

# Louis xiv -example assignment

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The time of Louis XIV was a very strong period of history for France. Many people will say that France was made a better country during this time. Many will argue that nothing was done for France during this time. During the reign of Louis XIV France experienced multiple extremes at the same time. France was brought to glory by its wars and art galleries and the Palace of Versailles, but at the same time all of these things took its toll on the highly taxed poor as they tried to support the bankrupt country. His government was nothing more than a cast of actors in the play of Louis' beliefs. The fact of the matter is this; although the result in the long term may have been a betterment of France, the only reason anything was done, was to stroke and coddle Louis XIV's massive ego.

One of Louis' greatest endeavours was the constant strengthening and reinforcing of his absolute power, which in turn fed his massive ego. By emphasizing his absolute power Louis was able to do anything that he pleased. In his palace of Versailles, Louis reigned over the aristocrats, who all competed for the great honours of being able to pass the king his shirt, or bow before his food as it passed down the hallway. The whole palace and the fact that these people worshipped the king, did no good for the country of France, it was all at their expense. It was all great for one thing though, the ego of the king. Louis was so busy being swept off his feet by all the attention he got that he simply forgot to care about the state of his countries finances. As long as Louis and his band of aristocrats were able to live in the lap of luxury who cared what went on in the rest of the country, for Louis could justify his palace and its costs simply because he was the absolute ruler and what he said went. Anyone close enough to speak to him quickly

found out what his greatest weakness was: flattery. Even the coarsest adulations were able to woo the king with ease. The rules and regulations of Versailles were all meant to belittle the aristocrats. Even the smallest everyday tasks such as knocking at a door were made to be different in Versailles. Louis wanted the aristocracy not to knock vulgarly on a door but to “scratch it with the little finger of the left hand, growing the finger nail long for that purpose.” There was no real purpose for this change in tradition; it was nothing more than a ruse that misled the aristocracy to believe their presence in Versailles had meaning. The truth is the aristocracy were too busy worshipping Louis, which was exactly what he wanted, to see that the real reason they were there was so Louis could keep tabs on them and ensure that the people who held power before Louis’ time were not plotting against him.

Some might argue that Louis did many things for France. Yes he built schools, roads, hospitals, art galleries, created police forces and improved cities, but it can also be argued that all of these things were done simply for himself. Since Louis is quoted as saying “I am France,” he thought of himself as the country, and anything he did for the country was actually for Louis. Because Louis rebuilt only certain roads and left others to crumble, he knew what routes the people would take. This made it easier for his police to patrol and his collectors to enforce tolls upon. The art galleries were built for the enjoyment of the upper echelon of society, not for the general population whose taxes and labour had constructed them. Police, Louis did a good job of making it seem as though the police were for the populous and their protection, but in actual fact, these police were in place to control the public,

to record their wrongdoings and to hold them responsible and punish them for their crimes against the state, against the king. The schools were a good way for Louis to stroke his ego, he could have the teachers teach their students all of the things Louis had done. If the king controlled the schools, the students would learn what he wanted them to, they would only know what he desired so it was very easy for him to have people learn how great he really was. By controlling all public services and making sure they weren't all equally available to all levels of the public, Louis controlled the opportunities that certain groups of people were given or withheld from. So if there was discontent with the king, the discontent was over different issues between different groups. This meant that the public would not join together in an uprising against him.

The symbolic government of Louis XIV's kingdom was nothing more than a group of appointed advisors who all preached the same beliefs as their leader. The way he chose his ministers and generals was "not for their knowledge, but for their ignorance, not for their capacity but for their want of it." He chose ministers and generals that he could shape and mold and make into good little puppets. All of the people in his government whom he let think had power were simply thinking what Louis would think, doing what he would do, his beliefs were expressed through these people. The only reason he had ministers in positions of "power" was so that he gave the public the illusion of not having too much control. Had the public who had been educated by the king, thought that the king was imposing too much control on them they might have revolted, this is why Louis had to build the stage of Versailles and produce the play of his government.

Louis did many things during his reign, but none can be made out to be truly for the sole benefit of France. Although many did in the long run benefit the country, this was not the intention when they were put forth. Louis' power was absolute and the only reason he had absolute power was so at the end of the day, he could take credit for all the glory and blame and behead one of his puppet generals or ministers for anything that had went wrong, or looked bad. With absolute power comes the ability to do absolutely anything, and Louis, for his own personal being, abused or used his power for his lush expensive lifestyle. The people of France would support him whether they knew what he was doing or not, there was no other choice for them.

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