

Imagine that you are preparing a project with your friend. You have found some interesting material for the presentation and you want to read this text to your friend. You have 1.5 minutes to read the text silently, then be ready to read it out aloud. You will not have more than 1.5 minutes to read it.

Only seven prisoners were freed by the storming of the Bastille. In France, 14 July, Bastille Day, is a national holiday and a glorious national symbol. From the rousing paintings of the scene, you might think hundreds of proud revolutionaries flooded into the streets waving tricolours. In fact, only just over half a dozen people were being held at the time of the siege.

One hundred lives were lost in the attack, including that of the governor, whose head was carried through Paris on a pike. Soldiers invalided out of regular service — and conditions were fairly comfortable for most inmates, with relaxed visiting hours and furnished lodgings. The painter Jean Fragonard's sketch of visiting day in 1785 shows fashionable ladies promenading around the courtyard with the prisoners, who were given a generous spending allowance, plenty of tobacco and alcohol, and were allowed to keep pets.