The French Revolution was a great event in history. It was accomplished through a variety of causes, however. Because of financial crises, poor management, and contention between classes, it was accomplished. However, the financial crises were the greatest contributors to this event.

There were many financial crises during this time in France. As it states in Turgot’s recommendations (Doc. 3), wars were a large contributor to France’s distress. Specifically, it cites The Seven Years’ War that happened before Louis XVI’s reign. However, Turgot may be biased in his recommendations. He was sending those to a new king, so by making problems seem worse than they really were, he could persuade the king to give him more power. According to a French Inspector (Doc. 6), bread prices were the main cause of rebellion in France. He states that Frenchmen paid more for bread with half as much money as they had years earlier. This would be rather important, as lack of bread would also lead to starvation. A certain British Chargé d’ Affaires (Doc. 11) stated that the French problem was also due to an unwillingness to reform tax structure. The tax structure in this period was based on the medieval system where peasants were taxed to pieces and nobles were tax exempt. This is obviously a problem, taking your revenues from the impoverished while the wealthy don’t contribute a single Haypenny. However, this document could be biased. It was a British point of view reporting on the enemy’s problems. It might have exaggerated the situation to keep British citizens from fearing French power. The finance minister Necker (Doc. 7) boasted that he financed the American War without raising taxes. This accentuates the point that France had to borrow lots of money to finance this war. Evidently, if one doesn’t raise taxes, one must borrow money to finance wars. This document is biased. He was trying to sell his ability to handle finances so he didn’t get fired. He made it look like it was great that he didn’t raise taxes to finance war, though all he succeeded in doing was pushing his country deeper into debt.

This leads into the next point, poor management. Looking back at the documents, more specifically, the ones by Necker, Calonne, Turgot, and Brienne (Docs 2, 7, 10, and 16), it can be deduced that Louis XVI went through many different finance ministers in his reign. This inconsistency made it so that there were great, sporadic changes in finances. Unfortunately, the beginning of a plan is also the time when the most expenses are made. Louis XVI also had a problem with waffling depending on the will of the people. Brienne (Doc. 16) states in his recommendation that France could either be bankrupt or be tax heavy. He cynically implies that Louis XVI cannot do both, which is exactly what Louis tried to do. Now, this document is also likely to be biased. Brienne was under tremendous pressure because of bread riots. He was pressuring Louis to do something to save his own skin. Also, according to Charles Gravier (Doc. 5), the French Foreign Minister, the French had an unhealthy obsession with defeating England. He states that they wanted to see Britain’s power humbled and that was why they intervened in the American War. If a country’s leaders make war on another country because they don’t like them, then one can be sure that the said country will see trouble soon.

The next point is the contention between the classes. At this time there was an incredible increase in the Bourgeoisie, as stated by a French author (Doc. 8). They seemed to have doubled in the few years separating Louis XIV and Louis XVI. As a Dutch journal put it (Doc. 9), this increase in Bourgeois led to increased clashes between nobles and them. It speaks specifically of the country nobles and the wealthy merchants. The jealous nobles disliked that they had more money than themselves. The merchants hated the nobles’ tax exemptions and other privileges. Case in point, the Dúc de Arlés (Doc. 4) said that it wasn’t the nobility’s duty to relieve the king’s debt. In other words, the duke was defending tax exemptions for nobles. The bread shortages also led to clashes between the 2nd Estate and the poor 3rd Estate. An English traveler (Doc. 1) states that the French nobility was lazy, yet still got bread. This must’ve infuriated the peasants, who couldn’t afford to eat. However, this is biased because of its point of view. It was written by a British traveler who might’ve been poor himself, so he would’ve sympathized with the peasants.

Because of these reasons, the Revolution happened. We can see financial issues in all of the reasons, so obviously they were the most important. They appear in finances, poor financial management, and class clashes due to wealth discrepancies.