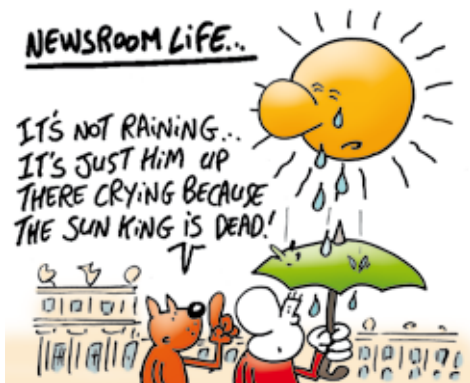




Special
edition
2015-2016



{ 300 YEARS AGO }

On 1st September 1715, King Louis XIV died. Also known as the Sun King, he was 76 years old and had reigned over France since before his 5th birthday – that meant he was king for a record 72 years! His death ended an important chapter in French history.

{ INTERNET }

For all the info about the “The King is Dead” exhibition, go to *Le Petit Journal du grand roi*: www.leroiestmort.com/en



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The King is dead

The last days of Louis XIV



CHRONOLOGY
Discover
the key dates
in the history
of Louis XIV's
reign.

p. 11



2,500

The number
of people who
followed the Sun
King's funeral
procession

Louis XIV, the Sun King (1638-1715)

Louis XIV is probably the most famous king in France's history. Because he was so confident of his own power, he compared himself to the mightiest, brightest star - the sun.

1661: Taking power

When his chief minister Mazarin died, Louis XIV took personal control of the government. Under his reign, royal power became absolute - the king made all the decisions after listening to the advice of his loyal ministers.

1658: the Battle of the Dunes

Louis XIV was passionate about war. As a child, he went to various battles. He was 20 years old when he won the Battle of the Dunes at Dunkirk. He sent France to war against other European kings for 33 of the 54 years of his reign in the hope of enlarging the kingdom of France. But war is very expensive and he had to increase taxes to pay for it.

The court of Louis XIV

The most important people in the kingdom were part of Louis XIV's court and they met at Versailles. They wanted to win Louis XIV's favor. Visiting the king as he got up in the morning or during his mealtimes was a great privilege.

1643: The child king

Louis XIV was nearly 5 years old when his father, Louis XIII (13th), died. Some noblemen tried to seize power, but his mother, Queen Regent Anne of Austria, protected the little boy.

1682: Moving into Versailles

The Château de Versailles was quite small at the time, so Louis XIV extended it. He hired the greatest artists of the time to make it a truly exceptional palace. He held vast parties and entertainments there.

1685: The Edict of Fontainebleau

Louis XIV wanted to unite all the people of his kingdom by making them all Catholic. He persecuted Protestants and cancelled the Edict of Nantes, a law made by a previous king, Henri IV (4th), which gave Protestants a certain amount of freedom.

Protestant

A Christian who follows a faith known as Protestantism. Unlike Catholics, Protestants do not recognise the Pope as the head of the Church.

Edict

A law made by a king.

{ CONTEXT }

Immortal | By the time Louis XIV died, the French people had grown tired of this king who seemed to be immortal.

Many people had lived and died while he was still on the throne.

Power | When the king died, power had to be handed over

to a new sovereign.

Heir | Philippe of Orléans governed until his cousin and heir to the throne, Louis XV (15th), was 13.



The Death of Louis XIV at the Palace of Versailles, T.-J. Barke, circa 1835-1840.

The last days of Louis XIV

It was 10th August and he had just come back from the Château de Marly

(another of his pleasure palaces, located near Versailles, now destroyed) when Louis XIV felt an intense pain in his leg and summoned his doctors. His condition got worse very quickly. Within a few days, he was no longer able to get up, stroll in the Trianon gardens, attend his huge public meals or go to mass at the royal Chapel.

By 17th August, he was spending all day in bed.

The pain was getting worse and the remedies he was given were not working. Medicine was still not very advanced in those days, even for kings!

“The king is dead, long live King Louis XV!”

The grand chamberlain's official announcement that the king had died.

On Saturday 24th August, his doctor, Fagon, realised that the king had **gangrene**. Louis XIV knew that he was seriously ill and that he was going to die. He confessed to a priest, Le Tellier - he admitted the mistakes he had made and the wrong he had done so God would forgive him.

