

## Audio 3, tracks 1–7: Britain and the French Revolution

*Clive Emsley*

**Presenter:** Clive Emsley

**Producer:** Jenny Bardwell

### Objectives

In listening to the programme and working through these notes you should gain in knowledge of:

- 1 events in the British Isles during the decade of the French Revolution;
- 2 differing attitudes in the British Isles to the French Revolution and how these changed.

### Before listening

You should have read Unit 6 on the French Revolution. The talk on this programme is designed to complement the discussion there, and also to provide background for Units 10 and 11 on Evangelicalism in Britain.

Plates A3.1–A3.4 in the Illustrations Book are discussed in the talk, and you will therefore need to keep them beside you as you listen.

### After listening

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**EXERCISE** Why was there no revolution in Britain during the period of the French Revolution?

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**DISCUSSION** This issue is addressed at the end of the talk, and I do not intend to repeat precisely what I have said there. However, you ought to consider what events might be said to occasion a revolution – look again at Tony Lentin’s discussion in Unit 6, pp.249–51, and see p.290. There were dissatisfaction and rioting in Britain during the 1790s. There were new political organizations calling for extensive political (and linked social and economic) reform – but is that sufficient to start a revolution? The food riots and disorders of 1795 and the naval mutinies of 1797 may well have constituted serious threats, and would have been especially serious had they occurred together. Yet the elite did not lose faith in the institutions of government or in its own abilities. Ireland was different:

this was a predominantly Catholic country dominated by an elite that was largely Protestant. Yet here again there are problems – at the beginning the United Irishmen were not all Catholics and they had a strong following among, indeed a significant leadership from, respectable Protestants in Ulster.

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## Sources

Track 1: extract from Richard Price, 'A discourse on the love of our country', a sermon preached 4 November 1789.

Track 2: extract from Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790.

Track 3: extract from Tom Paine, *The Rights of Man*, 1791–2.

Track 5: extract from 'Resolutions of the London Corresponding Society', 26 October 1795, in Thale, Mary (ed.) (1983) *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.316–17; extract from 'The delegates of the different ships at the Nore, assembled in counsel, to their fellow subjects', June 1797, National Archives, Adm. 1/5486; 'The Topman and the Afterguard', late eighteenth-century song.

Track 6: 'The Wearing of the Green', Irish song.

Track 7: 'Rule Britannia', song by Thomas Augustine Arne, 1740.