



ARC DE
TRIOMPHE

A SYMBOL OF THE REPUBLIC



LEARNING
RESOURCE



RÉPUBLIQUE
FRANÇAISE

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*

CENTRE DES MONUMENTS NATIONAUX

THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE, SYMBOLS AND COMMEMORATIVE FUNCTIONS

A symbol of a republic serves to identify a state among others. It can take the form of an object, a text, an animal, or even a person who embodies certain values in an abstract and illustrative way.

For the French Republic, the four principal symbols are the tricolor flag, the national anthem, Marianne, and the motto “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.”

The tricolor flag originated during the French Revolution, symbolizing the weakening of royal power (represented by white) through the incorporation of the colors of Paris (blue and red), the epicenter of the 1789 uprising.

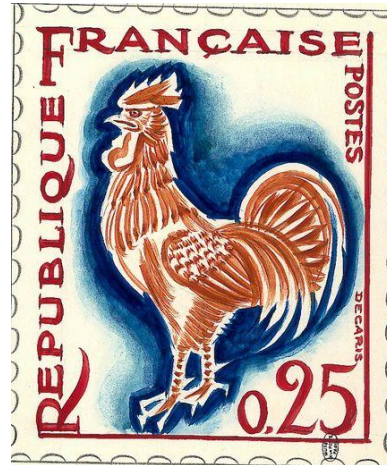
The French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, is a revolutionary war song composed by Rouget de Lisle in 1792 for the Army of the Rhine. This song resonated deeply throughout the nation before being officially adopted as the national anthem of France under the Third Republic in 1879.

Marianne, the figure of a protective yet warrior-like woman, also emerged from the French Revolution as the embodiment of Liberty and the Republic. She is easily identifiable by her iconic Phrygian cap, itself a symbol of freedom.

“Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” is a motto that also originated during the Revolution of 1789. Like the flag and the national anthem,

it was somewhat sidelined during the imperial periods before being enshrined in the Constitution of the Second Republic and more definitively adopted under the Third Republic.

Other symbols of the Republic exist, such as the National Day on July 14th, or the rooster (**fig. 01**), which is now commonly associated with sporting events.



01. Coq Decaris Stamp.

THE PHRYGIAN CAP: A SYMBOL OF LIBERTY

Before becoming Marianne’s emblematic adornment (**fig. 02**), the Phrygian cap was regarded in Greco-Roman antiquity as a symbol of liberty. It harkens back to the ritual of emancipating former slaves, who were adorned with a cap known as the pileus, signifying their status as freed individuals. This headwear bore a conical shape akin to the pointed cap with ear flaps known as the “Phrygian cap,” named for its association with the Phrygians, an ancient people of Asia Minor.

Centuries later, the symbolism of this cap was powerfully revived during the American War of Independence (1775–1783), appearing on the flag of the American insurgents. A few years later, this symbol was repurposed during the French Revolution as the “cap of liberty.” Revolutionaries adopted it for official uses, such as letterheads and as the seal of the Republic. Over time, the cap grew into a widely recognized and national emblem.

Although certain political regimes, such as the Empire, later neglected it, the Phrygian cap remains a significant symbol of the French Republic today (**fig. 03**). During the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the official mascot was the “Phryge,” a personified representation of this iconic cap.



02. Pipe sheath featuring a feminine representation of the “Republic” adorned with a Phrygian cap.



03. Agence Mondial. *The new bust of Marianne*, 1933.

THE ALTAR OF THE FATHERLAND, AN ANCIENT SYMBOL OF CITIZENSHIP

During the French Revolution, altars of the Fatherland were constructed as symbols of civic duty. They embodied a material representation of the Nation, serving as monuments dedicated to citizen gatherings, ceremonies, and civic celebrations, which became widespread starting from the first French Revolution of 1789.

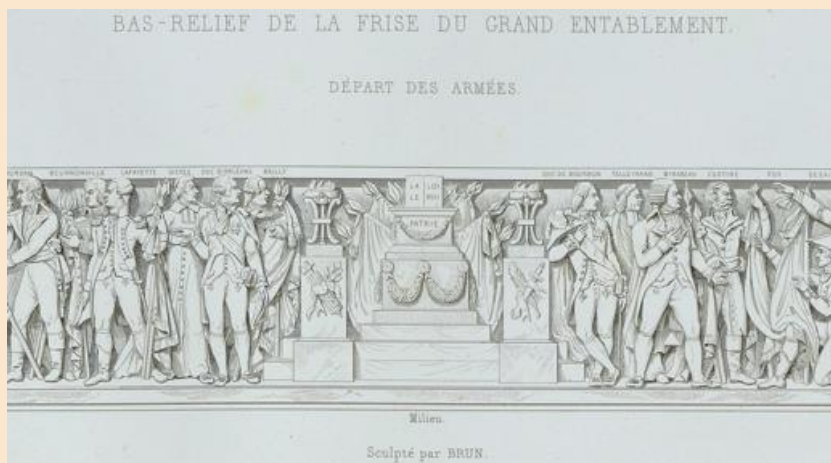
Constructed of stone or wood, these altars bore the inscription "The citizen is born, lives, and dies for the Fatherland," which would echo decades later in the inscription engraved on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe: "Here rests a French soldier who died for the Fatherland" (cf. Learning Resource – The Unknown Soldier).

In 1792, a law made their construction official in all French communes. However, under the First Empire, the majority of these altars were destroyed. Only a few were spared and preserved. One of the last still standing and in good condition is located in Thionville, in Moselle, and dates back to 1796 (fig. 04).

On the frieze of the Departure of the Armies, depicted on the entablature of the Arc de Triomphe (upper part), on the Champs-Élysées side, an altar of the Fatherland is represented at the center, symbolizing the one present at the Fête de la Fédération on July 14, 1790, where the oath to the Nation was taken (fig. 05).



