

Assignment # _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

The Life and Times of Louis XVI

Directions: Read the article below very carefully. High light the vocabulary words from the “Louis XVI Biography Vocabulary Analysis. Then, high-light any key people, phrases and dates. This will be used for another activity.

Louis XVI Early life

Louis XVI was born as Louis-August, Duc de Berry: son of Louis, Dauphin of France and Princess Marie-Josephe of Saxony. He was the grandson of King Louis XV. His father died of lung tuberculosis at age 36 before having a chance to become the next King of France. His mother died shortly from the same illness, leaving Louis August and his sibling’s orphans. At that time, Louis August was only 13. He was then raised by his grandmother who died the next year. As he was the oldest man alive of his 7 brothers and sisters, he was destined to become the next King of France.

Although he was a good student with particular interest in Science, he wasn't prepared to become King. He was probably a little too shy, too irresponsible and mostly interested in hunting and locks. His grandfather was often blamed for his lack of commitment into his grandson's political education. When he turned fifteen, Louis-August married [Marie Antoinette](#). The fourteen-year-old Maria Antonia of Austria was a Habsburg Archduchess. This gesture was a political agreement between the Bourbons (France, Spain, Parma, Napoli and Sicily) and the Habsburg (Austrian Empire dynasty: Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, Toscana), it was a time where alliances were strategic.

The couple was young and didn't commit to their family life quick enough. Rumors spread in Paris and on the whole region that they were infertile and unloving. After all, the own essence of the Monarchy is to have an Offspring. The people voice didn't go through the walls of Versailles very often at that time but the Monarchy didn't appreciate being mocked this way. On June 11th, 1775 after his grandfather died, Louis August accessed to the throne and became Louis XVI. He was 20 and far from thinking how in a bad position he was.

Louis XVI's Reign (May 10th, 1774 - August 10th, 1792)

When he became the King, **Louis XVI** had to choose its own way to govern France. He was well aware of France's military inefficiency and [economical turmoil](#). He decided to build a strong, efficient, capable of rivalize with the English, maritime arsenal. He sent his forces to America where the independence war was raging. This act was a key point in the independentist's naval victory.

On the economic side, France was in a huge crisis. The price of the flour was rising sharply and the price of the bread followed the trend closely. People were raging and some regions more than others. In the southeast of France, in the town of Grenoble, a few amounts of representatives of the French bourgeoisie gather in the Castle of Vizilles with representatives of the three estates, the Clergy (50 priests), the Nobility (165 people) and the third estate (276 people) to deliberate about these issues. In July 1788, the assembly called for convocation of the Estates-General and ruled than the decisions would be taken by a vote but, by one vote per people (instead of one vote by estate, as this was usually done).

This was a nice gesture but it was as well a way for the French bourgeoisie to express their grief against the King's attempts to diminish their power. Following the advice of Turgot and Malesherbes, one of Louis XVI's

reforms was to tax all the people of France on a unique rate. The Nobility and the Clergy were exempted from a lot of them when the third estate, the majority of French people, were heavily charged.

Louis XVI may have been loved by the French people but wasn't respected by his own 'court'. He wasn't helping them protect their interests no matter how bad the economic crisis was. They quickly pictured him as a fool, an unprepared, shy and stupid man with a clear lack of common sense. This was a terrible mistake from **Louis XVI** to have underestimated the power of its people. His tax reform was abandoned and his advisers dismissed. Louis XVI then choose Necker as his new minister of finance. As the tax chapter seemed very sensitive, Necker's view was to solve the financial crisis by taking out huge loans from other supportive nations. This was a mistake. Nothing seemed to work for **Louis XVI** and his ministers.

In May 1789 he had no other choice but to call for the [meeting of the estates general](#). This assembly, made of representatives of the three estates (Clergy, Nobility and the third estate) meet and try to find a solution to a severe political, military or economical issue. It was the first time in more than 150 years that the King had to call for such a meeting. Representatives from the three estates arrive in Versailles for the meeting. But the arrival was bitter sweet for the third estate. They realized quickly that the rights of vote they wanting wouldn't be accepted. As an act of revolt against the centralized power of Clergy and Nobility, the Third Estate left the Assembly and gathered together in another part of the Castle. During the Tennis Court Oath (June 20th, 1789), they decide to form a new National Constituent Assembly on 9 July. The power of the King was severely affected and in a very short time, with [the storming of the Bastille](#), he would lose it all.

Louis XVI and The Revolutionary Constitutional Reign, 1789-1792

When the King arrived in Paris after the storming of the Bastille, he had no choice but to accept his defeat. He signed a lot of political and economic reforms that automatically diminish his own powers. French rioters forced him to move out of Versailles and to take residence under their watch to the Tuileries, in the heart of Paris. Unwilling to stay prisoner of its own people in Paris, Louis XVI tried to flee to his wife's native country, Austria. On June 21st, 1791 Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and their children dressed as bakers and hit the road. But the rumors of the King escape spread widely in the regions and the royal refugees were recognized and captured few miles from the German border, in Varennes.

When they were returned to Paris, the population was all but comprehensive towards the traitors. No other ally Kings went to help the French falling Monarchy. **If a country is burning, it is sometimes easier to wait for the storm to be over and to deal with the new governors than to spend troops to a chaotic outcome.** Lots of tensions from military losses in the East of France pushed the parliament to propose some reforms and the King used the rest of his powers to veto some of them. On August 10th, 1792 people of Paris (Commune) Stormed the Tuileries. Louis XVI was officially arrested and sent to prison three days after. **France became a republic.** He had a trial in front of the Convention which decided to send him to the [guillotine](#) in January 1793. He was accused of High Treason and Crimes against the State. On January 21st, 1793 **Louis XVI was executed** in front of the people of France who saluted his death as the beginning of a better era.

<http://bastille-day.com/biography/LouisXVI-Biography>