

Plan 3: Comparing Historically Significant Women in Power

Introduction:

In this lesson, students will learn about some of the world's historically significant, politically influential women. They will learn specifically about Marie Antoinette and her role in the politics of France during the late 1700's. Students will also study other historically significant women and examine how these women came into positions of power, their success in these positions, and their common background and leadership characteristics. Finally, students will draw conclusions about how these women are remembered in history and what can be learned from them.

Subject Areas:

Women's Studies, World History, Government/Political Science, Current Events, Social Studies, and Communication Arts

Grade Level: 9-12

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

1. Utilize prior knowledge to form opinions about questions on an Anticipation Guide
2. Participate in class and small group discussion activities related to Marie Antoinette's life and draw conclusions related to her political and historical significance
3. Utilize listening and viewing skills to complete Viewing and Discussion Guide activities related to Marie Antoinette
4. Conduct research about an historically significant woman and make comparisons between her and Marie Antoinette using a graphic organizer
5. Write a biography and complete an informational display about the woman they have researched and present this information to another student
6. Provide constructive feedback for one another about the information presented on their individual displays
7. Use what they have learned about Marie Antoinette and other influential women in history to analyze changes in the opinions initially recorded on the Anticipation Guide

Relevant National Standards:

McRel Compendium of K-12 Standards Addressed:

Historical Understanding

Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective

World History

Standard 32: Understands the causes and consequences of political revolutions in the late 18th and early 19th centuries

Language Arts

Writing

Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Reading

Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

Standard 7: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

Listening and Speaking

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Viewing

Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

Thinking and Reasoning

Standard 3: Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences

Working with Others

Standard 1: Contributes to the overall effort of a group

Standard 4: Displays effective interpersonal communication skills

Estimated Time:

Two to three 90-minute class periods or four 50-minute class periods plus additional time for extension activities.

Materials Needed:

- **Anticipation Guide** (included with lesson plan)
- **Viewing and Discussion Guide** (included with lesson plan)
- Television with VCR/DVD to view video clips from *Marie Antoinette and the French Revolution* (clips specified in lesson plan)
- **Comparing Women in History** handout (included with lesson plan)
- Internet access and/or access to primary source materials for research purposes
- 1 poster board per student
- assorted art supplies (optional)

Procedures:

1. To focus student attention on the topic, begin by distributing the **Anticipation Guide** handout. Review the directions, and provide students with approximately 5 minutes to complete the guide.
2. After all students have completed the activity, facilitate a short discussion about each question. Encourage students to use specific reasons and examples when sharing their opinions. Following the discussion, explain to students that as part of the lesson they will be learning about a famous, French “teen queen”, Marie Antoinette, why she is historically significant, and her role in the French Revolution.

3. Access students prior knowledge about Marie Antoinette by asking questions such as:
 - Who was Marie Antoinette?
 - Why was she famous/well known in world history?
 - What words would you use to describe Marie Antoinette?

Some students may have very limited knowledge of Antoinette. Explain to them that she is a key figure from the late 1700's and important to world history, in particular, the French Revolution.

4. Share some basic information about Marie Antoinette by reading an excerpt about her life from the website. It appears below or could be accessed as a class at <http://www.pbs.org/marieantoinette/faces/antoinette.html>. "Following is an excerpt of the article entitled "The Teen Queen: Marie Antoinette":

"As Queen of France, Marie Antoinette had no official role and no legitimate political power — her main job was to produce a male heir to continue her husband's royal line. Like the marriage, the coronation of Louis XVI was greeted warmly by the French people, who had great hopes that after the fifty-year reign of Louis XV, the young King would bring new ideas, much-needed reforms, and a fresh approach to governing France in a rapidly-changing world.

This goodwill quickly eroded as the King's economic policies failed, while his Queen failed to produce an heir. He seemed to lose interest in government, as she became aggressively social, attending the Opera and dances in the capital, gambling and partying late into the night at Versailles. In public and at court she was seen only in the latest and most expensive fashions. Rumors about her alleged secret lovers and out-of-control spending increased.

