

**PROTESTANT
REFORMATION: FRENCH
HUGUENOTS**



PROTESTANT REFORMATION: FRENCH HUGUENOTS

Description

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, including excerpts from the Edict of Nantes (1598) and the Edict of Fontainebleau (1685), students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain who the French Huguenots were, the religious persecution they faced in the 16th and 17th centuries in France and how the exodus of Protestants from France after 1685 left its legacy around the world.

Subjects

European History, World History, US History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Protestant Museum, Paris
- Musee du Desert, Mialet
- Temple Protestant de l'Oratoire, Paris

Essential Questions

- Who were the French Huguenots? Where did they get their religious beliefs?
- How did the French Huguenots challenge the establishment in 16th century France?
- What were the French Wars of Religion? What was the Edict of Nantes? Why was it later revoked by the French monarchy?
- What happened to the French Huguenots? Where did most of them go?

Academic Summary

Edict of Nantes (1598) -- excerpts

Henry, By the Grace of God, King of France, and Navarre, To all Present, and to Come, greeteth.

... Amongst our said affairs (towards which it behooves us to have patience) one of the principal hath been, the many complaints we received from divers of our Provinces and Catholic Cities, for that the exercise of the Catholic Religion was not universally re-established, as is provided by Edicts or Statutes heretofore made for the Pacification of the Troubles arising from Religion ; as also the Supplications and Remonstrances which have been made to us by our Subjects of the reformed Religion, as well upon the execution of what hath been granted by the said former Laws, as that they desire to have some addition for the exercise of their Religion, the liberty of their Consciences and the security of their Persons and Fortunes.

. . . For this cause, acknowledging this affair to be of the greatest importance, and worthy of the best consideration, after having considered the papers of complaints of our Catholic subjects, and having also permitted to our Subjects of the Reformed Religion to assemble themselves by Deputies, for framing their complaints, and making a collection of all their Remonstrances ; and having thereupon conferred divers times with them, viewing the precedent Laws, we have upon the whole judged it necessary to give to all our said Subjects one general Law, Clear, Pure, and Absolute, by which they shall be regulated in all differences which have heretofore risen among them...

6. And not to leave any occasion of trouble and difference among our Subjects, we have permitted and do permit to those of the Reformed Religion, to live and dwell in all the Cities and places of this our Kingdom and Countries under our obedience, without being inquired after, vexed, molested, or compelled to do anything in Religion, contrary to their Conscience, nor by reason of the same be searched after in houses or places where they live, they comporting themselves in other things as is contained in this our present Edict or Statute.

8. In the Houses that are Fiefs, where those of the said Religion have not high Justice, there the said Exercise of the Reformed Religion shall not be permitted, save only to their own Families, yet nevertheless, if other persons, to the number of thirty, besides their Families, shall be there upon the occasion of Christenings, Visits of their Friends, or otherwise, our meaning is, that in such case they shall not be molested : provided also, that the said Houses be not within Cities, Burroughs, or Villages belonging to any Catholic Lord (save to Us) having high Justice, in which the said Catholic Lords have their Houses. For in such cases, those of the said Religion shall not hold the said Exercise in the said Cities, Burroughs, or Villages, except by permission of the said Lords high Justices.

27. To the end to reunited so much the better the minds and good will of our Subjects, as is our intention, and to take away all complaints for the future ; We declare all those who make or shall make profession of the said Reformed

Religion, to be capable of holding and exercising all Estates, Dignities, Offices, and public charges whatsoever, Royal, Signioral, or of Cities of our Kingdom, Countries, Lands, and Lordships under our obedience, notwithstanding all Oaths to the contrary, and to be indifferently admitted and received into the same, and our Court of Parliament and other Judges shall content themselves with informing and inquiring after the lives, manners, Religion and honest Conversation of those that were or shall be preferred to such offices, as well of the one Religion as the other, without taking other Oath of them than for the good and faithful service of the King in the exercise of their Office. . . .

Edict of Fontainebleau 1685 (Revocation of the Edict of Nantes) -- excerpts

Louis, by the grace of God king of France and Navarre, to all present and to come, greeting:

King Henry the Great, our grandfather of glorious memory, being desirous that the peace which he had procured for his subjects after the grievous losses they had sustained in the course of domestic and foreign wars, should not be troubled on account of the R.P.R., as had happened in the reigns of the kings, his predecessors, by his edict, granted at Nantes in the month of April, 1598, regulated the procedure to be adopted with regard to those of the said religion, and the places in which they might meet for public worship, established extraordinary judges to administer justice to them, and, in fine, provided in particular articles for whatever could be thought necessary for maintaining the tranquility of his kingdom and for diminishing mutual aversion between the members of the two religions, so as to put himself in a better position to labor, as he had resolved to do, for the reunion to the Church of those who had so lightly withdrawn from it.

