

**WORKSHEET**

**40**

**Analyzing a Primary Source: The Storming of the Bastille**

Read the following passage, an eyewitness account of the fall of the Bastille, and then answer the questions below.

Veteran armies . . . have never performed greater prodigies [feats] of valor than this leaderless multitude of persons belonging to every class, workmen of all trades who, mostly ill-equipped and unused to arms, boldly affronted the fire from the ramparts and seemed to mock the thunderbolts the enemy hurled at them. . . .

The attackers, having demolished the first drawbridge and brought their guns into position against the second, could not fail to capture the fort. . . .

. . . One of the [soldiers] opened the gate behind the drawbridge and asked what we wanted. "The surrender of the Bastille," was the answer, on which he let us in. At the same time the besiegers lowered the great bridge. . . .

Those who came in first treated the conquered enemy humanely and embraced the staff officers to show there was no ill-feeling. But a few soldiers posted on the platforms and unaware that the fortress had surrendered discharged their muskets, whereupon the people, transformed with rage, threw themselves on the [soldiers]. . . .

. . . Several . . . [individuals] contended for the honor of having arrested the Marquis de Launay [the governor of the Bastille] . . . and a few

others undertook to guard him and succeeded in getting him out of the Bastille, though he was roughly handled by the people, who were calling for his death. . . .

But the fury of the crowd continued to increase and their blind wrath did not spare de Launay's escort. . . . Exhausted by his efforts to defend his prisoner . . . he had to separate from M. de Launay. . . . Hardly had he sat down when, looking after the procession, he saw the head of M. de Launay stuck on the point of a pike. . . . The people, fearing that their victim might be snatched away from them, hastened to cut his throat on the steps of the Hotel de Ville [City Hall]. . . .

In the intoxication [excitement] of victory the unfortunate inmates of the dungeons of the Bastille had been forgotten. All the keys had been carried off in triumph and it was necessary to force the doors of the cells. Seven prisoners were found. . . .

(Reprinted by permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons and Martin Secker & Warburg, Ltd. from *The French Revolution* by Georges Pernoud & Sabine Flaissier, trans. by Richard Graves. Copyright © 1960 by Martin Secker & Warburg, Ltd.)

1. What kinds of people stormed the Bastille? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What turned the mob from fairly reasonable to fierce? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do you think people competed with one another to arrest the Marquis de Launay? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. According to your textbook, why was the Bastille attacked? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What significance did the attack on the Bastille have as a symbol? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_