/bionapoleon.htm), by a new constitution in 1799 which created three [consuls](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glconsulate.htm) to rule France. Bonaparte was the [first consul](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/thefrenchrevolution/a/hfr9_2.htm) and, while the reform of France continued, Bonaparte managed to bring the revolutionary wars to a close and have himself declared consul for life. In 1804 he crowned himself Emperor of France; the revolution was over, the empire had begun.

Want more? Read our full length [History of the French Revolution.](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/thefrenchrevolution/a/hfrcontents.htm)  
The [French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/napoleonicwars/a/The-French-Revolutionary-And-Napoleonic-Wars.htm).

**The Reformation**

**Summary:**

Split in the Latin Christian church instigated by Luther in 1517 and evolved by many others over the next decades which created and introduced Protestantism. More commonly referred to as either the ‘reformations’ or specific '\*\*\* reformation' in recognition of the many different ideas.

**The Pre-Reformation Latin Church:**

In the early 16th century western and central Europe followed the Latin Church headed by the Pope.

While religion permeated the lives of everyone in Europe – even if the poor focused on day to day issues and the rich on improving the afterlife – there was widespread dissatisfaction with many aspects of the church: at it’s bloated bureaucracy, perceived arrogance, avarice and abuses of power. There was also widespread agreement that the church needed to be reformed, to restore it to a purer and more accurate form. While the church was certainly vulnerable to change, there was little agreement on what should be done.

A massively fragmented reform movement, with attempts from the Pope at the top to priests at the bottom, was ongoing, but attacks tended to focus on only one aspect at a time, not the whole church and the local nature led only to local success. Perhaps the main bar to change was the belief that the church still offered the only route to salvation. What was needed for mass change was a theologian/argument which could convince a mass of both people and priests that they did not need the established church to save them, allowing reform to run unchecked by previous loyalties.

**Luther and the German Reformation:**

In 1517 Luther, a Professor of Theology, grew angry at the selling of [indulgences](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glindulgence.htm) and produced 95 theses against them. He sent them privately to friends and opponents and may, as legend has it, have nailed them to a church door, a common method of starting debate. These were soon published and the Dominicans, who sold lots of indulgences, called for sanctions against him. As the papacy sat in judgement and later condemned him, Luther produced a powerful body of work, falling back on scripture to challenge the existing papal authority, and rethinking the entire church.

Luther’s ideas and style of preaching in person soon spread, partly amongst people who believed in him and partly among people who just liked his opposition to the church. Many clever and gifted preachers across Germany took on the new ideas, teaching and adding to them faster and more successfully than the church could keep up with. Never before had so many [clergy](http://historymedren.about.com/od/cterms/g/clergy.htm) switched to a new creed which was so different and over time they challenged and replaced every major element of the old church. Shortly after Luther a Swiss preacher called Zwingli produced similar ideas, beginning the related Swiss Reformation.

**Reformation Changes:**

1. Souls were saved without the cycle of penitence and confession (which was now sinful), by faith, learning and the grace of God.
2. Scripture was the sole authority, to be taught in the vernacular.
3. A new church structure: a community of believers, focused around a preacher, needing no central hierarchy.
4. The two sacraments mentioned in the scriptures were kept, albeit altered but the other five were downgraded.

**The Renaissance**

**Summary of the Renaissance**

The Renaissance was a cultural and scholarly movement which stressed the rediscovery and application of texts and thought from classical antiquity, occurring in Europe c. 1300 – c. 1600. The Renaissance can also refer to the period of European history spanning roughly the same dates.

**What was the Renaissance?**

Essentially, it was a cultural and intellectual movement, intimately tied to society and politics, of the late fourteenth to early seventeenth centuries, although it is commonly restricted to just the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is considered to have originated in Italy. Traditionally people have claimed it was stimulated, in part, by Petrarch, who had a passion for rediscovering lost manuscripts and a fierce belief in the civilizing power of ancient thought, and in part by conditions in Florence.

At its core, the Renaissance was a movement dedicated to the rediscovery and use of classical learning, that is to say knowledge and attitudes from the Ancient Greek and Roman eras. [Renaissance](http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/rterms/g/120607Renaissan.htm)literally means ‘rebirth’, and Renaissance thinkers believed the period between themselves and the fall of Rome, which they labelled the Middle Ages, had seen a decline in cultural achievement compared with the earlier eras. Participants intended, through the study of classical texts, textual criticism and classical techniques, to both reintroduce the heights of those ancient days and improve the situation of their contemporaries.

