



# MONARCHS WHO SHAPED HISTORY: **KING LOUIS XIV** **OF FRANCE**

6 FRENCH CLASSROOM LESSON PLANS BASED ON AP  
FRENCH LANGUAGE & CULTURE COURSE THEMES



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## INTRODUCTION

# MONARCHS WHO SHAPED HISTORY: KING LOUIS XIV OF FRANCE

This guide is for French teachers who wish to make their language instruction and cultural lessons about the target language come alive through virtual tourism in the world language classroom. These lesson plans could be used in preparation for future travel with students or in lieu of travel for those students or teachers who are unable to do so.

The lesson plans are designed for high school students, and are written to correspond to the six themes making up the AP French Language and Culture:

- Beauty and Aesthetics
- Contemporary Life
- Families and Communities
- Global Challenges
- Personal and Public Identities
- Science and Technology

The lessons can be equally valuable if your students are not taking the AP exam.

The lessons can be conducted in either or French or in English. Feel free to adapt activities to use with either individuals or groups of students.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Susan Braun** taught public school in Indiana for eight years before taking a break to raise her own children. She has taught studies about King Ludwig to students, both during the regular school year and during summer enrichment sessions. She was awarded a Lilly Endowment Teacher Creativity Fellowship and a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Study Scholarship, and used both to study European royalty while visiting sites in Germany and England.

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# INTRODUCTION TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AND AP FRENCH LANGUAGE & CULTURE COURSE THEMES

The following high school virtual tourism lesson plans for the study of France's King Louis XIV are planned for learning and thinking around the six course themes making up the AP French Language & Culture exam. These themes are broad enough to apply equally well for students who are not in an AP French class.

*These lesson plans will assist students to engage in the three types of communication recommended by ACTFL standards:*

- **Interpersonal Communication:** Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.
- **Interpretive Communication:** Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.
- **Presentational Communication:** Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.

**The AP French Language & Culture course is structured around 6 themes:**

- Beauty and Aesthetics
- Contemporary Life
- Families and Communities
- Global Challenges
- Personal and Public Identities
- Science and Technology

Themes facilitate the integration of language, content, and culture, and promote the use of the language in a variety of contexts. The themes may be combined, as they are interrelated.

# 6 LESSON PLANS TO EXPLORE THE LIFE AND IMPACT OF KING LOUIS XIV

## KING LOUIS XIV OF FRANCE

**Louis XIV, known as “Louis the Great” and the “Sun King,”** ruled France from 1643 until his death in 1715 – the longest reign of any monarch of a major country in European history. He believed in the divine right of kings, and during his reign France was the leading European power. He was an advocate of many artistic and cultural figures in France during his lifetime, and today we remember him as we view his palatial Versailles estate. Louis’ life and influences provide rich material for French students to use the French language in exploring AP French Language and Culture themes in interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication.



# LESSON 1: BEAUTY AND AESTHETICS

1. Students will gain an overview of the Palace of Versailles through an online tour at this website:  
**French:**<http://www.chateauversailles.fr/decouvrir/domaine>  
**English:** <http://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/estate>  
*(Note that students may work either independently or in groups, and that virtual tour of Versailles is available in French or English)*
2. Students can study the history of Versailles at this site. What was its use and purpose at the time Louis XIV came to the throne? How did he change and expand it? What influenced the king in his additions to the palace?
3. As homework, assign each student (or each group of students) an area of the palace to research, either at the site listed above or using other resources. Their research can be focused on information to give to guests visiting the palace, and they can prepare presentations to make in class.
4. The next day, students can pretend to be tour guides at Versailles as they give their presentations to the class, going through the various areas of the palace and gardens.
5. Students can choose another area of the arts that Louis XIV focused on: literature (various French authors), dance (particularly ballet), or music. Each student or group can write a paragraph describing the king's influence on this art form during his reign.



*Palace of Versailles.*



# LESSON 2: CONTEMPORARY LIFE

1. Students will read a brief biography of King Louis XIV online:  
*English:* <http://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/history/louis-xiv#from-royal-residences-to-the-palace-of-versailles>  
*French:* <http://www.chateauversailles.fr/decouvrir/histoire/louis-xiv#des-résidences-du-roi-au-château-de-versailles>
2. Lead students in a discussion of the king's impact on French citizens during his reign. Opinions on the king might differ depending on whether one was a member of the aristocracy, or a member of the lower classes. Instruct students to make Venn diagrams comparing and contrasting opinions on Louis XIV from an upper class and a lower class perspective.
3. Religion was an integral part of life for the French people during Louis XIV's reign. Have students research the king's policies on religion and how these affected his citizens. As homework, students can research British King Henry VIII's religious policies a century earlier. What similarities are there in the two kings' policies? What differences?
4. In Ludwig's castles, how does the artwork used both challenge and reflect cultural perspectives? Students can write brief papers exploring this question.



