Versailles Revival

1867–1937

FOR 8 TO 12-YEAR-OLDS

Game booklet

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CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES

The rediscovery of Versailles

Less than a century after the Revolution, Versailles became quite popular again. During the Second Empire, the Palace, its Park, and its history (through its famous former occupants) were the subject of admiration and nostalgia. From 1867 to 1937, a new era began for Versailles. Fleeing the Paris Commune, the government moved to Versailles for several years and built a new Congress Chamber in the Palace. As curators and architects successively worked to restore the Palace to its original state, painters, poets, and musicians flocked there. Versailles (including the Palace and the Grand and Petit Trianon) inspired multiple copies around the world. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Gardens hosted large aristocratic celebrations, and the first waves of tourism began in the 1930s.

Pierre de Nolhac, Curator of Versailles from 1892 to 1920, strongly contributed to Versailles' rebirth. He worked to restore the Palace and recover its furnishings, which had been scattered during the Revolution. He also wrote a lot about the Palace, and his research helped expand historians' knowledge.

1

Pierre de Nolhac wrote about the famous queen featured on this medallion. Who was she? Two clues: She was Austrian and lived at Versailles.

Fascination...

Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoleon III, worshipped Marie-Antoinette. She increasingly identified with her, as you can see from the painting to the left, in which Eugenie wears country-style clothing in the spirit of the 18th century. In 1867, Eugenie organised the first exhibition on Marie-Antoinette, restoring the martyr queen's image to that of a veritable icon. This veneration sparked a fascination with Versailles in artistic and literary circles, and even beyond France's borders. Marie-Antoinette's life became a common subject for painters, who presented imaginary scenes.

Empress Eugenie painted by Franz Xaver Winterhalter in 1857.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

George Roux depicted the royal family in a gondola on the Grand Canal.

2

Look closely at the painting to the right. Two of the images above are not in the painting. Which ones?

...and nostalgia

The last days of Louis XIV's reign, according to Russian painter Alexandre Benois in 1897.

Following Marie-Antoinette's re-emergence, the ghost of another major figure associated with Versailles appeared: Louis XIV, the Sun King, who transformed the Palace into a site that reflected his visions of grandeur. Alexandre Benois, a Russian painter who was passionate about Versailles, nostalgically revisited its history. He produced watercolours in dusky tones that depicted the last walks of Louis XIV, represented as a solitary and impotent old man. His work also illustrated the Palace's abandonment after the Revolution.

A book cover illustrated by Maurice Leloir in 1904.

LE ROY SOLEIL

3
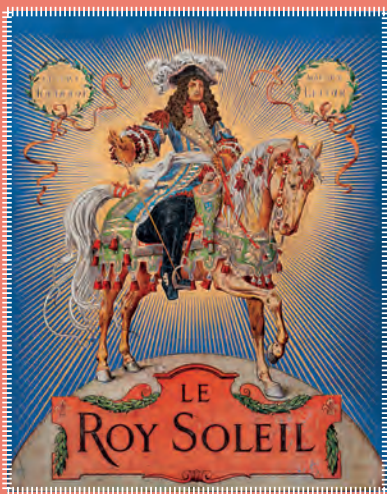
Look closely at the two depictions of Louis XIV on this page and match each label the corresponding image.

THE KING'S DOMINATION

DUSKY

THE KING NO LONGER WALKS ON HIS OWN

AGEING

TRIUMPHANT

RADIANT

THE KING RIDING HIS HORSE

THE KING'S DECLINE

The return of political power

Around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Versailles became once again the seat of power and the setting for several major political events. The German Empire was proclaimed in the Hall of Mirrors in January 1871. In response, nearly 50 years later, the same location was chosen for the signature of the Treaty of Versailles, which brought to an end the World War I. In between these dates, the Paris Commune forced the government to flee to Versailles. The Palace's Opera house was transformed to host sessions of the National Assembly and then the Senate.

Jules Arsène Garnier depicted a parliamentary session in the new Congress Chamber in 1878.