**The Renaissance Age**

The era was dynamic, with European explorers “finding” new continents, the transformation of trading methods and patterns, the decline of feudalism, scientific developments such as the Copernican system of the cosmos and the rise of gunpowder. Many of these changes were triggered, in part, by the Renaissance, such as classical mathematics stimulating new financial trading mechanisms, or new techniques from the east boosting ocean navigation. The printing press was also developed, allowing Renaissance texts to be disseminated widely.

**The World at War Again: WWII**

**Summary:**

**World War II** (often abbreviated to **WWII** or **WW2**), also known as the **Second World War**, was a [global war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_war) that lasted from 1939 to 1945, although related conflicts began earlier. It involved [the vast majority of the world's nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II_by_country)—including all of the [great powers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_power)—eventually forming two opposing [military alliances](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_alliance): the [Allies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_II) and the [Axis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axis_powers). It was the most widespread war in history, and directly involved more than 100 million people from over 30 countries. In a state of "[total war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_war)", the major participants threw their entire economic, industrial, and scientific capabilities behind the [war effort](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_effort), erasing the distinction between civilian and military resources. Marked by mass deaths of civilians, including [the Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust) (in which approximately 11 million people were killed) and the [strategic bombing of industrial and population centres](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_bombing_during_World_War_II) (in which approximately one million were killed, and which included the [atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki)), it resulted in an estimated [50 million to 85 million fatalities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II_casualties). These made World War II the [deadliest conflict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_disasters_by_death_toll) in [human history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_world).

The [Empire of Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_of_Japan) aimed to dominate [Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia) and the [Pacific](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific) and was already [at war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War) with the [Republic of China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_China_(1912%E2%80%931949)) in 1937,but the world war is generally said to have begun on 1 September 1939[]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II#cite_note-8) with the [invasion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_of_Poland) of [Poland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Polish_Republic) by [Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany) and subsequent declarations of war on Germany by [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Third_Republic) and the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom). From late 1939 to early 1941, in a series of campaigns and [treaties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripartite_Pact), Germany conquered or controlled much of continental Europe, and formed the Axis alliance with [Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Italy) and [Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_of_Japan). Under the [Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molotov%E2%80%93Ribbentrop_Pact) of August 1939, Germany and the [Soviet Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) partitioned and annexed territories of their European neighbors, [Poland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_invasion_of_Poland), [Finland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_War), [Romania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_occupation_of_Bessarabia_and_Northern_Bukovina) and the [Baltic states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupation_of_the_Baltic_states). The war continued primarily between the European Axis powers and the coalition of the United Kingdom and the [British Commonwealth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Commonwealth), with campaigns including the [North Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Desert_Campaign) and [East Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_African_Campaign_(World_War_II)) campaigns, the aerial [Battle of Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Britain), the [Blitz bombing campaign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blitz), the [Balkan Campaign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_Campaign_(World_War_II)) as well as the long-running [Battle of the Atlantic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Atlantic). In June 1941, the European Axis powers launched [an invasion of the Soviet Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Barbarossa), opening the [largest land theatre of war in history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_(World_War_II)), which trapped the major part of the Axis' military forces into a [war of attrition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attrition_warfare). In December 1941, Japan [attacked the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack_on_Pearl_Harbor) and [European territories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_invasion_of_Malaya) in the Pacific Ocean, and quickly conquered much of the Western Pacific.

The Axis advance halted in 1942 when Japan lost the critical [Battle of Midway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Midway), near [Hawaii](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaii), and Germany was defeated in [North Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_El_Alamein) and then, decisively, at [Stalingrad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad) in the Soviet Union. In 1943, with a series of German defeats on the [Eastern Front](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_(World_War_II)), the [Allied invasion of Sicily](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allied_invasion_of_Sicily) and the [Allied invasion of Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allied_invasion_of_Italy) which brought about Italian surrender, and Allied victories in the Pacific, the Axis lost the initiative and undertook strategic retreat on all fronts. In 1944, the Western Allies [invaded German-occupied France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normandy_landings), while the Soviet Union regained all of its territorial losses and invaded Germany and its allies. During 1944 and 1945 the Japanese suffered major reverses in mainland Asia in [South](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Guangxi_Campaign) [Central China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_West_Hunan) and [Burma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burma_Campaign), while the Allies crippled the [Japanese Navy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Japanese_Navy) and captured key Western Pacific islands.