Illegal presses began printing pamphlets showing the queen as an ignorant, adulterous spendthrift. Some speculated in print that the King's brother, the comte d'Artois, was taking the King's place in his wife's bed. Louis XVI was the first French king in two hundred years not to have a royal mistress; Marie Antoinette was the first queen to believe that she could be both wife and mistress to her husband. However, by cultivating fashion, taste, and the arts while failing to produce a legitimate heir, Marie Antoinette looked to all the world like a mistress, not a wife, and one whose sexuality was directed away from the King. All the ire that had been directed at Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry, Louis XV's most famous mistresses, was now redirected at the only target available: the Queen who acted like a mistress, but who was not satisfied, it seemed, with the King.

Marie Antoinette's first child, Marie Therese Charlotte, was finally born in December 1778, followed by Louis Joseph in 1781, Louis Charles in 1785 and Sophie Béatrix in 1786. As she grew older, the Queen became less extravagant, devoting herself to her children, two of whom died in childhood. In fact, her first son, the dauphin, died on June 4, 1789. This meant that the Queen was in mourning for her son when the Tennis Court Oath was signed on June 20, the Bastille fell on July 14, and still when the Great Fear spread throughout the countryside in August.

In October 1789, the royal family was forced to leave Versailles for the Tuileries palace in the heart of Paris, where they lived in prison-like isolation. Marie Antoinette secretly requested help from other European rulers, including her royal siblings in Austria and Naples. On the night of June 20, 1791, the royal family attempted to flee. Their escape plan was said to have been engineered by Axel von Fersen, the Swedish count who was rumored to be one of the Queen's lovers. It is incontestable that Marie Antoinette's brother awaited the royal family just across the border and that he was accompanied by troops ready to invade. They were caught in the small town of Varennes, half-way to the border, and brought back to Paris, prisoners now of the Revolutionary government.

On the night of August 10, 1792, militants attacked the royal palace where Marie Antoinette and her family were being held and forced the Legislative Assembly to "suspend" the King. Little more than a month later, on September 20, the new National Convention was convened, and two days later it voted to declare France a republic, thus abolishing the monarchy. From that moment on, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were no longer King and Queen, but, like many others, imprisoned citizens suspected of treason. Marie Antoinette became a widow when her husband was guillotined to death after being tried and convicted of treason in January 1793. Her two remaining children were subsequently taken from her. After a brief trial, Marie Antoinette herself was convicted of treason and also of sexual abuse of her son in October 1793. On October 16, she too was executed by guillotine. She was 37 years old."

5. Once students have some basic background about Marie Antoinette, distribute the **Viewing and Discussion Guide** and review the directions for completing Part 1. Have students watch the following excerpts from the film *Marie Antoinette and the French Revolution*. Stop and discuss information as needed while viewing.

Episode 1

- approximately 3:14 beginning with "Marie Antoinette grew up at the Hapsburg Court in Vienna..." to approximately 9:50 ending with "She had no idea what lies ahead of her."
- approximately 15:15 beginning with "Royals didn't have much sense of the larger world and their countries." to approximately 16:00 ending with "Her role was to bear an heir to the throne."

Episode 2

- approximately 2:08 beginning with "France was nearly bankrupt." to approximately 3:00 ending with "It was her fault, it was her responsibility."
- approximately 4:26 beginning with "At last, the Queen recognized the danger..." to approximately 8:30 ending with "They didn't want to share power with the delegates."
- approximately 9:35 beginning with "The deputies to the Third estate had declared themselves a National Assembly." to approximately 13:35 ending with "You may be sure that adversity has not lessened my strength or my courage."
- approximately 18:17 beginning with "The royal family was taken to the Tuileries Palace in Paris..." to approximately 21:25 ending with "Tribulation first makes you realize who you are."
- approximately 28:42 beginning with "With the King and Queen back in the Tuileries Palace..." to approximately 35:25 ending with "The monarchy which had endured for nearly 1000 years was no more."

- approximately 44:43 beginning with “All of Europe was aligning itself against France.” to approximately 49:00 ending with “Her reputation was.”
- approximately 52:40 beginning with “When the verdict came, it was four in the morning.” to approximately 53:35 ending with “I am calm as people are whose conscience is clear.”
- approximately 54:47 beginning with “As the tumbrel made its way across Paris...” to approximately 57:45 ending with “She was buried in an unmarked grave.”

6. Have students work in small groups to discuss their answers to the **Viewing and Discussion Guide**. This could also be done as a large group activity. Encourage students to add details to their answers as they discuss each question.

