History 110 Writing Assignment

**1. Discuss the organization of society and the economy in Europe during the 18th century under the "Old Regime." Include information on the social structure, the family, changes in agriculture and industry, and the rise of cities.**

The Old Regime referred “to the patterns of social, political, and economic relationships that had existed in France before 1789,” and before the French Revolution (450). The Old Regime, also known as the Ancient Regime, revolved around absolute monarchy, aristocracy, politics, and social life.

During the Old Regime, there were laws regarding hierarchy and privilege. One of these laws was a sort of dress code; it “forbade persons in one class or occupation from wearing clothes like those worn by their social superiors” (450). Europeans in the eighteenth century did not believe in individual rights, “[i]nstead, a person enjoyed such rights and privileges as were guaranteed to the particular communities or groups of which he or she was a part” (450). Because of this, in return each of these communities or groups held certain privileges. The class structure ranged from aristocrats down to peasants and serfs.

In Europe, there were two models of households within the family economy—one portrayed northwestern Europe and the other conveyed eastern Europe. The household of northwestern Europe “almost invariably consisted of a married couple, their children through their teenage years, and their servants,” and “usually consisted of not more than five or six members” (456). Servants during this time were people who were hired to work in exchange for a place to stay and wages; they were practically a part of the family. While in eastern Europe, households were generally bigger, and often “consisted of more than nine, and possibly more than twenty, members, with three or perhaps even four generations of the same family living together” (457). This was brought on by early marriages, usually before age twenty. In the Old Regime, most people lived in households “because it was virtually impossible for ordinary people to support themselves independently” (457). Also, everyone within a household worked in order to survive, and all profits “went to the benefit of the household rather than to the individual family member,” which goes along with the lack of belief for individual rights in Europe (457). Due to the struggling finances, children were not always wanted in some households. Sometimes children were abandoned or purposely killed.

For women during this time, “marriage was an economic necessity,” and their focus was on maintaining a household environment (458). Girls started helping with household work around the age of seven and if they were the daughter of an artisan, they may have stayed at home until they were married. Women at this time also had to accumulate a dowry before they could be eligible for marriage, sometimes working for more than ten years, meaning she would not be married until her late twenties. It was hard for women to find jobs because “many occupations and professions [were] closed to them because they were female,” and on top of that, “[t]hey often received lower wages than men for the same work” (458).

The Industrial Revolution played a huge role in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Contrary to popular belief, this revolution began in rural areas with the textile industry. Some of the significant inventions in the textile industry were the spinning jenny, created by James Hargreaves in 1765, and the water frame, created by Richard Arkwright in 1769. The steam engine, locomotive, and an increase in iron production were other inventions that came from the Industrial Revolution. Inventions and improvements in agriculture included Charles Townsend’s crop rotation, Cyrus McCormick’s sickle, Jethro Tull’s iron plow and seed drill, Eli Whitney’s cotton gin, and the replacement of the open field method with enclosure. Less people were needed to work in the fields because of all of these new advancements. Industrialization moved people into factories instead of fields, urban areas instead of rural areas, and expanded the rise of cities. New skills, an expanded work force, and faster production of goods were three very important and positive things that came from industrialization. The Industrial Revolution did have its down falls, such as long working hours, low wages, unhealthy and unsafe working conditions, and pollution, but overall, it was a necessary and positive era.

**2. Trace the background causes and the major events of the French Revolution up until the rise to power of Napoleon. What impact did the revolution have on France and on Europe?**

The French Revolution, also known as the Revolution of 1789, was a period of social and political turmoil in France lasting ten years, from 1789 until 1799. This period was very significant to the history of France, and even the world, as it also had a huge effect internationally.

Politically during this time, monarchy was rid of to create a new republic, only to be overthrown when Napoleon became dictator. This period launched the decline of absolute monarchies, replacing them instead with republics and liberal democracies. The extensive amount of monarchies was one reason for the cause of the revolution. Along with this, other political reasons for the French Revolution were the unnecessary extra spending of money (on wars, for example), the inefficient tax system, the unfair legal system, and the lack of legislature. Basically, France needed a whole new, updated government system because their current government was seen by the people as being corrupt. Economically, debt and inflation, and remainders of feudalism were things that influenced the French Revolution. Much of this debt came from the French participation in the Seven Years’ War and the American Revolutionary War. There were many attempted solutions to France’s financial problems, none of which were successful. This went on for many years, which gave the French citizens time to build up their anger about all the issues they were having in their country, and also the resentment they felt towards the superiority and privileges of the nobility. The three classes during this time were the clergy, the nobility, and the commoners—which included three types: the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and the peasantry.

The Third Estate represented the majority of French citizens, but could still be outvoted by two other bodies. In 1789, they established a new body that “declared itself the National Assembly” (554). What is known as the Tennis Court Oath took place on June 20, 1789. The bodies met, “finding themselves thus unexpectedly locked out of their usual meeting place, the National Assembly moved to a nearby indoor tennis court” where the “members took an oath to continue to sit until they had given France a constitution” (554). Thus, this was how the French constitution was formed.

