

Louis xiv the sun king

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Louis XIV became the most beloved king of France and then became despised. The consequences of his childhood and the people who raised him developed his calm and confident personality. This led him to create his own destiny. “ While he never doubted that he had been chosen by God to sit on the throne, and that he was His direct representative, that meant he considered himself something like a trustee. France and the French, did not belong to him: rather, he had been placed at their head so that he might improve their lot.”¹ Known as the Sun King, Louis XIV was the supreme figure of the 17th century and was notable mainly for sustaining a supreme monarchy, building France as the strongest country in the world and increasing the size of the chateau Versailles to be the greatest palace and court the world had ever known.

Louis XIV could be classified as a “ miracle baby.” His parents, Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, married when they were both 14 years of age but quickly grew to hate each other.² When they had been married for 23 years, they tried to avoid each other as best they could, and often lived apart.³ One night, the weather intervened and placed the king back in the bed of his wife. Although she despised her husband, Anne did want to produce an heir and it was so seldom that she saw her husband.⁴ Nine months later, on September 5, 1638, a healthy baby boy was born and was named: Louis Dieudonne, or, Louis, Gift of God.⁵

Louis XIII was of course thrilled. He and Anne had another child two years later, also a boy named, Philippe.⁶ But Louis XIII died in 1643 of tuberculosis.⁷ This left little five year old Louis and his mother in a precarious state. Louis XIII’s will had made Anne, Regent, but also set up a

four person council that had to approve all her actions. 8 This really weakened the strength of the monarchy that Louis XIII's prime minister, Richelieu, had worked so hard to build up. 9 The Queen Regent and her Council agreed that the will needed to be broken. They also needed the agreement of Parlement, who concurred that "royal authority should be one and indivisible." 10 Even so, Parlement had been itching to do something and exert their power.

The nobles set about trying to enact some laws and Regent Anne could do little to stop them because her chief general was at war. 11 She was told by Cardinal Mazarin, who would later become the Prime Minister, to hold her peace but she could not and impulsively had three outspoken members of Parlement jailed. 12 This set off a several year fronde -(french for slingshot) meaning that the nobles and bourgeois rebelled against the throne. 13 Regent Anne and little Louis ran for their lives, several times, as did her trusted advisor, Cardinal Mazarin. 14 This was of course, quite humiliating for the monarchy and little Louis never forgot the severe financial hardships that they suffered during this time as there were no taxes being levied and no income for the royal household. 15 Many, many deals and alliances were made, and broken.

Many battles were fought during the fronde. One of the few things that saved the monarchy was the pitting of the nobles against each other. 16 Finally, in 1653 when Louis XIV was 15, the fronde ended because no single, strong opposition emerged and the people grew weary of the civil unrest and the traumas that were inflicted on their lives and land.

17. In June of 1654, at the age of 15, Louis XIV was coronated and set about enjoying the life of a King, by riding, hunting, dancing and courting women.

18 It appeared to many that he would need a prime minister forever but they greatly underestimated him. 19 Mazarin, who Louis XIV retained as Prime Minister, was an accomplished pupil of Richelieu²⁰ and was only too happy to set France back on her feet. Mazarin was a Sicillian and was distrusted by the people of France because he was not French. 21 He wanted to limit the powers of the nobility and the bourgeoisie. His intended to keep the monarchy strong and he was devoted to Louis XIV. 22 His other main concern was the economy and he realized that a strong economy made all people of France wealthy, including himself. He became a Duke and amassed a personal wealth of over 65 million (in today's dollars) from public funds. 23 He always had a calm and smiling demeanor and always had a workable solution to the most complicated problems. It was rumored that he was the lover of Anne, Louis' mother.

24 Mazarin was in charge of Louis' education and although he tried his best, it was not always the best education due to the distractions of financial woes and wars. 25 He did however, manage to convey certain teachings that gave Louis XIV incredible confidence in his ability to lead his country. Mazarin believed that a King should realize that there should be " a necessity of personal government, a distrust of the great nobles, sound management of finances and the necessity of justice. " 26 On his death bed, Mazarin instructed Louis: " Sire -never have a prime minister.....Govern! If you take government into your own hands, you will do more in one day that an able prime minister in six months." 27 Louis took his advice to heart and set

about being a hard working monarch with a plan. He was 23 years old. His vision was that France should become the supreme country on earth and to do this he believed his will had to be absolute. The factions and disorderliness of the fronde had really affected him and he never wanted a repeat of such revolution. 28

War for over 50 years had drained the coffers and spirits of France. 29 Within a short time of being crowned King, Louis began to supervise the accounting books of France that Nicholas Fouquet had been in charge of as Surintendant. There was much syphoning of funds, to the point it was theft. 30 The King needed Fourquet for a bit longer though and continued to take his advice. Fouquet knew that the King suspected him of fraud but felt that the young monarch would soon bore of being King. 31 Fourquet planned a party for the King at his new, enormous estate, Vaux-le-Vicomte.

Fouquet felt his house and furnishings would prove to the king that Fourquet was shrewd (in addition to having taste) – giving the King even more confidence in him as Minister of Finance. 32 Over 6, 000 people attended the party. 33 Louis XIV had never seen such grandeur and “ perhaps the greatest irritant was the solid gold dinner service that was used for the occasion. Louis XIV had been obliged to have his own service melted down to help defray the cost of the 30 year war. ” 34 Soon after the party, Louis had Fouquet arrested and later, imprisoned.