04. The Altar of the Fatherland, City of Thionville.



05. Bas-relief of the large entablature frieze, Paris side, detail. In the center the altar of the fatherland.

From this symbolic perspective, how does the Arc de Triomphe, initially an imperial monument commissioned by Napoleon I in honor of the armies in 1806 (cf. Learning Resource – The Arc de Triomphe), also contribute to a form of republican embodiment?

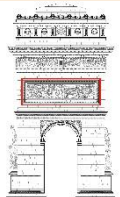
By taking a closer look at the sculptural representations of the monument, this learning resource explores the symbolic relationship between the Arc de Triomphe and its history in relation to the Republic. This relationship is particularly evident when examining the image and political appropriation of the monument through successive French political regimes. The file will also

highlight the commemorative function of this heritage building, making it a significant place of memory and civic gatherings, anchoring it in the strong values of the Republic.

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED

The Arc de Triomphe is a monumental and architectural masterpiece on which no fewer than 22 sculptors worked. The sculptural program of the monument covers the great deeds of the armies across several historical periods (cf. Learning Resource – The Sculpted Decorations), including the Empire and the Revolution. Upon closer inspection of the sculptures depicting the revolutionary army, many details reveal a tribute to the Republic.

THE BATTLE OF JEMMAPES, CHARLES MAROCHETTI



High relief in Chérence stone
3.96 meters high ;
17.26 meters wide
Avenue Kléber side (south)

This upper lateral relief on the southern side of Avenue Kléber depicts the first success of the young French Republic on November 6, 1792. The victory was led by Charles François Dumouriez, a general of the Revolution, also renowned for his victory at the famous Battle of Valmy with the revolutionary army on September 20, 1792, at the dawn of the First Republic (cf. Learning Resource – The Sculpted Decorations). He is shown here at the center of the relief, raising his hat on his horse (**fig. o6**). The injured man on the ground, in the care of a medical officer, is Jean-Baptiste Drouet. This French revolutionary politician gained prominence during the National Convention*, siding with the Mountain faction and voting for the death of Louis XVI during his trial.

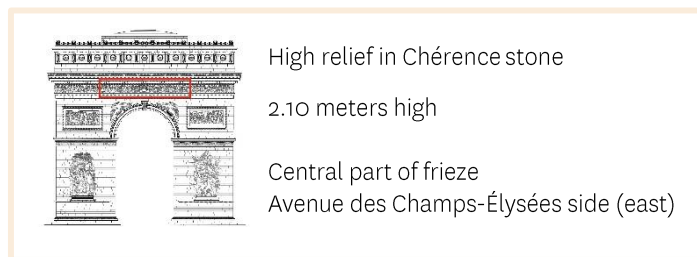


o6. Charles Marochetti, *The Battle of Jemmapes*.

*Glossay

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THE GREAT FIGURES OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE - THE DEPARTURE OF THE ARMIES



The entablature frieze The Departure of the Armies is divided into several sections, paying tribute to different branches of the armed forces and notable historical figures. Its main segment, located at the center of the east façade facing the Champs-Élysées, is entitled The Great Figures of the Revolution and the Empire. It was sculpted by Joseph-Sylvestre Brun (cf. Learning Resource – The Sculpted Decorations). Among these great historical figures is Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, better known as “Mirabeau” (fig. 07). A prominent figure of the Revolution, the politician represented the Third Estate and contributed to drafting the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. While this foundational text was not created in a republican context, it has nevertheless become a cornerstone of democratic values.



07. “Mirabeau”, *Les Grands Personnages de la Révolution et de l'Empire* (detail).

A rare female figure depicted among the many characters featured on the Arc, Madame Roland is shown seated under a tree, leaning on her husband (fig. 08). This committed revolutionary is a prominent historical and political figure, celebrated as a muse of the Girondins*.



08. “Manon Roland”, *Les Grands Personnages de la Révolution et de l'Empire* (detail).

Manon Roland was an educated and intellectual bourgeois woman, as well as a *salonnière*. During the Revolution, she hosted a *salon** where political figures such as Robespierre, Desmoulins, and Brissot gathered. This salon and the political meetings held there served as a laboratory for Girondin ideology. Her influence also extended through the political career of her husband, Jean-Marie Roland, for whom she drafted documents during his tenure as Minister of the Interior. She was guillotined in 1793 during the Reign of Terror* and is said to have declared before her death: “Oh Liberty! What crimes are committed in your name!”.

*Glossary

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THE GREAT FIGURES OF THE REVOLUTION AND EMPIRE - THE DEPARTURE OF THE ARMIES

The first figures depicted on this segment, just before Mr. and Mrs. Roland, are the poet André Chénier and the sculptor Jean-Guillaume Moitte.

The poet Chénier was also a journalist and a fervent defender of the French Revolution (fig. 09). He was politically active during this period, writing poems deeply influenced by the revolutionary context. As a member of the constitutionalist party opposed to Jacobinism and the Reign of Terror, he was guillotined in 1794.

The sculptor Moitte was likewise a supporter of Enlightenment philosophy and the French Revolution. He dedicated his art to projects aligned with the regime, such as designs for Republican seals based on revolutionary allegories (fig. 09).

Rouget de Lisle is the last prominent figure represented in this section of the frieze (fig. 10). This writer, musician, and military man composed The War Song of the Army of the Rhine. This song became a profound symbol of the French Republic, officially adopted as the national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, in 1879 during the Third Republic.

Also featured is the painter Jacques-Louis David, depicted sitting on a wheelbarrow, sketching (fig. 11). In addition to his artistic career, David played a political role as a deputy to the National Convention and as an organizer of revolutionary festival*.

These great figures, etched into the stone of the monument, pay tribute to the political events of the era. Depicting them in such a central and prominent segment of the Arc provides significant and symbolic visibility to the early beginnings of the Republic.



09. «Chénier et Moitte», *Les Grands Personnages de la Révolution et de l'Empire* (detail).

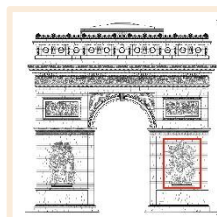


10. «Rouget De L'Isle», *Les Grands Personnages de la Révolution et de l'Empire* (detail).



