



Fédon's Rebellion

Resource sheet 1

Aim

To understand how enslaved people fought for their freedom

Task 1

1. Read the information sheet on Fédon's rebellion
2. Turn your jotter on its side and draw a line down the middle of the page
3. Using the information sheet you should fill in your timeline with detailed notes of what happened during this rebellion. The first and last one has been done for you.

1789
The French Revolution

19 June 1796
British reinforcements arrived ending the rebellion

What sparked it?

The French Revolution in 1789 inspired revolutionary ideas about freedom. Such ideas in turn sparked a slave rebellion in the French-owned Caribbean Island of Haiti (formally called Saint-Domingue) in 1791. Following this, Haiti became the first independent Black state. This in turn sparked other rebellions, such as in Grenada, led by Julien Fédon. Fédon's Rebellion aimed to form a Black republic and put an end to slavery.

Who was the leader?

Julien Fédon's father had been a French planter and his mother was a former enslaved woman. Fédon had inherited his estate in Grenada, from his father and on it, owned approximately 80 enslaved people. This estate was called Belvidere, was located in Grenada's mountainous interior. Grenada had been a French colony before becoming British and many of the French enslavers, like Fédon, resented British domination and wanted to overturn their rule... Although the initial aim of the rebellion was to overturn British rule and it was led by free people who themselves owned enslaved people, it later became an anti-slavery rebellion.

Exam Style Question

1. Describe the events of Fédon's Rebellion (4)



Fédon's Rebellion

Resource sheet 3

What happened?

On the night of 2nd March 1795, Fédon and his forces, with the rebel cry of *Liberté, égalité ou la mort!* (Freedom, equality or death), surrounded the town of Grenville (formally known as La Baye), capturing and putting to death eleven of the British residents. At the same time in Gouyave (another town on Grenada's west coast), a different group of revolutionaries captured more British residents, who were then taken to Belvidere. In total over 40 hostages —among them Ninian Home, Governor of Grenada—were held for over a month at Fédon's Estate.

On the 3rd March the ranks of the rebels began to increase as French planters, free men, and enslaved people flocked to the military camp at Belvidere. The president of the General Council called on the rebels to surrender, promising a pardon to all except those who participated in the massacre at Grenville. The Grenada government requested assistance to put down the revolt, but help was slow in coming. The Militia and fewer than 200 regular troops prepared to defend St. George's if attacked.

Fédon had previously warned the British that he would order the deaths of some of the hostages if he was attacked. On 8 April the long-awaited assault on the rebel camps started but proved unsuccessful. In response to this attack 48 of the hostages were executed. The government changed strategy by establishing coastal posts to intercept incoming supplies for the rebels and arming enslaved people to fight for. For the remainder of the year there were a number of sporadic attacks by both sides as the rebellion dragged on.

By early 1796 the rebels controlled most of the island, but in March the British captured the strategic sites of Post Royal and Pilot Hill, cutting off the rebels' primary external supplies of weapons and food. On 19 June British reinforcements finally arrived, and rebels' positions were attacked and successfully captured. The rebels, suffering heavy losses, fled to their mountain stronghold at Fédon's Camp and awaited the final assault and defeat. It took the British 16 regular military units, 15 months, and the loss of hundreds of soldiers from Yellow Fever and hostilities before the rebellion was finally defeated.

Were they successful?

Some fifty rebels were captured, tried and found guilty of high treason, and 14 'noted brigands' were publicly executed 'on a large gibbet in the Market place'. In a final act of vengeance the heads of the rebels were reportedly severed from their bodies and publicly displayed. Rebels not jailed or executed, together with their families, were deported to Honduras. Fédon himself was never captured.

Fédon's Rebellion ruined the island's economy, its agriculture devastated by fires and fighting. Some 7,000 slaves lost their lives and hundreds of British soldiers were killed or died from diseases. Sixteen British regiments were deployed to restore order in the 134-square-mile island, and reported damages totalled more than £ 2.5 million sterling.