

A Portrait of a King—Part I

Go inside the plaza entrance to the South Pavilion (across from the Family Room). There you will find the painting below just outside of Gallery S102.



Title: Portrait of Louis XIV
Artist: Workshop of Hyacinthe Rigaud (French)
Date: After 1701
Medium: Oil on canvas

Louis XIV became King of France in 1643 at the age of five. When he finally took control of the throne in 1661, he moved the seat of French government from Paris to Versailles. He forced the nobility to live at his château (palace) in Versailles so that he could control and keep a careful watch over their activities. He wanted Versailles and its art to show visitors that Louis XIV, who was also known as the “Sun King,” was the most powerful ruler of his time. While the artist who painted this portrait made a credible likeness of the king, his purpose was not to express Louis XIV’s character but to glorify the monarchy. Louis XIV had obsessive control over many aspects of French society and culture until the end of his rule in 1715.

1. Although Louis may look strange to us today, in his time he was considered the height of style and fashion. In our society, who sets the fashion trends? Who do you think is the height of style and fashion?

Translate Louis’ features into today’s fashion:

	What was stylish then:	What is fashionable now:
Hair:	Long and curly	
Shoes:	Heeled shoes with diamond buckles	
Clothes:	Stockings with knee buckles Fur-trimmed robe Short breeches	

2. What details in the painting indicate that he was a man of power and wealth?

3. The symbol of French monarchy was the *fleur-de-lis*, which means “flower of the lily” in French. Look for these decorative symbols on the blue fabric. Beginning in the 12th century, visual symbols were used to identify an individual's family, ancestry, or institutional affiliation. Coats of arms, for example, were originally displayed on the shields of knights to help identify them in battle. Visual images frequently were combined with a motto or a set of verses often carrying a moral lesson.



4. Design an emblem and choose a motto to represent you and your family. Draw it below.

A Portrait of a King—Part II

Walk through the gallery behind the portrait of Louis XIV. Stop at the next room, Gallery S103.



Title: Cabinet on Stand

Artist: Attributed to André-Charles Boulle (French)

Date: 1678–1680

Material: Oak with ebony, tortoiseshell, pewter, brass, ivory, horn, and various woods; painted and gilded wood figures; bronze mounts

This cabinet is also a kind of portrait of Louis XIV. As with the painted portrait, the cabinet was meant to show the wealth and power of the French monarchy. The decoration on this monumental cabinet refers to King Louis XIV's military victories

Find the following symbols and images on the cabinet:

- The cockerel (young rooster) of France standing triumphant over both the eagle of the Holy Roman Empire and the lion of Spain and the Spanish Netherlands.
- Gilt-bronze military trophies flanking a medallion portrait of Louis XIV.
- Two large Greek mythological figures, Hercules and Hippolyta (Queen of the Amazons), who represent strength and bravery.
- Can you find the fleurs-de-lis on this cabinet?

Complete the diagram below, comparing and contrasting the painted portrait and the cabinet.

