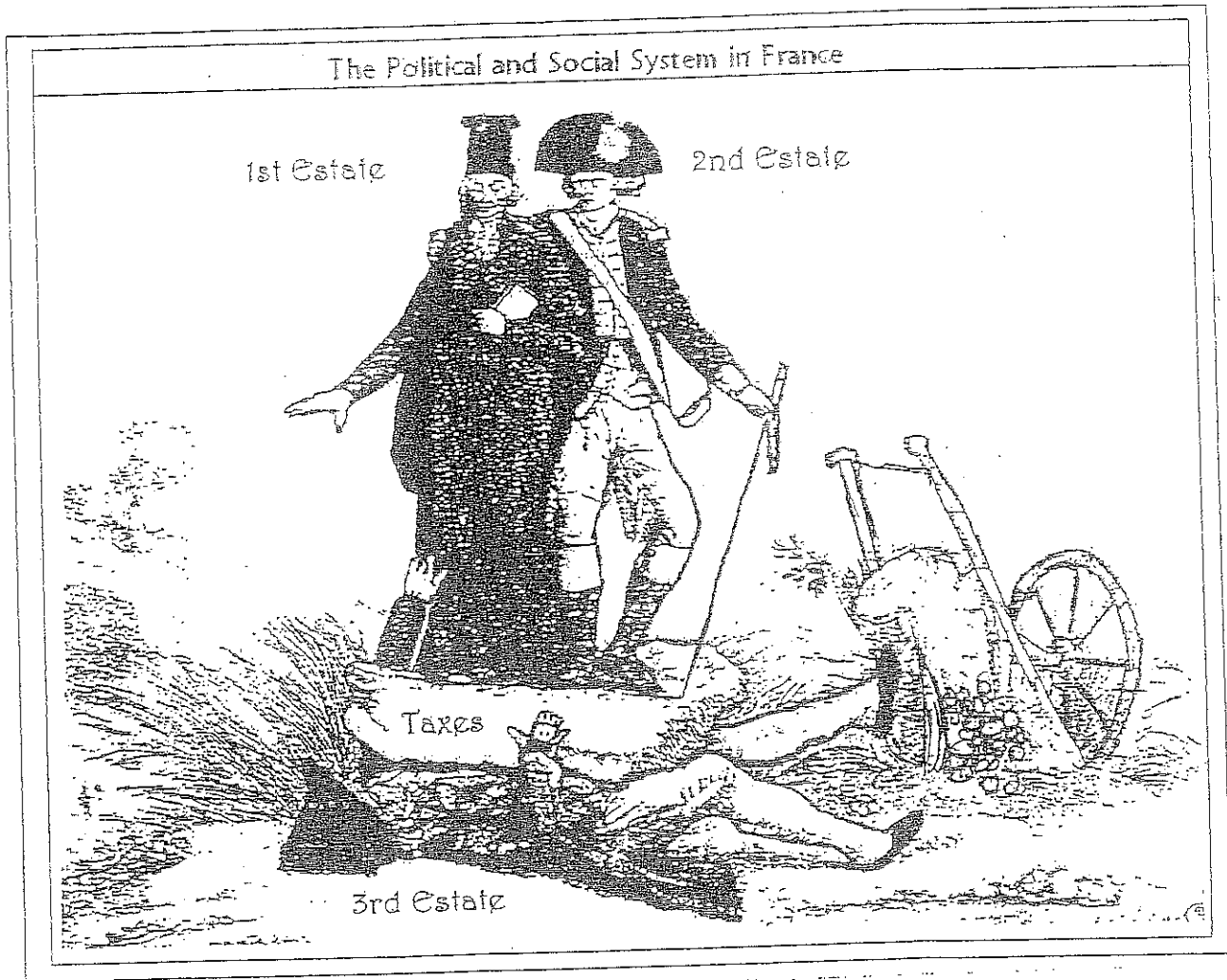


Document 7: The Political and Social System in France



Document 1: This excerpt is adapted from *Travels in France* by Arthur Young, who traveled through France from 1787 to 1789.