The war in Europe concluded with an [invasion of Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Allied_invasion_of_Germany) by the Western Allies and the Soviet Union, culminating in the [capture of Berlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Berlin) by Soviet and Polish troops and the subsequent [German unconditional surrender](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Instrument_of_Surrender) on [8 May 1945](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_in_Europe_Day). Following the [Potsdam Declaration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potsdam_Declaration) by the Allies on 26 July 1945 and the refusal of Japan to surrender under its terms, the United States [dropped atomic bombs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki) on the Japanese cities of [Hiroshima](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiroshima) and [Nagasaki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagasaki) on 6 August and 9 August respectively. With an [invasion of the Japanese archipelago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Downfall) imminent, the possibility of additional atomic bombings, and the [Soviet Union's declaration of war on Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet-Japanese_War_(1945)) and [invasion of Manchuria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_invasion_of_Manchuria), [Japan surrendered](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surrender_of_Japan) on 15 August 1945. Thus ended the war in Asia, cementing the total victory of the Allies.

**The Enlightenment**

**Summary:**

The **Enlightenment** (also known as the **Age of Enlightenment**, in [French](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_language): *le Siècle des Lumières*, [lit.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literal_translation) 'the Century of Lights'; and in [German](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_language): *Aufklärung*, 'Enlightenment') was an intellectual movement which dominated the world of ideas in Europe in the 18th century. The Enlightenment included a range of ideas centered on reason as the primary source of authority and legitimacy, and came to advance ideals such as liberty, progress, tolerance, [fraternity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraternal_order), [constitutional government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_government), and [separation of church and state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_church_and_state). In France, the central doctrines of *les Lumières* were individual liberty and religious tolerance in opposition to an [absolute monarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolute_monarchy) and the fixed dogmas of the [Roman Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church).The Enlightenment was marked by an emphasis on the [scientific method](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_method) and [reductionism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reductionism) along with increased questioning of [religious orthodoxy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodoxy) - an attitude captured by the phrase[*Sapere aude*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sapere_aude), "Dare to know".

The ideas of the Enlightenment undermined the authority of the monarchy and the Church, and paved the way for the political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. A variety of 19th-century movements, including [liberalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberalism) and [neo-classicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-classicism), trace their intellectual heritage back to the Enlightenment.

The Age of Enlightenment was preceded by and closely associated with the scientific revolution. Earlier philosophers whose work influenced the Enlightenment included [Francis Bacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bacon), [René Descartes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren%C3%A9_Descartes), [John Locke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke), and [Baruch Spinoza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baruch_Spinoza). The major figures of the Enlightenment included [Cesare Beccaria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cesare_Beccaria), [Voltaire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voltaire), [Denis Diderot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_Diderot), [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Jacques_Rousseau), [David Hume](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Hume), [Adam Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Smith), and [Immanuel Kant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanuel_Kant). Some European rulers, including [Catherine II of Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catherine_II_of_Russia), [Joseph II of Austria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_II_of_Austria) and [Frederick II of Prussia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_II_of_Prussia), tried to apply Enlightenment thought on religious and political tolerance, which became known as [enlightened absolutism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enlightened_absolutism). [Benjamin Franklin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin) and [Thomas Jefferson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Jefferson) visited Europe from America during this period and contributed actively to the scientific and political debate, and later incorporated the ideals of the Enlightenment into the [Declaration of Independence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Declaration_of_Independence) and the [Constitution of the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_the_United_States).

**The Importance of WWI**

**Summary:**

[World War 1](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/worldwar1/f/faqww1start.htm) was a major conflict fought in Europe and around the world between July 28th 1914 and November 11th 1918. Nations from across all non polar continents were involved and over eight million people died, although Russia, Britain, France, Germany and Austria-Hungary dominated. Much of the war was characterised by stagnant trench warfare and massive loss of life in failed attacks.

