



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A Level History A

Y313/01 The Ascendancy of France 1610–1715

Friday 9 June 2017 – Morning

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet
(OCR12 sent with general stationery)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Answer Question 1 in Section A and any two questions in Section B.
- Write your answer to each question on the Answer Booklet.
- Do **not** write in the barcodes.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended responses will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document consists of **4** pages.

SECTION A

Read the two passages and then answer Question 1.

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the impact of the construction of the Palace of Versailles. [30]

Passage A

There is a strong case for arguing that Versailles helped to widen the divisions in French society during Louis XIV's reign. By isolating the King, his ministers and his courtiers from the nation, Versailles significantly contributed to this process. It is indeed both illustration and cause of increasing social and economic inequality.

However, the traditional picture of the first two estates living a life of pointless futility at Versailles has to be revised. The nobles were far more involved in the real world than used to be appreciated, sharing real power and real profits with the King and his ministers. Meanwhile, the clergy encouraged the less privileged members of society to accept meekly the gross inequalities which Versailles represented and the dominant role of the King and of the first two estates.

Perhaps the chief contribution of Versailles to the social stability of the reign was propaganda. For the image of sacred, centralised absolutism which emanated from Versailles was partly based on fact, but partly on media manipulation. There was a real element here not only of clever presentation but also of pretence. It is significant how Louis himself was obsessed with appearances, with creating the right impression. So which sectors of French society was Louis trying to impress? Undoubtedly the people who mattered. In practice this meant the nobility of the robe. Louis was happy for such people to admire him from afar, provided they did not damage his gardens. However, the real audience at whom the reign's cultural offensive was targeted was the aristocracy. By their imitation of the Sun King, the nobles showed how much they admired him, how effective the media campaign was. Versailles eloquently represents both an ideal and an evasion. The ideal was a conservative Catholic society dominated by an absolute monarchy. It was by no means an absurd or an ignoble ideal. However, Louis XIV's version of this ideal involved an evasion, a deliberate turning away from the imperfections of French society. Instead of trying to effect changes or improvements, Louis and his ministers chose rather to glorify, glamorise and misrepresent the status quo.

Adapted from: Richard Wilkinson, *Louis XIV, France and Europe 1661–1715*, published in 2002.

Passage B

In style and conception Versailles was part of a vast project to exploit arts in the service of the King. The buildings and gardens created a classical world, illustrated and reinforced by painting and sculpture, in which a certain image of royalty was projected. Great emphasis was put on the virtue and power of the King, and transmitted the memory of his exploits to future generations. In fact, without this memory there could be no true grandeur. This was not a new conception; what is new about the artistic patronage of Louis XIV is its scale, for Versailles is distinguished by its gigantic proportions. The display of power could therefore take place in theatrical surroundings that were designed to overawe the spectator. This courtly grandeur should be seen as a vital aspect of Louis' baroque state, as display, representation and pageant created an aura of power. The court of Versailles was at the centre of the governing system, the meeting point for King, courtiers, ministers, ambassadors and deputations from the provinces. It also reflects a move by king and court from Paris, that turbulent capital, where the Louvre stirred unpleasant memories for Louis as well as presenting aesthetic problems of remodelling and joining up the Tuileries, because of its awkward angled ground plan. Versailles was a place of unparalleled grandeur befitting a king obsessed with his *gloire*; the fact of its construction in a marshy valley only emphasised his power.

Adapted from: Peter Campbell, *Louis XIV*, published in 1993.

SECTION B

Answer **TWO** of the following three questions.

- 2*** How far did religious developments hinder the power of the French monarchy in the period from 1610 to 1715? **[25]**
- 3*** 'Throughout the period from 1610 to 1715 unrest was not a serious threat to the power of the monarch.' How far do you agree? **[25]**
- 4*** 'The Treaty of Westphalia was the most important turning point in the development of France as an international power.' How far do you agree? **[25]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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