



Paideia Seminar Lesson Plan



Marie Antoinette - letter to her mother Marie Theresa, Archduchess of Austria

Grade/Subject

MS / Social Studies



History, Communication, Family Relationships, Reasoning/Logic, Monarchy



Pre-Seminar Content



Launch Activity:

What things do you have control over, in your daily life? What things do your parents control? Create a 3-column chart listing the activity and then these headings: I Decide, Parent Decides, and Others Decide. Write about your daily routine.



Inspectional Read:

Scan the document and highlight the hours of the day. Notice whom the letter is written to and who wrote it. Put topic headings on the different sections of the letter to help you see the themes more clearly since paragraph divisions are missing.

Background Information:

In April 1770 fifteen-year-old Marie Antoinette was sent to France to marry King Louis XV's grandson, the Dauphin, who was only a year older than her. Marie Antoinette was the pivot of her mother's plan to strengthen the alliance between France and Austria, thus guaranteeing Austria's security. She was immature for her age and needed guidance. Aware of what was at stake, Marie Theresa maintained a regular correspondence with her daughter. Marie Antoinette's closest advisers were the Austrian Ambassador Mercy and the Abbé Vermond (devoted to Austria). The most important issue was the production of an heir who did not appear for a number of years. The Archduchess died in 1780, ending years of advice and support and Louis XVI became king in 1774.

Vocabulary:

Read the whole text aloud and slowly, while students are circling any unfamiliar words creating a list. Write the unfamiliar words on the board. Anticipate 18th century vocabulary that they would not know from the letter (*général, waistcoat, toilette, courier, harpsichord, communion, disquiet, ardently*). Have teams of students define the terms and share with the whole class, while students note definitions on their copies of the text.

Analytical Read:

Divide the letter into logical sections and name each section. Give participants time to read the text for a second time. State that the purpose for their second read is to come to a better understanding of key points. Highlight in yellow the activities Marie Antoinette has control over and underline in pencil the activities controlled by others. Where can you make a connection to your daily routine? Put an exclamation point next to something that surprised you.



Pre-Seminar Process

 Define and state purpose for Paideia Seminar.

 Describe the responsibilities of facilitator and participants.

 Have participants set a Personal Goal.

 Agree on a Group Goal.

Seminar Questions

Opening (Identify main ideas from the text.):

- ❖ What event in the young princess' day most surprised you? (round robin response)
- ❖ Why? Refer to the text. (spontaneous discussion)

Core (Analyze textual details.):

- ❖ What is the purpose of Marie Antoinette's letter according to the text?
- ❖ What evidence in the letter shows that people were/were not supportive of Marie Antoinette?
- ❖ What influence did Marie Antoinette's mother have on her life? Refer to text.
- ❖ Even though Marie Antoinette was Queen, what evidence in the letter shows control or lack of control over her daily life?

Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas.):

- ❖ What advice do you ask your parents? Do you take their advice? What similarities and differences can you find between that advice and the advice you see in this letter?

Post-Seminar Process

 Have participants do a written self-assessment of their personal participation goal.

 Do a group assessment of the social and intellectual goals of seminar.

 Note reminders for next seminar.



Post-Seminar Content

 *Transition to Writing:*

Have students brainstorm ideas that they heard, said, and thought during the seminar related to the ideas under discussion, and take notes.

 *Writing Task:*

After reading Marie Antoinette's letter to her mother, write a letter to Marie Antoinette in which you identify a problem and propose a solution as if you are her mother, the Archduchess. Support your discussion with evidence from the text. What advice would you give the young queen?



 *Brainstorm:*

Invite participants to talk in pairs for two minutes to share thoughts about what the writing task is asking them to do.

Structure the Writing:

Discuss possible outlines of their letters. Allow time for all to create a design for their letters. Follow through with participants drafting their designs on paper and using them as a reflection tool.

First Draft:

Challenge them to use their outlines when writing their paragraphs. Refer to the original text to emphasize key points.

Collaborative Revision:

Have participants work in pairs to read aloud to each other the first drafts. Listener remarks on one point and asks a clarifying question. Roles are switched. Allow time for full revisions, resulting in a second draft.