**Belligerent Nations of World War 1:**

The war was fought by two main power blocks: the [Entente Powers](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/Entente-Powers-Allies.htm), or 'Allies' comprised of the Russia, France, Britain (and later US) and their [allies](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glallies.htm) on one side and the [Central Powers](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/referenceencyclopedia/g/glcentralpowers.htm) of Germany, Austro-Hungary, Turkey and their allies on the other. Italy later joined the Entente.

[**Origins of World War 1**](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/worldwar2/fl/The-Origins-of-World-War-Two-in-Europe.htm)**:**

European politics in the early twentieth century were a dichotomy: many politicians thought war had been banished by progress while others, influenced partly by a fierce arms race, felt war was inevitable. In Germany this belief went further: the war should happen sooner rather than later, while they still (as they believed) had an advantage over their perceived major enemy, Russia.

As Russia and France were allied Germany feared being attacked from both sides and had developed the[Schlieffen Plan](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/worldwar1/a/The-Schlieffen-Plan.htm) to deal with it: a swift looping attack on France designed to knock it out early, allowing concentration on Russia.

After rising tensions, the catalyst occurred on June 28th 1914, when [Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/worldwar1/a/The-Assassination-Of-Archduke-Franz-Ferdinand-1914.htm) was assassinated by a Serbian activist, an ally of Russia. Austro-Hungary asked for German support and was promised a 'blank cheque'; they declared war on Serbia on July 28th. Russia mobilised to support Serbia, so Germany declared war on Russia; France then declared war on Germany. As German troops swung through Belgium into France days later, Britain declared war on Germany too. Declarations continued until much of Europe was at war with each other. There was widespread public support.

[**Aftermath of World War 1**](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/worldwar1/f/faqww1end.htm)**:**

Each of the defeated nations signed a treaty with the Allies, most significantly the Treaty of Versailles which was signed with Germany, and which has been blamed for causing further disruption ever since. There was devastation across Europe: 59 million troops had been mobilised, over 8 million died and over 29 million were injured. Huge quantities of capital had been passed to the now emergent United States and the culture of every European nation was deeply affected and the struggle became known as The Great War or The War to End All Wars.

**Technical Innovation:**

World War 1 was the first to make major use of machine guns, which soon showed their defensive qualities. It was also the first to see [poison gas](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/worldwar1/a/World-War-Ones-New-Weapons-Gas-And-Tanks.htm) used on the battlefields, a weapon which both sides made use of, and the first to see [tanks](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/worldwar1/a/World-War-Ones-New-Weapons-Gas-And-Tanks.htm), which were initially developed by the allies and later used to great success. The use of[aircraft](http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/worldwar1/a/Aircraft-In-World-War-1.htm) evolved from simply reconnaissance to a whole new formed of aerial warfare.

**Scientific Revolution**

**Summary:**

The **scientific revolution** was the emergence of [modern science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_science) during the [early modern period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_modern_period), when developments in [mathematics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_mathematics#Mathematics_during_the_Scientific_Revolution), [physics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_physics#Scientific_Revolution), [astronomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_astronomy#Renaissance_Period), [biology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_biology#Renaissance_and_early_modern_developments) (including [human anatomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_anatomy)) and [chemistry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_chemistry#17th_and_18th_centuries:_Early_chemistry) transformed the views of society about nature. The scientific revolution began in [Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe) towards the end of the [Renaissance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance) period and continued through the late 18th century, influencing the intellectual social movement known as[the Enlightenment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Enlightenment). While its dates are disputed, the publication in 1543 of [Nicolaus Copernicus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolaus_Copernicus)'s [*De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_revolutionibus_orbium_coelestium) (*On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*) is often cited as marking the beginning of the scientific revolution.

A first phase of the scientific revolution, focused on the recovery of the knowledge of the ancients, can be described as the *Scientific Renaissance* and is considered to have ended in 1632 with publication of [Galileo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo)'s [*Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogue_Concerning_the_Two_Chief_World_Systems).[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_revolution#cite_note-8) The completion of the scientific revolution is attributed to the "grand synthesis" of [Isaac Newton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton)'s 1687 [*Principia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophi%C3%A6_Naturalis_Principia_Mathematica), that formulated the [laws of motion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newton%27s_laws_of_motion) and [universal gravitation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_gravitation). By the end of the 18th century, the scientific revolution had given way to the "[Age of Reflection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism_in_science)".

