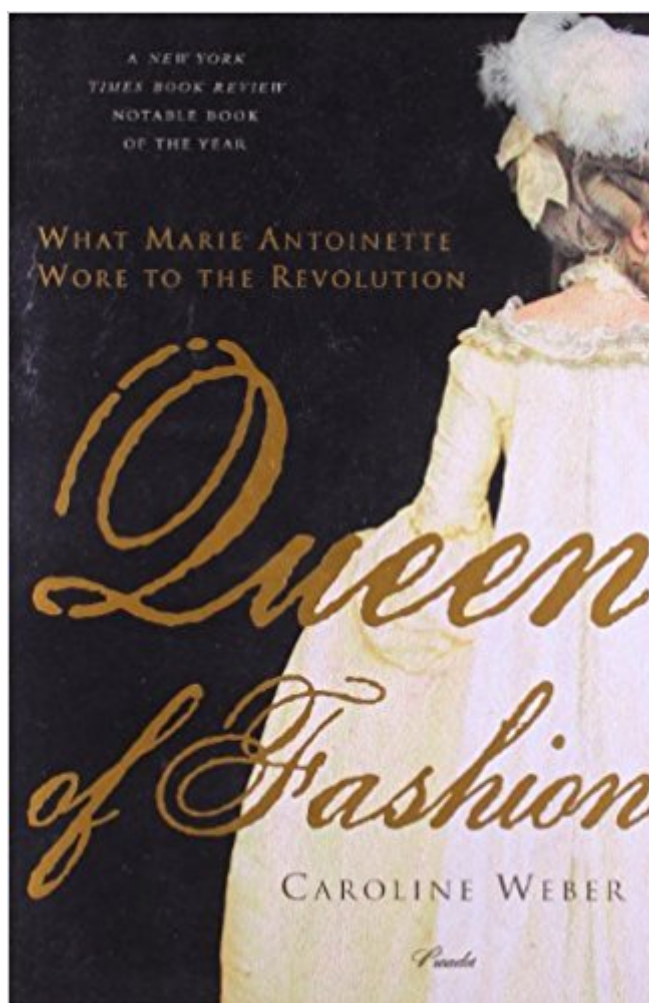


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# Queen Of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore To The Revolution



## Synopsis

A Washington Post Book World Best Book of the Year When her carriage first crossed over from her native Austria into France, fourteen-year-old Marie Antoinette was taken out, stripped naked before an entourage, and dressed in French attire to please the court of her new king. For a short while, the young girl played the part. But by the time she took the throne, everything had changed. In *Queen of Fashion*, Caroline Weber tells of the radical restyling that transformed the young queen into an icon and shaped the future of the nation. With her riding gear, her white furs, her pouf hairstyles, and her intricate ballroom disguises, Marie Antoinette came to embody--gloriously and tragically--all the extravagance of the monarchy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. At Versailles, where even the daily rouging of the Dauphin's cheeks was a highly ritualized and politicized affair, and where obedience to protocol could brook no infringement, 14-year-old Marie Antoinette's refusal to wear her whalebone corset threatened the Bourbon-Hapsburg alliance. As this prodigiously researched, deliciously detailed study (perfectly timed for the fall release of Sofia Coppola's movie) of the doomed royal's fashion statements demonstrates, her masculine equestrian garb, ostentatious costumes for masked balls, high Parisian hairdos and faux country-girl gear were bold bids for political power and personal freedom in a suffocating realm where a queen was merely a breeder and living symbol of her spouse's glorious reign. An iconic trendsetter whose styles were copied by prostitutes and aristocrats alike, Marie Antoinette was blamed for France's moral decay and financial bankruptcy, the blurring of

class lines and callousness toward the poor. When many of her aristocratic contemporaries donned tricolor ribbons and jewelry set with stones from the Bastille's demolished walls as pro-revolutionary emblems, a defiant Marie Antoinette reintroduced her most opulent jewels into her daily costume. The generously illustrated history by Weber (*Terror and Its Discontents*) posits that the queen's fashion obsession wasn't about narcissism and frivolity but self-assertion; even at the guillotine she controlled her image with a radiantly white ensemble. (Oct. 1) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Plenty of proof here, from an associate professor of French at Barnard (and author of *Terror and Its Discontents*, 2003), that clothes did indeed make the woman. Weber's thesis, made clear at the outset, is that the dauphine-soon-turned-queen's costumes became an accurate symbol of her individuality and personality versus political unrest. No minutiae is left unnoticed; for example, Marie Antoinette's struggles with the strictly mandated whalebone corset was the epitome of her initial lack of acceptance by the French court, whereas her creation of the three-foot-high pouffed hair-dress was emblematic of her preoccupation with fashion. One revolution in women's accoutrements, unfortunately, was swapped for another more deadly revolution in politics and freedom. Tales of intrigue dot every page (for instance, the long-standing feud with Louis XV's mistress, Comtesse du Barry), as do the foibles of commoners and royalty. Using bold and engaging prose, the author has created a whole new appreciation for academic writings. Barbara Jacobs Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Although the book is well written, it rather disappointed me. Since this book purported to focus on the fashion aspect and history surrounding Marie Antoinette, I was expecting more pictures of her dresses, shoes, apparel and jewelry for starters. Then the writer tends to spend much time on the politics of the times which has already been rehashed ad-nauseum in so many other scholarly works. I kept trying to skip bits so as to find out more about Marie Antoinette's clothing. I also was kept starved for more gossip and dishy parts (historically researched of course) regarding her relationship with Rose Bertin and others. The writer is, I believe, an Associate Professor of French (Barnard College) and a specialist in Eighteenth Century French literature and cultural history. I expected to learn all about the fine details of corsets, sleeves, stockings etc. as well as the fabric industry, innovations in clothmaking and dying techniques, and so much more, which would have

