

Queen Marie-Antoinette

Marie-Antoinette was an Austrian princess. She was only 15 years old (right) when she was married to Louis. She was forced to leave behind all of her friends and family when she crossed the French border: she even had to strip out of her Austrian clothes!

In 2006, Marie-Antoinette was made the subject of a Hollywood blockbuster starring Kirsten Dunst in the title role. In this lesson we will examine how she has been portrayed by Hollywood, and how accurate this interpretation is.



A scene from the film



Does this image create a positive or a negative impression of the queen?

What was she like?

- Marie-Antoinette was deeply unpopular with the French people. Read the following points being made about her on the right, then write a corresponding descriptive word on the left.

Distrusted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She was Austrian by birth, not French. The people called her "l'autrichienne" (the Austrian... dog).
Wasteful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She spent fortunes on jewellery, clothing and parties, earning the nickname "Madam Deficit [debt]"
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She built a life-sized toy village and liked pretending she was a milkmaid
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When told the people had no bread, she allegedly said "Well let them eat cake"
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She supposedly had loads of male and female lovers and was rumoured to have slept with her own son
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She hated the rituals of the French court, such as having to eat, dress and even give birth in public!

2. Which of these weaknesses do you think was the most damaging to the monarchy? Why?

Task: Film Clips

Watch the related film clips and pay particular attention to how the Queen is portrayed in each. Remember to cite evidence / examples!

3. In what ways does the film create a positive impression of the Queen?

4. In what ways does the film create a negative impression?

This poster suggests that Kirsten Dunst's "dodgy teeth" made her a strange choice to play a "romantic lead".

5. Which actress do you think would have been the best choice to play Marie- Antoinette? Explain.

6. Which actor do you think would have been the best choice to play King Louis XVI? Explain.