11. «David», *Les Grands Personnages de la Révolution et de l'Empire* (detail).

THE DEPARTURE OF THE VOLUNTEERS, SAYS THE MARSEILLAISE, FRANÇOIS RUDE



High relief in Chérence stone
11.60 meters high
6 meters wide
Avenue des Champs-Élysées side,
right pediment (northeast)

The Departure of the Volunteers is a sculptural group located on the right pier of the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. Its second designation, *The Marseillaise*, evokes the Republic and its associated symbols (**fig. 12**). While this high-relief depicts the people asserting their independence during the French Revolutionary victory at Valmy (cf. Learning Resource – The Sculpted Decorations), the allegory of the woman, representing the genius of the homeland and the guide of the nation, was later interpreted as an allegory of the Republican regime, evoking Marianne. This winged woman, guiding the volunteers toward their independence against the coalition of monarchies, is adorned with a Phrygian cap.



12. François Rude, *The Departure of Volunteers*.

As previously mentioned, this symbol of freed slaves had become a symbol of the French Revolution and a direct association with the figure of Marianne, the embodiment of the Republic. In the upper left of the composition, the rooster—a symbol of the French Republic—can also be seen. It is perched atop the pole of the French flag, another major symbol of the Republic, bearing the initials "R.F.," which stand for *Révolution Française*, though they are sometimes interpreted as *République Française*.

Choosing to represent the Great Revolution through this sculptural group is a deeply political decision. It reflects a desire to appeal to republican sentiment while legitimizing the constitutional monarchy of Louis-Philippe, who was a supporter of the French Revolution and present at the Battle of Valmy. By honoring this pivotal event in revolutionary history, the work both satisfies the monarch and serves as a powerful and symbolic allegory of the Republic.

INTERIOR PILLARS AND THE ROOSTER SYMBOL

The symbol of the rooster also appears 18 times on the inner pillars of the Arc, framing the names of certain battles in alternation with the eagle, the symbol of the Empire. While the rooster became a symbol of the Republic during the Revolution, its origins date back to Antiquity. However, it has not always been viewed positively, having been associated with lust during the Middle Ages (cf. Learning Resource – The Sculpted Decorations).

The association of this animal with France stems from a play on its Latin etymology, *gallus*, which means both "Gallic" and "rooster." Since France, during Roman Antiquity, was part of the geographical region known as "*Gaul*" (Latin *Gallia*), the connection to the rooster was easily made, eventually becoming a rather secondary symbol of the French Republic.

POLITICAL APPROPRIATIONS

The Arc de Triomphe has been the subject of political representations that have continuously evolved throughout the history of France and its succession of political regimes. From the Restoration (1814-1830)* to World War II, its appropriation was not always straightforward, and numerous ideological and symbolic uses have been associated with it.

During the Restoration period, the monument, still unfinished, appeared as a relic of the Empire with an uncertain future. Napoleon died in 1821, and the monarchy hesitated to abandon or even destroy this imperial ruin.

It was during the July Monarchy* that a reinvestment in the monument took shape, through the lens of both revolutionary and imperial ideology, promoted by Louis-Philippe. This was especially evident in the selection of sculptural groups, including those by Rude (cf. Learning Resource – The Sculpted Decorations). This period of ideological blending between the Empire and the Revolution allowed for the incorporation of various values and tributes, which were expressed through the monument's architecture. It was, in fact, completed under this regime in 1836.

FRATERNITY DAY, APRIL 20, 1848

The July Monarchy ended with the February Revolution of 1848, giving way to the Second Republic. This revolution marked the definitive end of the monarchy in France, in a context of social, economic, and political demands fueled by uprisings across Europe. The Spring of Nations thus led France to its Second Republic on February 24, 1848. During this era, the Arc de Triomphe became the site of several popular celebrations and festivities.

On April 20, 1848, the Festival of Fraternity took place, organized in honor of the establishment of universal male suffrage (fig. 13). For the occasion, bleachers were set up under the great vault of the monument, and a massive distribution of tricolor flags occurred, decorating the entire Avenue des Champs-Élysées. Bouquets of flowers tied with tricolor ribbons were also distributed and thrown into the crowd, celebrating fraternity and the colors of the Republic.

There are several illustrations of this festive day, including this painting by the artist Hippolyte Sebron in 1848. Displayed at the Carnavalet Museum in the City of Paris, it provides a testimony to this great popular gathering in the history of the French Republic and the Arc de Triomphe.



13. Hippolyte Sebron, *La fête de la fraternité, April 20, 1848, Place de l'Etoile: distribution of flags to the national guard, 1848.*

*Glossary

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Subsequently, under the Second Republic and the Second Empire of Napoleon III, the Arc de Triomphe was again rarely used. It served occasionally as a monumental backdrop during the proclamation of the Empire and during the national holiday, which was celebrated on August 15. This date also coincided with the cult of Saint-Napoleon, born on August 15, 1769.