As the intention of the king, our grandfather, was frustrated by his sudden death, and as the execution of the said edict was interrupted during the minority of the late king, our most honored lord and father of glorious memory, by new encroachments on the part of the adherents of the said R.P.R., which gave occasion for their being deprived of diverse advantages accorded to them by the said edict ; nevertheless the king, our late lord and father, in the exercise of his usual clemency, granted them yet another edict at Nimes, in July, 1629, by means of which, tranquility being established anew, the said late king, animated by the same spirit and the same zeal for religion as the king, our said grandfather, had resolved to take advantage of this repose to attempt to put his said pious design into execution. But foreign wars having supervened soon after, so that the kingdom was seldom tranquil from 1635 to the truce concluded in 1684 with the powers of Europe, nothing more could be done for the advantage of religion beyond diminishing the number of places for the public exercise of the R.P.R., interdicting such places as were found established to the prejudice of the dispositions made by the edicts, and suppressing of the bi-partisan courts, these having been appointed provisionally only.

God having at last permitted that our people should enjoy perfect peace, we, no longer absorbed in protecting them from our enemies, are able to profit by this truce (which we have ourselves facilitated), and devote our whole attention to the means of accomplishing the designs of our said grandfather and father, which we have consistently kept before us since our succession to the crown. And now we perceive, with thankful acknowledgment of God's aid, that our endeavors have attained their proposed end, inasmuch as the better and the greater part of our subjects of the said R.P.R. have embraced the Catholic faith. And since by this fact the execution of the Edict of Nantes and of all that has ever been ordained in favor of the said R.P.R. has been rendered nugatory, we have determined that we can do nothing better, in order wholly to obliterate the memory of the troubles, the confusion, and the evils which the progress of this false religion has caused in this kingdom, and which furnished occasion for the said edict and for so many previous and subsequent edicts and declarations, than entirely to revoke the said Edict of Nantes, with the special articles granted as a sequel to it, as well as all that has since been done in favor of the said religion.

I. Be it known that for these causes and others us hereunto moving, and of our certain knowledge, full power, and royal authority, we have, by this present perpetual and irrevocable edict, suppressed and revoked, and do suppress and revoke, the edict of our said grandfather, given at Nantes in April, 1598, in its whole extent, together with the particular articles agreed upon in the month of May following, and the letters patent issued upon the same date ; and also the edict given at Nimes in July, 1629 ; we declare them null and void, together with all concessions, of whatever nature they may be, made by them as well as by other edicts, declarations, and orders, in favor of the said persons of the R.P.R., the which shall remain in like manner as if they had never been granted ; and in consequence we desire, and it is our pleasure, that all the temples of those of the said R.P.R. situate in our kingdom, countries, territories, and the lordships under our crown, shall be demolished without delay.

II. We forbid our subjects of the R.P.R. to meet any more for the exercise of the said religion in any place or private house, under any pretext whatever . . .

III. We likewise forbid all noblemen, of what condition so ever, to hold such religious exercises in their houses or fiefs, under penalty to be inflicted upon all our said subjects who shall engage in the said exercises, of imprisonment and confiscation.

IV. We enjoin all ministers of the said R.P.R., who do not choose to become converts and to embrace the Catholic, apostolic, and Roman religion, to leave our kingdom and the territories subject to us within a fortnight of the publication of our present edict, without leave to reside therein beyond that period, or, during the said fortnight, to engage in any preaching, exhortation, or any other function, on pain of being sent to the galleys. . . .

VIII. As for children who may be born of persons of the said R.P.R., we desire that from henceforth they be baptized by the parish priests. We enjoin parents to send them to the churches for that purpose, under penalty of five hundred

livres fine, to be increased as circumstances may demand; and thereafter the children shall be brought up in the Catholic, apostolic, and Roman religion, which we expressly enjoin the local magistrates to see done.

X. We repeat our most express prohibition to all our subjects of the said R.P.R., together with their wives and children, against leaving our kingdom, lands, and territories subject to us, or transporting their goods and effects therefrom under penalty, as respects the men, of being sent to the galleys, and as respects the women, of imprisonment and confiscation.

