Year 11 into 12 Bridging Work for History

One of the modules that you will be studying is called The Sun King: Louis XIV of France, 1643 to 1715. You probably don’t know much about this period so it is important to begin to prepare early so that we can hit the ground running in September.

This task is designed to give you some background on the years leading up to the start of our period in 1643. It will also tell us what you can do and how committed you are!

You will need to read the chapter called “Richelieu, 1622 – 1642” and use it do the tasks below (This is scanned into this folder – see me if you have any difficulty finding it) Richelieu was the chief minister of France during the reign of King Louis III. He worked hard to increase the power of the King. He faced a lot of opposition from powerful groups who did not want this – if the King increased his power, they lost some of theirs.

You will be able to read much of the chapter quite easily but there are some difficult words and phrases – no apologies for this as this is A Level! Use a dictionary or look it up in a reference book or website.

You will not need information from all the chapter but will need to find the pages that are relevant.

NOTE: the nobility/noles/magnates were powerful landowners and had titles such as Duke or Count. They include members of the royal family.

**TASKS**

1. Describe Richelieu’s character. (about a paragraph)
2. What were his aims? (a paragraph)
3. Describe 3 conspiracies by the nobles against Richelieu and the King. (about a side)
4. How serious was noble opposition to Richelieu? You will need to discuss both sides of this question and come to a judgement. (write about 2 sides of A4 paper)

GOOD LUCK! Mr Burgess
KEY THEME

| Richelieu, 1622-42 |

| CHAPTER 8 |

PRINCIPES OF THE FLEET. In April 1624, Marie de Medici, the queen mother, decided to intervene in the foreign policy of the French Republic. She believed that the French needed to take a more active role in European affairs. The queen mother's goal was to assert French influence on the continent and to strengthen the power of the French monarchy.

The queen mother's intervention in foreign affairs was a continuation of her previous efforts to assert French influence. She had already taken steps to increase French military strength and to strengthen the French navy. In April 1622, she had ordered the construction of four new ships, and by April 1624, three of these ships were ready for service. The queen mother's determination to assert French influence was reflected in her decision to take a more active role in foreign affairs.

The queen mother's intervention in foreign affairs was a response to the crisis in the Spanish Netherlands. The Spanish were launching a series of attacks on French possessions in the region, and the queen mother believed that she needed to take action to protect French interests. She had already sent troops to aid the Spanish, and in April 1624, she placed her son, Louis, on the throne of Spain.

The queen mother's intervention in foreign affairs was a reflection of her ambition and her desire to assert French influence on the continent. Her actions were a clear indication of her determination to protect French interests and to strengthen the power of the French monarchy.

ASSUMPTION OF HENRY IV? Why did the queen mother take more control after the death of Henry IV? The queen mother was the queen regent in the reign of her son, Louis XIII, and she played a major role in the government of France.

The queen mother was a strong and confident woman, and she was determined to assert French influence on the continent. She was also a shrewd and practical politician, and she was able to use her position to her advantage.

The queen mother's intervention in foreign affairs was a reflection of her ambition and her desire to assert French influence on the continent. Her actions were a clear indication of her determination to protect French interests and to strengthen the power of the French monarchy.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. What did the queen mother do after the death of Henry IV?
2. How did the queen mother assert French influence on the continent?
3. What were the queen mother's goals in foreign affairs?
4. What were the queen mother's accomplishments in foreign affairs?

Several Issues are Worth Noting from This Further:

1. The queen mother's intervention in foreign affairs was a reflection of her ambition and her desire to assert French influence on the continent.
2. The queen mother was a shrewd and practical politician, and she was able to use her position to her advantage.
3. The queen mother's intervention in foreign affairs was a clear indication of her determination to protect French interests and to strengthen the power of the French monarchy.
campaigned for Richelieu’s return to the royal council. Louis, although suspicious of the cardinal, was increasingly frustrated by the failure of his present ministers, Sillery and Puysegur, to assert French diplomatic rights over the Valtelline. Richelieu’s ambition and abilities were viewed in a positive light by the French king, who was eager to promote his prestige and dignity on the European stage. By August 1624, Richelieu had secured the disgrace of his last remaining rival, the surintendant (chief minister) La Vieuville, and his rise to power was complete. Richelieu could now begin to install his own supporters and dependants in key positions. Quick-witted, brilliant and politically astute Richelieu had a perfect understanding of courtly intrigue. Already we can see the makings of a political leader in Richelieu’s rise to power:

- patronage of Marie de Medici and the Estates General of 1614
- experience at court as foreign secretary under Concini
- peace brokering between mother and son 1619–20
- appointment as cardinal in 1622
- destruction of La Vieuville.

