



Why France Never Chose a Year

Read the passage and answer the questions. (CEFR B1–B2)

Class _____ No. _____ Name _____

1 When the Third Republic made July 14 a national holiday in 1880, the country was still deeply divided. France had lost a war to Prussia in 1871, and many conservatives still dreamed of bringing back a king. For them, the storming of the Bastille stood for violence and disorder, not liberty. The new government needed a celebration that most citizens could accept.



2 The lawmakers solved this problem with a clever silence. The law simply named the date and left out the year. Republicans could remember the people's victory of 1789, while moderates could point to the Festival of the Federation of 1790, a day when the king himself swore to uphold the new constitution. The historian Henri Martin told the Senate that the second date had not shed a drop of blood. In other words, each group could find its own July 14 in the same short law.

3 This kind of strategic ambiguity is common in national symbols. A holiday that means slightly different things to different groups can still bring them to the same streets on the same night. The fireworks over the Eiffel Tower do not ask anyone which July 14 they are celebrating.

Comprehension

1. What is the main point of the passage?

- (A) France lost a war to Prussia in 1871.
- (B) The storming of the Bastille was very violent.
- (C) Fireworks are the most popular part of July 14.
- (D) The law left out the year so that different groups could all accept the holiday.

2. Why did many conservatives dislike the storming of the Bastille?

- (A) It happened on a Sunday.
- (B) For them, it stood for violence and disorder.
- (C) The king was not invited.
- (D) It took place outside Paris.

3. According to the passage, what did the king do at the Festival of the Federation in 1790?

- (A) He swore to uphold the new constitution.
- (B) He left Paris for another country.
- (C) He refused to take part.
- (D) He named July 14 a national holiday.

4. Why did Henri Martin most likely say that the second date had not shed a drop of blood?

- (A) To show that the Bastille had few prisoners
- (B) To ask the Senate to choose 1789
- (C) To make the holiday easier to accept for people who disliked violence
- (D) To explain why the fireworks are at the Eiffel Tower

5. In paragraph 3, what does strategic ambiguity mean?

- (A) A mistake made by lawmakers
- (B) A plan to change the date every year
- (C) A short law with many rules
- (D) Being unclear on purpose to reach a goal

6. Why does the writer end with the fireworks over the Eiffel Tower?

- (A) To show that people can celebrate together even if they remember different things
- (B) To say that the fireworks are the oldest tradition of July 14
- (C) To suggest that the holiday has lost its meaning
- (D) To compare France with the United States



Vocabulary, Paraphrase & Summary

Match the words with the definitions. Then rewrite and summarize.

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|-----------------|--|
| 1. divided | a. planned carefully to reach a goal |
| 2. conservative | b. the state of having more than one possible meaning |
| 3. disorder | c. split into groups that do not agree with each other |
| 4. moderate | d. a person who does not like big changes and wants to keep old ways |
| 5. uphold | e. a situation where people are out of control and there is no order |
| 6. constitution | f. a person whose ideas are not extreme |
| 7. strategic | g. to support a law or a rule and make sure it continues |
| 8. ambiguity | h. the basic laws and rules of a country |

Paraphrase — say it in your own words

1. “The new government needed a celebration that most citizens could accept.”

Hint: Use had to find and agree with.

2. “The law simply named the date and left out the year.”

Hint: Use only and did not say.

3. “A holiday that means slightly different things to different groups can still bring them to the same streets on the same night.”

Hint: Start with Even if, and use celebrate together.

Summary

Summarize the passage in about 50 words.



Debate & Opinion Essay

Prepare for a debate. Then write your opinion (100–150 words).

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Motion: A national holiday should remember a peaceful event rather than a violent one.

FOR 賛成

- A peaceful event, like the festival of 1790, is easier for everyone in the country to accept.
- Celebrating violence may teach young people that fighting is the best way to change things.
- Holidays are for bringing people together, and painful memories can divide them.

Add your own reason:

AGAINST 反対

- Many important changes, like the fall of the Bastille, came through struggle, and hiding that is not honest.
- Remembering a violent event can teach people the cost of freedom.
- As the French law shows, a holiday can remember both kinds of events at the same time.

Add your own reason:

Opinion	<i>I believe / I think that ...</i>
Reason 1	<i>First, ... For example, ...</i>
Reason 2	<i>Second, ... In fact, ...</i>
Counter	<i>Some people say ... However, ...</i>
Conclusion	<i>In conclusion, ...</i>