XII. As for the rest, liberty is granted to the said persons of the R.P.R., pending the time when it shall please God to enlighten them as well as others, to remain in the cities and places of our kingdom, lands, and territories subject to us, and there to continue their commerce, and to enjoy their possessions, without being subjected to molestation or hindrance on account of the said R.P.R., on condition of not engaging in the exercise of the said religion, or of meeting under pretext of prayers or religious services, of whatever nature these may be, under the penalties above mentioned of imprisonment and confiscation.

Given at Fontainebleau in the month of October, in the year of grace 1685, and of our reign the forty-third.

Signed, *Louis*.

Although the Catholic Church was centered in Rome under the pope's leadership, France had long been considered a nation of the faithful. Ever since Frankish kings and knights had defended Christianity at the Battle of Tours in 732 CE, the relationship between the French nation and the papacy had been a close one, at times rocky, but always close. Roman popes throughout the centuries counted on French support. French kings needed the Church's support in controlling their subjects. In the end, it was a symbiotic system that held sway over the French people for hundreds of years, but during the Protestant Reformation the scheme began to crack with the rise of a group called the Huguenots.

Huguenots were French Protestants. Many of them were influenced by John Calvin, a French lawyer and theologian who founded a reformed church in Geneva, Switzerland in the early 1530s. Word of Calvin's teachings spread quickly back his native lands, and within two decades there were roughly two million reformed Protestants in France, mostly in the southern and central sections of the country. They organized their first national synod in 1558. Catholic leaders were appalled and, like in the German lands after Luther's break with Rome, a series of civil wars subsequently broke out between Catholic and Protestant factions. Based partly on religious ideology, the wars were also political in nature, as different groups of nobles and royal houses backed the competing sides.

On 24 Aug 1572, St. Bartholomew's Day, a wave of violence by Catholics against Huguenots rocked the capital of Paris. Official reports are sketchy as to the number killed, but most modern historians believe that in the span of three days somewhere between 2000 and 3000 Protestants were killed in the city, with another 8000-10000 murders in the rest of France as the massacre spread. Few firsthand accounts have survived, but the "St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre" was certainly a time of extreme

violence. In one particularly gruesome story, the severed head of Huguenot leader Gaspard de Coligny was packed up and sent to Pope Gregory XIII (the head never reached Rome and was “lost” in Lyon). Thousands of bodies were summarily dumped in the Seine River. Revenge fueled sporadic outbreaks of violence across France for the next 25 years.

In 1598, in an attempt to heal the divisions plaguing his kingdom, Henry IV issued a decree known as the Edict of Nantes, which granted legal rights and recognition to the Huguenots in France and all French territories, although the decree also reaffirmed Catholicism as the established religion in France. Protestants still had to pay the official tithe to Catholic churches and they were restricted in the areas they could worship, but it was a step towards religious freedom in the kingdom. Unfortunately, many Huguenots still faced prejudice and retribution over the next century.

In 1685, Louis XIV, the “Sun King” and a staunch Catholic, formally renounced the Edict of Nantes and declared Protestantism illegal when he issued the Edict of Fontainebleau. Under Louis’s decree, Protestants had to convert to Catholicism or face retribution from the authorities. This act led to the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Huguenots from France, many fleeing for their lives facing the prospect of torture and death. Most moved to areas of Europe or the colonies where their beliefs would be accepted such as Great Britain, the German lands, the Dutch Republic, Switzerland, South America and the British colonies of North America (especially New York and Virginia). Religious toleration and freedom to worship for non-Catholics would not be restored until the eve of the French Revolution. In recent polls, roughly 3% of the French population today counts itself as Protestant (in many denominations), while over 60% counts itself as Catholic, yet the legacy of the Huguenots can be found around the world.

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, including excerpts from the Edict of Nantes (1598) and the Edict of Fontainebleau (1685), students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain who the French Huguenots were, the religious persecution they faced in the 16th and 17th centuries in France and how the exodus of Protestants from France after 1685 left its legacy around the world.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how the French Huguenots played a role in the Protestant Reformation.
2. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain what kinds of religious persecution the Huguenots faced in France during the 16th and 17th centuries.
3. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain the basic provisions of the Edict of Nantes (1598) and the Edict of Fontainebleau (1685).
4. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how the exodus of Huguenots from France after the Edict of Fontainebleau in 1685 left its legacy both in the American colonies and in other places around the world.