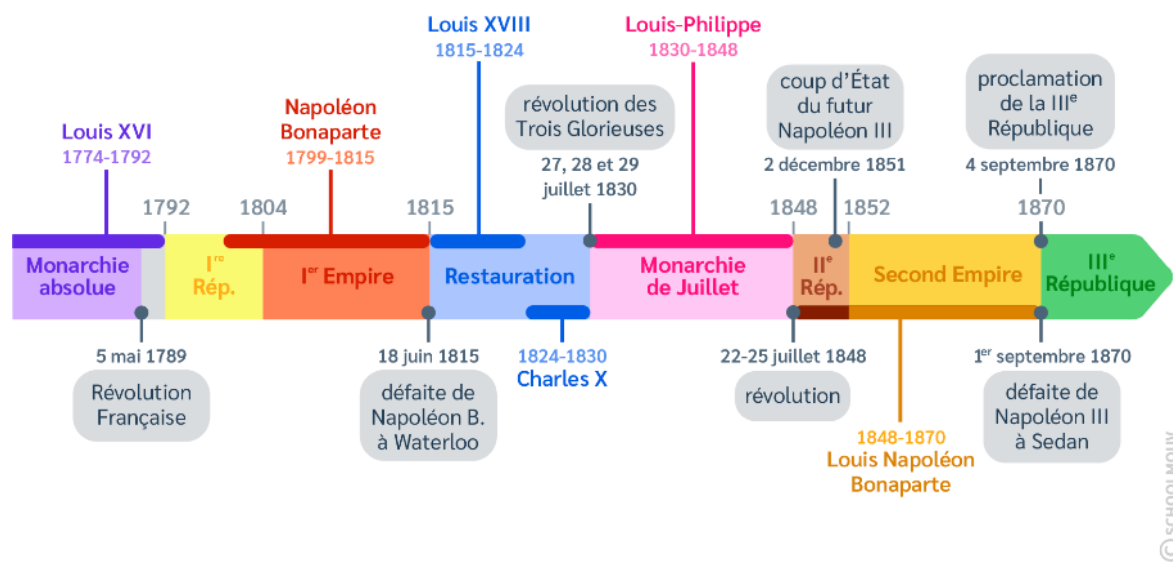
Apart from these few public festivities, the Arc was not used to glorify the Empire. Out of respect for his uncle Napoleon I, Napoleon III refrained from appropriating the monument or altering its architecture. He was also wary of its symbolism, which was associated with the tyrannical and unpopular campaigns of his uncle.

There is no doubt that the monument carries an imperial connotation, which somewhat hindered its use during the Republic. Its first official use dates back to 1873, during a visit by the Shah of Persia.

The major and significant event marking the appropriation of the monument by the Republic during this period took place during the funeral of Victor Hugo on May 31 and June 1, 1885 (fig. 14). After 1850, the poet had firmly established himself as a Republican, and from this time forward, his engagement and work evolved in this direction. During his funeral, the Arc de Triomphe was draped in a black veil, symbolizing the nation's mourning for the poet. His coffin was displayed and watched over under the Arc, and a catafalque was constructed for the occasion. Nearly two million people paid their respects during the funeral procession that led him to the Panthéon (cf. Learning Resource – Victor Hugo).



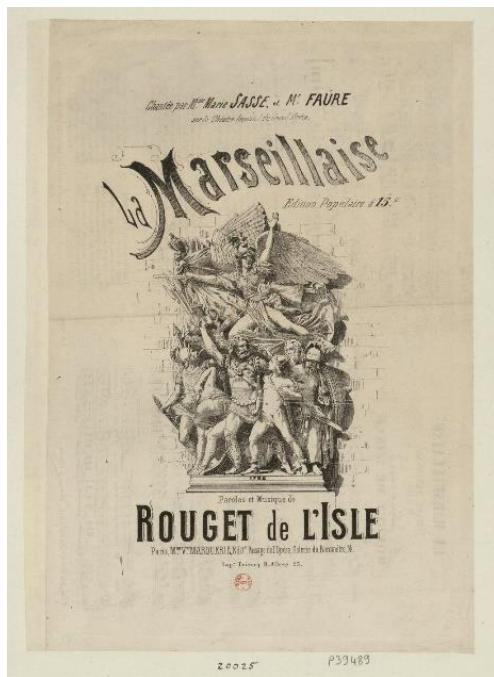
14. Guiaud, *Victor Hugo's funeral, the catafalque under the Arc de Triomphe*, after 1885.



15. Timeline of France's political situation in the 19th century, in French.

THE APPROPRIATION OF THE RUDE'S *LA MARSEILLAISE* BY THE REPUBLIC

Under the Third Republic, the appropriation of the Arc de Triomphe occurred both through the use of the monument itself and its dissemination as an image, particularly with *La Marseillaise* by Rude, the most republican sculptural part of the monument. Just as *La Marseillaise* by Rouget de Lisle became the French national anthem in 1879, a connection emerged between the two works (fig. 16).

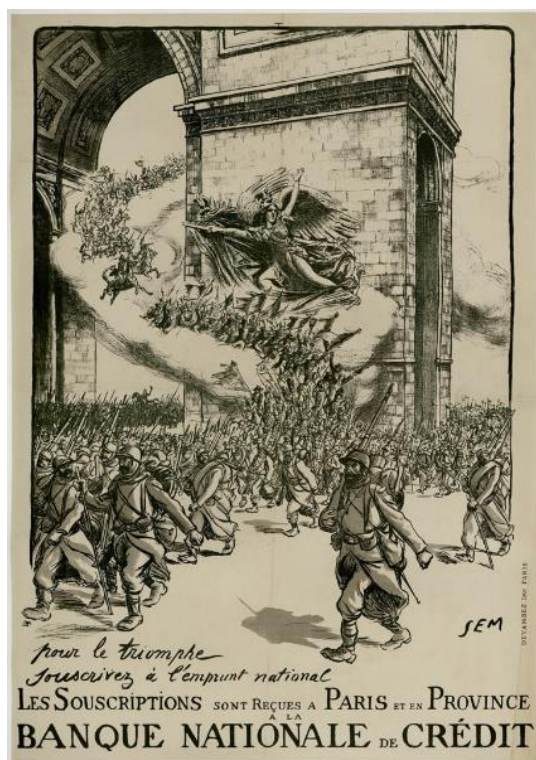


16. Rouget de L'Isle, Claude Joseph, *La Marseillaise*: Chantée par Mme Marie Sasse, et Mr Faure, sur le Théâtre Impérial du Grand Opéra, 1870.

The most symbolic part of the sculptural composition is that of the Génie de la Patrie, with its warrior-like expression and Phrygian cap. This section was used for several molding projects, for institutions such as the Beaux-Arts or the Musée de la Sculpture comparée (now the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine), a major republican educational institution conceived by Viollet-le-Duc in 1882. Dedicated to architecture and sculpture, this museum houses life-sized molds of sections of French buildings, thus contributing to the dissemination of knowledge about heritage, an important value of transmission for the Republic.

