

History 214

Student**Summaries** 

HISTORY 214

Revolution Notes

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The Haitian Revolution

Possible Essay Questions hinted in class:

1. What are the important influences coming from the French revolution that we can find in the Haitian revolution, and how did the fracturing unfold?
2. The Haitian leader and how he played both sides → French and Spanish I assume is what he means here
3. Internal and external influences of the revolution
4. What is happening in France vs in Haiti

Pre-revolutionary Context:

- 20 September 1697 establishment of French colony in St Domingue (west of Haiti) and Spanish colony in Santo Domingo.
- By 1700 thriving sugar plantations and high slave imports
- Shortly after settlement St Domingue becomes most valuable French colony
 - ⇒ 40% Europe's sugar
 - ⇒ 60% Europe's coffee
 - ⇒ 2nd biggest home to slavery
- Late 18th century:
 - ⇒ Slavery on sugar plantations is exceptionally brutal
 - ⇒ More slaves imported to St Domingue
- 19th century:
 - ⇒ Slaves made up about 90% of the total population of St Domingue
 - ⇒ Most slaves African born because of brutal working and living conditions which made reproduction impossible
 - ⇒ Yellow fever and small pox also inhibited reproduction
- The plantations:
 - ⇒ Large
 - ⇒ Often more than 200 slaves/plantation
 - ⇒ Many of the field workers and in some cases the majority were women
- Colonial society in St Domingue: divided into four groups → this has important consequences for the revolution (in order of societal hierarchy)
 1. White Planters: *grands blancs*
 2. Free people of colour (wealthy)
 3. Petits Blancs
 4. Slaves
- 1784-85 new royal ordinances from France make it possible for slaves to legally denounce abuses of a master or plantation manager
- French revolution breaks out 1789 → all four groups above had own grievances

- ⇒ Slaves: slavery
- ⇒ Free people: still subject to legal discrimination regardless of wealth
- ⇒ Poor whites: poor and resentful of privileges held by wealthy people of colour
- ⇒ Grands blancs: French trade laws and the government's attempts to slightly improve living and working conditions of slaves
- June 1788 Third Estate assembles in the tennis court at Versailles to write a new constitution → mulattoes and free blacks pursue representation and equal rights as free persons
- Unrest begins 1789 (same year as the French revolution begins)
 - ⇒ Slaves hear a rumour that the king of France had freed them
 - ⇒ Word spreads of changes in France from across the ocean
- The Declaration of the Rights of Man and The Citizen 27 August 1789
 - ⇒ Terrified planters
 - ⇒ Gave hope to free people of colour and to slaves
- At the same time **petit blancs** are saying there is inadequate discrimination against blacks:
 - ⇒ Identified with the 3rd estate in France
 - ⇒ Called for interest rates to be lowered so they could begin paying off their debts
 - ⇒ Called for colonial independence
 - ⇒ Actually thought they were the oppressed people in Saint Domingue because they couldn't afford to own slaves → don't even consider the slaves to be people
 - ⇒ If petit blancs could become independent from France they could take power from the people of privilege and institute a democracy where everyone has a voice (except for 95% of the population, the slaves)
- 8 March 1790:
 - ⇒ A new decree in France grants full legislative powers to the Colonial Assembly, giving the colony almost complete autonomy.
 - ⇒ May → start issuing radical decrees and reforms which cause conflict between royalists and patriots
- 12 October 1790:
 - ⇒ French National Assembly dissolves the Colonial Assembly at Saint Marc
 - ⇒ The Colonial Assembly refuses to disband and issues a call to arms of all citizens

The Revolution: (14 August 1791- 1 January 1804)

The First Phase:

- 1791 Radical Petit Blancs seize the city of Port Au Prince