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French Revolution Essay

Was Marie Antionette executed justifiably or was her execution undeserved?

There are many opinions and reasons that support both arguments. On one hand, Marie lived extravagantly and showed little concern for the welfare of her people. She was accused of treason and was therefore executed. Was Marie Antoinette responsible for her fate or was she a victim of circumstance? History gives many reasons that show she was a victim of circumstance.

Marie Antoinette was the 15th child born to the Holy Roman Emperor Frances 1st and the Habsberg Empress Maria Theresa. She was born in Austria in 1755, during a time when there was great instability for European monarchies. In 1766, Marie Antoinette was promised to the future king of France to instill peace between the two countries. Four years later in 1770 the two teenagers (Marie 15 years old) (Louis XVI 16 years old) were in married in Versailles in front of crowds of people.

Her life at Versailles in the public eye was not easy. Her marriage also was not great as she had very little official duties and spent most of her time socializing and indulging in extravagant food. Widely circulated newspapers and inexpensive pamphlets poked fun at the queen’s lavish behavior and spread outlandish, even pornographic rumors about her. Before long, it had become fashionable to blame Marie Antoinette for all of France’s problems, even though she barely knew of the problems.

During the Revolution, the nation’s difficulties were not the young queen’s fault. In the Eighteenth-century the American Revolution, in which the French had stepped in on behalf of the colonists, this created tons of debt for the French state. The Catholic Church (First Estate) and the nobility (Second Estate) did not have to pay many taxes. The commoners (Third Estate) on the other hand, had high taxes and were resentful of the royal family’s constant spending. Sadly, popular press blamed Marie Antoinette for this, they called her “Madame Veto,” among other things. During this time, conditions worsened for ordinary French people, many thought that the monarchy and the nobility were against them. Marie Antoinette continued to be the target for their rage. Cartoonists and pamphleteers depicted her as an “Austrian whore” doing everything she could to undermine the French nation. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette fled Paris and headed for the Austrian border, where it was thought the queen’s brother waited with troops ready to invade France. This incident was proof to many that the queen was not just a foreigner, but a traitor. Revolutionaries began to argue that the most insidious enemies of the state were the monarchs themselves.

In December, Louis XVI was put on trial for treason; in January, he was executed. The campaign against Marie Antoinette likewise grew stronger. In July 1793, she lost custody of her young son, who was forced to accuse her of sexual abuse and incest before a Revolutionary tribunal. In October, she was convicted of treason and sent to the guillotine. She was 37 years old.

Marie Antionette’s death was not justified. She was target of the majority of Frances anger towards the country and blamed for problems out of her control. Executing her did not actually solve any problems. She was one of many of France’s monarchist that were killed in the attempt to abolish monarchy in France.