At the dawn of the 20th century, the Dreyfus Affair* led to a political crisis between the republican defense movement and the nationalism of the anti-Dreyfusards. The latter appropriated the sculpture as an allegory of a warrior goddess, singing the national anthem to call the people to defend the homeland. In opposition to the Dreyfusards, they even came to appropriate the entire Arc de Triomphe, especially when Émile Zola was buried at the Panthéon in 1908. Meanwhile, for the anarchists, *La Marseillaise* symbolized a liberating figure of the Great Evening of Humanity (Grand Soir de l'Humanité)*.

The republican appropriation of the Arc strengthened after 1914, when Rude's sculptural group was used as a propaganda image for the theme of liberation*. *La Marseillaise* also served as a political and commemorative image, disseminated in school textbooks, for example, or associated with war memorials (fig. 17).



17. Propaganda poster, *Pour le triomphe, souscrivez à l'emprunt*, 1918.

*Glossary

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ARC DE TRIOMPHE COMMEMORATIVE APPROPRIATION

During and after the Great War, the appropriation of the monument by the Republic continued to intensify, particularly during significant ceremonies. One notable event took place on July 14, 1915, when the body of Rouget de L'Isle was transferred to the Invalides. The funeral procession passed through the Arc de Triomphe, beneath the famous sculptural group, to pay a final symbolic tribute to the author of the national anthem. This event also revived the republican July 14th celebrations at the Arc de Triomphe, which had only been held there from 1884 to 1886. Once again, the link between the Republic and the monument was reinforced.

Subsequently, the victory over Germany led to a grand international celebration, where a military ceremony took place at the Arc de Triomphe and along the Champs-Élysées on July 14, 1919 (fig. 18). The Great War truly and permanently solidified the link between the Arc de Triomphe, the Republic, and its army. For France, since the Empire, this was the first time that a republican regime emerged victorious from a foreign coalition.

Thus, the military parade on July 14, 1919, was the very first official procession celebrating peace and the restoration of the nation

since the armistice (fig. 19). It also commemorated the Treaty of Versailles*, signed a few weeks earlier, on June 28, 1919. In addition to being a procession for the return to peace and victory over Germany, this military parade primarily paid tribute to the fallen and the survivors of those years of combat. The maimed and gueules cassées (those disfigured by war) led the procession and were honored by André Mare's Cenotaph*, located beneath the Arc de Triomphe.

The parade route traversed all of Paris, and the highlight of the event, most represented by the press and artists, was the passage beneath the Arc de Triomphe. For the first time in its history, the Arc de Triomphe was used for its original purpose: that of a monument celebrating a military triumph. Napoleon Bonaparte's original desire to celebrate the triumphant army by constructing an arch after the Battle of Austerlitz on December 2, 1805, would finally be realized 114 years later, under the Third Republic. For some contemporaries, the idea even emerged that the Arc de Triomphe had been built specifically for this mission—to celebrate the victory of the Great War.



18. Press photograph, *Cenotaph, monument erected in memory of the Great War dead near the Arc de Triomphe*, 1919.



19. Stereoscopic positive on glass plate, *Victory Day, July 1919*.

*Glossary

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Another major event further solidified the monument's role in celebration and remembrance. On November 11, 1920, the Fête du Cinquantenaire de la République took place. During this event, two significant funeral ceremonies were held: the pantheonization of Léon Gambetta through the transfer of his heart, and the arrival of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe. Other posthumous exhibitions of Great War hero soldiers followed, including those for Generals Joffre, Foch, and Lyautey. However, the Unknown Soldier's funeral remains the most notable, with his burial under the monument on January 28, 1921 (cf. Learning Resource – The Unknown Soldier). By becoming a tomb, the Arc de Triomphe entered a permanent memorial dimension, further embedding it in republican values.

However, depending on the ideologies and political trends, not all veterans fully embraced the Arc and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with the same conviction. The patriotic significance now associated with the monument, marked by the inscription "Here rests a French soldier who died for the homeland," led to divergences in the appropriation of the monument (fig. 20).

For some, with its imposing architecture, the monument evokes the idea of domination, carrying a sense of national superiority.



20. Arc de triomphe de l'Etoile, the keeper of the flame, June 1942.

This aesthetic can be misinterpreted and associated with notions of vengeance or war, criticized by some veterans. Meanwhile, more conservative individuals claim the monument as a symbol of national unity. During commemorations of the war, left-wing associations tend to demonstrate at the Panthéon or the Bastille. This avoidance of the Arc led to its appropriation by more conservative or even nationalist groups, such as the Jeunesses patriotes.

The monument became, for nationalist leagues, an image of propaganda, symbolizing the grandeur of France, and they twisted the patriotic meaning of the Unknown Soldier into a nationalist and anti-republican dimension. The Beam League* notably used the image of the monument to promote Le Nouveau Siècle through propaganda posters and press cartoons (fig. 21).



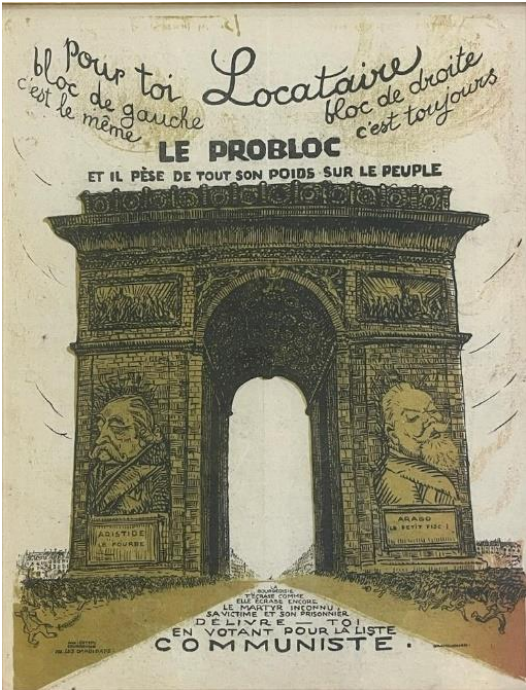
21. Page from the newspaper Le Nouveau Siècle, with a drawing depicting "Le Faisceau" in front of the Flame of the Nation of the Unknown Soldier, November 12, 1925

