Revolutions Document Based Question Essay

**Question:** Using the provided documents, explain how the causes of revolution were similar and different in two of the following revolutions: English Revolution, American Revolution, French Revolution, Haitian Revolution, Mexican Revolution, or the Venezuelan Revolution.

**Historical Background:** In 1688 the English overthrew their king (James II) and replaced him with new king, who would recognize an increase of citizen rights by signing the English Bill of Rights. This event, also known as the Glorious Revolution, was justified by John Locke in *Two Treatise on Government* (1689). In response, Locke would be considered the father of the Enlightenment, a philosophical movement that inspired the people to question their government and rulers (kings). These Enlightenment ideals would be displayed through a chain reaction of political revolutions in the 18th and 19th centuries in America, France, Haiti & throughout Latin America. The success and failure of these revolutions may lie in their goals and the causes for which they fought.

**Document 1**

*Source: English Bill of Rights. Signed on December 16, 1689 at the conclusion of the English Revolution.*

Whereas the late King James the Second, by the assistance of divers evil counsellors, judges, and ministers employed by him, did endeavour to subvert and extirpate the protestant religion, and the laws and liberties of this kingdom.

1. By assuming and exercising a power of dispensing with and suspending of laws, and the execution of laws, without consent of parliament...6. By causing several good subjects, being protestants, to be disarmed, at the same time when papists were both armed and employed, contrary to law...7. By violating the freedom of election of members to serve in parliament.

All which are utterly and directly contrary to the known laws and statutes, and freedom of this realm.

And whereas the said late king James the Second having abdicated the government, and the throne being thereby vacant ... the said lords spiritual and temporal, and commons ... do in the first place (as their ancestors in like case have usually done) for the vindicating and asserting their ancient rights and liberties, declare;

1. That the pretended power of suspending of laws, or the execution of laws, by regal authority, without consent of parliament, is illegal.
Document 2
Source: Declaration of Independence. Signed July 4, 1776, near the beginning of the American Revolution.

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world… He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good…He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them…For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world…For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent…For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury

Document 3
Source: Political cartoon illustrating the Estate system in 18th century France prior to French Revolution.
Document 4
Source: The excerpt below from The French Revolution, edited by Philip Dawson, lists the grievances of the people of Arceville, a small village about 25 miles north of Orleans.

1. The said inhabitants observe that they alone have been charged with the mass of the taxes, while their seigneur, who farms much of the land in the parish, enjoys total exemption, although he has had a great part of the land planted with woods, which are populated by game that devastates the rest of the countryside; and that the woods, as well as the avenues he has had planted in great quantity, damage and almost destroy the neighboring lands, so that these lands, even in better years, yield no harvest. Wherefore they ask that, concurrently with them and without any distinction of title or rank, the said seigneur be taxed like them, as well as all the other seigneurs who possess property in this parish ... and that everyone be permitted to destroy the game which ruins his crop.

2. They complain that the tithe and the champart (feudal tax levied by landowners on peasants) take a large part of the compost from their lands, so that, far from being able to improve their lands, they sadly watch them deteriorate annually through the removal of straw and fodder that would serve not only for the enrichment of their lands but also for the nourishment of their cattle. Wherefore they ask that the tithe and the champart be abolished, or at least converted into an annual payment in money.

Document 5
Source: An excerpt from the cahier of the Third Estate of the city of Paris. A document largely created by lawyers and businessmen, it presents a fair sampling of the grievances and expectations of urban, upper-middle-class Frenchmen on the eve of the French Revolution.

FINANCES

The Estates General shall void every special tax, on persons or on property, such as the taille (tax on land paid by peasants), the franc-fief (fee paid by nobles on the acquisition of land), head tax, military service, the corvee (unpaid labor demanded from peasants by their landlords), I the billeting of troops, and others, and replace them as needed by general taxes, payable by all citizens of every order.

The Estates General in the outright replacement of taxes, shall consider principally direct taxes, which will bear equally on all citizens and all provinces and which will be simplest and less expensive to collect.

TREATMENT OF CRIMINALS

No citizen can be arrested or obliged to appear before any judge without an order coming from a competent judge. Every accused person, even before his first interrogation, shall have the right to call a lawyer.

A law will be passed to suppress the use of all torture before a criminal is executed and all practices that add prolonged and cruel suffering to the execution.

The death penalty should be limited to the smallest number of cases as possible, and reserved for truly atrocious crimes.

Those guilty of the same crime, no matter what order of society they are from, should undergo the same punishment.

