

MFAH **Rienzi** Bastille Day Quiz

Brush up on your French history, art, and culture with this quiz featuring Rienzi's decorative art objects.

Rienzi is the MFAH house museum for European decorative arts. Originally the home of arts patrons Carroll Sterling Masterson and Harris Masterson III, Rienzi comprises a remarkable art collection, house, and gardens. For more than 40 years, the Mastersons collected European decorative arts, paintings, furnishings, and porcelain made from the 17th to mid-19th centuries.



1. This official mistress, also known as the *maîtresse-en-titre*, of King Louis XV had a rocky relationship with young Queen Marie Antoinette. An elderly victim of the guillotine, the mistress famously asked her executioner, "You are going to hurt me! Why?" Rienzi's bust of this art patron and beauty (shown at left) is a rare example of Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory's portrait busts made in the 1770s.

- a. Émilie du Châtelet
- b. Marie-Jeanne Bécu, later Comtesse du Barry
- c. Simone de Beauvoir
- d. Catherine Monvoisin (La Voisin)



2. The Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory is best known for its fine porcelains in exquisite color palettes. This plate, with scenes from Roman mythology and ancient cameos around its perimeter, features the signature Sèvres color *bleu céleste*. Few museums have examples from the 800-piece dinner service commissioned by this Russian empress.

- a. Valentina Tereshkova
- b. Anastasia Nikolaevna of Russia
- c. Catherine II, the Great
- d. Eudoxia Feodorovna Lopukhina



3. In 1685 the Edict of Nantes, which had granted French Protestants the right to practice their religion freely, was revoked in France. A number of artisans and craftsmen, like silversmiths Pierre Platel and Paul de Lamerie, left France and settled in England where they could openly worship without reprisals from the authorities. Paul Crespin, the maker of the two Rococo sauceboats featured at Rienzi, was the English-born child of two of these refugees referred to by this name.

- a. Les Huguenots
- b. Les Protestants
- c. Les Rebelles
- d. Les Réfugiés



4. France and England engaged in a series of wars in the 18th and 19th centuries. James Northcote's portrait *Captain Peter Hawker of the 14th Light Dragoons* captures a serene British aristocratic soldier while a battle rages in the background during the Peninsular Campaign (1807–14) that was fought mainly in Spain and Portugal. This series of wars is named after the French general and later emperor of France who set out to conquer Europe until his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

- a. Charles de Gaulle
- b. John Vernou Bouvier III
- c. Ferdinand Foch
- d. Napoleon Bonaparte



5. English aristocrats admired French designs and employed many French craftsmen to make furnishings for their stylish townhomes and colossal country houses in England. François Hervé, an émigré French “cabriole chairmaker” is believed to have been the maker of the two *bergères* chairs gracing the elegant Rienzi Drawing Room. Originally made for the Albert Edward John, 7th Earl Spencer, they were in the inventory of Althorp, the family home of this late Princess of Wales.

- a. Joan, Countess of Kent
- b. Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha
- c. Princess Diana
- d. Princess Mary of Teck

Answers

See lower right corner.

If you answered 4–5 correctly

Merveilleux, you know your French history!

If you answered 2–3 correctly

Bon essai, a little more study and you will be a French bon vivant.

If you answered 1 correctly

Domage, maybe you are more of an Anglophile than Francophile.

Manufactured by Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory, after Augustin Pajou, *Bust of Madame du Barry* (detail), soft-paste porcelain, c. 1771–73, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Rienzi Collection, museum purchase funded in memory of Caroline Wiess Law by The Brown Foundation, Inc., Isla and Tommy Reckling, Mrs. James Anderson, Jr., James A. Elkins, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. J. Cooke Wilson, Jr., Faye Sarofim, James and Elise Reckling, Mr. and Mrs. A. Leslie Ballard, Jr., Mrs. Fred T. Couper, Jr., Mary Criner Blake, Alfredo and Celina Hellmund Brener, Rosslyn and Marshall Crawford, Ellen and Ed Randall III, Mr. and Mrs. Cliffe Reckling, Wilhelmina and Ed Smith, Jr., Mrs. Harold Stream, Jr., Sue and Bill Whitfield, Isabel B. Wilson, Jas A. Gundry, Betty Lou and John Carter, Jr., Joan and Irvin L. Levy, Harry Masterson IV, Alice C. Simkins, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas D. Anderson, Kitty Neuhaus, Buddy English, Jr., Fran Fauntleroy, Katherine S. and George E. Howe, Carolyn and Harry Hudson, Mrs. Joseph C. Hutcheson III, Barbara and John Riddell, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Wickman, and Caroline Rotan, 2004.819. / Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory, *Dinner Plate from the “Empress Catherine” Service*, 1778, soft-paste porcelain, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Rienzi Collection, museum purchase funded by the Rienzi Society, 2002.39. / Paul Crespin, *Pair of Sauceboats*, 1752–53, sterling silver, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Rienzi Collection, museum purchase funded by the Rienzi Society, Isla and Tommy Reckling, Windi and David Grimes, Hugh E. McGee, Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Tate, and Meg Goodman and Mike Bonini, 2011.480.1,.2. / James Northcote, *Captain Peter Hawker of the 14th Light Dragoons* (detail), 1812, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Rienzi Collection, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harris Masterson III, 96.1123. / Attributed to François Hervé, possibly designed by Guillaume Gaubert, probably supplied by Henry Holland, *Pair of Bergères*, c. 1791, giltwood, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Rienzi Collection, museum purchase funded by the Rienzi Society, 2014.189.1–2.

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