*Glossary

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Following the events of February 6, 1934, and the bloody anti-parliamentary demonstration that marked the day, a union of the left emerged, giving birth to the Popular Front. It is in this context that left-wing supporters and veterans partially reclaimed the monument, especially with *La Marseillaise* by Rude, which conveys a revolutionary message inherent to the party. Already an integral part of the collective memory of the right and republican center, *La Marseillaise* now also unites the left-wing classes, who associate it with their ideology. This ongoing process of appropriation and use of the Arc de Triomphe throughout historical and political events demonstrates a constant evolution of the monument as a symbolic site of the Republic (fig. 22).



22. Communist propaganda poster, 1924 elections (?).

THE MONUMENT’S APPROPRIATION DURING SECOND WORLD WAR

During World War II, the monument was occupied by Nazi soldiers. They paraded there as victors and held ceremonies and decoration presentations. On June 14, 1940, during their entry into Paris, the Arc was used as a propaganda symbol, with the Nazi flag flying at its summit for the duration of the day. Although the display of the flag was brief, the symbolism was powerful, and the flag would be displayed again during special events, such as Adolf Hitler’s visit to Paris (fig. 23).



23. The Nazi flag flies over the Arc de Triomphe, June 14, 1940.

The domination and superiority of Nazi Germany were symbolically reinforced by this image, with the Nazi flag asserting the defeat and occupation of France. The flag, as an emblem of sovereignty, emphasized the power dynamic and the triumph of the occupiers over the French nation and its military heritage. The attack on the French Republic was strongly represented and asserted through this use of the monument.

The ceremony of rekindling the flame of the Unknown Soldier was never interrupted. Although the Nazi Germans frequently participated, they did not oppose this daily commemorative event. For the French, this situation evoked mixed feelings. The pride of continuing the tribute to the Unknown Soldier remained despite the Nazi occupation and the state of war, but the Unknown Soldier had died for a free and peaceful France, not for an occupied one.

FROM COMMEMORATIVE APPROPRIATION TO AN ENDURING MEMORIAL AND CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS FOR THE REPUBLIC

By hosting the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Arc de Triomphe has become a burial site, a place dedicated to soldiers who died for France since 1920. Although this monument was not originally built with the intention of becoming a war memorial, it has nonetheless become a national commemorative monument. The ceremonies on November 11th and May 8th, the anniversaries of the armistices of World War I and World War II, are celebrated each year at the Arc de Triomphe (fig. 24).

The November 11th ceremony, a public holiday since 1922, is a republican ritual that honors citizens, rather than abstract principles. This ceremony celebrates the citizens who died and those who survived beside them. It does not commemorate the army or the nation, but rather symbolizes a tribute from the nation to the citizens who protected it. This republican ritual is thus part of a duty of remembrance and citizen transmission. Republican values and norms are passed on through what is called civic and moral education. The lessons and pedagogy related to these values are conveyed through such commemorations and ceremonies.

The various elements accompanying these ceremonies, such as the laying of wreaths, solemn music, and a moment of silence, are



24. Wreath laying at the flame of the unknown soldier by the Préfet de Région, Sunday, November 11, 2012.

all demonstrations that impress and emphasize the memorial and civic aspects of these rites. The same is true for the May 8th ceremony, which became a public holiday in 1953.

This entire ritualized and annual commemorative process takes place at war memorials, sites dedicated to the memory of the victims of these military conflicts (fig. 25). The Arc de Triomphe, by following these same celebrations, thus anchors itself as a monument of memory, on par with those erected to honor the nation and Republican values.



25. 94th anniversary of the armistice of November 11, 1918, tribute to all those who died for France, Sunday, November 11, 2012.

Finally, the presence of the French flag during these celebrations, a republican emblem, also symbolizes a tribute from the nation to the commemorated citizens. The display of the flag (Flagging)* under the Arc de Triomphe also takes place during national days. For example, on March 19, National Day of Remembrance and Reflection, honoring the victims of the Algerian War and the battles in Tunisia and Morocco. Also, the last Sunday of April, National Day of Remembrance for the Victims and Heroes of Deportation, or on May 27, for National Commemorative Day of the Resistance. Not to mention, of course, the celebration of the national holiday on July 14.

*Glossary

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NATIONAL HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Another important ceremony for the Republic is that of July 14, Bastille Day, a national and popular celebration that commemorates the Revolution and the Republic. This date, which became a national holiday in 1880, symbolizes the unity of the country through its values and history. Traditionally, it takes the form of a grand official ceremony staged by a military parade, where all branches of the army are represented and honored. This ceremony has evolved significantly over the years. During the July 14 celebrations of 1919 and 1945, the French army and the Allied troops paraded from the Avenue de la Grande Armée to the Place de la République, passing through the Champs-Élysées (fig. 26). It was in 1919 that this parade first took place on the Champs-Élysées. Prior to this date, it was held at the Longchamp Racecourse*.

Following the victorious celebration of 1945, the location of the military parade changed several times, moving between the Champs-Élysées, the Cours de Vincennes, and from Place de la Bastille to Place de la République. It wasn't until 1980 that the Avenue des Champs-Élysées became the permanent location for this national ceremony, with a few exceptions, such as on July 14, 2024, when it took place on Avenue Foch due to the Paris Olympic Games. Whether on the Champs-Élysées or Foch, the Arc de Triomphe dominates the avenue and serves as the main monumental and symbolic backdrop for this republican event. The French Patrol (Patrouille de France)* flies over it on this occasion, leaving behind a trail of smoke in the colors of the tricolor flag. This image, now ritualized for several decades, solidifies the Arc de Triomphe as a heritage monument of memory, homage, and unity, reaffirming its symbolic role for the Republic and its citizens.



