**Nine Interesting Facts about the French Revolution**

## In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, most French citizens ate two pounds of bread each day. TWO POUNDS.

**The deets:** Because of Louis XVI’s financial mismanagement leading up to the Revolution in 1789, the price of flour skyrocketed and caused the cost of a loaf of bread to become equal to a peasant’s monthly earnings. Cue riots.

1. **One of the earliest acts of defiance in the Revolution took place on a tennis court.**

**The deets:** The Tennis Court Oath was the first “forget you, monarchy” of the French Revolution. Members of the Third Estate (commoners) — clergy and nobility made up the First and Second Estates, respectively — gathered on June 20, 1789, on a tennis court near the Palace of Versailles after being locked out of a meeting of the Estates General. The Oath marked the formation of the National Assembly, as well as the first time French citizens so publicly opposed King Louis XVI.

## Marie Antoinette didn’t actually say, “Let them eat cake.”

**The deets:** Most historians agree that the so-called Madame Deficit probably didn’t care enough about her subjects to ever utter these words. The phrase is now considered a journalistic cliché, and may have originated with rumors among French peasants.

## Affectionately called the “national razor,” the swift-killing guillotine was popularized during the French Revolution and was a legal form of execution in France until 1981.

**That’s right:** You could lose your head by way of guillotine until 1981, when France abolished capital punishment. The country’s last guillotine execution, however, was in 1977.

## French revolutionaries didn’t wear pants. Sort of.

**The deets:** Revolutionaries were called “sans-culottes,” literally “without culottes.” To distinguish themselves from the French nobility who wore the silk knee breeches called culottes, sans-culottes wore long trousers called *pantalons*, short-skirted coats called *carmagnoles*, red caps to symbolize liberty, and clogs (*sabots*).

## The Bastille was torn down BY HAND. Totally beast mode.

**The deets:** Because they didn’t have powerful explosives, the men, women, and children that stormed the Parisian fortress tore it down brick by brick. The bricks were given away/sold as symbols of the breakdown of tyranny.

**Bonus:** In his diary for July 14, 1789, Louis XVI simply wrote “nothing,” referring to a hunting trip he took earlier in the day.

## There was a lot of weird slandering the monarchy during the years of and leading up to the Revolution.

**The deets:** *Libelle* pamphlets were meant to undermine the power of the monarchy, and often threw shade at the personal lives of the French nobility. Marie Antoinette became a symbol of extravagancy because of her outlandish spending and partying, and therefore an easy target for libelle authors.

## Radical revolutionary journalist Jean-Paul Marat was murdered in his bathtub.

**The deets:** In Marat’s newspaper *L’ami du peuple* (“The Friend of the People”), he published works defending the sans-cullottes, but due to a chronic skin disease, he spent the three years prior to his assassination in a medicinal bath. Charlotte Corday, a [Girondist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girondin) sympathizer, murdered Marat with a five-inch kitchen knife on July 13, 1793, blaming him for 1792’s September Massacres and fearing an all-out civil war in France brought on by his writings. She was later executed by guillotine.

## The first public zoo was created in Paris during the French Revolution: the Ménagerie du Jardin des Plantes.

**The deets:** The National Assembly, one of the transitional governing bodies during the Revolution, passed a decision that exotic animals held privately were to be donated to the menagerie at Versailles, or killed, stuffed, and donated to scientists at the Jardin des Plantes. The animals were not killed — go scientists! — and the world’s first public zoo was created in the interest of public education. Thanks, French Revolution!

Taken from:

http://www.buzzfeed.com/meganp25/the-11-absolute-weirdest-true-facts-about-the-french-revolut#.ribvvPov5