

## **The Jacques Experiment:** *A game of French Revolutionaries, Nobles, and Innocent Bystanders*

In the spirit of the chaos of the French Revolution as portrayed in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, we are going to experience a role playing game that allows us to (playfully) replicate the sinister murders, unjust casualties, general unrest, mistrust, plotting, and counter-schemes of this historical setting. Each of you will be secretly assigned a role, as a part of one of the following three populations. Keep your role absolutely secret from your classmates—  
in this game, it's a very serious matter!

### Revolutionaries

**Objective:** kill all six nobles before they can safely emigrate; don't die.

**Abilities:** You are a well-armed revolutionary. You are able and willing to kill, and your weapon is aimed at the aristocracy. As you walk about the city, you may greet people by shaking their hands. **If you suspect someone to be of the noble class, squeeze his or her hand tightly three times in a row.**

**They will die.** (Keep your dispatching as discreet as possible—you do NOT want to reveal your identity.) However, if you accidentally shake the deadly hand of a fellow revolutionary, you will die. Make sure you attempt to discern who's who... but you can't ask anything straight out... people are always listening. If you like, you may decline a handshake at any time, but not two in a row. **You can also recruit an innocent bystander to your cause, by whispering "Your new name is Jacques" to him or her.** If they agree, they are now on your side. However, if the one you recruit is actually a noble, he or she may cry "FREEDOM!" and escape from France unharmed. **If you are accidentally recruited by another revolutionary, simply whisper, "Viva la revolución!" and be on your way**

### Nobles

**Objective:** get safely out of France; don't die.

**Abilities:** You have a ton of money, but you need to get out of France *now* if you plan to stay alive.

The revolutionaries are after you. In order to get to safety, you must avoid death. **If offered a handshake by someone you suspect to be a revolutionary, you may decline the handshake to preserve your safety. However, you cannot decline two handshakes in a row.** Choose carefully. **You have two ways to freedom:** 1. **Fool a revolutionary into thinking you are an innocent bystander who is sympathetic to the revolution.** If a revolutionary whispers "Your new name is Jacques" to you, you may cry "FREEDOM!" and escape from France. 2. **Even if you don't escape early, if you can manage to stay alive until the end of the game, we'll assume that you bought your way to freedom.**

## Innocent Bystanders

**Objective:** join the revolution OR lay low; either way, don't die.

**Abilities:** As part of the general French mob, you are unpredictable. **One of your main traits is merely to cause chaos and suspicion, by offering handshakes to your fellow civilians. However, take care. If a revolutionary mistakes you for a noble, you may die. Like the others, you may decline a handshake at any time, but not twice in a row.** Really the best way to preserve yourself is to get recruited by a revolutionary. Try to convince him or her that you are sympathetic to the cause. **If someone whispers "Your new name is Jacques" to you, you may agree to become part of the revolution. If that occurs, you will also have the power to kill and recruit.** You may refuse if you like, but that will make you seem sympathetic to the royals, which may make you a target...

### How to Play

You've been assigned your role by now. Think about what we've read so far from Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*... It's not always safe to reveal one's identity or allegiance in revolution-era France (or England for that matter). Keeping that in mind, think up a cover story for your character... regardless of who he or she truly is, what might she want to say in order to avoid detection? As you walk about the room, shaking hands (or not!), ask and answer these questions about each other's characters. Spend a moment considering what you'll say, and then it's time for chaos to rule... We'll play for ten minutes. If you are dispatched, you may "die" dramatically and return to your seat. If you are a noble who manages to escape from France, take your place of honor and safety in the corner by the door, and watch the mayhem ensue. We'll play for ten minutes. Anyone left standing at the end will then reveal his/her true identity.

#### *~Conversation questions~*

*What is your name?*

*Where were you born? Where do you live now?*

*What is your occupation?*

*Do you have a family? Who are they?*

*How do you feel about the plight of the poor in this country?*

*Where are you going on this fine day?*

#### **Questions for consideration after the activity:**

Which populations seemed to fare the best? What attributed to this?

What types of things were likely to get you in trouble? What about keeping you safe?

How/why were alliances created? Did any of them backfire?

Who did a great job disguising their identities? How did they accomplish this?

If we had allowed the game to last all hour, what would've happened?

How can we relate the observations about these conditions to history? To the novel?