

Name _____

The Estates-General: Catalyst for Change

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. The convening of the Estates-General in 1789 was driven by a combination of factors. France faced a severe financial crisis due to extravagant spending and war debts. The rigid social hierarchy, with privileges for the clergy and nobility, led to social inequality and resentment among the common people. Inspired by Enlightenment ideas, many believed that political change was necessary to address grievances and promote a more just society.
2. The controversy over voting procedures during the Estates-General's deliberations centered on whether to vote by headcount or by estate. The Third Estate demanded voting by headcount to have greater influence, leading to a deadlock. The Tennis Court Oath, taken by the representatives of the Third Estate on June 20, 1789, marked the formation of the National Assembly, symbolizing the people's determination to bring about political change.
3. The Estates-General evolved from a symbol of royal authority into a symbol of change and equality during the French Revolution. Its transformation into the National Assembly represented the common people's demand for political change and equality. The shift in power dynamics signaled a significant step toward the dismantling of the old social order.
4. King Louis XVI played a role in convening the Estates-General in an attempt to address the country's financial crisis. However, his indecisiveness and inability to resolve the crisis contributed to the events leading up to the French Revolution. His leadership was seen as ineffective, and he faced increasing pressure as the revolution unfolded.