On Sunday 25th August, there was a grand party at Versailles to celebrate Saint Louis' day. As the day was ending,

the king collapsed. Cardinal de Rohan performed the rite of **extreme unction**. Three days later, he was given a remedy to drink by a man from Marseille who claimed he could cure the king. An hour passed and the king felt better. But it did not last long.

By Saturday 31st August, the king was dying.

Most of the time he was unconscious. He died at 8.15 the following morning, on Sunday 1st September.

{ GOOD TO KNOW }

The king's farewell to court

During the 2 days which followed Saint Louis' day celebrations on August 25, the king felt he was close to death. He said farewell to all the princes, cardinals, court officers and princesses, and to his successor (his great-grandson, Louis XV, aged 5) and his secret wife, Madame de Maintenon.

Gangrene

A disease which rots part of the body then contaminates it completely if proper treatment is not given quickly.

Extreme unction

A rite performed by a priest for dying people, to ease their suffering and gain strength from Christ.

Where did the grand chamberlain announce the king's death?

From a balcony at the Palace of Versailles.



Careful preparations to preserve the king's body

25

The number of different plants used to embalm Louis XIV's body.

Surgical instruments



When they were doing the autopsy on the king's body and embalming it, doctors used scalpels to cut the skin, scissors, saws and then needles and thread to sew it all back up.

Plants and products



Apothecaries (the pharmacists of the day) preserved their precious wares such as salt and medicinal plants in glass bottles or earthenware pots.

Autopsy

Examining a body to find out why the person died.

Viscera

Organs in the chest and stomach (intestines, liver, kidneys, lungs, etc.).

Odoriferous

Giving off a pleasant smell.

The day after Louis XIV died, his body was moved into another room of the Château de Versailles, the Bull's Eye Salon.

In keeping with tradition, physicians opened up the king's body so they could do an autopsy. By studying his corpse, they could tell what caused his death. They wanted to be sure that the king had not been poisoned.

Once the autopsy was finished, his heart and viscera were removed so they could be buried in a different place from the rest of his body. This was known as 'tripartition' (see below). His heart was locked in a box and his viscera were put in a separate coffin. Then the doctors

and surgeons embalmed the body.

Embalming stops the body from rotting and helps to preserve it.

This was necessary because Louis XIV's body would not be buried for another seven weeks. When a body is embalmed, it is filled with odoriferous powdered herbs (such as bay leaves, basil, lavender and lemon peel) which also dry it out. It is then sewn up and wrapped in bandages before being placed in its coffin.

We still know exactly what happened, because lots of people who were there wrote their own eye-witness accounts. Doctors wrote reports and the grand officers of the court copied them down in the kingdom's records.



Stages of surgery, 1707.



Louis XIV's coffin in the Mercury Salon at Versailles.

The king's body lies in state at Versailles

Three days after his death, Louis XIV's coffin was placed in the Mercury Salon in the King's Grand Apartment to lie in state for 1 week. Masses were offered up constantly, both with and without music. The room was kept under guard.

The coffin was put on a bed and covered with several cloths. The top one was gold-coloured and decorated with ermine. The bed was surrounded by candlesticks.

The king's heart was placed in a gold box on top of the coffin. The viscera were placed in a lead cask at the foot of the bed.

In many European countries at this time, courtiers could come to pray in front of an open coffin or a wax effigy of the king. This tradition was supposed to prolong the deceased person's life artificially. But in a break with custom, no likeness of Louis XIV was made.

MOURNING RITUALS

Degrees of mourning



After a king had died, court had to be in mourning for a year, which was split into 2 stages - deep mourning and half-mourning. There were certain traditions to follow for both. During deep mourning, for instance, performances and games were banned at court.

Royal purple



While the rest of the court had to wear black, kings had to wear purple. This included the young Louis XV. Even the walls of his apartment were completely draped in purple.

Ermine

White fur from stoats, popular with kings.

Cask

A container.

Effigy

A representation or likeness of a person.

Mourning

The sad feeling people experience when a loved one has died.

WORD OF THE DAY



In the context of French kings, 'tripartition' means separating their bodies into 3 parts so they can be buried in 3 different places.