made this book a real gem and a unique book amongst so many other books about Marie Antoinette. It's funny but Antonia Fraser's book on Marie Antoinette "The Journey" is much more colourful and interesting and shares more anecdotes and little incidents regarding Marie Antoinette's styles and clothing issues...I also saw a youtube video of the author giving a lecture on her book and it was rather dull too. How odd, she didn't seem very passionate about the subject when she spoke and she refused to answer several of her audience's questions in a very cutting manner regarding Marie Antoinette's relationship with her husband. One does not get the impression the author actually enjoyed writing this book at all....So, for me, an avid reader of scholarly and/or interesting history book which concentrate on the human aspect of royalty, this book was a bit of a disappointment not because it wasn't well-researched or properly worded but because it seemed to miss the point entirely.

Okay, yes, I am well and truly aware that MA never said "Let them eat cake," and that it was from a princess 100 years before MA ever set foot in France. However, the spirit of that saying, how MA was accused of violating her subjects by blithely ignoring their economical state for the duration of her tenure as Queen of France, that I want to convey, even while knowing how she was in some ways innocent of their myriad of accusations. This book, Queen of Fashion, originally caught my eye when the description laid out a biography of MA by basing much of her actions, her rise and fall from power, and her eventual demise through her clothing choices and how clothes in the time of late 1700's France conveyed power, prestige, privilege, and most especially, monarchical control. From the sample alone, I encountered a wealth of information based on MA's early years in Austria, how she was raised and tutored in the ways of dance, music, history, and etiquette on to when her betrothal to the Dauphin of France was finalized before she made her way to the border between France and Austria for the exchange of this primped and proper archduchess over to the French envoys. The amount of money that Maria Teresa spent on her daughter before she ever left the Austrian borders, a trousseau that eclipsed all the dowries of her sisters, all to impress the French officials and nobility that would bear witness to the detailed, and yes very naked, transformation of this Austrian girl to French Dauphine, was mind-blowing. What I can only imagine as being close to millions of today's currency all for clothes, accessories, and a carriage to elevate MA into the French's idea of Bourbon luxury is incredible to me. And from there, the excess became even more stunning. Over the course of the book, the amount of clothing and extras that MA commissioned, who her stylists were, where she shopped and perused in the streets of Paris, and the masses of details and jewels and fads she created and unleashed on the court and upper nobility, all outlined

and embellished how MA was received at court when she first arrived (Louis XV found her quite charming and approved, the Dauphin was terrified of her, and many were just waiting for the Le Autrichienne to mess up so horribly she would be sent back to Vienna) and how the turbulent social and political climate of her time directed her actions from her entrance to France up until her death.-- How she used the glorious over-the-top grandeur of her ancestor the Sun King, and consumed millions of livres to furnish her body with clothes, jewels, shoes, ribbons, hats, coats, and coiffuers, to build up her royal "credit" to win court allies when she couldn't birth an heir due to her husband's delicate erectile condition and earning the ire of French citizens for her expenditures and amounting debt as well as the nickname "Madame Deficit" in the bargain.-- How she created unorthodox pseudo-pastoral styles of muslin and linen dresses called gaulles and wide farm hats tied with silk ribbons at her Petit Trianon in order to escape the exceedingly rigid, ridiculously complex etiquette of Versailles, and greatly offending the authentic peasants that starved for bread and flour that MA was constantly covering her hair with while also starving the established French silk industry with her imported fabrics.-- How she commissioned an entire wardrobe of royalist-colored dresses and coats when the revolution was metaphorically (and quite literally) beating down the doors of the palace to have her head, thus encouraging her captors that any promise of complicity and support of the changing political times was an absolute falsehood, condemning MA even further in their eyes as a born deceiver, an insatiable monster, and the cause of all their problems.-- And how, during the final hours of her life, MA chose to wear a pure white gown and cap on the ride to her execution, cementing into the minds of the revolutionaries that had come to watch her death, the vision of an unstained, almost deified, figure that graciously and full of dignity strode to her doom, not once allowing the pain and grief of her unfortunate life, her lost husband and friends, her children torn from her arms, and the cruel, malicious actions of biased, hateful jailers to be seen on her face as she confronted Madame Guillotine for the first and last time. I loved this book. LOVED it. I would gladly recommend this book to any history buff or MA lover. The amount of detail, research, and flow of information was perfect. I devoured it in days. Please, if you love MA or are a fan of France circa 1700s, get this book. It will not disappoint.

An excellent account of Marie Antoinette's sartorial passages -- very good historical writing about the doomed Queen of France who began as a very young Austrian princess. Her clothes, her elaborate wigs -- called -- which she had to sleep in because they were too elaborate to be redone the next day. Great illustrations accompany a riveting narrative. She was arrogant and over the top in many ways, but was taken down in a vicious manner -- her public trial was a spectacle of insult

and outrageous allegations (such as seducing her own young son) -- so extreme that the lower class women of Paris booed the prosecutors. Read it!

....the French ...we owe a lot to them ...they invented everything worth enjoying .... Horrific moments are described with such literary dignity ....your hairs will stand on end ... BRAVO to Miss Weber!!!!

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