

# Famous Portraits Series

## Louis XVI

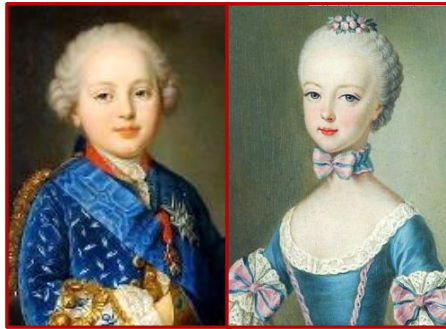
King of France and Navarre (1774-1792)

Born: 23 August 1754 - Died: 21 January 1793 (Aged 38)

## Marie Antoinette of Habsburg

Queen of France (1774-1792)

Born: 2 November 1755 - Died 16 October 1793 (Aged 38)



1. Louis as Duke of Berry in 1760 (aged 7)  
Marie Antoinette in 1763  
as Archduchess of Austria (aged 8)



2. Louis and Marie Antoinette at the time of  
their marriage in 1770  
(aged 16 and 15 respectively)



3. Louis and Marie Antoinette on their  
accession to the French throne in 1774  
(aged 19 and 18 respectively)



4. Louis and Antoinette on the eve of the French  
Revolution in 1787  
(aged 33 and 32 respectively)



5. Louis with the red cap of the Revolution.  
Marie Antoinette wearing black after the execution of  
her husband.



6. Louis bidding farewell to his children before  
his execution, January 1793 (aged 38)

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### Image Sources:

- <https://thisisversaillesmadame.blogspot.com/2022/04/the-incomplete-education-of-louis-xvi.html>
- <https://www.habsburger.net/en/chapter/marie-antoinette-childhood-overshadowed-politics#o-8626>
- <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/52/ce/5f/52ce5fa409747ad11a6f4a8cbc3f547b.jpg>
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/marie-antoinette-134629573/>
- <http://istoria.canalblog.com/archives/2017/07/05/35448351.html>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie\\_Antoinette#/media/File:Marie-Antoinette,\\_1775\\_-\\_Mus%C3%A9e\\_Antoine\\_L%C3%A9cuyer.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Antoinette#/media/File:Marie-Antoinette,_1775_-_Mus%C3%A9e_Antoine_L%C3%A9cuyer.jpg)
- <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Louis-XVI>
- <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/650488/marie-antoinettes-diamond-bracelets-are-headed-auction>
- [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_2013-7028-3](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2013-7028-3)
- [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marie-Antoinette;temple;koningin\\_der\\_Fransen.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marie-Antoinette;temple;koningin_der_Fransen.jpg)
- <https://www.mediastorehouse.com/fine-art-finder/artists/etruscan/louis-xvis-farewell-family-january-20-22540386.html>

**Louis XVI** from the French Bourbon dynasty was born at the Palace of Versailles in France. He was the last King of France before the Revolution of 1789. He succeeded his grandfather Louis XV to the throne in 1774 at the age of 20, inheriting a country plagued by financial and social crises. From the first years of his reign Louis was known for his well-intentioned but indecisive nature, which often led to ineffective governance.

During his reign, France was faced with numerous problems. The country was burdened with a massive debt resulting from involvement in frequent and costly wars, such as the Seven Years' War (1757–1764) and the American War of Independence (1776–1787). Louis genuinely tried to implement fiscal reforms, but his efforts were met with resistance from the privileged classes. These difficulties contributed to growing public dissatisfaction and unrest, ultimately leading to the French Revolution in 1789.

Despite his initial desire for reform, he struggled to assert his authority and take decisive decisions. He vacillated between different factions and advisors, further eroding his credibility and influence. The image of the monarchy suffered greatly, and the king became a target of criticism, resentment and ridicule from the French people.

**Marie Antoinette** from the Austrian Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty was born at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. She was a daughter of Empress Maria Theresa of Habsburg-Austria. In 1770, at the age of 14, she married the Dauphin Louis, heir to the French throne. Their marriage aimed to strengthen the alliance between Austria and France. However, since Marie Antoinette came from a traditional enemy of France, she had to face harsh criticism and public scrutiny throughout her reign.

Her extravagant lifestyle and perceived indifference to the distress of the French people contributed to her negative image. Rumours and scandals, such as the 'Diamond Necklace Affair' of 1784-1785 further tarnished her reputation. During the Revolution she was wrongly attributed of having uttered the infamous quote, 'Let them eat cake.' Although historical evidence suggests that she never made such a statement, this quote came to symbolize the growing popular discontent with the monarchy.

With the outbreak of Revolution in 1789, her influence in politics diminished and she became a target of revolutionary fervour. With the fall of the monarchy in 1792, Louis and Marie Antoinette were deposed, imprisoned and put on trial separately for treason. They were both sentenced to death and guillotined in January and October 1793 respectively.

**Further reading:**

[https://kids.kiddle.co/Louis\\_XVI](https://kids.kiddle.co/Louis_XVI)

[https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Louis\\_XVI](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Louis_XVI)

[https://kids.kiddle.co/Marie\\_Antoinette](https://kids.kiddle.co/Marie_Antoinette)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqHacO7lQo0&t=30s>

## Questions

1. What makes you conclude that Louis XVI was not ready to become king in 1774?
2. Identify THREE problems in France which Louis had to face as king?
3. To what extent can he be blamed for the outbreak of revolution in 1789?
4. Do you think Louis was unjustly condemned to death by the revolutionaries? Explain your answer.
5. Could Marie Antoinette have predicted her fate when she married the heir to the French throne in 1770? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Why was she very unpopular with most of the French people?
7. Did she do anything to try to win the sympathy of the French people?
8. Do you think she was unjustly condemned to death? Explain your answer.