*Louis XIV and family.*



# LESSON 3:

## FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

1. Students can review King Louis XIV's life through this brief biography:  
*English:* <http://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/history/louis-xiv#from-royal-residences-to-the-palace-of-versailles>  
*French:* <http://www.chateauversailles.fr/decouvrir/histoire/louis-xiv#des-residences-du-roi-au-chateau-de-versailles>
2. In groups, students can discuss and list ways that the reign of Louis XIV affected the French people. They may make particular note of the ways his policies affected the nobility versus the underclass.
3. Louis XIV attempted to eliminate remnants of feudalism in France by compelling many noblemen to live at Versailles. In pairs, instruct students to write scripts in which they role play a discussion between the king and a nobleman. The scripts could be an introduction of a nobleman to the king, a conversation where the king describes an area of the palace to the nobleman, etc. These conversations are excellent practice for the AP French Language and Culture exam's interpersonal speaking component.
4. As homework, ask students to research slavery in French colonies during Louis XIV's reign, particularly noting the Code Noir. Each student writes a summary paragraph which can aid in a classroom discussion the next day.



*Versailles, 1682.*

## LESSON 4: GLOBAL CHALLENGES

1. Students can prepare for the lesson by reading a concise history of Louis XIV's reign:  
*English:* <http://www.history.com/topics/louis-xiv>  
*French:* [https://www.herodote.net/Louis\\_XIV\\_1638\\_1715\\_-synthese-192.php](https://www.herodote.net/Louis_XIV_1638_1715_-synthese-192.php)
2. Direct students to outline the above article, individually or in groups, with a focus on the global effects on, and consequences of, Louis' reign.
3. As a class, discuss how some of Louis' actions as monarch affected France as well as other nations. Discussion topics could include his involvement in several wars, and his revocation of the Edict of Nantes and its effect on French Protestants.
4. King Louis XIV is famous for his belief in the divine right of kings. As homework, assign students to write a brief cause and effect paper on this concept, and ways in which it influenced his actions during his reign.

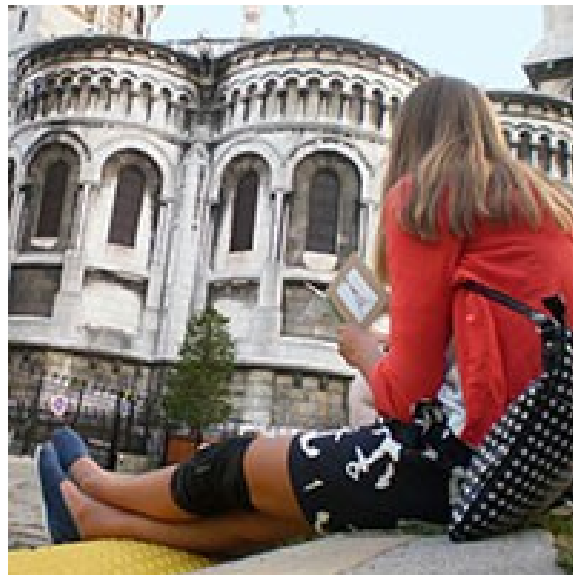


*Louis XIV visiting siege of Maastricht in 1673.*

# LESSON 5:

## PERSONAL AND PUBLIC IDENTITIES

1. Students can review Louis' life through this brief biography:  
*English:* <http://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/history/louis-xiv#from-royal-residences-to-the-palace-of-versailles>  
*French:* <http://www.chateauversailles.fr/decouvrir/histoire/louis-xiv#des-residences-du-roi-au-chateau-de-versailles>
2. King Louis XIV is probably history's best-known French monarch. The king was said to have shaped his reign with a "mixture of commerce, revenge, and pique." He greatly increased French influence in the world, and also increased the influence of the monarchy and its authority over the church and the aristocracy.
3. In groups, students can discuss and make lists of Louis XIV-related influences that contribute to France's national identity today.
4. Instruct students to use these lists to prepare 2-minute presentations comparing cultural features of France with cultural features of their own communities. They can then present these to the class. This is excellent preparation for the presentational speaking portion of the French Language and Culture AP exam.



*Student drawing.*



# LESSON 6: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Students read the following on science during the reign of King Louis XIV: <https://en.chateauversailles.fr/news/life-estate/sciences-versailles#chapter1-sciences-power>
2. Students can make outlines depicting scientific advances during the king's reign.
3. For homework, assign students to use their outlines in writing a persuasive essay with a thesis of their choosing: Was Louis XIV's reign an overall asset to scientific discovery? Were the discoveries made shortly after his reign a result of his policies in any way? Which of the technological advances of his reign are most influential today? The king was known to have little personal interest in science – were the advances of his day made because of or in spite of him? Etc. Writing such an essay is good practice for the persuasive essay portion of the French Language and Culture AP exam. In keeping with the exam protocols, guide students in locating two additional sources to reference in their papers.
4. Louis XIV founded the French Academy of Sciences in 1666. Students can research the academy prior to holding a class discussion on its contributions to various scientific fields. How has the academy changed over the years? In what ways have its activities remained the same?



*Colbert presenting the Members of the Royal Academy of Sciences to Louis XIV in 1667.*

# CONCLUSION

Having learned more about the life and times of King Louis XIV, your students are no doubt anxious to actually see the places where the Sun King lived and reigned in person. There is no better activity to solidify learning than with a visit to the places students have spent time studying. Their language fluency will improve by leaps and bounds when they visit a French-speaking country. Travel makes a lifelong impact on students and teachers alike, bringing culture and language to life in a way that's difficult to replicate in a classroom setting.

Whether in person or via virtual tourism, we hope you and your students enjoy learning more about Louis the Great!





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