7. As a class, discuss Part 2 of the **Viewing and Discussion Guide**. Have students site specific reasons, facts, and examples from Part 1 of the guide in their discussion of each question.

8. Distribute the **Comparing Women in History** handout and review the directions for completing the activity. Some students may have trouble selecting a woman to research. You could make suggestions from the list below or other resources available to you.

Hatshepsut	Nefertiti	Cleopatra	Eleanor of Aquitaine
Winnie Mandela	Mary Queen of Scots	Elizabeth I	Catherine the Great
Catherine de Medici	Indira Ghandi	Margaret Thatcher	Queen Victoria (Eng.)
Empress Maria Theresa	Benazir Bhutto	Corazon Aquino	Eleanor Roosevelt
Evita Peron	Chandrika Kumaratunga	Megawati Sukarnoputri	

9. Provide students with a least one class period to complete their research and create their display.

10. When all projects have been completed, have each student display his/her work. Direct students to share their projects with another student in the class. Each student should provide the other with feedback about the project by writing the following phrases on a sheet of paper and completing each phrase.

- Three things I learned from your project were....
- The thing I liked best about your project was....
- One suggestion for improving your project is....

Have students exchange feedback sheets after both have presented their projects to each other. Collect feedback sheets from all students.

11. Post all projects around the classroom or in a display location within the school so others may learn from what the students have created.

12. As a culminating activity, facilitate a class discussion or have students complete a written response based upon the questions from the **Anticipation Guide**. Ask students to address ideas such as:

- How have your ideas and opinions about these questions changed since studying Marie Antoinette? Why?

Assessment Suggestions:

1. A completion grade could be assessed for the Anticipation Guide activity.
2. Participation grades could be awarded for all group discussion activities.
3. The Viewing Guide could be graded for accuracy using a points/percentage grade.
4. The research project could be graded for accuracy and content using a points/percentage grade or a scoring guide.
5. Students will evaluate one another's projects and could receive a completion or participation grade for this activity.

Extension Activity:

1. Discuss reasons why the U.S. has not elected a woman president. Direct students to brainstorm a list of historical and/or modern day women who possess the skills, qualifications, and personality to serve as president. When a name is added to the list, encourage students to give reasons why they believe this woman would have been/could be a successful president. As a closing activity, have students write a letter to the editor showing support for this woman as president or have students create an informational campaign pamphlet or website home page that gives specific reasons why this woman should be/should have been elected President of the United States.

Related Resources:

Great Women Rulers

<http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/rulers.html>

Provides biographies and pictures of women leaders throughout history.

100 Most Important Women of World History

<http://womenshistory.about.com/library/weekly/b1990610a.htm>

Provides a list of historically significant women and links to a variety of information about each one.

Women's History Month: Women's Hall of Fame

http://www.history.com/minisite.do?content_type=Minisite_Generic&content_type_id=918&display_order=2&mini_id=1286

Lists historically significant women with links to information about each of them. Included are political leaders as well as those known for achievements in other areas.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Anticipation Guide

Directions: Read each statement below. Mark an X in the Agree or Disagree column. In the Reasons column, explain briefly why you agree or disagree with each statement. Include reasons, facts, and examples to support your opinions. Be prepared to discuss your answers with the class.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Reasons
Marie Antoinette was well prepared to become the Queen of France when she married Louis XVI at age 14.			
Marie Antoinette, like most royalty, had a good understanding of the everyday lives of the French commoners.			
As the Queen of France, Marie Antoinette was expected to be involved in leadership and decision making activities along with her husband, King Louis XVI.			
Marie Antoinette was a scapegoat and a symbol of all that was wrong with France, causing her to be publicly executed during the French Revolution.			
History is full of many examples of politically influential women, and Marie Antoinette is remembered for her success as a wife, mother, and Queen of France.			

Name: _____ Date: _____

Viewing and Discussion Guide

Part 1:

As you watch the video clips from *Marie Antoinette and the French Revolution*, write a complete answer for each question below. Be prepared to discuss this information with classmates. Be as specific as possible when recording answers as you will use this information to complete a project later in the lesson.