One big event that happened during the French Revolution was the fall, or storming, of the Bastille in July 1789. The Bastille represented royal authority, so its fall was a pretty monumental event during this period. The “Great Fear” was a period in the summer of 1789 that is properly named. There were rumors that royal troops were going to be sent into rural area homes, which caused residents to burn, dispose of, or hide items and documents that they did not want to be found. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen was published in August 1789, and was based off of the Enlightenment principles and the Virginia Declaration of Rights. In 1791, a new constitution was born, and “the National Constituent Assembly established a constitutional monarchy” in this document (561). This constitution improved judicial, economic, political, and financial issues and structures. It adopted the laissez-faire system of economics, opened up all occupations to any one (not just men), and adopted the three branches of government—judicial, legislative, and executive (similar to the government we now have in the United States).

The French Revolution was split up into three phases: the moderate phase, the radical phase, and the conservative phase. The radical phase is the most well known, because that is when many of the significant events occurred. This took place after the constitution of 1791 was established, and most people were content with this, but some were not. The Jacobin Club was formed during this time, which was “[t]he most famous and best organized of these clubs” that were “composed of politically like-minded persons” (567). The Jacobins were very extreme Enlightenment believers. The Jacobins fought against the Girondins in what was known as The Reign of Terror between 1793 and 1794. This event was a very violent time with mass executions; it was fundamentally a purge.

The French Revolution does not have a clear ending, but it is said to have ended around 1795, when a new constitution was agreed upon. It has also been said that it ended in 1799, when new consuls were elected to represent the new government system, replacing the previous one. Napoleon Bonaparte was one of these consuls, and later, in 1802, was named consul for life, and eventually emperor by 1804.

**3. Examine the unification of Italy and Germany during the mid-1800s. What were the major events and who were the major figures? What impact did unification have on these two nations and on Europe as a whole?**

Originally, Germany and Italy were both in many smaller, independent states. In Italy, there were about a dozen of these states, while there were only a small handful in Germany. After many years of conflict between the differing opinions, they both unified all of their individual states to create what we now know as the countries of Italy and Germany.

To begin with, Italy was composed of approximately a dozen states, most of which were “under the direct or indirect rule of the Habsburgs” (690). Nationalists in these states had wanted to unite together for a long time before it ever actually happened. It took much longer for this unification because there were differing opinions in the first half of the century on how to approach this unification.

Romantic republicanism was one of the suggested solutions on how to unify the states. This idea included the foundation of secret societies throughout the Italian peninsula, the most famous one being Carbonari, which means “charcoal burners.” These societies “were widely feared, but ineffective” (690). In 1831, nationalist uprisings in Italy failed, and after this, Giuseppe Mazzini became the new romantic republican nationalism leader. Mazzini worked closely with Giuseppe Garibaldi, a fellow Republican. Moderate Italians were threatened by this approach to unification because they did not want a republic.

Cavour’s policy was another, more effective and successful solution to the issue of unification. Count Camillo Cavour was the prime minister of the independent Italian state of Piedmont and played a significant role in this country’s unification. He was against republican nationalism because instead of believing in romantic ideals, he believed in economic ideals. The Hapsburgs controlled most of the Italian states, and Cavour knew that they would not agree to unifying them, so instead he proposed that they pursue an alliance with France so that they could together defeat Austria. He thought that, in order to do this, Italy needed to prove that they were economically progressing and capable of being a new individual country. Italian troops were sent by Cavour to help the French and British in the Crimean War in an attempt to form this alliance, which was successful. War began with Austria in 1859 and they were defeated by the Italian state of Piedmont and France. Garibaldi began attacks against Cavour’s states in 1860, as he wanted a republic of Italy instead. Eventually he surrendered, knowing that many lives would be lost unnecessarily if they continued.

Majority of the Italian states were unified by the end of 1860, and two, Nice and Savoy, were ceded to France. In 1861, Victor Emmanuel II was titled the first king of Italy. Three months after this, Cavour died. Many Italians argued that the remaining territories in the Italian peninsula needed to join into the country of Italy before the unification could be deemed complete. Italy gained these extra states by the end of 1870.

The unification of Italy of course affected all of the Italian peninsula, but it affected Austria and France as well. Austria because they previously had control over some of the Italian states, but no longer held this control. France because they were allies in the Crimean War and in the war against Austria, and by the end of it all, they had gained two of the Italian states.

The unification of Germany “was the most important political development in Europe between 1848 and 1914,” so it definitely had a lasting impact (696). This unification was actually organized by Prussia’s prime minister. *Burschenschaften* (student groups) advocated for a unified Germany, but these groups were dismembered by the Carlsbad Decrees.