**Significance:**

The period saw a fundamental transformation in scientific ideas across mathematics, physics, astronomy, and biology in institutions supporting scientific investigation and in the more widely held picture of the universe. The scientific revolution led to the establishment of several modern sciences.

In 1984, Joseph Ben-David wrote:

Rapid accumulation of knowledge, which has characterized the development of science since the 17th century, had never occurred before that time. The new kind of scientific activity emerged only in a few countries of Western Europe, and it was restricted to that small area for about two hundred years. (Since the 19th century, scientific knowledge has been assimilated by the rest of the world).

Since that revolution turned the authority in English not only of the Middle Ages but of the ancient world—since it started not only in the eclipse of scholastic philosophy but in the destruction of Aristotelian physics—it outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements within the system of medieval Christendom.... [It] looms so large as the real origin both of the modern world and of the modern mentality that our customary periodization of European history has become an anachronism and an encumbrance.

**The Industrial Revolution**

**Summary:**

# The **Industrial Revolution** was the transition to new manufacturing processes in the period from about 1760 to 1840. This transition included going from hand production methods to machines, new chemical manufacturing and iron production processes, improved efficiency of [water power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_wheel), the increasing use of [steam power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steam_power), the development of [machine tools](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machine_tool) and the rise of the [factory system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Factory_system). [Textiles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textile) were the dominant industry of the Industrial Revolution in terms of employment, value of output and capital invested; the textile industry was also the first to use modern production methods. The Industrial Revolution began in [Great Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Britain) and most of the important technological innovations were British.

The Industrial Revolution marks a major turning point in history; almost every aspect of daily life was influenced in some way. In particular, average income and population began to exhibit unprecedented sustained growth. Some economists say that the major impact of the Industrial Revolution was that the [standard of living](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_of_living) for the general population began to increase consistently for the first time in history, although others have said that it did not begin to meaningfully improve until the late 19th and 20th centuries At approximately the same time the Industrial Revolution was occurring, Britain was undergoing an [agricultural revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Agricultural_Revolution), which also helped to improve living standards and provided surplus labor available for industry.

Mechanized textile production spread from Great Britain to continental Europe in the early 19th century, with important centers of textiles, iron and coal emerging in Belgium, and later in France. Since then industrialization has spread throughout much of the world.[  The precise start and end of the Industrial Revolution is still debated among historians, as is the pace of economic and social changes [GDP per capita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GDP_per_capita) was broadly stable before the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of the modern [capitalist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism) economy, while the Industrial Revolution began an era of per-capita [economic growth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_growth) in capitalist economies. Economic historians are in agreement that the onset of the Industrial Revolution is the most important event in the history of humanity since the [domestication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestication) of animals and plants.

The First Industrial Revolution evolved into the [Second Industrial Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Industrial_Revolution) in the transition years between 1840 and 1870, when technological and economic progress continued with the increasing adoption of steam transport (steam-powered railways, boats and ships), the large-scale manufacture of machine tools and the increasing use of machinery in steam-powered factories.

**The Holocaust**

**Summary:**

**The Holocaust** (from the [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language) ὁλόκαυστος *holókaustos*: *hólos*, "whole" and *kaustós*, "burnt"), was a [genocide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide) in which [Adolf Hitler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_Hitler)'s [Nazi Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany) and its collaborators killed about six million [Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews). The victims included 1.5 million children and represented about two-thirds of the nine million Jews who had resided in Europe. Some definitions of the Holocaust include the additional five million non-Jewish victims of Nazi [mass murders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_murder), bringing the total to about 11 million. Killings took place throughout Nazi Germany, [German-occupied territories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German-occupied_Europe)[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust#cite_note-FOOTNOTENiewykNicosia200045.E2.80.9352-7) and territories held by allies of Nazi Germany.