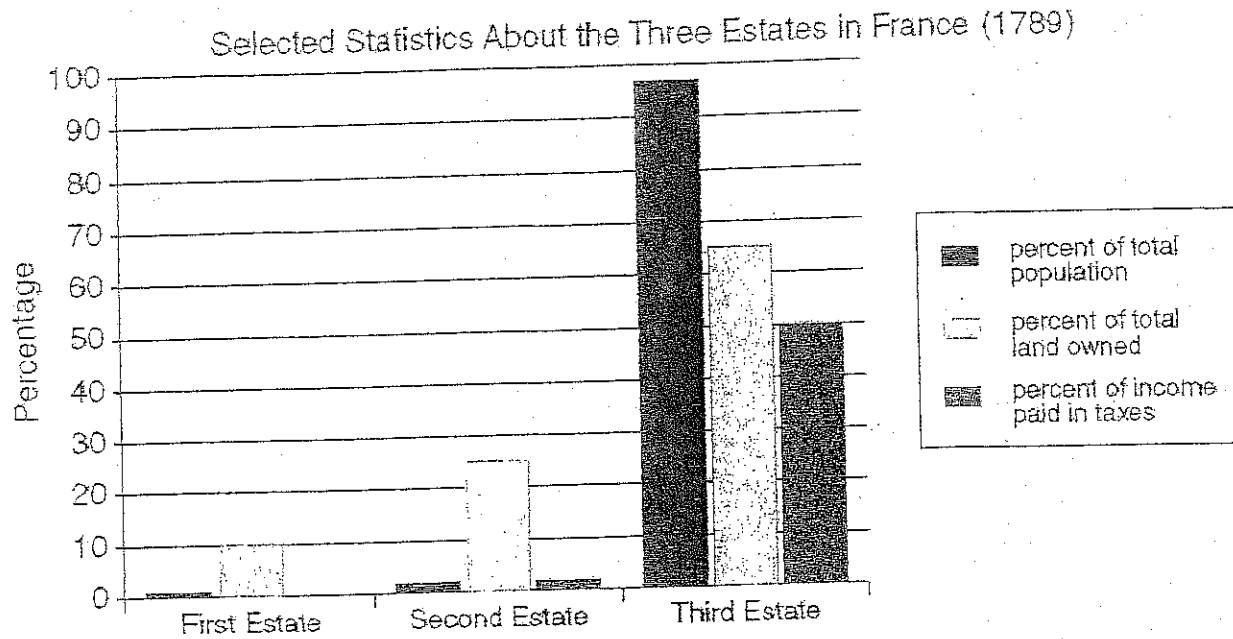
In the south of France there is a taille [tax on the land and its produce]. There is an injustice in levying the amount each person must pay. Lands held by the nobility are taxed very little. Lands held by commoners are taxed heavily...

September 5, 1788: The poor people seem very poor indeed. The children are terribly ragged.

June 10, 1789: The lack of bread is terrible. Stories arrive every moment from the provinces of riots and disturbances, and calling in the military, to preserve the peace of the markets.... The price of bread has risen above people's ability to pay. This causes great misery.

July 1789:I was joined by a poor woman who complained of the hard times. "The tailles and feudal dues [rents owed the lords] are crushing us," she said.

Document 2: This diagram illustrates the three estates in 1789 and the land each held during the Old Regime.



Document 3: These excerpts from *cahiers* (lists of grievances about the king, taxing, and voting in the Estates General) brought to the Estates General..

*That the king be forced to reform the abuses and tyranny of letter de cachet.
That every tax.... Be granted [by the Estates General] only for a limited time.
That the taille [a tax on land] be borne equally by all classes....
The meetings of the Estates General.... Shall be scheduled for definite times....
In order to assure the third estate the influence it deserves because of its numbers... its votes in the assembly should be taken by head...*

Document 4: In *The French Revolution*, historian Albert Mathiez claims that leadership fell to the middle class with their knowledge of the ideas of the Enlightenment.

The Revolution had been accomplished in the minds of men long before it was translated into fact....

The middle class... was sensitive to their inferior legal position. The Revolution came from them—the middle class. The working classes were incapable of starting or controlling the Revolution. They were just beginning to learn to read.

Document 5: Lord Acton suggested another point of view.

The condition of France alone did not bring about the overthrow of the monarchy... for the suffering of the people was not greater than they had been before. The ideas of the philosophers were not directly responsible for the outbreak... [but] the spark that changed thought into action was supplied by the Declaration of American Independence... The American example caused the Revolution to break out...

Document 6: Comte D'Antraigues as quoted in an excerpt from *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*.

"The Third Estate is the People and the People is the foundation of the State; it is in fact the State itself; the other estates are merely political categories while by the immutable (unchangeable) laws of nature the People is everything. Everything should be subordinated (inferior) to it... It is in the People that all national power resides and for the People that all states exist."

