

2F The Sun King: Louis XIV, France and Europe, 1643–1715

This option provides for the study in depth of a key figure, whose ambitions had a profound impact, not only on France, but on the whole of Europe. It explores the concepts of French absolutism, centralisation, aggrandisement and power. It also encourages an in-depth understanding of the importance of monarchy and social status in the 17th century as well as the glories and perils of personal and state confidence and ambition.

Part one: The Sun King, 1643–1685

1. The Regency, 1643–1661
 - The French monarchy in 1643: the legacy of Richelieu and Louis XIII; the establishment of the Regency
 - The Minority of Louis XIV: the roles of Anne of Austria and Mazarin; the Parlement of Paris, unrest and opposition; the Frondes
 - France and Europe: the rise of French power at the expense of the Habsburgs; the treaties of Westphalia and the Pyrenees
 - The condition of France at the accession of Louis XIV in 1661: politics, economy and society

2. The establishment of Absolutism at home, 1661–1685
 - Louis XIV and Divine Right: personality and aims; the restoration of order; the centralisation of royal authority; the role of Versailles
 - Louis XIV and patronage of art, culture and science: the Academie Francaise; the Academy of Sciences; the role of Colbert
 - Finance and the economy: the reforms of Colbert; taxation; trade and communications within France; mercantilism; overseas trade and colonisation
 - Louis XIV and the Church: disputes with the papacy; persecution of Jansenists; policies towards Huguenots and the Revocation Edict of 1685

3. Louis XIV and Europe, 1661–1685
 - The context of French foreign policy in 1661: Louis XIV's aims, the extent of French military resources; the Military Academy; the role of Louvois
 - France and Spain: the decline of Spanish military power; the War of Devolution
 - France and the Dutch Republic: relations between Louis XIV and Charles II of England; the Franco-Dutch War; the Peace of Nijmegen
 - France and the policy of Reunions: the drive to annex 'lost' territories to France such as Luxembourg, Casale and Strasbourg; the Treaty of Ratisbon

Part two: Louis XIV in decline, 1685–1715 (A-level only)

4. Challenges at home, 1685–1715 (A-level only)
 - The personal monarchy: the strengths and weaknesses of royal government; the influence of Madame de Maintenon
 - Finance and the economy: problems after Colbert; the costs of war
 - Louis XIV and the Church: Gallicanism; relations with Huguenots; Jansenists and Quietists
 - Pressures from below: social divisions; problems with the regions; discontent and popular protests

5. Challenges in Europe, 1685–1697 (A-level only)
 - The challenge of William of Orange: the Dutch-English alliance after the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688
 - The ‘Grand Alliance’: the League of Augsburg and the anti-French alliance between Protestant states; the Empire and Spain
 - The Nine Years War: outbreak, course and outcome; the war in Europe; the war in North America, the Caribbean and Asia; the Peace of Ryswick 1697