Richelieu was an effective political operator and he was more than ready for office.

Richelieu’s aims and objectives
Richelieu was concerned about how his actions and policies would be viewed by his contemporaries and also how he would be remembered in history. His *Political Testament* describes the values of absolute monarchy and good government. Doubt remains as to just when the Testament was written, although it is accepted to be near the end of the cardinal’s life. The Testament revolves around five key objectives:

- ruin the Huguenots
- humble the pride of great men
- bring subjects to their duty
- raise the name of the king abroad
- extend the authority of government.

The aims appear rather negative, as the first three are concerned with destruction rather than reform. While Richelieu’s aim was clear, there was no grand plan for the extension of royal authority. Richelieu was an opportunist introducing reforms when required. Furthermore, Richelieu recognised the weaknesses of royal power and used tried ideologies and methods to prompt a revival of monarchical strength. In this context Richelieu’s period of ministerial dominance ought to be seen as part of a process; a brilliant ministry but one that was evolutionary not revolutionary.

Consolidation of power
Above all else Richelieu recognised that the trust and affection of his king were crucial in the maintenance of power. The cardinal was careful to consult the king over important policy decisions and he played the king far more effectively than his ministerial predecessors in terms of judging when to consult him and how to sound him out over potentially contentious issues. The issue over which Richelieu was able to consolidate his power was that of royal succession. Thus far the marriage between Louis and Anne had provided no heirs and with the king’s health prone to bouts of fragility, courtiers began to speculate as to what might happen in the event of his death. According to Salic law the crown would revert to Gaston, the younger brother of Louis. In 1624, the marriage of Gaston became one of great political significance.

- Louis and Richelieu supported a marriage between Gaston and Marie de Bourbon Montpensier, a princess of the blood.
- Gaston himself along with his tutor Jean Baptiste d’Ornano favoured a foreign princess allowing him greater freedom and prestige.
- Anne of Austria and the Duchess of Chevreuse (Lynes’ widow) meanwhile wanted no marriage, jealous as they were of Gaston’s ability and ambition.

Chevreuse used her beauty and charms to unite a powerful faction including Condé behind their cause. Gaston and d’Ornano were forced to look for protection from provincial governors sympathetic to their cause and
in May 1626 Louis took Gaston’s actions as dangerous and potentially treasonable. D’Ornano was arrested and Gaston was married off to Marie de Montpensier. These were examples of Louis’ paranoia about the security of his crown. Richelieu used this turmoil to his advantage in that he:

- rid the court of any surviving pro-Luynes nobles
- consolidated his position as the protector of the king
- replaced d’Aligre with Michel de Marillac, a loyal follower, and also introduced the Marquis of Effiat, another trusted adviser
- had executed the Count of Chalais for conspiring with Gaston against the king. The Duchess of Cheveuse was driven into exile in Lorraine.

**The queen mother**

Between 1624 and 1630, France was ruled by the king, his mother and the cardinal. In November 1630, Louis was forced, against his will, to drop one of the trio. Tension had been growing for some time between the dévots group represented by Marie de Medici and the keeper of the seals, Michel de Marillac. One-time allies of Richelieu, the dévots now began to drift away from their former champion. The principal reasons for this were:

- After the successful siege of La Rochelle (see p. 113), Richelieu was less respectful to Marie de Medici and less eager to seek her advice.
- Marillac opposed Richelieu’s policy of armed intervention in Italy believing that the cardinal should root out heresy at home rather than fight Catholic Spain. Richelieu did not share their Counter-Reformation politics. The cardinal was a nationalist Catholic, who put the crown of France above all else.
- Marillac blamed Richelieu for the financial ruin of the crown, as every year since 1620 had seen a royal army raised and costly foreign adventures were reflected in increased taxation and loans.