4

The painting below depicts the signature of the Treaty of Versailles. When was it signed? Read the text above carefully.

a. 1889

b. 1919

c. 1939
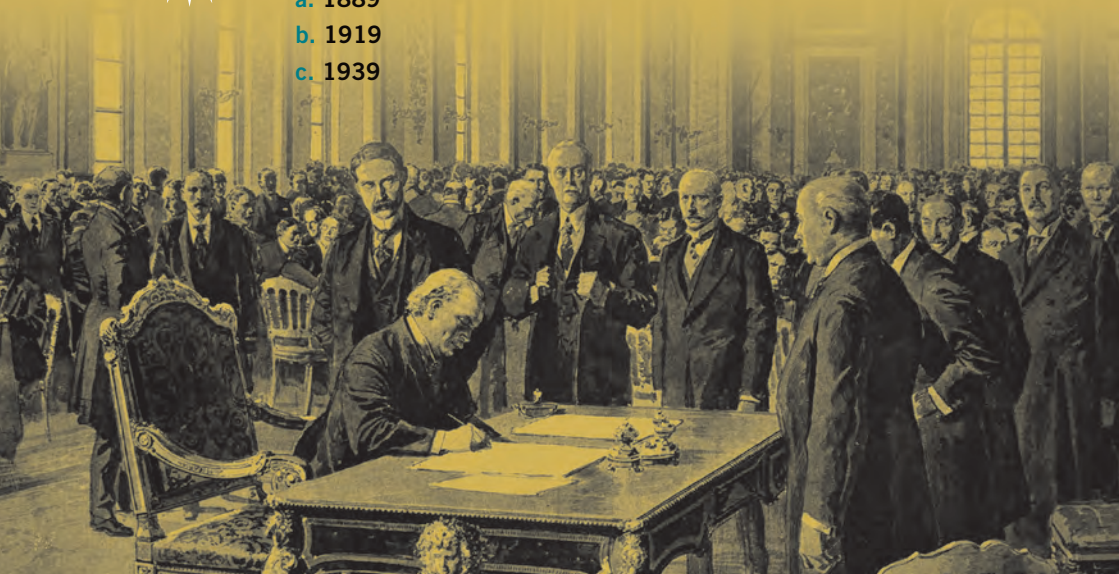
Autumn colours inspired many artists, particularly painter Georges Leroux around 1920.

Autumn in the garden

At this time, there was also a renewed interest in the French-style Gardens, symbolised by the work of gardener Le Nôtre. The Palace's Park, with its fountains, parterres, groves, and topiaries (bushes trimmed in the shape of sculptures) became a source of inspiration for painters and poets. Autumn was their favourite season because its glowing colours and nostalgic accents allowed them to celebrate the beauty of the site.

5 Fill in the crossword puzzle with words describing the Park of the Palace of Versailles.

PARTERRE
STATUE
PERSPECTIVE
TOPIARY
FOUNTAIN
LABYRINTH
GROVE
GARDENS
PARK
POOL
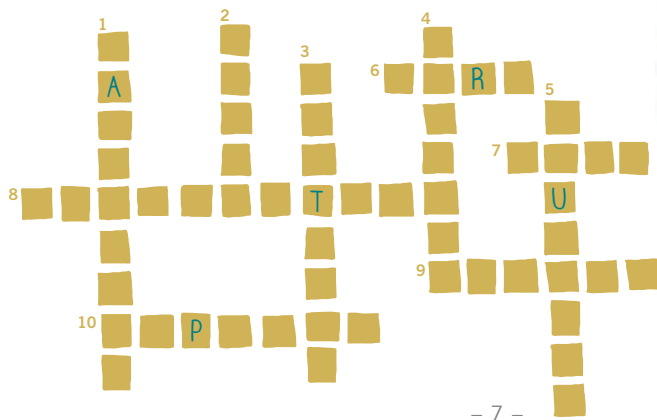
A costume by Paul Poiret in Louis XIV's preferred style. Drawing by Georges Lepape in 1913.

During the Belle Epoque, at the turn of the 20th century, elegant visitors came to stroll around Versailles.

