

## Defining Revolution Seminar

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Due \_\_\_\_\_

### Directions:

1. Read, annotate, and create 3 – 5 questions for discussion at seminar.
2. Your annotation might include:
  - i. Underline key words
  - ii. Identify main idea as it occurs throughout the reading
  - iii. Identify words or phrases you don't understand
  - iv. Identify connections
  - v. Questions you have about the reading



### The Myth of Speed

*Common perception*  
"Quick change" is what many of us associate with political revolution. Consider the drama of the French Revolution's Women's March on Versailles: a large mob reacted violently and rapidly to royal indifference. Or, consider the bread shortages: peasants, both in the streets of Paris and the rural countryside, spontaneously rioted over a lack of food, political representation, and power. Or, consider more modern symbols of revolution: students stepped in front of Chinese tanks in Tiananmen Square, imploring them to halt.

*Connecting revolutions*  
Despite the drama we associate with these events, Revolution is rarely a speedy occurrence. The Women's March was a culmination of many years of sublimation, poverty, and increasing anti-royal sentiment as were the French peasant riots. Even the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 were responding to policies that dated as far back as Mao's leadership, which formally began in 1949.

### Who Leads Revolutions?

*more truth*  
Another common misconception is that revolutions happen when ordinary people join together and rise up against authority.

*Common misconception?*  
For a revolution to really take hold, a large section of a population typically does need to feel a pressing need for societal change. However, revolutions are historically led by people who are not "just plain folks." Revolutionary leaders usually possess something extra: additional education, connections to existing authority, a leadership position within

*build up of issues for a long time*  
*stand out in the crowd - leadership cred*

the repressed community, or simply a profound charisma or oratory gift that helps them influence, persuade and lead. This doesn't mean that revolutionary leaders do not empathize with their followers; indeed, many have lived the same struggles. But this is not always the case. *Are their ideas merely better in their own minds? Ego v. common good?*

In the French Revolution, The Jacobins, led by Maximilien Robespierre, initially based their actions on the populist sentiments of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and worked to make a better life for the poor. However, Robespierre had not exactly experienced the struggle of those he represented. He was highly educated as a lawyer, was a royal appointee at the original Estates General, and—perhaps most importantly—had a profound ability to write and deliver eloquent, fiery speeches.

### A Messy Affair

Although many definitions of revolution refer to one government replacing another, the process is usually not nearly as tidy. Revolutions are ambiguous, messy things, constantly "morphing" and undergoing revision and redefinition. During the French Revolution's approximately ten-year history, new political groups, parties, and factions constantly emerged. And even within parties, splinter groups were quick to develop.

Not to mention, revolutions that are founded on violence rarely have smooth and easy transitions. Instead, it is typical that revolutionary regimes, especially those with a bloody start, often have difficulties in settling and establishing new, lasting traditions. For example, the violence applied to overturn France's Ancient Regime eventually turned one revolutionary faction against another, resulting in thousands of deaths before the Revolution was declared officially over in 1799.

### Beyond Political Revolutions

The term "revolution" can refer to many types of massive change that affect society in profound ways. For example, the British Agricultural Revolution, which happened between the 16th and 19th centuries, refers to a time of extraordinary agricultural output, mostly due to better farming methods and mechanization. Doesn't sound like it would have much impact beyond the fields? Not so: this upturn in agricultural success supported a huge population growth, which freed a lot of workers to leave farming and pour into the workforce, eventually sparking the Industrial Revolution and early 19th century international phenomenon, saw manual labor being replaced by mechanized tools, thus profoundly changing the way the world worked, traveled, and lived.

The concept of revolution also reaches into other areas of daily life. The Italian Renaissance of the 15th century was a time when the way in which the Western world created art, wrote poetry, designed architecture, and even absorbed knowledge, was overhauled, kicking off what is often labeled as the beginning of the "modern" epoch.

transition from  
Medieval to  
Modernity

rebirth  
Da Vinci  
Galileo  
Gutenberg's  
printing  
press

Social revolutions include the Sexual Revolution, when the invention of the birth control pill in 1960 offered women access to reliable contraception. Social scientists theorize that this pharmaceutical development impacted sexual behavior, attitudes, and more throughout the Western world, and redefined women's views of education and career.

affects are  
for reaching in time  
& place

Finally, the computer that generated this article was developed during the Digital Revolution, which refers to an ongoing transformation that began in the early 1980s. The plummeting cost and rapid improvement of digital devices made these tools more widely available, affecting the way we do our jobs, entertain ourselves, and even communicate with one another.

is technology  
a revolution or  
an evolution?

### 3-5 Seminar Questions

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Cycle 6: Forces**

### **Seminar Questions: Defining Revolutions**

#### **Writing**

In the reading, we found there are many definitions of revolution. Briefly write about one aspect of your life that is worthy of a revolt.

#### **Opening**

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of the text, it discusses a misconception of the speed in which revolutions occur. What conditions have to come together for unease/unrest to tip over into revolutionary response?

#### **Core**

##### Leadership

- Characteristics of revolutionary leaders included additional education, connections to existing authority, current leadership position, profound charisma and/or oratory gift?
  - What other attributes would you deem important for a revolutionary leader?
  - There is a common saying of famous people – is it the myth, the man or the legend? How do you think this saying pertains to leaders of revolutions?
- On the 2<sup>nd</sup> page, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, the text discusses leaders have empathy for their followers, a sense of understanding the struggles. Is this empathetic nature a result of wanting the best for the common good or gaining support to bring forth their own ideas of right/wrong?
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> page, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, we read about an aspect of the Golden Rule – being able to walk in someone else's shoes. How does leader use this insight to unite a large population in revolutionary ideas and acceptance?

##### Intent

- Revolutions are said to be ambiguous, messy, changing and revising. How does this cause dissention in the ranks and dissention in leadership?
- Not all revolutionary leaders are altruistic in nature. What happens when a revolution happens more by force of a few than by agreement of many?
- What can be lost in transitions of power?

##### Without War

- The section of the text talks about revolutions that do not involve war or violence. What is being changed through these revolutions – British Agricultural Revolution, the Italian Renaissance, the Sexual Revolution, the Digital Revolution?
- How do the words rebirth and revolution connect?
- Do revolutions just affect their immediate time and place?
- At what point does a revolution become evolution?

#### **Closing**

Is today's technology a revolution in our society or an evolution of mankind?