

LIFE OF MARIE ANTIONETTE

Directions: Read the following and complete the related activities.



Louis XVI, who belonged to the Royal House of Bourbon, became King of France in 1774 when his grandfather Louis XV died. Earlier, in 1770, at the age of fifteen, Louis XVI married Marie-Antoinette, the fourteen year old daughter of the Empress of Austria. The marriage was arranged to strengthen the alliance between France and Austria.

The personalities of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette differed tremendously. Louis XVI was introverted, shy and indecisive. As well, he enjoyed solitary activities, such as: reading and metalwork. Whereas, she was outgoing and craved social encounters such as parties.

During the first few years of the marriage, Marie Antoinette became very unpopular. She was young and had few responsibilities and indulged herself by extravagant spending of jewels, clothes and parties. For this reputation she earned the nickname "Madame Deficit". She was so despised by the people of France that they blamed her for the large debts of the country and its financial crisis.

In 1785, she was accused of buying a diamond necklace worth 1,600,000 livres. Although it would be eventually proved that she did not buy the necklace, she had already lost the confidence of public opinion. As financial crisis and poor harvests gripped France in the 1780's, Marie Antoinette's extravagant lifestyle helped create a building animosity from the people of France towards the French monarchy. Countless cartoons and pamphlets accused the Queen of extramarital affairs and overspending.

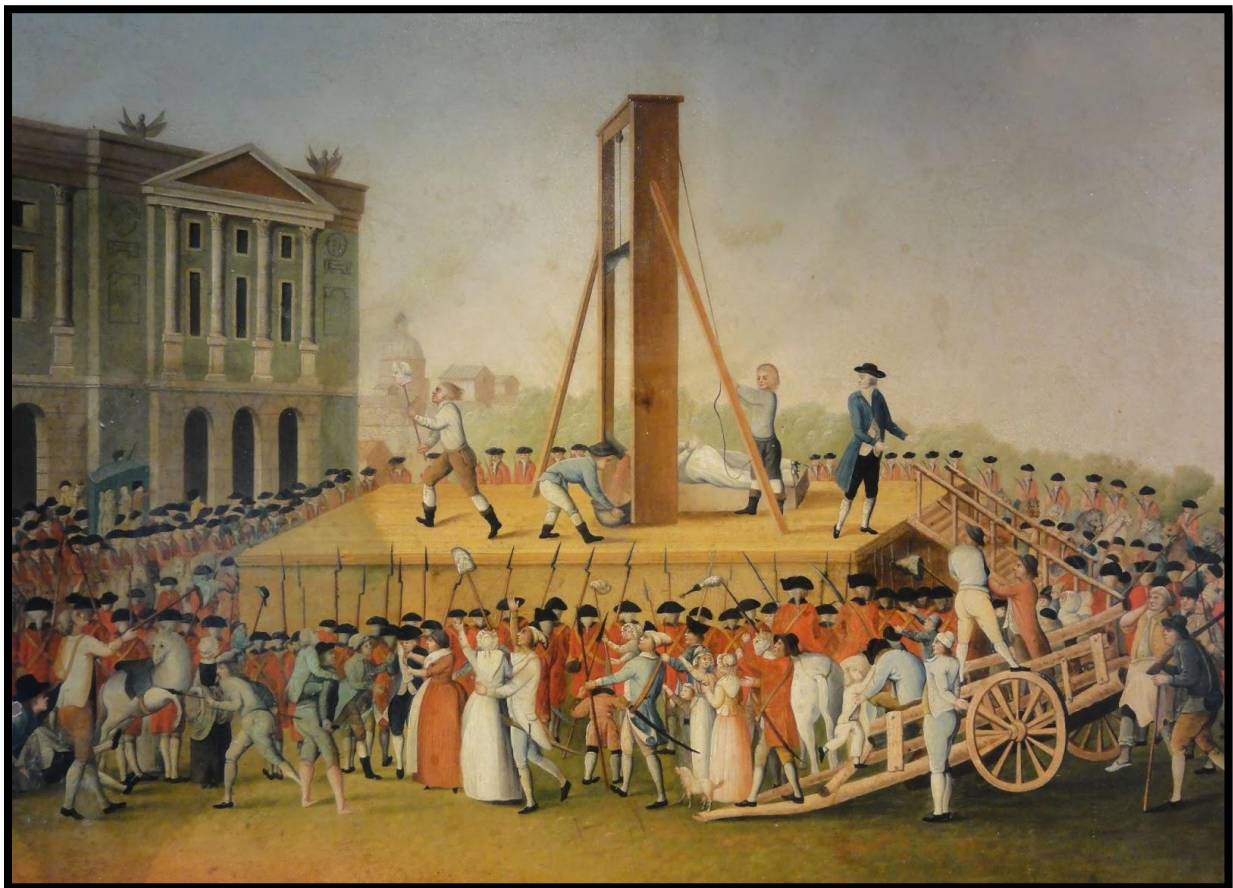


For his part, Louis XVI was ultimately ignorant of the crisis that the people of France faced and the growing opposition in France to himself and his Queen.