Edit:

This time, have the participants work in groups of three or four and edit the second drafts slowly, marking grammar and spelling errors. Give time for revisions resulting in a third and final draft.

Publish:

Have participants exchange their final letters with a classmate for a candid, thoughtful response.

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

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Organization: Chattanooga School for the Liberal Arts



Choisy, France
July 12, 1770

Madame my very dear mother,

I cannot express how touched I am by the kindness Your Majesty has shown me, and I can swear to you that I have not received one of your dear letters without having tears come to my eyes because I am separated from so kind and loving a mother; and although I am very well situated here, I still ardently wish I could see my dear and very dear family for a moment at least. I am in despair that Your Majesty should not have received my letter. I thought it was to be sent with the courier, but Mercy thought it advisable to send it through Forcheron which I imagine might have caused the delay. I find it very sad having to await my uncle, my brother and my sister in law without knowing when they will arrive. I implore you to tell me if it is true that you travelled to Gratz to meet them and that the Emperor has lost a lot of weight because of the journey; this would disquiet me deeply as he has not much fat to lose. As for what you ask about my spiritual exercises and the général, I will tell you that I have only taken communion once; I confessed the day before yesterday to M. L'abbé Maudous, but since it was on the day I expected to leave for Choisy, I did not take communion, because I thought I would have too many distractions. As for the général, it is the fourth month that I have missed it. Our trip to Choisy was delayed by a day because my husband had a cold and a fever, but he got over it in a day for, having slept for twelve and a half hours, he found himself cured and able to leave. We have thus been here since yesterday – where from the time we dine at one to one in the morning, we never go back to our apartments – which I find very unpleasant because, after dinner, we play cards until six, then we see a play which lasts until nine, then comes supper, then again cards until one, sometimes even one thirty, but the King, who saw yesterday that I was exhausted, was kind enough to send me back to my rooms at eleven, which pleased me greatly and I slept very well until ten thirty [next morning], although I was alone; my husband was still on a diet and so he came in from supper and immediately went to bed in his room, which otherwise never happens. Your Majesty is kind enough to take an interest in me and you even want to know how I spend my days. I will tell you, therefore, that I get up at ten, or at nine, or at nine thirty and that have been dressed, I say my morning prayers; then I breakfast and then go to my aunts {Mesdames}, where I usually find the King. That goes on until ten-thirty; after that, at eleven, I go to have my hair dressed. At twelve they call in the chamber and then anyone can come in as long as they belong to the Court. I put on my rouge and wash my hands in front of everyone; then the men leave and the ladies stay and I dress in front of them. At noon we have Mass. If the King is at Versailles, I accompany him, my husband, and my aunts to the Mass; if he is away, I go alone with M. le Dauphin, but always at the same time. After Mass we have dinner together in public, but it is over by one-thirty because we both eat very quickly. From there I go to the M. le Dauphin's apartment and, if he's busy, I come back to mine, I read, write or work since I am embroidering a waistcoat for the King which hasn't progressed much, but I hope that with God's grace, it will be finished in a few years. At three I go back to my aunt's whom the King visits at that

time; at four the Abbé [de Vermond] comes to see me, at five, everyday, I have a singing or harpsichord teacher until six. At six-thirty, I almost always go to my aunts' when I do not go for a walk. At seven we sit down to cards until nine but when the weather is nice, I go for a walk and then the card playing takes place not in my apartment but in my aunts'. At nine we have supper, and when the King is away, my aunts come and have supper with us, but when the King is there, we go to their apartments after supper and wait for him. I lie down on a large sofa and sleep until he arrives; if he's away, we go to bed by eleven. That's our whole day. As for what we do on Sundays and holidays, I will keep it for another time.

I beg my very dear mother to forgive me if my letter is too long, but chatting with her is my great pleasure. I also beg her pardon if the letter is dirty, but I have to write it on two successive days what I was at my toilette because I had no other free time, and if I don't answer all your questions exactly, it is because I have been so prompt to burn your letter. I must finish getting dressed and go to the King's Mass. I have the honor of being the most obedient of daughters. I send you the list of the presents I have been given as I think it might amuse you.