Louis XIV's body was buried at the Saint-Denis Basilica, but his viscera went to Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral and his heart to the Jesuit church on Rue Saint-Antoine in Paris (which is now the church of Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis).

DID YOU KNOW?



Copper plaque

A copper plaque was put on Louis XIV's coffin. It said that the king had died in the Château de Versailles on 1st September 1715. The plaque was torn off during the French Revolution, but it was re-found and is now owned by the Musée de Cluny in Paris.



Two coffins

After it had been embalmed, Louis XIV's body was enclosed in a lead coffin, which was then put inside another coffin, made of oak. When the coffins were opened up during the Revolution, it was discovered that Louis XIV's body was very well preserved.

IMAGE OF THE DAY



During the period of mourning, some rooms of the apartments in the Château de Versailles were draped with black wall hangings, as were the carriages. Courtiers who had come to pay their respects to young King Louis XV were also dressed in black (picture from Langlois Almanach).



42 kings

32 queens, 63 princes and princesses and 10 other important people are buried in the Saint-Denis Basilica, which is a bit like a cemetery for French kings.

'Menus-Plaisirs'



The king loved to be at the centre of magnificent spectacles. He believed that celebrations boosted his kingdom's prestige and should show him off as a great king. Louis XIV had a department of staff to organize his ceremonies, parties and court entertainment, called the *Menus-Plaisirs* (or 'little pleasures'). It organised his funeral, which was presented like a show. A grand, theatrical set in black, gold and silver was created in the Saint-Denis Basilica.

Courtier

A person who lived in the court, as part of the king's entourage.

Procession

A group of people who follow another in order to honour them.

Lavish

Very luxurious.

Bourbon

The name of Louis XIV's family.

Vault

Tomb.

Funerary ritual

Ceremony carried out during the burial of a dead person.

Louis XIV goes to his final resting place

On 9th September 1715, Louis XIV's body was taken away

on a carriage draped in black and pulled by eight horses.

He left Versailles at 7pm and arrived at Saint-Denis Basilica at 7am the next day.

Thousands of people followed the coffin, including civilians, soldiers, priests, monks and nuns, **courtiers** and members of the royal family.

At the back of the **procession** was a group of poor people carrying torches. Louis XIV's night-time journey symbolized resurrection (coming back to life) after death. The coffin stayed in the basilica for 43 days while the funeral was being organised. Masses were constantly offered up and the bells were rung 3 times a day to commemorate the king's death. The funeral took place on 23rd October



Louis XIV's funerary gauntlet.

© Paris, musée de l'Armée

in the basilica, which had been richly decorated (see left). Because Louis XIV loved music, the king's musicians played many pieces, including the funeral march by Philidor.

When the **lavish** ceremony was over, Louis XIV's coffin was buried in the **Bourbon**

family **vault**. The royal family returned to Versailles. The treasurer of the Saint-Denis Basilica then removed the precious objects that had been thrown in the vault and added them to the Basilica's own treasury. Today, some of these objects are owned by the Louvre.

Changing funeral traditions

Hélène Delalex, historian at the Château de Versailles, tells us how important **funerary rituals** were to royal families in France and Europe: "Deaths, like births, marriages and coronations, were all important moments for royalty. This is still true today. They are very popular events and the chance for a country to unite and come together."

Louis XIV's death was no different. "Because he reigned for 72 years, everyone had forgotten what royal funerals were like. They needed to look through the archives to find descriptions of the funeral held for his father, Louis XIII. So their funerals were quite similar. They were



more sombre and religious than funerals for previous kings. But they still had to be impressive, so the decor was very luxurious and the funeral procession and ceremony were theatrical and spectacular!"

The funerals of French kings were quite like those of

their European cousins. "The main stages of royal funerals were similar everywhere - the body lay in state, then it was placed in the coffin, taken in the funeral procession to the religious ceremony called the 'Grand Service', then placed in its tomb."

In which year did Louis XIII die?