26. The Patrouille de France flies over the Arc de Triomphe during the July 14, 2020 celebrations.

*Glossary

Please refer to page 16

A MONUMENT TO POPULAR CELEBRATION

Paris hosted the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games during the summer. This sporting and festive period provided significant visibility to the French capital and its monuments. The Arc de Triomphe found itself at the heart of this historic event, adorned with the "Agitos," the emblem of the Paralympic Games. Composed of three commas in red, blue, and green, this symbol represents values of courage, determination, and equality, echoing those of the monument. It also symbolizes inclusion and movement, as its Latin etymology "agito" means "I move," giving meaning to the Paralympic motto "Spirit in Motion" (fig. 27).

The symbolic role of the monument in this sporting and inclusive context recalls the values of the Republic in all its fraternal and egalitarian dimensions. It also served as the site for the Olympic Flame relay on July 15th. This symbolic moment, held the day after the national holiday, saw the Olympic Flame alongside the Flame of the Nation at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This moment of remembrance between the two flames once again anchors the Arc de Triomphe within the values and significant events of the French Republic.

At the end of this sporting summer, and beyond the closing ceremonies of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, a final moment of popular gathering took place: the Parade of Champions. Orchestrated on September 14, 2024, this parade of French athletes and para-athletes took place on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. An

official presentation of republican decorations by the President of the Republic punctuated this parade. 120 athletes and para-athletes who had won medals and were present at the ceremony were decorated with the Legion of Honour* or the National Order of Merit*. Une célébration de champions sportifs et triomphants, s'inscrivant au pied d'un édifice dédié à l'origine aux armées triomphantes.

Although the dedication of the Arc de Triomphe has evolved throughout its history, its functions as a site for popular gatherings, commemorations, and civic celebrations have continuously accompanied the major events in France's history for nearly 200 years. This monument thus reflects the republican and civic values of France, serving as a symbolic heritage structure rich in meaning for the Republic.



27. Arc de triomphe with the Paralympic Games emblem, the Agitos, 2024.

*Glossary

Please refer to page 16

* **Dreyfus Case**

A major political and social scandal of the Third Republic, which highlighted and political divisions in France. The case began in 1894, when a Jewish French officer, Alfred Dreyfus, was falsely accused of spying for Germany.

* **National convention**

Constituent Assembly elected on September 2, 1792, following the suspension of Louis XVI. First French election by universal male suffrage.

* **André Mare's Cenotaph**

Funerary monument that does not contain a body, erected in memory of a person or group of people, and whose shape is reminiscent of a tomb. The monument dedicated to the dead of the First World War was designed by architect André Mare.

* **Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen**

Founding text of the French Revolution and democratic principles, drafted by the Constituent Assembly and adopted 1789.

* **1918 Liberation Loan**

A "perpetual" wartime loan which was not intended to be repaid, but rather paid out in the form of an annuity when public finances were strained during the war. Numerous propaganda posters were produced to encourage the population to subscribe massively.

* **Revolutionary Celebrations**

Ceremonies during the French Revolution (1790-1799) organized to celebrate key events such as the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille.

* **Girondins**

Moderate, liberal political group of the French Revolution, drawn from the upper bourgeoisie. Opposed to the more radical Jacobin political group.

* **Grand Soir de l'Humanité**

A term derived from communist ideology, signifying the dawn of social upheaval, leading to the overthrow of the current system and social norms.

* **Longchamp Racecourse**

Racetrack built in 1857 under Napoleon III, on the site of the Royal Abbey of Longchamp, since destroyed. It is located in the Bois de Boulogne.

* **Legion of Honor**

Honorary decoration created in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte. It is France's highest honor, and one of the most widely recognized in the world.

* **Beam League**

Short-lived French fascist party founded in 1925 by politician Georges Valois. It was the first non-Italian fascist movement, and disappeared in 1928.

* **July Monarchy**

Name given to the reign of Louis-Philippe I (1830-1848), who came to power after the revolution of July 27, 28 and 29, 1830, known as the "Three Glorious Days".

* **National Order of Merit**

Honorary, civic and military decoration, instituted in 1963 by General Charles de Gaulle. It is the second highest award for French citizens.

* **French Patrol**

Patrouille acrobatique de France (PAF) official squadron of the French Air Force. Unit dating from 1953, ambassador of French aeronautics.

* **Flagging**

The act of decorating a place with a flag or pennant. French public buildings are subject to legislation on paving.

* **Restoration**

French historical period from 1814 to 1830, when the monarchy was restored. It began with the brief return of Napoleon Bona-parte (the Hundred Days period), followed by the constitutional monarchy of Louis XVIII (1814-1824), then Charles X (1824-1830).

* **Literary Salon**

A literary salon or salon de conversation was a private gathering of intellectuals and socialites to discuss to discuss philosophy, literature, politics or art and music. It sometimes symbolized an ante-chamber of power.

* **Terror**

Name given to the period of the French Revolution between 1792 or 1793 depending on the historian, and 1794. The revolutionary government pursued a bloody policy, with between 35,000 and 40,000 people people were guillotined or executed executed during this period.

* **Treaty of Versailles**

Peace treaty signed on June 28, 1919 at Versailles between Germany and the Allies at the end of the First World War.

§ André Chénier (1762-1794)

Originally from Constantinople, André Chénier grew up in France, in Carcassonne. He was passionate about classical poetry and antiquity, and wrote poems in the ancient style (*Les Bucoliques*, *À Fanny*, etc.), later producing more philosophical and satirical works. He also became a journalist during the Revolution, becoming an active participant in the revolutionary movement and a critic of Jacobinism. During the Reign of Terror, he strongly opposed the regime and its actions, which ultimately led to his execution by guillotine in 1794. He was one of the last victims of the Terror, being guillotined just days before Robespierre. His work inspired other great poets, such as Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Alfred de Musset.