Palace fashion

6

At the turn of the 20th century, writers (such as Marcel Proust), artists, and composers often came to Versailles. They helped to foster the fascination with the site by creating works inspired by the Palace and its Gardens. The Park became very popular as the venue for major countryside and evening parties, during which guests wore costumes in the style of the Ancien Régime. It was here that the most prominent figures, such as Countess Greffulhe (in the portrait below) liked to be seen.

Some words in this quote from Marcel Proust have faded over time. Can you guess what they are?

> VERSAILLES, GREAT _ _ _ _ THAT IS RUSTY AND SWEET, _ _ _ _ _ CEMETERY OF _ _ _ _ _ _ _, VAST WATERS AND _ _ _ _ _ _.

MARBLE

ROYAL

NAME

FOLIAGE

Countess Greffulhe above and writer Marcel Proust to the right..

Carbon copies

This Versailles craze extended around the world, inspiring many copies of the Palace, like Herrenchiemsee built for Ludwig II of Bavaria, and even in the United States. The SS *France* ocean liner, referred to as the "Versailles of the Atlantic", was inaugurated in 1912. It offered wealthy passengers a luxurious décor to distract them from the tragedy of the Titanic, which had only recently sunk. The centrepiece was the Conversation Room (below), also called the Louis XIV Room, which even featured a copy of one of the famous portraits of the Sun King. The journey back in time was nonetheless accompanied by the most modern comforts such as a system of complex pipes, two lifts, a print shop, a telegraph service, and even a cinema.
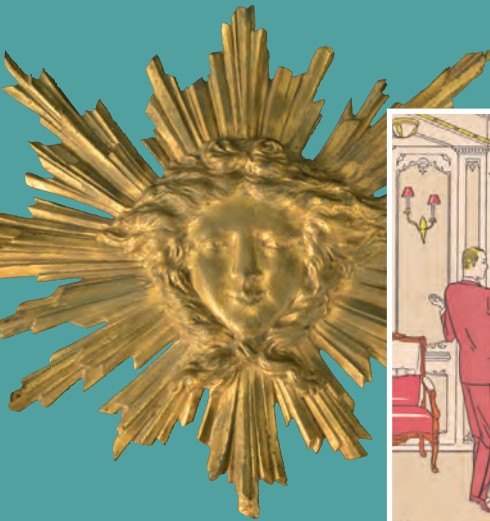
A close-up of a very "17th century" décor on the SS France liner in 1912.

7

Look at this scene set in the SS France's Louis XIV Room and see if you can spot 7 differences between the two images.

Brand image

The beginnings of cinema and advertising helped to spread Versailles' image far and wide. The Palace and the royal family, particularly Marie-Antoinette, were featured in many advertisements, becoming part of a real brand image used to sell luxury products like chocolate. The Palace's image was also frequently shown on postcards, which became more popular at the end of the 19th century.

People sent postcards with images of Versailles to their friends and family.

8

The designer of this patchwork-shaped poster presented several iconic locations and buildings from the Estate of Versailles. Can you recognise them? Connect the names to the corresponding images.

THE TEMPLE OF LOVE

THE PARK'S POOLS AND FOUNTAINS

THE QUEEN'S HAMLET

THE GATE OF HONOUR

THE GRANDE PERSPECTIVE

THE STATUE OF LOUIS XIV

The famous photographer André Kertész illustrated the success of the Fountains Shows in 1935 or so.

A popular destination

Versailles became a popular destination, attracting Sunday crowds
and benefiting from the growth of tourism following the introduction
of paid holidays. In 1937, crowds rushed to the Palace, to the tune of nearly
1 million visitors. Major photographers, such as Man Ray and André Kertész,
witnessed this phenomenon. In their photographs,
it is now the people who are at the center.

9

**In this crowd of visitors,
find the person who only
appears once.**

Waterwork

Water played an essential role in Le Nôtre's designs of the Park. The Fountains Shows attracted ever-increasing crowds. At the beginning of the 19th century, electricity was routinely used to light up the water effects. Fireworks launched from several spots in the Park created an enchanting display during sumptuous evening parties.

10

Put the letters back in the right order to find the name of the famous fountain in the Palace of Versailles's Park, which was inspired by mythology. Look closely at the different items in this poster, they will give you some clues.

U E
T
N
E
P N

FOUNTAIN

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