As the crisis worsened the major events of the French Revolution unfolded, which would eventually find both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette arrested. First, on July 14th, 1789 Parisians stormed the Bastille prison marking the beginning of the French Revolution. Later, a crowd of French citizens (mostly women) marched from Paris to the Palace of Versailles and demanded the King and Queen return to Paris. Afterwards they were essentially imprisoned in their palace in Paris.

As the chaos of the French Revolution unfolded Louis XVI failed to respond to the uprising and remained indecisive on how to respond. In 1793, the radical new republic, called the National Convention, put Louis XVI on trial for treason. He was convicted and executed by guillotine on January 21, 1793. Marie Antoinette was put on trial several months later for treason and theft, as well as a false and disturbing charges of sexual abuse against her own son. She was executed by guillotine on October 16th, 1793.



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QUESTIONS

1. According to the reading, why were Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette both a likely and unlikely couple for marriage?

2. The image below is showing Marie Antoinette during the time of the French Revolution. In what ways does the image show:
 - a. How the ordinary citizen of France would have viewed her? Explain.

 - b. How she (and her actions) led to the outbreak of the French Revolution? Explain.



3. Marie Antoinette is often associated with uttering the phrase "let them eat cake", after having learned that the French peasants were starving from famine. The "cake" that is associated with the phrase is called brioche which is a dough that is enriched with butter and eggs, making it more expensive than traditional bread. However, there is no historical evidence that she ever spoke the infamous phrase, even though she still often gets falsely labeled as having done so.
 - a. Why do you suppose the rumor of Marie Antoinette having said "let them eat cake" was able to spread so easily?
 - b. In what ways would the rumor of her having said the phrase helped the revolution against the French monarchy?
 - c. What was the phrase supposed to show about Marie Antoinette?
4. Before she was executed, Marie Antoinette was found guilty of treason, theft and having committed sexual abuse against her son. On what basis do you think she was charged for these crimes by the new revolutionary government? (Why do you think she was charged specifically with these crimes?) Explain your reasoning.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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QUESTIONS

1. According to the reading, why were Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette both a likely and unlikely couple for marriage?

Their marriage was likely because Austria and France were seeking to increase their alliance. Their marriage was unlikely because Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI had very different personalities. While she was outgoing, he was shy and introverted.

2. The image below is showing Marie Antoinette during the time of the French Revolution. In what ways does the image show:

- a. How the ordinary citizen of France would have viewed her? Explain.

The ordinary French citizen viewed Marie as extravagant and excessive in her spending. This image would have supported that belief and contrasted the gap in wealth between the Queen and the average citizen.

- b. How she (and her actions) led to the outbreak of the French Revolution? Explain.

The revolutionaries of the French Revolution resented the inequalities in French society and rebelled primarily against the perceived excesses of the French monarchy. This image would have represented these excesses perfectly in that while the Queen was having extravagant hair styles and clothes, French citizens were suffering.



3. Marie Antoinette is often associated with uttering the phrase "let them eat cake", after having learned that the French peasants were starving from famine. The "cake" that is associated with the phrase is called brioche which is a dough that is enriched with butter and eggs, making it more expensive than traditional bread. However, there is no historical evidence that she ever spoke the infamous phrase, even though she still often gets falsely labeled as having done so.
 - a. Why do you suppose the rumor of Marie Antoinette having said "let them eat cake" was able to spread so easily?

French citizens resented her extravagant lifestyle while they suffered under terrible conditions and would have believed it to be possible that she made the statement. Revolutionaries would have used the rumor to further their cause against the monarchy.

- b. In what ways would the rumor of her having said the phrase helped the revolution against the French monarchy?

Revolutionaries would have used the rumor to further their cause against the monarchy. The statement would have helped the revolutionaries further their case that the monarchy didn't care about the French citizens and would have helped turn the citizens against the King and Queen.

- c. What was the phrase supposed to show about Marie Antoinette?

Since brioche was more expensive than bread, it was supposed to show her lack of understanding for the issues facing the country and the ordinary citizen.

4. Before she was executed, Marie Antoinette was found guilty of treason, theft and having committed sexual abuse against her son. On what basis do you think she was charged for these crimes by the new revolutionary government? (Why do you think she was charged specifically with these crimes?) Explain your reasoning.

She was charged with treason because she (and Louis XVI) were against the revolutionaries and the revolutionary government. She was charged with theft due to her excessive spending which would have been viewed as theft against the people. She was likely falsely charged for sexual abuse due to the hatred that people had for her and how they felt she treated them during her reign.

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WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Thomas Jefferson once stated that he had always “believed that if there were no Queen, there would have been no revolution.” In the space below, write a paragraph response in which you respond to the question below. In your response identify and explain evidence in order to support your response.

To what extent do you agree with Thomas Jefferson’s statement?

The intention of this assignment is for student to use the information from the reading and cartoon (and any other sources) to create an argumentative response in relation to the quote by Thomas Jefferson. A rubric has been included with the resource that focuses on student explanation of ideas and support of evidence. Therefore students should focuses on developing and explaining their ideas as well as supporting their response with specific evidence.

If needed, students may require more information or sources. You may consider allowing them textbook, library or online resources for use. The following link is a good starting point for students.

<http://www.history.com/topics/marie-antoinette>