

### **Reading Questions: Revolutions III, Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France***

1. Who is Burke's audience in writing the *Reflections*? Is it an English audience or a French? Someone else? How would knowing the audience affect how we should read it?
2. What does Burke think of efforts to reform institutions on the basis of abstract philosophical reasoning? What arguments does he make for his view?
3. Where do Englishmen get their rights, according to Burke's reading of documents like Magna Carta and the Declaration of Right? How does this differ from the rights declared by the French National Assembly?
4. What does Burke mean when he writes that "in proportion as [the rights of man] are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false?"
5. What does Burke think replaces chivalry and social esteem in securing social order? Do you agree with him that one's country should be lovely, if it is to be loved?
6. In what sense does Burke think society is like a contract? How does his understanding compare with other conceptions of the social contract?
7. What attitude should we take toward changing our political institutions?
8. What does Burke mean by prejudice and why does he praise it? Would Kant agree with his reasoning on this point?
9. What does Burke think of the claim that democracy is the only legitimate form of government? On what basis does he think we should choose our form of government? Do you agree with him?
10. What have the revolutionaries done to the office of the king that Burke objects to, and why does he object to the changes? How does this compare to the way Rousseau imagines the task of the executive or "government?"
11. How are "old establishments" tried or judged according to Burke? Does this sound plausible to you?
12. What are the three bases of representation Burke discusses? How does he assess them?
13. Who will be empowered and who disempowered in the new French republic according to Burke? Why?
14. What "strong impression" did the Britons who introduced innovations into the British constitution have but the French revolutionaries lack? Do you think this is an important quality in designing basic laws or constitutions?