1. Who was Empress Maria Theresa, and what role did she play in Marie Antoinette's life?
2. As the daughter of an Empress, what type of training and education did Marie receive to prepare her for royal life?
3. Why did Marie marry Louis the XVI of France at age 14?
4. Describe Marie's understanding of the people, geography, and everyday life of the French people.
5. As the wife of Louis XVI, what was Marie's main role/responsibility?
6. What nickname did the press give to Marie Antoinette, and why did she get this name?
7. What did Marie Antoinette do to shed this image and the nickname "Madame Deficit"?

8. When King Louis XVI was confronted with the economic and political problem facing his country, how did he react?

9. After Louis XVI breakdown, Marie began attending meetings of the King's Council in an attempt to help govern the country. Why is she unsuccessful in this endeavor?

10. What was the Estates General, and how did convening this group change the role of the King in Queen in governing France?

11. When the King and Queen refused to accept the Third Estate's (made up of commoners) declaration of a National Assembly that would have limited their power by making them a constitutional monarchy, what happened as a result? List/describe 2 major things.

12. While imprisoned at the Tuileries Palace, how did Marie Antoinette fight against the revolutionaries? Give two examples.

13. What does Marie's quote "Tribulation first makes you realize who you are." mean, and how does it show a drastic change in her character?

14. When France decides to declare war on Austria, how does Marie react to this?

15. Marie Antoinette was prosecuted as an enemy of the state. At her trial, what were the charges against her?

16. What was the result of the trial?

Part 2:

Based on what you learned and discussed in the questions above, discuss the following questions as a class.

1. How did Marie Antoinette come in to power/become a political figure in France?
2. What background and qualifications did Marie have to prepare her for a significant political role?
3. Why is Marie Antoinette remembered as a historically significant woman?
4. What can be learned from studying the life of Marie Antoinette as a Queen and as a woman in a position of power?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Viewing and Discussion Guide—Answer Key

Part 1:

As you watch the video clips from *Marie Antoinette and the French Revolution*, write a complete answer for each question below. Be prepared to discuss this information with classmates. Be as specific as possible when recording answers as you will use this information to complete a project later in the lesson.

1. Who was Empress Maria Theresa, and what role did she play in Marie Antoinette's life?
She was the ruler of the great Austrian Empire and Marie's mother. She was often ignored by her mother, who said "They are born to obey." when referring to her daughters.
2. As the daughter of an Empress, what type of training and education did Marie receive to prepare her for royal life?
Virtually none. Her mother thought she was not going to amount to much and found her sweet, yet uninteresting. She was not trained to focus on studies, and instead spent her time learning to play the harpsichord and dancing.
3. Why did Marie marry Louis the XVI of France at age 14?
France and Austria had been enemies for centuries. Empress Maria Theresa commanded Marie to marry Louis XVI as a way to erase the past and improve relations between the two powerful countries.
4. Describe Marie's understanding of the people, geography, and everyday life of the French people.
She had no understanding of these things. She was geographically isolated in the fantasy world of Versailles.
5. As the wife of Louis XVI, what was Marie's main role/responsibility?
Her job was to bear a child that could be an heir to the throne and preserve the monarchy.
6. What nickname did the press give to Marie Antoinette, and why did she get this name?
They called her "Madame Deficit" because of her extravagant spending in the face of France's financial crises. The people wanted to blame her for all that was going wrong in their country.
7. What did Marie Antoinette do to shed this image and the nickname "Madame Deficit"?

She cut all extravagant spending and bad habits by firing her private dressmaker, removing the gambling tables from her home, and cutting personal expenses of every kind. She also began taking an interest in politics.