Procedure

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: What was the Protestant Reformation? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – French Wars of Religion (20 min)
- Video – Persecution of the French Huguenots (10 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the sources and articles about the French Huguenots and their legacy in France, in America and around the world. (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of the articles for homework to prepare for class discussion.
- Suggestion: Break students into groups and assign different articles to each group.
- Suggestion: AP/Advanced students should concentrate on primary sources.
- Group Activity – Socratic Discussion: Who were the Huguenots? What types of religious persecution did they face in 16th and 17th century France? Why did so many Huguenots emigrate from France after 1685? (20 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay / DBQ: Explain in detail who the French Huguenots were, the religious persecution they faced in the 16th and 17th centuries in France and how the exodus of Protestants from France after 1685 left its legacy around the world.

Extension

On tour: Temple Protestant de l'Oratoire du Louvre, Paris

While on tour, students in Paris can see the Temple Protestant de l'Oratoire du Louvre, located at 145 rue Saint-Honore, around the corner (8-10 minutes' walk) from the Louvre Museum, where they can see for themselves the oldest Protestant church in Paris. Although still a working church, the "Oratory" is also dedicated to the struggle Protestants faced in France during the 16th and 17th centuries, and thus is a focal point for people visiting the city from around the world. Outside is a monument dedicated to Gaspard de Coligny, the Huguenot leader killed during the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- www.museedudesert.com/article5769.html
Edict of Nantes – Excerpts in English (primary source). From Musee du Desert
- http://huguenotsweb.free.fr/english/edict_1685.htm
Edict of Fontainebleau – Excerpts in English (primary source)
- www.huguenot-museum-germany.com/huguenots/edicts.php
Huguenot Edicts (website) – from the German Huguenot Museum
- www.lepg.org/wars.htm
Wars of Religion: Part I (website). From Le Poulet Gauche, a guide to 16th century France.
- www.lepg.org/wars2.htm
Wars of Religion: Part 2 (website). From Le Poulet Gauche, a guide to 16th century France.
- www.huguenot.netnation.com/general/
The National Huguenot Society (website)
- huguenotsocietyofamerica.org/
The Huguenot Society of America (website). Great information on the Huguenots who came to the British American colonies after 1685. Good Resource for basic information on the French Protestants in America. Highly recommended for students and teachers as a great place to start.
- www.museum.co.za
Huguenot Memorial Museum (website) – in South Africa
- www.mrgalusha.org/APEuroDocs/Unit%202/French%20Wars%20of%20Religion.ppt
French Wars of Religion (PowerPoint). From Justin Galusha, AP European History teacher at Weymouth High School (MA).
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.
- www.learner.org/resources/series58.html
The Western Tradition: #29 – The Wars of Religion (video). This 27-minute video, although perhaps too long for many in-class showings, is well worth watching. It is part of a much larger (52-part) series produced by WGBH TV in Boston in 1989 and features Dr. Eugen Weber, former history professor at UCLA and one of the foremost experts in Western History before his death in 2007. The series, called “The Western Tradition” consists of 52 lectures of 30 minutes each, and covers subjects from the Dawn of History to the Twentieth Century. Highly recommended for students and teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxLSbAo4ztE
The Persecution of the French Huguenots (video). 10-minute video on the Religious Wars in France.

Background Information

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huguenot
Huguenot – Wikipedia article
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Wars_of_Religion
French Wars of Religion – Wikipedia article
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Nantes
Edict of Nantes, 1598 – Wikipedia article
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Fontainebleau
Edict of Fontainebleau, 1685 – Wikipedia article
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/france/country_profile
On the Road: France – from Passports Educational Travel

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/sir-thomas-more
Reformation England – Sir Thomas More
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/english-reformation
Reformation England – An Overview
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/reformation-britain-pilgrimage-of-grace
Reformation England – Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-37
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/anne-of-cleves
Reformation England – Anne of Cleves: Henry's 4th Wife and Beloved Sister
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/protestant-reformation-french-huguenots
Protestant Reformation – French Huguenots
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/germany/martin-luther-95-theses
Protestant Reformation – Luther and the 95 Theses 1517
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/switzerland/john-calvin-and-predestination
Protestant Reformation – John Calvin and Predestination

Key Terms

- Calvin
- Edict of Fontainebleau
- Edict of Nantes
- French Wars of Religion
- Huguenot
- Protestant
- Reformation
- Reformed Churches

