

Jean-Paul's Daring Adventure: *Stories From Old Mobile*

Overview

The lesson will familiarize students with King Louis XIV, also known as the Sun King or Louis the Great, who reigned from 1643 to 1715, making him the longest reigning monarch of a major European country. The lesson is designed to accompany the graphic novel, *Jean-Paul's Daring Adventure: Stories from Old Mobile*. It can be used on its own and is designed to be used prior to the lesson plan *Letter to King Louis*, to provide students with a better understanding of whom they are writing to.

Objectives

In this lesson, the students will

- Gain a clear understanding of 'monarchy' and 'colony';
- Practice visual literacy skills;
- Understand how status can impact perspective;
- Learn more about how France viewed its colonies.

Historical Background

The novel takes place from 1702 to 1711, a time when all of the major colonial powers in America, that is France, Spain, and Britain, were vying for control of the continent. Hence, when Iberville established the first French colony in this area he named the territory, which later extended to the present-day state of Louisiana, *La Louisiane* (Land of Louis).

In the novel's prologue, one of King Louis' nicknames, the Sun King, is mentioned. It is unclear whether this was a nickname that he gave to himself or that was given to him by his subjects. But the idea was to convey that the King was like the sun which the planets revolved around, in the same way he wanted his subjects to revolve around him.

On the home front, King Louis is well-known for building the palace of Versailles, being a ardent lover and patron of the arts, and for his aggressive foreign policy. During his reign, he was involved in numerous European wars (War of Devolution, War of the Grand Alliance, War of Spanish Succession) and although France did not lose territory, the wars drained the French coffers. This is one reason the colonies did not receive much attention or supplies from France. In Mobile, supply ships came on average once every two years, so colonists often ran out of much needed supplies such as gun powder and flour. As a result, the Spanish in Pensacola and the French in Mobile often traded and helped one another with supplies, even when the Mother countries were at war.



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Novel Connection

King Louis is mentioned in the graphic novel's prologue. Although not one of the novel's main characters, it is important to emphasize that King Louis was the reigning monarch and in this capacity made all of the final decisions regarding the colony. Prior to analyzing the painting, have students read the prologue (pages 1-4) of *Jean-Paul's Daring Adventure*.

Prior Knowledge

Students need to have a basic understanding of a monarchy, a form of government where one person reigns, a king or queen, a position that is generally inherited.

Possible questions to assess prior knowledge or to facilitate a discussion:

- What is a monarchy?
- Do monarchies still exist today? Where?
- Can you think of any famous kings and queens, either living or dead?

Activities

Vocabulary

Start by asking students to look up the word 'colony' in the glossary at the back of the book. With a partner, ask students to discuss what they think a colony is and expand on the definition. As a class, ask students to convey what they discussed with their partners and ensure that all students have a firm understanding of what a colony is.

Interpreting a Painting

This activity asks students to look at the painting *King Louis XIV at the Siege of Namur* (Musée de l'Histoire de France, Château de Versailles, by Pierre Mignard, 1612-1695) and see what they can infer about him based on his pose, the objects, and symbols depicted in the image. Provide students with the worksheet:

Interpreting a Painting and ask them to answer the questions. You can either provide them with a photocopy of the painting on the reverse side of the worksheet or you can project the image for the class so that students can view it in color. You can also choose a different portrait of the King; there are many that can be found on-line. The activity can be done individually, in pairs, or in groups. Depending on time and needs, you can take it up in class or mark every paper individually and then review it.



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Materials

- Worksheet *Interpreting a Painting*
- Image of King Louis XIV (photocopy on worksheet or to be projected onto a screen)

Extra Resources

- An excellent and relatively brief resource on King Louis XIV along with a series of short videos on specific aspects of his reign (e.g. marriage, religion, Versailles)
<http://www.biography.com/people/louis-xiv-9386885>
- Ten fascinating facts about the King that can make a great addition to a discussion with your students!
<http://www.tenfactsabout.co.uk/0036louisxiv.htm>