8. When King Louis XVI was confronted with the economic and political problem facing his country, how did he react?
He spent his time hunting, eating, and weeping in the Queen's apartments. He basically had a nervous breakdown.
9. After Louis XVI breakdown, Marie began attending meetings of the King's Council in an attempt to help govern the country. Why is she unsuccessful in this endeavor?
She knew nothing about politics and had no experience in the political arena. To complicate this, Marie had no understanding of French history or the life of the French people. She did not know the depth and variety of problems faced by the country.
10. What was the Estates General, and how did convening this group change the role of the King in Queen in governing France?
The Estates General is a form of parliamentary government made up of 3 groups: the nobility, the clergy, and the common people. Convening this group meant that the King and Queen would no longer have absolute power. Instead, they would have to share their power with the other groups.
11. When the King and Queen refused to accept the Third Estate's (made up of commoners) declaration of a National Assembly that would have limited their power by making them a constitutional monarchy, what happened as a result? List/describe 2 major things.
The revolution begins with the storming of the Bastille and the murder of the governor in Paris; most of the King and Queen's court/supporters left in fear of what would happen if they remained loyal to Louis XVI; and the King refused to leave France, even though Marie wanted to flee.
12. While imprisoned at the Tuileries Palace, how did Marie Antoinette fight against the revolutionaries? Give two examples.
She meets secretly with ambassadors and advisors, she learns to write in code to communicate with the leaders of other countries, she advises the King and makes decisions when he is unable to do so because of his mental breakdown, she tries to keep the monarchy intact.
13. What does Marie's quote "Tribulation first makes you realize who you are." mean, and how does it show a drastic change in her character?
Answers will vary.
14. When France decides to declare war on Austria, how does Marie react to this?
She commits treason, unbeknownst to anyone. She writes letters to her nephew, the Emperor of Austria, telling him military plans and doing whatever she can to help Austria defeat France.

15. Marie Antoinette was prosecuted as an enemy of the state. At her trial, what were the charges against her?

Marie was charged with treason, among other things.

16. What was the result of the trial?

Marie was found guilty and sentenced to be executed. She was executed by guillotine the next day at noon in front of a crowd of more than 30,000.

Part 2:

Based on what you learned and discussed in the questions above, discuss the following questions as a class.

1. How did Marie Antoinette come in to power/become a political figure in France?

Answers will vary but should include some reference to Marie's desire to preserve the monarchy, even after Louis XVI breakdown and subsequent inability to make decisions affecting the country and the monarchy.

2. What background and qualifications did Marie have to prepare her for a significant political role?

Answers will vary, but should include discussion of the idea that she had not formal training in this area and was truly relying on her best judgment to guide her.

3. Why is Marie Antoinette remembered as a historically significant woman?

Answers will vary but could include mention of her role as a scapegoat for French Revolutionaries, her significant change in character over the course of her reign, and her commitment to preserving the monarchy in any way possible.

4. What can be learned from studying the life of Marie Antoinette as a Queen and as a woman in a position of power?

Answers will vary but could include discussion of Marie's change in focus and character over time and how her lack of worldly experiences, history, and life for those whom she governed ultimately cost Marie her life.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Comparing Women in History

Throughout history, there have been many historically significant women with great political influence and power. You have already learned about the role of Marie Antoinette in the French Revolution. Your next job will be to select another powerful woman from history and learn about how she has impacted her country in an historical and/or political way.

After researching this woman, you will create a project that provides some basic background about her and draws some comparisons between her and Marie Antoinette. Finally, you will draw conclusions about why we remember this woman as part of our history and what can be learned from studying her from a political and historical perspective.

Follow the steps below for creating your project.

1. Select a historically significant woman from world history that you would like to learn more about. Write her name in the space below.

I will be studying _____

2. Conduct research that answers the following questions:
 - How did this woman come in to power and/or become a politically/historically figure in her country?
 - What background and qualifications did this woman have to prepare her for this role?
 - How did this woman gain power/notoriety/significance in history?
 - Was this woman a successful leader in her endeavors? In what ways?
 - What important qualities and characteristics did this woman have that helped her achieve this status in history?
 - List specific reasons why this woman is remembered as a historically significant?
 - What lessons can be learned from studying the life of this woman?
 - In what ways is this woman like Marie Antoinette?
 - In what ways do the two women differ?
 - Other interesting facts and information about the woman you are studying
3. Using what you have learned from your research, write a short biography telling the story of the woman you researched in 1 page or less. In it, address who, what, when, where, why, and how questions that will give readers information about why this woman has a special place in history.
4. Using the graphic organizer on the last page, compare Marie Antoinette with the woman you have researched. Complete this neatly as you will be using it on your final display.
5. Using the biography and graphic organizer, create a poster-board size display that includes the biography, the comparison graphic organizer, and a picture of the woman you researched. Create a section somewhere on the display that addresses the questions:

- This woman is historically significant because...
- By studying this woman, we can learn....

In addition, fill the remaining sections of your poster board with pictures, quotes, ideas, and other representations of the woman you researched. Be prepared to discuss your display with another classmate.