By November 1630, matters had come to a head as Marie demanded Richelieu’s dismissal. She argued that Richelieu’s policies were unholy: he attacked fellow Catholics abroad but in the process weakened France. The Treaty of Regensburg (October 1630) between Emperor Ferdinand II and Louis promised potential peace and hinted that Marillac was gaining the upper hand over Richelieu.

**Day of the Dupes**

On 10 November 1630, a dramatic and furious showdown occurred between Louis and his mother at the Luxembourg Palace, resulting from Marie’s persistent calls for Richelieu’s removal. Richelieu sneaked into the room via a secret passageway only to be met with a tirade of abuse from Marie de Medici. Louis made his own departure to his hunting lodge at Versailles, ignoring Richelieu as he departed. All at court believed Marillac and Marie to have triumphed. Marillac prepared for a triumphant entry into the Luxembourg Palace while Richelieu prepared to leave for Le Havre where he was governor. Yet Louis valued his cardinal too highly to allow him to become the victim of faction. The king invited Richelieu to his lodge at Versailles and reassured him of his confidence in his abilities. Louis believed that Richelieu’s advice was more important than his mother’s and that Marillac was to blame for the problems that France was encountering. Richelieu’s fall never came, instead 10 November became known as the Day of the Dupes in recognition of the way in which the king fooled all into believing that he was willing to sacrifice his leading light, Richelieu was triumphant and the Day of the Dupes marks a significant turning point in the administration of the cardinal and the development of royal absolutism. All of the leading magnates were now under no illusions as to who was in control of policy at court. Richelieu could embark upon a period of ministerial absolutism in the name of the king and with his full backing.

**RELIGIOUS POLICY**

In 1621, France was once more on the verge of civil conflict. The Edict of Nantes had given legal recognition to the religious, political and military organisation of the
Huguenot communities but still many Protestants feared for the future of their faith:

- The edict left many royal offices open only to Catholics, while popular Catholic resentment of Huguenot rights of worship manifested itself in violence.
- Moreover, the Catholic Church was enjoying a revival in the seventeenth century. Louis XIII’s friendship with Spain further convinced many Huguenots that their days were numbered.

Huguenot nobles such as Rohan, Turenne and Bouillon were eager to increase their strength, and with over 200 strongholds and 20,000 men this was a distinct possibility. In 1617, the king decided to impose the edict of Nantes in the region of Béarn. This action provoked the Huguenots. A national assembly of Reformed churches met at La Rochelle in 1620. In response, royalist forces under Louis and Luynes set out southwards in 1621 with the aim of striking at specific Protestant strongholds and bringing the Huguenot nobility to the negotiating table.

Military action
Huguenot military strength under Rohan and Soubise was great and, despite a successful siege of St Jean d’Angély in June 1621, the following assault by royal armies on Montauban was called off in November after heavy casualties and a typhus epidemic. In 1622, the conflict resumed in the Huguenot heartland towards the west of France. In April 1622, the royalists inflicted a significant defeat on the Huguenots at Rie, a victory that was followed by the occupation of Guerfaye and a siege of Montpellier. The Peace of Montpellier that followed saw a dilution of Huguenot rights from the Edict of Nantes.

Two key issues need to be highlighted here in the context of Richelieu’s forthcoming religious policies:

- Protestant rebels were not questioning the authority of the crown as they had been in the late sixteenth century, but merely the crown’s interpretation of the edict of Nantes.
- The strength of La Rochelle as a Huguenot stronghold was clear for all to see. Rich in commerce and tied closely with the Dutch Calvinists, La Rochelle was the headquarters of Huguenot operations.

Richelieu and the Huguenots
Richelieu was a zealous Catholic but he believed first and foremost in the power of the French crown and he was interested only in the good of the monarchy. With regard to the Huguenots, Richelieu believed that he should, as he put it in his Political Testament, ‘ruin the Huguenot party’.

In January 1625, Soubise, a leading Huguenot nobleman, seized the islands of Rie and Oléron which offered important access routes into La Rochelle. Richelieu collected a major fleet and sent a royal army to expel Soubise from his refuge. A truce was agreed, brokered by the English (Louis’ sister Henrietta Maria had married Charles, Prince of Wales), but suspicion remained high on both sides. Yet English goodwill did not last long and the Duke of Buckingham saw an opportunity to assist the Protestants of La Rochelle.