Otto von Bismarck played a very important role in the unification of Germany; he “shaped the next thirty years of European history” (967). He was against the liberal Parliament, but in the next elections the liberal majority won again, which left him thinking of a new “way to attract popular support away from the liberals and toward the monarchy and the army” (697). So, Bismarck wanted to unite Germany by using Prussian conservative institutions.

The unification of Germany occurred “over the course of three wars, each of which Bismarck could have prevented had he not considered them necessary” (697). These three wars were The Danish War of 1864, The Austro-Prussian War or Seven Weeks’ War of 1866, and The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and 1871. Denmark wanted to included two duchies into their country, both of which were predominated by Germans. Thus, war broke out and Denmark was defeated. Bismarck then managed to manipulate a war between Austria and Prussia in which Austria was defeated. This war ended with the Treaty of Prague, leaving Prussia “as the only major power among the German states” (698). Bismarck again devised a plan to cause war between France and Prussia, as he believed this would complete German unification. His plan again succeeded as he had hoped, and Germany was unified.

The unification did many things for Europe as a whole because Germany was stronger militarily and economically than Prussia was alone, “[i]t was rich in natural resources and talented citizens, and had an advance educational system” (700). Germany was a conservative country, so their unification hurt the liberalism in Europe, while supporting conservativism like never before.

Overall, “[t]he two nations most immediately affected by German and Italian unification were France and Austria” (700). These unifications uncovered weakness in both France and Austria, which led to the return of the republican government in France and domestic restructuring in Austria.

**5. Discuss the background and the immediate causes of World War I. What were the important events and who were the most significant figures? What impact did WWI have on Europe?**

World War I, or the Great War, is considered one of the most significant wars to ever take place in our world history, as well as being the first total war because social life and economics were both altered back home to support the war. The world leaders during the Great War were president Woodrow Wilson of the United States, revolutionary Vladimir Lenin of Russia, czar Nicholas II of Russia, prime minister David Lloyd George of Great Britain, premier Georges Clemenceau of France, and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. This war was brought on by nationalist alliances and a series of Balkan wars and crises, and lasted from 1914 to 1918.

The first major crisis was the Bosnian Crisis of 1908, or the Annexation Crisis or the First Balkan Crisis. This occurred when Austria-Hungary declared that they were going to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, both of which were territories in the Ottoman Empire. Austria and Russia teamed together and “decided to act quickly before Turkey became strong enough to resist” (833). The Second Moroccan Crisis, or the Agadir Crisis, followed this in 1911, and it “emphasized the French and British need for mutual support” against Germany (833). During this crisis, France brought troops into Morocco to advert rebellions. The event that followed this was the First Balkan War in 1912 between the Balkan League—Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Montenegro—and the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was defeated and lost much of its territory. Shortly after this came the Second Balkan War of 1913. During this war, “Turkey and Romania joined Serbia and Greece against Bulgaria and stripped away much of what the Bulgarians had gained in 1878 and 1912” (833).

In 1914, the year following the Second Balkan War, World War I officially broke out. A month before the official start of the war, “a nineteen-year-old Serbian nationalist shot and killed Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, and his wife as they drove in an open car through the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo” (834). This caused outrage and conflict within the European countries. It is believed by some that “Germany had long been plotting war, and some even think a specific plan for war in 1914 was set in motion as early as 1912,” though “[t]he vast body of evidence on the crisis of 1914, however, gives little support to such notions” (835). Because there had not been a general war since Napoleon’s rule, “few understood the horrors of modern warfare” (837). These European countries, as well as the others, did not realize what they were digging themselves deeper and deeper into. The First World War included trench warfare, ships and submarines, airplanes, and tanks. The casualties during this war were ridiculously and unnecessarily numerous.

The effects of World War I were seen back home, which is why this war is referred to the first total war. The war had a “demand for foodstuffs, supplies, and other necessities,” which caused shortages on the home front and “forced important changes in their lives” (841). Women were especially affected as they had to assume the responsibilities of the men who were away at war, as well as carrying on their normal duties. The experiences during the Great War “surely helped change the society’s view of the proper role of women” (841).

When German submarines sunk neutral British ship *Lusitania* in the Atlantic that drowned 1200 people—118 of which were Americans, American “[p]resident Woodrow Wilson […] warned Germany that a repetition would have grave consequences” (846). Woodrow Wilson failed “to bring about a negotiated peace” between both sides in 1916, two years before the official end of the war. In 1917, “the Germans announced the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare,” which angered the United States and led them “to break off diplomatic relations” (846). Two months later, war was declared on Germany by the United States.

In 1918, United States president Woodrow Wilson proposed the Fourteen Points to end the war, which spread liberalism and democracy. This document was a proposal of peace to officially end the First World War. The fourteenth point in this proposal was the League of Nations. The Armistice officially ended this war on the western front. Following the war were the Treaty of Versailles and the Paris Peace Conference.