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Bernardo Bellotto (1721-1780) painted this oil-on-canvas of Schönbrunn, Marie Antoinette's childhood home, as it appeared between 1758-1761. Today the work is maintained by the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* (Museum of Art History, or, the Museum of Fine Arts) in Vienna.

Madame Antoine - as the young Habsburg archduchess (born on November 2, 1755) was known to people outside her family - was a beautiful girl who loved music and dancing. Her favorite instrument, which she played herself, was the harp.

Although her mother was Empress, Antoine lived during a time when women usually held supporting roles. Using Vienna's archives, Edward Crankshaw (in his book *Maria Theresa*) breathes life into the history of Antoine's childhood. She was taught, for example, that young women must obey.

At page 250, Crankshaw quotes Maria Theresa's observation (made the year after Antoine's birth) about her daughters:

They are born to obey and must learn to do so in good time.

When they were not performing official duties, however, the Habsburgs (also spelled Hapsburg) lived a more relaxed lifestyle than other European royalty. This was especially true when compared with the French court at Versailles, where life was very formal and courtiers observed even the most private moments - including child birth - of the royal family.

While her mother was busy with governmental matters, Antoine's father doted on his children.

Known as Francis Stephan, Duke of Lorraine (before he married Maria Theresa), he was Emperor Francis I (after the marriage). To become Emperor, he abdicated (in 1736) from the Duchy of Lorraine (territory, now in France, whose ownership was long-disputed by France and various Germanic powers).

Depending on the time of year, Francis and Maria Theresa moved their family back and forth between three palaces in, and around, Vienna. Their lifestyle was far different from that of the common people:

- The Habsburg summer palace, Schönbrunn (Schoenbrunn), in Vienna, still features beautiful gardens and a nearby park.
- Hofburg, the imperial palace where the royal family wintered, dates back to the thirteenth century.
- It is said that Antoine, the young archduchess, most loved her family's home at Laxenburg. With its gardens and cozy atmosphere, the smaller palace provided the royal family an escape from the demands of imperial life.

Because his wife managed the affairs of state, Francis I had time to do as he pleased. Knowledge of this did not escape his wife who, though she loved her husband, warned one of her ladies-in-waiting:

Never marry a man who has nothing to do.

Perhaps Maria Theresa should have admonished herself to avoid a son-in-law completely unprepared to rule his kingdom.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-ROYAL-CHILDHOOD-Marie-Antoinette>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-ROYAL-CHILDHOOD-Marie-Antoinette>

Media Stream



Marie Antoinette at the Clavichord

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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Marie Antoinette Playing the Harp

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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Maria Theresa - by Edward Crankshaw

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.

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Emperor Francis I

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Emperor Francis I and Family

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Francis I and Maria Theresa with Their Children

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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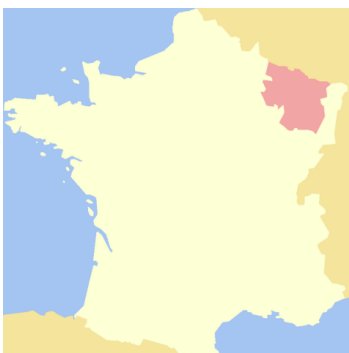
Maria Theresa (Before She Was Empress)

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Duchy of Lorraine - Map Locator

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Schoenbrunn Palace - Vienna

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Hofburg Palace - Vienna

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Laxenburg - Gardens

Image online, courtesy BadenFotos.

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Laxenburg - View of the Surrounding Area - Blauer Hof

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Laxenburg - Home of Marie Antoinette

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Laxenburg Palace - Drawing

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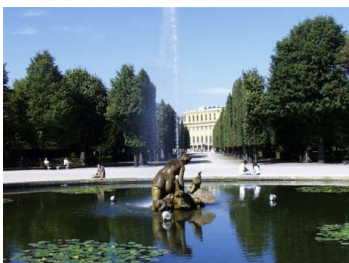


Schoenbrunn - Beautiful Gardens

Image online, courtesy [University of California, Berkeley](#).

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Schoenbrunn - Nearby Park

Image online, courtesy Chello (an Austrian website).

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Schoenbrunn - View of Surrounding Area

Image online, courtesy Carto.net

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Vienna - Home to Schoenbrunn Castle

Image online, courtesy University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.

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