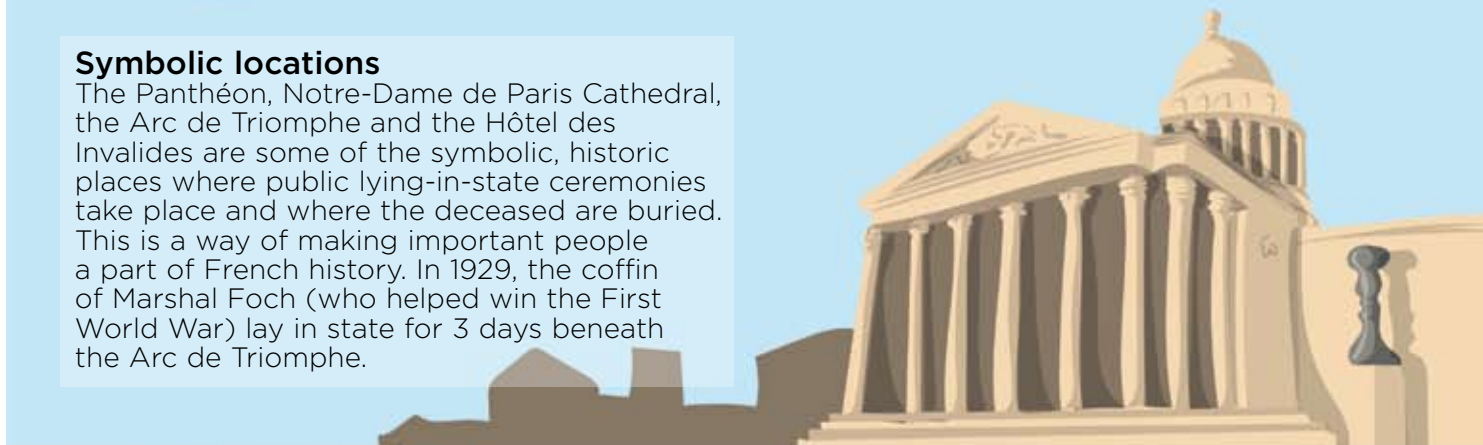
1643.

Funerals throughout history

After the monarchy was abolished in France, funerals for important people such as writers, artists, scientists, soldiers and politicians kept the lavish style of royal funerals. Only the religious side of the ceremony became less important.

Symbolic locations

The Panthéon, Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral, the Arc de Triomphe and the Hôtel des Invalides are some of the symbolic, historic places where public lying-in-state ceremonies take place and where the deceased are buried. This is a way of making important people a part of French history. In 1929, the coffin of Marshal Foch (who helped win the First World War) lay in state for 3 days beneath the Arc de Triomphe.



Impressive processions

The procession which follows a coffin gives funerals a **ceremonial** feel. Soldiers line the route. At first newspapers reported processions, then radio and now the television do too. Mourning has become a national event. In 1885, 1 million people followed the writer Victor Hugo's coffin along the streets of Paris from the Arc de Triomphe to the Panthéon.

Extravagant ceremonies

State funerals are organized when a very important person dies. People feel that the more lavish a ceremony is, the more the deceased person was respected. Statues, fountains and streetlights along the procession route are covered in black cloths, flags and flowers. This is what happened in 1899 when French President Félix Faure's coffin was taken to Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral in a magnificent carriage pulled by several horses.



Music everywhere

Music has always been an important part of ceremonies since the days of French kings to more recent times. This includes singing, orchestras and military bands. Louis XIV loved music and about 150 musicians and singers performed at his funeral at the Saint-Denis Basilica.

Ceremonial
Solemn and impressive.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

