

## Symbols and Shifts - The Deeper Meaning



Though the Bastille itself was a relatively minor fortress-prison by 1789, its storming marked a monumental shift in the public consciousness of France. More than a tactical victory, it became a symbol of resistance against tyranny. The fortress was originally built to defend Paris from foreign invaders, but over time, it evolved into a place of internal oppression. By the reign of King Louis XVI, it had become infamous as a destination for political prisoners, many of whom were detained without a formal trial under the king's orders.

When the people of Paris stormed the Bastille on July 14, their goal was not simply to free prisoners—they sought weapons and gunpowder to defend themselves against the king's troops. Yet the emotional significance of the event far exceeded its strategic value. The fall of the Bastille emboldened revolutionary movements across France, triggering the collapse of centuries-old institutions.

What followed was a volatile period in French history, including the drafting of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, and eventually, the execution of the king. Bastille Day, now a national holiday, reflects the enduring values of liberty and collective action, even though the revolution itself led to years of political chaos and bloodshed.

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### Questions:

1. According to the passage, what was the Bastille originally built for, and how did its function change over time?
2. What was the actual goal of the citizens who stormed the Bastille?
3. Why is the fall of the Bastille considered more significant symbolically than strategically?
4. What were some of the political outcomes that followed the storming of the Bastille?
5. The author describes the revolution that followed as “volatile.” What evidence from the passage supports this description?
6. Based on the text, how is Bastille Day viewed in modern France?