§ Rouget de L'Isle (1760-1836)

Claude Joseph Rouget, known as de L'Isle, was born in the Jura and studied at the Royal School of Engineering in Charleville-Mézières. He became a captain in 1791, stationed in Strasbourg. Passionate about music and poetry, the mayor of Strasbourg tasked him with composing an anthem for liberty, set to music by Ignace Pleyel, for the *Fête de la Constitution* in 1791. He went on to compose numerous patriotic songs, and in 1792, he was asked to write a song for the army, mobilized for the war against Austria, which had just been declared. *Le Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin* was composed on the night of April 25–26, 1792. The song made its way to Marseille, where the volunteers adopted it and sang it upon their arrival in Paris for the August 10, 1792, insurrection at the Tuileries.

Renamed *La Marseillaise*, it became the national anthem. De L'Isle, who was a royalist and disapproved of the establishment of the Empire, resigned from the army in 1796. He then lived in hardship as a writer and died in debt in 1836.

§ Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825)

Born in Paris, Jacques-Louis David was passionate about ancient art and won the Prix de Rome in 1774 after four attempts. A precursor of French neoclassicism and highly admired by the aristocracy, the revolutionary period greatly inspired him. He aligned himself with the Montagnards, became a Jacobin deputy, and voted for the death of Louis XVI. His works depicted major events of the political moment, such as *The Death of Marat*. He narrowly escaped the guillotine after the death of Robespierre and became deeply fascinated by Napoleon and the Empire. David became Napoleon's official painter and created *The Coronation of Napoleon*. After the fall of the Empire, David was exiled from France and moved to Brussels, where he continued painting until his death in 1825.

§ Honoré Riquetti - Mirabeau (1749-1791)

Originally from Vaucluse, the Count of Mirabeau was a writer, journalist, and politician. He became a prominent figure in the French Revolution, leading a life of debauchery. During the Revolution, he sat in the Estates-General of Aix-en-Provence and then in the National Assembly. He was one of the greatest revolutionaries and orators of the time. He contributed to the drafting of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and advocated for a constitutional monarchy while also defending the rights of the people.

He died suddenly in 1791, a victim of his excesses, and his body was placed in the Panthéon. In 1792, when his secret correspondence with Louis XVI was discovered, he was accused of treason and was removed from the Panthéon two years later.

§ Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935)

Born in Mulhouse, Alfred Dreyfus came from an Alsatian Jewish family that adopted French nationality in 1872, following the annexation of Alsace-Moselle by the German Empire in 1871. He enlisted in the French army in 1878, joining the École Polytechnique. He successfully passed the various exams that allowed him to rise through the ranks, eventually being appointed in 1893 as a trainee officer at the army's general staff, holding the rank of captain at the Ministry of War.

In September 1894, an investigation by the French military counterintelligence services uncovered the existence of a traitor among their ranks. The handwriting on a suspicious memorandum was linked to that of Alfred Dreyfus, who was accused of espionage on behalf of Germany. Arrested and falsely charged with high treason, the young officer became a victim of antisemitism. Condemned unanimously by the court-martial, he was deported to a penal colony in French Guiana, after being publicly degraded in the courtyard of the École Militaire in Paris.

In 1896, the discovery of a new document led to the identification of the true culprit, Commander Esterhazy, and the exoneration of Dreyfus. However, this discovery was suppressed. From that point on, Alfred Dreyfus became the focal point of the most significant political and judicial affair of the Third Republic. Two factions emerged: the Dreyfusards, including Émile Zola, who published his open letter "J'accuse..." in *L'Aurore* in 1898, and the anti-Dreyfusards, nationalist figures.

As the case gained momentum, a new trial was held before a court-martial in 1899, which again condemned Dreyfus to 10 years in prison, despite the lack of evidence. Ultimately, in July 1906, Alfred Dreyfus was exonerated by the Court of Cassation. He was reinstated into the army as a lieutenant colonel and became a knight of the Legion of Honor. Called up during World War I, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and further honored as an officer of the Legion of Honor. He passed away in 1935 in Paris.

§ Jean-Guillaume Moitte (1746-1810)

A painter, sculptor, engraver, and draftsman, Moitte is primarily recognized for his sculptural works, particularly David Carrying the Head of Goliath in Triumph, which earned him the first prize in sculpture at the Rome Prize in 1768. In 1789, during the Revolution, he aligned himself with the regime, having always been close to the philosophy of the Enlightenment. He created a statue of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which is now housed in the Carnavalet Museum.

One of the first artists to promote the neoclassical movement, Moitte continued to complete commissions under the Consulate and the Empire. Some of his works are now accessible in public collections, such as at the Louvre Museum, for instance.

§ Manon Roland (1754-1793)

Manon Roland was a woman of struggle and conviction. Born into a bourgeois and educated family, she became a salonnière and revolutionary, emerging as one of the leading figures of the Girondin club. She had a significant influence on the political life of her time, never hesitating to fight for her beliefs, championing liberty and equality. Some would eventually find her disruptive, and she was ultimately guillotined. The phrase she proclaimed in front of the statue of Liberty as she ascended the scaffold would go down in history: "Oh Liberty! What crimes are committed in your name!"

§ Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879)

A renowned architect of the 19th century, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc was deeply passionate about medieval heritage. His extensive field of work led him to restore some of the country's greatest monuments, including the sculpted decoration of Notre-Dame de Paris, the city of Carcassonne, and the Château de Pierrefonds—each a major project under his direction.

His distinctive approach to heritage preservation earned him numerous criticisms and controversies, as historical documents were of little concern to him: "Restoring a building is not maintaining, repairing, or recreating it; it is restoring it to a complete state that may never have existed at any given moment." With this definition, the architect took considerable liberty in restoring heritage according to his own inspirations.

While this approach was criticized by his contemporaries and, at times, still is, Viollet-le-Duc is now credited with a visionary approach, through which this medieval heritage has been preserved for us today.

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