Officially Richelieu’s rebuilding of the French navy was the reason for the breakdown in Anglo-French relations and renewed English piracy in the Channel did little to help. France responded by impounding over 200 English vessels in the port of Bordeaux in 1627. In July 1627, over 80 English ships arrived in La Rochelle under Buckingham to lead an open revolt against Louis XIII. La Rochelle was besieged under the supervision of Richelieu and Louis. In November, the English fleet retreated having suffered serious losses in a skirmish off the island of Rie. Buckingham promised another fleet in the new year but a hastily constructed embarkment over 1.5 km long blocked the way and the English fleet was warded off. The subsequent assassination of Buckingham by a fanatic put paid to any further hopes of English assistance and La Rochelle was left to fend for itself. Famine and disease ripped through the city and on 29 October 1628 the gates were opened to the royal troops. Amnesty was granted to the rebels by a triumphant Louis who entered the city on 1 November 1628. Credit for the triumph went to Richelieu who had remained in personal control of the siege. The enterprise had been expensive and risky, yet
the outcome greatly benefited the cardinal’s political standing.

The Edict of Grace, 1629
In June 1629, the king issued the Grace of Alais (the Edict of Grace). The 1598 edict was renewed in religious and judicial terms but the military and political terms were suppressed. The Huguenot military organisation was to be dismantled, fortresses and strongholds demolished and Catholic worship revived wherever it had formerly existed. No more state finance was to be used for maintaining Protestant garrisons or educating Protestant clergy. The Edict of Grace was important:

- Henry IV had always meant for the concessions to the Huguenots in the royal brevets to be temporary, and now through force they had come to an end.
- The Huguenot state within a state was finished although Protestant worship had not been outlawed.
- The Huguenots remained a separate order in France, retaining their churches and synods, but all of their political and military influence had been shattered.

The campaign against the Huguenots, culminating in the Edict of Grace, should be viewed in the overall context of Richelieu’s centralisation of government. The Atlantic coast was now once more under strict royal control. The cycle of religious war ended in 1629 and the restructured Edict of Nantes kept the peace for the next 30 years.

ROYAL ABSOLUTISM

Richelieu’s reforms
The administration of Cardinal Richelieu was of crucial importance in the development of royal absolutism in France. Yet centralising, administrative reforms were not part of a grand design, rather they were introduced when required. Richelieu’s reforms were not particularly innovative, but they were more wide-reaching and systematic than those of his predecessors:

- Richelieu recognised the weakness of royal power and

used tried and tested means of centralisation to revive the authority of the crown.
- Richelieu effectively practised ministerial absolutism in the name of the king.
- Louis was fully aware of what Richelieu was attempting to achieve and the king gave his minister authority to carry out reform in his name.
- The achievements of Richelieu can be seen by 1661 after Mazarin had overcome the Fronde and Louis XIV felt sufficiently confident to take over full control of his kingdom. Louis XIV owed his security and power to the work carried out by Richelieu.

From 1630, Richelieu strengthened the power of the crown by clarifying the job of the bureaucracy. The trend after this date was towards a more streamlined conciliar system, with more emphasis being laid upon the role of key ministers in the conseil d’en haut. Contact with the provinces was maintained by the conseil des dépêches, and later increased through the role of intendants. Richelieu maintained the trend of reducing the size of crucial decision-making bodies.

Richelieu and the intendants
Richelieu not only diluted the power of the provincial governors but threatened them with dismissal if they resisted royal absolutism. By the end of Richelieu’s administration, twelve out of sixteen governors had been replaced. The powers that had traditionally rested with the governors gradually passed over to the intendants.

The key to understanding intendants like much else in Richelieu’s administration is the way in which their role became more defined and more important:

- By 1637, these officials, regarded still as temporary in order to enhance royal authority, had been established throughout the kingdom.
- Intendants controlled provincial subdivisions known as généralités, and their responsibilities were further increased by Richelieu’s successor Mazarin who gave them authority in the realm of tax assessment. The rise of the intendants combined with the control of the army
Richelieu had raised the strength of the French army to 100,000 by 1634, a figure which doubled by 1640) were the twin instruments by which royal authority was bolstered under Richelieu.

Richelieu’s network of clients and friends was enormous and all the more significant because it extended beyond the court. Richelieu amassed governorships of towns and provinces for himself and his family. He also purchased large amounts of land and established a very strong political foothold as a consequence throughout Brittany, Anjou, Poitou and Saintonge. Throughout western France, Richelieu became hugely influential through his direct personal authority and patronage.