From 1941 to 1945, Jews were systematically murdered in one of the [deadliest genocides in history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_genocides_by_death_toll), which was part of a broader aggregate of acts of oppression and killings of various ethnic and political groups in Europe by the Nazi regime. Under the coordination of the [SS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS), following directions from the highest leadership of the [Nazi Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Party), every arm of Germany's bureaucracy was involved in the logistics and the carrying out of the genocide. Other victims of Nazi crimes included [ethnic Poles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_crimes_against_the_Polish_nation), Soviet citizens and [Soviet POWs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_mistreatment_of_Soviet_prisoners_of_war), [other Slavs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generalplan_Ost), [Romanis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porajmos" \o "Porajmos), [communists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communists), [homosexuals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_homosexuals_in_Nazi_Germany_and_the_Holocaust), [Freemasons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freemasonry#The_Holocaust), [Jehovah's Witnesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Jehovah%27s_Witnesses_in_Nazi_Germany) and the [mentally and physically disabled](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_T4). A network of about 42,500 facilities in Germany and German-occupied territories was used to concentrate victims for [slave labor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery), mass murder, and other human rights abuses. Over 200,000 people are estimated to have been Holocaust perpetrators.

The persecution and genocide were carried out in stages, culminating in what [Nazis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazism) termed the "[Final Solution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Final_Solution) to the [Jewish Question](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Question)" (*die Endlösung der Judenfrage*), an agenda to exterminate Jews in Europe. Initially the German government passed laws to exclude Jews from civil society, most prominently the [Nuremberg Laws of 1935](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuremberg_Laws). Nazis established a network of [concentration camps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_concentration_camps) starting in 1933 and [ghettos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghettos_in_German-occupied_Europe_(1939%E2%80%931944)) following the outbreak of [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) in 1939. In 1941, as Germany conquered new territory in eastern Europe, specialized paramilitary units called [*Einsatzgruppen*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Einsatzgruppen) murdered around two million Jews, partisans, and others often in mass shootings. By the end of 1942, victims were being regularly transported by freight trains to [extermination camps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extermination_camp) where, if they survived the journey, most were systematically killed in [gas chambers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_gas_chambers). This continued until the [end of World War II in Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/End_of_World_War_II_in_Europe) in April–May 1945.

[Jewish armed resistance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_resistance_under_Nazi_rule) was limited. The most notable exception was the [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw_Ghetto_Uprising) of 1943, when thousands of poorly-armed Jewish fighters held the [Waffen-SS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waffen-SS) at bay for four weeks. An estimated 20,000–30,000 [Jewish partisans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_partisans) actively fought against the Nazis and their collaborators in Eastern Europe. [French Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Jews) took part in the [French Resistance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Resistance), which conducted a guerilla campaign against the Nazis and [Vichy French authorities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vichy_France). Over a hundred armed Jewish uprisings took place

**The Cold War**

**Summary:**

**The Soviet Union launched a Cold War--a series of obstructionist acts designed to make the Allies quit Germany. The Soviet Union blockaded the Allied sector of Berlin from mid-1948 to mid-1949 to keep food and supplies from the city. The Allies overcame the blockade of their land routes with a huge airlift in which planes even brought coal and machinery. In 1949 the Allied zones of Germany were united in the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany, and the Communists set up the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany. Berlin remained divided inside East Germany.**

**The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in 1949 to protect Western Europe. It included most Western European countries, the United States, and Canada. The objective of NATO was to join the forces of all members in the defense of any member nation that might be attacked.**

**After West Germany was admitted into NATO the Soviet Union forced the signing of the Warsaw Pact, a treaty establishing the mutual defense organization known as the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO).  Members were East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union. Albania, an original signer of the treaty, withdrew in 1968; Yugoslavia, with its independent views on Communism, remained outside.**

**The Soviet Union meanwhile continued to alternate attack and conciliation in the Cold War. In 1955 the Soviet Union agreed to a peace treaty with Austria. In 1956 some concessions were made to Poland, but, when Hungary's resistance fighters revolted, the Soviets brutally crushed the uprising.**

**Communists tightened their control over East Germany after an unsuccessful revolt in 1953. Each year thousands of East Germans fled to West Berlin. In 1961 the Communist government closed the border, building a wall to prevent the further escape of East Germans. The Soviet Union demanded that the Allies withdraw from West Berlin.**

**Soviet agreement with the United States and Great Britain to a limited test-ban treaty in 1963 lessened fears of a Soviet nuclear attack. Peace was again threatened in 1968 by the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia.**

**Beginning in 1989, as most of the governments of Eastern Europe relaxed or abandoned Communism for freer economies and greater democracy, the future of the Warsaw Pact appeared in doubt. In 1991 it was officially dissolved.**