

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Maximilien Robespierre: The Enigmatic Figure of the Reign of Terror

### Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. The main objectives of the Committee of Public Safety during the Reign of Terror were to protect the revolution from threats, maintain control, and eliminate opposition. Maximilien Robespierre contributed to these objectives by advocating for radical policies and being a dominant figure within the Committee. His commitment to revolutionary ideals, such as the pursuit of virtue, led to the implementation of mass arrests, trials, and public executions of perceived enemies of the Revolution. Robespierre's influence played a key role in shaping the Committee's actions and policies during this tumultuous period.
2. The Cult of the Supreme Being was a central part of Robespierre's vision for the new republic. He sought to establish it as a civic religion to replace traditional religious practices. This reflected his revolutionary ideals of promoting virtue and moral values in the republic. Robespierre believed that the Cult of the Supreme Being would serve as a unifying force and provide a moral foundation for the citizens. It reflected his commitment to a secular and rational belief system that aligned with the principles of the French Revolution, emphasizing the importance of civic duty and a shared moral code.
3. The downfall and execution of Maximilien Robespierre were the result of growing opposition within the Committee of Public Safety, particularly from members who feared his increasing authoritarianism and the scale of executions during the Reign of Terror. In July 1794, Robespierre and his associates were arrested after a dramatic confrontation. They were subsequently executed by guillotine. Robespierre's removal marked the end of the Reign of Terror and a shift in the course of the French Revolution. It led to a period of relative moderation and the eventual rise of a more stable government. His execution was seen as a necessary step to end the excessive violence and restore a sense of order to the revolution.
4. The controversy surrounding Maximilien Robespierre's legacy revolves around differing interpretations of his role during the Reign of Terror. Some view him as a champion of revolutionary ideals, arguing that he was dedicated to the principles of the French Revolution, including liberty and equality. They see his actions as necessary to protect the revolution from internal and external threats. Others see him as a ruthless dictator responsible for the excesses of the Reign of Terror, citing the mass arrests and executions that occurred under his influence. Ultimately, whether one sees him as a champion of ideals or a ruthless dictator depends on their perspective and the weight they assign to his actions and intentions during that turbulent period.