Financial policy, 1620s
Having chosen Richelieu over Marie de Medici and Marillac, Louis was committed to a policy of war and glory. The consequences were increased taxation and financial crisis. On top of this Richelieu’s financial policies in peacetime were far from successful:

- During a period of domestic peace in 1626, he proposed the abolition of venality and a reduction in the taille.
- Richelieu put forward the concept of a standing army, numbering over 18,000 men to be paid for and maintained by all the provinces of France. He also persuaded the assembly of notables to support an increase in the size of the navy and the creation of trading companies.
- Richelieu’s vision of a centralised French state centred on a thriving mercantile class consisting of nobles who were willing to invest heavily in trade and commerce. A scheme to repurchase ex-crown lands from the nobility over a six-year period failed to come to fruition as the assembly of notables extended the period to sixteen years and in doing so made it redundant. The plan to make all provinces responsible for the provision and upkeep of an army similarly met resistance, and in the end it was the treasury that paid over two-thirds of the bill.

Resistance to financial policies, 1630s
In the 1630s, the focus of Richelieu’s fiscal programme changed as the pressures of war served to double expenditure. Although the sale of offices declined in this period it was due to a fall in demand rather than a specific policy. The taille in 1643 was two and a half times what it had been during the reign of Henry IV. There was resistance to the policies:

- Resistance to taxation emerged from the estates of Normandy in 1638, as the crown sought to abolish local privileges and exemptions concerning the taille.
- Special levies and forced loans were necessary but equally unpopular. In the spring of 1636, there was a popular uprising by peasants calling themselves croquants in Angouleme that rapidly spread throughout south-west France. Troops had to be withdrawn from the front to meet the challenge and it was clear that, as the government attempted to increase revenue, disorder was always close at hand.
- In 1639, an insurrection consisting of 20,000 peasants took place in Normandy. The revolt of the Nu-Pieds

Richelieu’s financial policies
It is difficult to view Richelieu’s financial policies as a success given the misery that they caused the population of France. However, such hardships were not entirely the fault of Richelieu: harvests were poor and there was a shortage of bullion. There are three major points to make about Richelieu’s fiscal policies:

- The demands of war after 1630 provoked intensive fiscalism that extended taxation and made Richelieu along with his financial ministers (the Marquis of Effiat and Claude Bullion) look for new means of raising money.
- Popular disorder and peasant insurrection were common in the 1630s as a consequence of fiscal demands.
- Reform was limited and generally unsuccessful, particularly with regard to trade and commerce. Social values and local privileges impeded Richelieu’s vision of a French state.
(the barefooted) was in reaction to Richelieu’s attempt to extend the gabelle to a previously exempt region. Local gentry and clergy joined the revolt and once again the royal army had to fight long and hard to bring the area under the control of the crown. The royal order was revoked in the face of such hostility, although the rebels were punished harshly. Normandy was put under martial law and the population terrorised by royal troops. Summary judgements and mass executions highlighted Richelieu’s harsh and repressive sense of justice.

- Also in 1639 Richelieu had abolished the taille in the towns, replacing it with a 5 per cent sales tax. Again fierce resistance made it entirely unworkable, and soon after Richelieu’s death the tax was abolished, although in practice it had died long before the cardinal.

CONSPIRACIES OF THE NOBILITY

While Richelieu maintained the trust of the king, he was unchallenged in his position as supreme statesman of the kingdom. Yet, danger existed from those who felt excluded from court, and from those who resented the patronage and power of the cardinal himself. Money from Madrid and Brussels was always forthcoming to fund rebellions against the French king. While Richelieu’s clientele network was great and vast, those who did not benefit from the cardinal’s patronage turned to violence. Until 1638, Richelieu’s opponents looked to Gaston, heir to the throne, and the younger brother of the king:

- The Day of the Dupes confirmed Richelieu’s rise to power, and the fall of Marillac. Marie survived in exile and Gaston too left court in 1631 to begin a series of conspiracies and rebellions.
- In 1632, Henry de Montmorency raised an army in reaction to the extension of taxation in Languedoc, a pays d’étais province. Partly a rebellion against centralisation and partly one of noble discontent, it ultimately failed. Gaston was implicated again as he sought to unite the nobility against Richelieu. Captured at Castelnaudary, Montmorency was executed in Toulouse.
- Gaston once more survived and after a brief reconciliation he found another noble ally in the count of Soissons, another prince of the blood. Like Montmorency, Soissons was an independent noble of the sword who fronted a plot to overthrow the government. The Soissons conspiracy reached its peak in 1641 and was perhaps the most serious threat to Louis’ throne. Only the death of Soissons on the battlefield of La Marfée as his troops closed in on victory, thwarted his plans.
- As Spanish power in Europe began to dwindle in 1639–40, Philip IV and his statesman Olivares increasingly viewed noble malcontents in France as a way of weakening the French crown. Already in 1637 Anne of Austria had been discovered carrying out secret correspondence with her Spanish relatives, and her reputation was only partly restored by the birth of Louis, the Dauphin, in 1638.

Cinq Mars

The last great anti-Richelieu conspiracy occurred in 1642, and was partly of his own making. In a bid to counter the king’s obsession with Mlle de La Fayette, Richelieu introduced to court a favourite of his own, the Marquis of Cinq Mars. Louis and Cinq Mars soon became friends as Richelieu had hoped; the idea being that the cardinal could keep a close watch on the king, maintain his trust and good relations with Louis through the 17-year-old marquis. However, Richelieu made a major miscalculation in the character of Cinq Mars in that he soon became uncontrollable and keen to further his own political ambitions. Richelieu became a rival to Cinq Mars, and by 1642 Cinq Mars became the centre of a conspiracy to assassinate the cardinal:

- In March 1642, the conspirators made a secret treaty with Spain in a plot to persuade Louis to switch to a pro-Spanish dévou policy through an invasion fronted by Gaston. Richelieu would be assassinated and France would abandon its Protestant allies.
- Richelieu discovered the plot and personally interrogated François Auguste de Thou, a friend of Cinq Mars.
The type of correspondence that Cinq Mars had been involved in with Olivares was wholly inappropriate and reasonable. Cinq Mars was arrested and in September 1642 he was executed.

By threatening resignation Richelieu forced the king to remove all remaining associates of the young marquis and obtained a royal assurance not to take advice from anyone not on the royal council.

**Richelieu and the nobility**

We can make five conclusions about the seriousness of noble conspiracies against Richelieu:

- **Serious conspiracies were concentrated in the periods 1626–2 and 1641–2.** Outside these periods fear of the government (note here the treatment of Chalais, Montmorency and Cinq Mars) and Richelieu's clientele network kept explicit noble discontent to a minimum.

- **The most serious threat to Richelieu's power probably came from the count of Soissons whose victory at La Marfée in eastern France may have succeeded in toppling the cardinal had the former not died on the battlefield.**

- **Opponents of the regime were treated harshly, no matter their status or previous service to the crown.** Such practice acted as a deterrent to other malcontents. The lack of reaction to such repression demonstrates the disunity of opposition. Territorial magnates were independent in their power base and in their opposition.

- **Richelieu maintained the trust and respect of the king throughout this period, and in many ways noble opposition was inevitable.** The defeat of men such as Montmorency strengthened the cardinal's position at court further. Richelieu worked hard to maintain his privileged position at court and recognised that his power ultimately rested with Louis.

- **Spain consistently funded attempts to overthrow Richelieu in an attempt to undermine Louis and latterly attain a favourable peace settlement.** Richelieu's foreign policy was consistently anti-Spanish after 1630, and this created resentment among the décrets and unpopularity on the ground because of increased taxation.

**KEY ISSUE**

Richelieu's epitaph

Richelieu addressed the king from his deathbed thus, "I have the consolation of leaving your kingdom in the highest degree of glory and of reputation which it has ever had and all your enemies beaten and humiliated."

However, in November 1642 Richelieu fell ill, and on 4 December he died. In his will Richelieu left a vast fortune, totalling 22.5 million livres and to the king he bequeathed the Palais Cardinal along with his epitaph addressed to his majesty.

**SUMMARY QUESTIONS**

1. How serious was noble opposition to Richelieu?

2. How far was Richelieu able to strengthen the majority of the French crown?

3. To what extent did Richelieu fulfil the aims of his Political Testament?