35A lot had happened in six months that set Louis XIV on the road to superstardom – he had been crowned King, Fourquet was imprisoned, and he made himself fully in charge of the entire finances of France. 36 He also was

the last word on court life and domestic and international policy. Then, the icing on the cake was the birth of his son on November 1, 1661.

37. Louis hired men from the hard working middle classes to be his advisors.

38 One of the men that Louis enlisted to help make changes in the government was Jean Baptiste Colbert. For 22 years, this son of a draper from Reims watched over the finances of France and sought to make her a manufacturing powerhouse. 39 Louis had the utmost confidence in Colbert and considered him to be “ hardworking, intelligent and honest.” 40 Mazarin had been equally impressed with Colbert and said to the King on his deathbed: “ Sire, I owe you everything but believe I can repay some of my debt to you by giving you Colbert.” 41 Colbert was very much against war and extravagance, but the King was very much into extravagance so Colbert had to find a way to fund it. 42 The expansion of Versailles took many years.

43 The furniture, chandeliers, mirrors, tapestries, rugs, china, and silver that were required to make Versailles so spectacular, were all industries that originally started in other countries, but that Colbert brought to France. 44 In this way, France could produce the goods more affordably for Versailles and also export them to other countries. 45 Ironically, the pursuit of luxury by the King, was to later become the manufacturing hallmark of France and set a standard for lavish living for the entire world. 46 Capital was difficult to come by though so these factories became state run and thus, even more profitable. 47 Also, Colbert was impressed with how the Dutch got their goods to various markets and was made Head of the Navy as well. 48 Colbert built ships, started maritime conscription, and had ports fortified with cannon. As a result of this, the French Navy was supreme on the earth until

<https://assignbuster.com/louis-xiv-the-sun-king/>

1692. 49 Colbert's efforts were stupendous all the way around. Not only did he supervise every detail of building and funding Versailles but he also:

“ had ships built and a companies created and initiated a far-reaching colonial policy that was inspired by Richelieu's earlier efforts. He sought new markets and endeavored to revive French interest in new products. He extended New Canada to the Mississippi by supporting Lasalle in Louisiana; he added to this the French tropical positions in Guiana; he established the Kings' authority on the African coast from the Bay of Arguin to the shores of Sierra Leone; and he gained a footing in Madagascar and established the first trading posts in India.” 50

The economy of France was strong and Colbert believed that every man and woman in France should be busy with productive work. He did his best to give them something to do. 51 No one really knows when Louis XIV first thought about creating Versailles as the seat of the French government. If he had shared his wish with someone, they would surely thought he was mad because later, when he did make his desires known, all of his advisors tried to talk him out of spending one penny or one minute of time thinking about expansion of his father's hunting lodge.

52 But by 1661, he was throwing parties there that had to be held outside because the 20 room lodge was too small. 53 It has been said that Louis XIV wanted to create a lavish country life for several reasons: 1)he was an outdoorsman and much preferred the countryside to Paris, 54 2) he did not trust the nobility and preferred to have the court trapped, away from Paris and supervised by him on a daily basis55 and 3) he never forgave Parisians

for the fickle treatment that they showed his mother and him during the Fronde. 56 So even though Colbert thought that he should expand at the Louvre (which he did as well)⁵⁷ and even though his architects thought he should tear the original Versailles down, (Louis told them if anything happened to the original he would build it back, brick by brick)⁵⁸ the King went forward with his plans of expanding Versailles, 16 miles from Paris.

59 According to Voltaire, the “ integrated decor for which France became so famous, and so envied, was begun under the Sun King.” 60 Louis XIV saw how architecture and beautiful decoration could be uplifting at Vaux-Le-Vicomte and after he sent Fouquet to prison he hired his architect, builder, garden designer and decorator. 61 At first, it was just the gardens he enlarged at Versailles and the first of the over 1, 400 fountains was built. 62 All of the orange trees from Fouquet’s house were carted to Versailles. 63 There were over 1000 of them and today, eight of the original trees remain. 64 There was always the problem of water to run the fountains and much engineering time was spent trying to figure out how to damn or re-route rivers. 65 Many workmen lost there lives in this endeavor. A member of the court, Madame de Sevigne wrote of “ the prodigious mortality rate of the workmen.” 66

There were three major building periods of Versailles 1664-68; 1669-72 and 1674-82. 67 In 1682, it became the seat of government and the court came into residence. 68 They were still remodeling some apartments in 1701 and the chapel was not finished until 1708 but life at Versailles was firmly well established by this point. 69 Versailles remains one of, if not the most, elaborate houses ever built. There has been much figuring of the cost of <https://assignbuster.com/louis-xiv-the-sun-king/>

Versailles. All of the notes and bills remain and we can figure how much every door knob cost. 70 Everything ended up costing about 112 million of our dollars. This is an astounding amount but it was spread over 30 years and France could well afford to spend it. 71 Over the years of building, the most it ever cost France was 5% of their total budget. 72 But the impressive public relations that it provided to other heads of states was priceless.

For 72 years, Louis XIV ruled France. It was not always brilliant – it was sometimes blackened with war, death and despair. However, most of the troubles did not lower French prestige with the rest of the world. 73 After the treaty of Nijmegen of 1679, French became the language of diplomacy and remained so for over 250 years. 74 Louis XIV's monarchy is remembered as a success as it touched and improved so many different areas of life: the arts, lifestyle, government, education. The warmth of the Sun King can still be felt today as one strolls the glorious grounds of Versailles.