

0. MARIE ANTOINETTE and the GUILLOTINE - Story
Preface

1. A ROYAL CHILDHOOD
2. THE YOUNG ANTOINETTE
3. WEDDING at the PALACE of VERSAILLES
4. DEATH of LOUIS XV
5. A GROWING RESENTMENT
6. CHILDREN of MARIE ANTOINETTE
7. THE DIAMOND NECKLACE AFFAIR
8. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
9. EXECUTION of LOUIS XVI
10. THE GUILLOTINE
11. TRIAL of MARIE ANTOINETTE
- 12. MARIE ANTOINETTE and the GUILLOTINE**
13. Louis XVII - CHILD PRISONER
14. DNA EVIDENCE and LOUIS XVII



Marie Antoinette leaves her place of imprisonment, without saying goodbye to her children, to board a single cart drawn by two white horses. That cart will travel throughout Paris where large crowds will have a chance to see her alive, one last time. She is a hated woman now, perhaps the most-hated woman in all of France. Although her hands are bound, she is still a queen. Daughter of a famous Empress, Marie Antoinette was born to be a queen. Her blond hair, exquisitely styled for most of her life, has turned gray prematurely.

As the raucous crowd yells insults and spits at her, she remains composed. It isn't easy for her to make this journey, of course. As she see her former home, the Tuileries Palace, people see that her face changes expression. She starts to cry, then quickly recovers. She must remain strong to endure this ultimate mockery, humiliation and public execution. As the mob screams for blood, she must remain calm.

She is wearing a white cotton gown since she has been stripped of all her queenly finery. She is wearing a simple white cap on a head which will soon be severed. At 12:15 pm local time, she will place her head on a block just before an infamous French killing machine—known as a guillotine—removes it from her body.

A year later, the British artist William Hamilton (1751–1801), created this painting: “Marie Antoinette being taken to her Execution, October 16, 1793.” The oil-on-canvas is maintained at the Musée de la Révolution française (The Museum of the French Revolution).

How did the once-beautiful queen appear at the time of her death sentence? [Charles Lacretelle](#), a French historian who lived between 1766–1855, wrote this:

Sorrow had blanched the Queen's once beautiful hair; but her features and air still commanded the admiration of all who beheld her; her cheeks, pale and emaciated, were occasionally tinged with a vivid colour at the mention of those she had lost ... she had cut off her hair with her own hands.

Placed in a tumbrel, with her arms tied behind her, she was taken by a circuitous route to the Place de la Revolution, and she ascended the scaffold with a firm and dignified step, as if she had been about to take her place on a throne by the side of her husband.

What did she wear on her last day?

Marie Antoinette wore a white gown, a white handkerchief covered her shoulders, a white cap her hair; a black ribbon bound this cap round her temples ... The cries, the looks, the laughter, the jests of the people overwhelmed her with humiliation; her colour, changing continually from purple to paleness, betrayed her agitation ... On reaching the scaffold she inadvertently trod on the executioner's foot. "Pardon me," she said, courteously.

She knelt for an instant and uttered a half-audible prayer; then rising and glancing towards the towers of the Temple, "Adieu, once again, my children," she said; "I go to rejoin your father."

(Lacretelle)

Her daughter had no idea that her mother had been executed. Agonizing in her room at the Temple Prison, she wrote this on the wall:

Marie-Thérèse is the most unhappy creature in the world. She can obtain no news of her mother; nor be reunited to her, though she has asked it a thousand times ... Live, my good mother! whom I love well, but of whom I can hear no tidings ... O my father! watch over me from heaven above, life was so cruel to her ... O my God! forgive those who have made my family die.

Meanwhile, Marie-Theresa's brother, Louis-Charles, was enduring unbelievably cruel treatment in another room at the Temple.

Revolutionary officials were perplexed what to do with him. Now that Louis XVI was dead, the lad was a titular (Louis XVII) king. What if royalists captured him, attempting to restore the monarchy? Should he, a child of eight, also be killed?

The story of the dauphin's fate remained a mystery until a human heart - once stolen, then forgotten - went through DNA analysis.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MARIE-ANTOINETTE-and-the-GUILLOTINE-Marie-Antoinette>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MARIE-ANTOINETTE-and-the-GUILLOTINE-Marie-Antoinette>

Media Stream



Charles Lacretelle

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Marie Antoinette - Her Arms Tied Behind Her

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Marie Antoinette - Her Last Day

Image online, courtesy Education Environment Schools, a French language blog site.

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Marie Antoinette - On the Scaffold

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Marie Antoinette - Execution of a Queen Consort

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Director

Charles Shyer

Producers

Charles Shyer
Andrew Kosove
Broderick Johnson
Redmond Morris

Screenplay

John Sweet

Narrator

Brian Cox

Starring

Hilary Swank
Jonathan Pryce
Simon Baker
Adrien Brody
Joely Richardson
Christopher Walken

Music by

David Newman

Cinematography

Ashley Rowe

Studio

Alcon Entertainment

Distributor

Warner Bros.

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118 minute

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