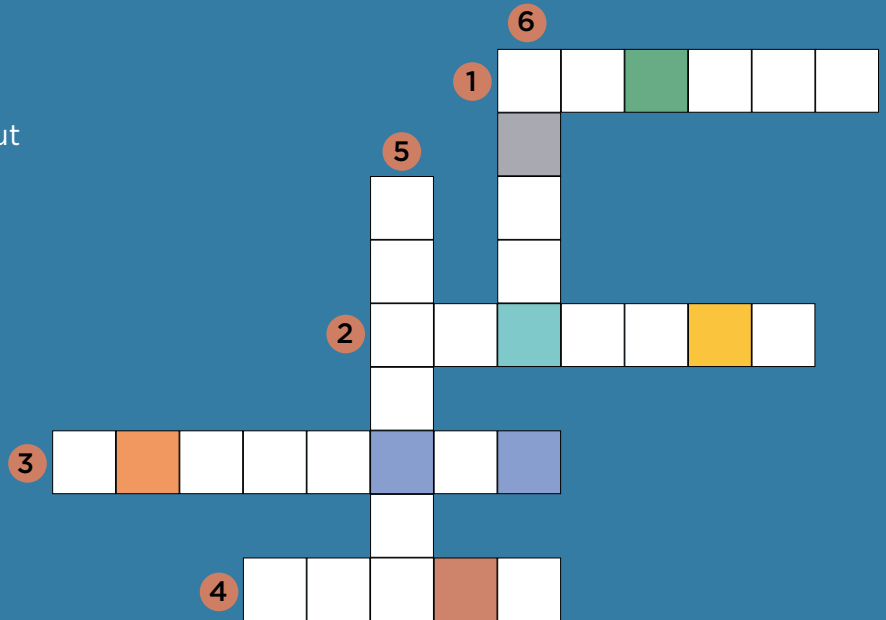
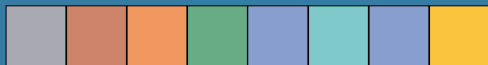


1 MYSTERY WORD

Write the answers to the clues in the boxes. When you put together all the letters in the colored boxes, you will see the name of the illness Louis XIV had before he died.

1. What doctors do to a king's body to preserve it.
2. Something doctors do to work out why a king has died.
3. The name of the infection that started in Louis XIV's leg.
4. The first name of the king who came after Louis XIV.
5. The French word for a castle or palace..
6. The name of a law made by a king.

Mystery word:



Answers: 1. Embalm / 2. Autopsy / 3. Gangrene / 4. Louis / 5. Chateau / 6. Edict. Mystery word: Diabetes.

2 RIDDLE

Can you put all the sounds together to work out this lady's name?

- My first is not sane.
- My second is what beavers build in rivers.
- My third is the French for "two".
- My fourth is not a woman.
- My fifth is the square root of 100.
- My sixth is the opposite of 'off'.

My all is the name of Louis XIV's secret wife.

Answer: Mad-dam-deux-man-ten-on - Madame de Maintenon.

3 PUZZLE

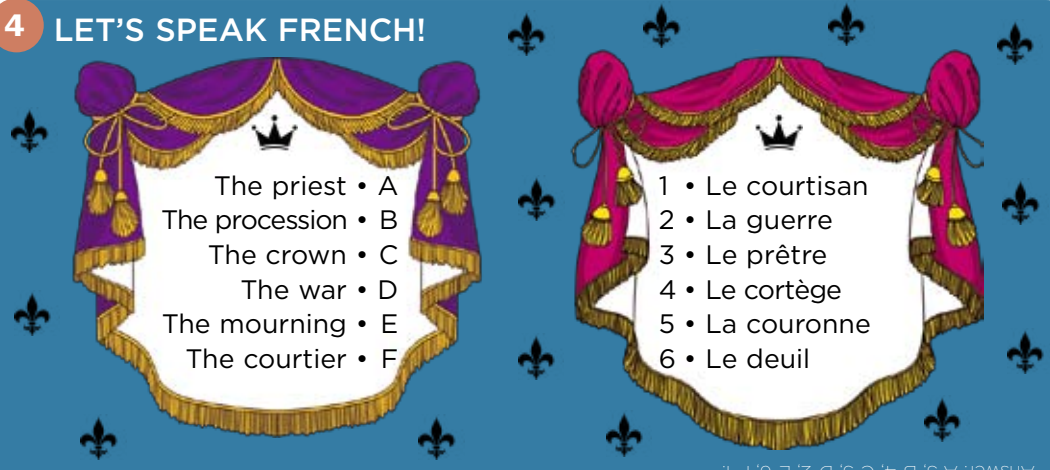
Follow the arrows starting with the letter T on the bottom row. You will see Louis XIV's nickname.



V	U	E	Q	L
S	O	N	U	Z
E	H	M	K	G
G	T	I	N	J

Answer: The Sun King.

4 LET'S SPEAK FRENCH!



Answer: A-3, B-4, C-5, D-2, E-6, F-1.

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