

Name: _____

Day: _____

Flight to Varennes 1791

On the night of June 20, 1791, the King and Queen of France, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette fled from their palace disguised as servants of the Russian Baroness de Korff. The King, Queen, their children and the King's sister passed the guards and escaped from the Tuileries palace in Paris. They boarded a large coach headed toward the French frontier.

That night and the next day, they traveled over 200 miles through the French countryside in their large lumbering coach. They were fleeing from the French Revolution now in its third year.

That night of June 21, the longest day of the year, the summer solstice, their journey of escape came to an end. At the small town of Varennes, just 40 miles from the border with the Austrian Netherlands, the King and Queen were stopped by the townspeople, forced to admit their real identities and then forced to return to Paris.

General Lafayette and the Assembly on learning of their escape, demanded their return and sent representatives, Petion and Barnave to accompany Louis and Marie Antoinette back to Paris.

What followed for the royal family was 4 harrowing days of suffocating heat and constant humiliation as Louis and Marie Antoinette were subjected to the constant gaze, frequent taunts and insults from large crowds of their subjects. These were the common people of the French countryside who had never before in their lives seen their King and Queen. Now, they came by the thousands to see the famous royal couple. On their arrival in Paris, the royal family was met with complete silence from the huge crowds.

Once back in the Tuileries palace, Louis, Antoinette and their family then faced a close guard under the direction of the French National Assembly. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette would never again leave Paris. They would lose their crowns a year later. Then each would be tried and die by the blade of the guillotine in 1793.

1. Why do you think the King and Queen were attempting to escape France?
2. How did the Flight work out for the King and Queen?
3. Do you think this ending for the King and Queen was inevitable? Why or why not?