The King and Queen:
1. The King - Louis XVI

Some historians argue that the French Revolution happened because the King and the Queen were hopeless. For example, on the day the Bastille fell, Louis made a one word entry in his diary – "rien" ("nothing")! In this lesson we will learn more about the King and Queen and decide how far we agree with this idea.

Source A: Three pictures of the King, produced at the time.

Source B
"Amongst the King's furnishings was a 'lit de justice' – a bed from which he was at liberty to pass any law without contradiction. Louis XVI infuriated his advisers on one occasion by retiring to bed to recite a new law, then, in front of hundreds of magistrates and peers, in a gesture worthy of Homer Simpson, falling asleep" – *the historian Mark Steel, in his book "Vive La Revolution"*

Source B
"The king eats four cutlets, a fried chicken, six eggs in gravy and a slice of ham and drinks a bottle and a half of champagne; he gets dressed, leaves for the hunt, and returns to dine with an incredible appetite" - *An account by one of Louis' courtiers*

Source C
"One can see the King spending his afternoons in his office watching people arriving at his palace of Versailles through his telescope. He often occupies himself sweeping up or knocking in nails…he has a sturdy enough intelligence, simple tastes, an honest heart and a true soul. But on the other hand he has a tendency for indecisiveness and a feeble will" - *An account by the Abbot of Veri*

Source D
"Louis XVI was an awkward, clumsy man who had a good heart but was able to relate on a personal level with very few. He often appeared unfeeling and gruff. He was insecure and seems to have disliked being King of France. When one of his ministers resigned, he was heard to remark, 'Why can't I resign too?' He often said his dream was to become a locksmith" - *from www.historywiz.com*

Source E
"He is an honest man and wishes really to do good, but he has not either genius or education to show the way towards the good which he desires" - *The American Ambassador in France*

Source F
"He was really good and tender hearted. You could never speak to him of disasters or accidents, without people seeing a look of compassion come over his face, yet his replies were often hard, his manner unfeeling" - *One of Louis' Ministers*

Source G
He was so short-sighted that he could not recognise anyone at a distance of more than three paces. He was stout, about five foot six inches tall, square shouldered and with the worst possible bearing. He looked like some peasant shambling along behind his plough" – *a Lady-in-Waiting*

Questions
1. Look at the three pictures.
(a) What is the message of the first two pictures?
(b) Does the third picture prove that they are lying?
2. Go through the sources and highlight all of his bad points in one colour, all of his good points in another.
3. In your books, list his 5 best qualities in one column, and his 5 worst in another. Put them in order of importance (number 1 being the most important).
3. Here are four statements about Louis:
"A good king, but a bad man"
"A bad king, but a good man"
"A bad king and a bad man"
"A good king and a good man"
Which one do you agree with most? Explain your answer carefully. Your teacher may wish to take a classroom vote at the end.