Prisons should have the purpose not of punishing prisoners but of securing their persons. Underground dungeons should be suppressed. Efforts should be made to make the interior of other Prisons healthier, and to establish rules for the moral conduct of the prisoners.

The Estates General should consider the plight of black slaves and men of color, in the colonies as well as in France.
Document 6

**Source:** PROCLAMATION OF HAITI'S INDEPENDENCE BY THE GENERAL IN CHIEF, Jean Jacques Dessalines to the Haitian people in Gonaïves, on January 1st 1804, year first of Haiti's independence

Dear Citizens,

It is not enough to have expelled from your country the barbarians who have bloodied it for two centuries; it is not enough to have put a brake to these ever reviving factions which take turns to play-act this liberty, like ghost that France had exposed before your eyes; it is necessary, by a last act of national authority, assure forever an empire of liberty in this country our birth place; we must take away from this inhumane government, which held for so long our spirits in the most humiliating torpor (lifelessness), all hope to re-subjugate (enslave) us; we must at last live independent or die.

Let us be on guard however so that the spirit of proselytism does not destroy our work; let our neighbors breath in peace, may they live in peace under the empire of the laws that they have legislated themselves, and let us not go, like spark fire revolutionaries, erecting ourselves as legislators of the Caribbean, to make good of our glory by troubling the peace of neighboring islands: they have never, like the one that we live in, been soaked of the innocent blood of their inhabitants; they have no vengeance to exercise against the authority that protects them.

Let us swear to the entire universe, to posterity, to ourselves, to renounce forever to France, and to die rather than to live under its domination.

To fight until the last crotchet rest for the independence of our country!

Document 7


I shall never hesitate between the safety of San Domingo and my personal happiness; but I have nothing to fear. It is to the solicitude of the French Government that I have confided my children.... I would tremble with horror if it was into the hands of the colonists that I had sent them as hostages; but even if it were so, let them know that in punishing them for the fidelity of their father, they would only add one degree more to their barbarism, without any hope of ever making me fail in my duty.... Blind as they are! They cannot see how this odious conduct on their part can become the signal of new disasters and irreparable misfortunes, and that far from making them regain what in their eyes liberty for all has made them lose, they expose themselves to a total ruin and the colony to its inevitable destruction. Do they think that men who have been able to enjoy the blessing of liberty will calmly see it snatched away? They supported their chains only so long as they did not know any condition of life more happy than that of slavery. But to-day when they have left it, if they had a thousand lives they would sacrifice them all rather than be forced into slavery again. But no, the same hand which has broken our chains will not enslave us anew. France will not revoke her principles, she will not withdraw from us the greatest of her benefits. She will protect us against all our enemies; she will not permit her sublime morality to be perverted, those principles which do her most honour to be destroyed, her most beautiful achievement to be degraded, and her Decree of 16 Pluviôse which so honors humanity to be revoked. But if, to re-establish slavery in San Domingo, this was done, then I declare to you it would be to attempt the impossible: we have known how to face dangers to obtain our liberty, we shall know how to brave death to maintain it.
Document 8

Source: The following selections come from a proclamation by Simon Bolivar, calling Venezuelans to arms in the fight against Spanish occupation, which occurred in 1813.

THE 1813 PROCLAMATION
We are sent to destroy the Spaniards, to protect the Americans, and to re-establish the republican governments that once formed the Confederation of Venezuela. The states defended by our arms are again governed by their former constitutions and tribunals, in full enjoyment of their liberty and independence, for our mission is designed only to break the chains of servitude which still shackle some of our towns, and not to impose laws or exercise acts of dominion to which the rules of war might entitle us.

Moved by your misfortunes, we have been unable to observe with indifference the afflictions you were forced to experience by the barbarous Spaniards, who have ravished you, plundered you, and brought you death and destruction. They have violated the sacred rights of nations. They have broken the most solemn agreements and treaties. In fact, they have committed every manner of crime, reducing the Republic of Venezuela to the most frightful desolation. Justice therefore demands vengeance, and necessity compels us to exact it. Let the monsters who infest Colombian soil, who have drenched it in blood, be cast out forever; may their punishment be equal to the enormity of their perfidy, so that we may eradicate the stain of our ignominy and demonstrate to the nations of the world that the sons of America cannot be offended with impunity.

Document 9

Source: A Casta Painting- Casta is a Portuguese and Spanish term used in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mainly in Spanish America to describe as a whole the mixed-race people which appeared in the post-Conquest period.