

Testing a Hypothesis Using Maps

In the seventeenth century, many French peasants lived in extreme poverty, while others managed to get by. There were reasons for this, some of them **social** and some **geographic**. In this Guidebook, you will look more closely at the link between geography and the economic status of the peasants.

France has many surface land features, as shown in Figure 3-1. One of the most fertile areas is the northwest, especially the Paris Basin, where wheat and rye are grown. It has been estimated that a seventeenth-century French family would have needed approximately 2 hectares of land to provide enough food for themselves, pay all the required taxes and rents, and save enough seed for sowing the next year.

Orchard and dairy farming took place in pockets around the country. If peasants lived in the south of France or in the Alsace region, they might grow grapes for wine. Wine was an important **cash crop**. Grapes for wine thrive on the sunny slopes of hillsides in sandy, chalky soil. Deep, rich valley soils result in poor wine.

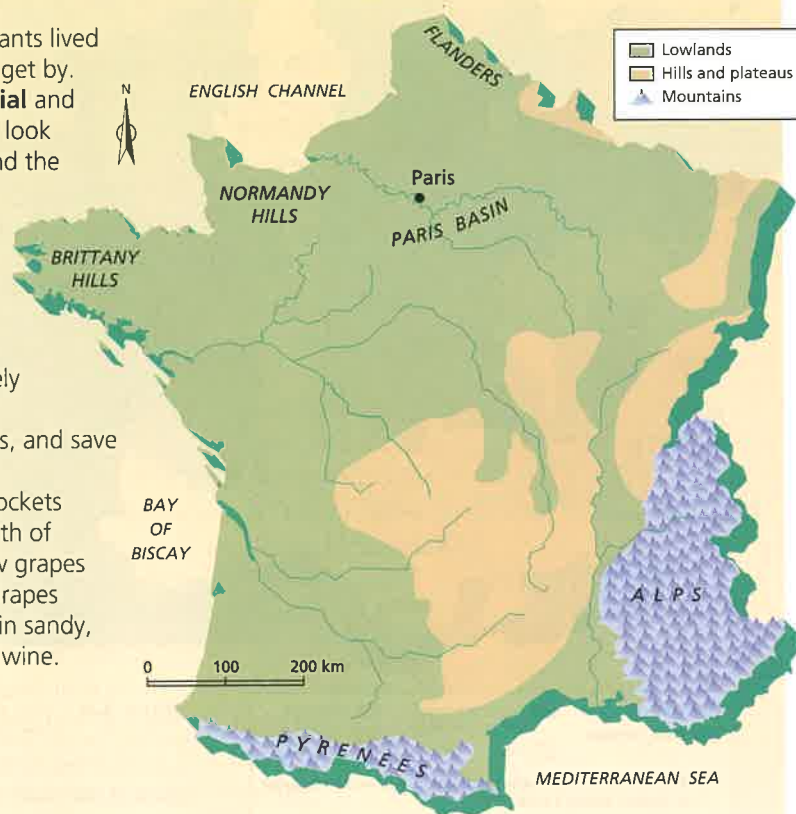


Figure 3-1 France's important physical features



Figure 3-2 France's agricultural products by district

Peasants in wine-producing regions were extremely busy, tending and pruning the vines, and harvesting the grapes during the wine-making season of October and November. Men and women picked the grapes and women carried the baskets of fruit to the manor castle. Because good grape-growing land is stony, peasants in those regions grew mostly grapes and depended less on animals or other crops.

Now consider who might have been better off in seventeenth-century France—a farmer living in the Paris Basin, or a farmer from the busy wine-producing valley of Burgundy? Reread the information above and look at Figures 3-1 to 3-4 before you proceed to the next section.

social reasons: reasons that relate to the society in which people live

geographic reasons: reasons that relate to the physical location in which people live

cash crop: a crop that is grown for export, not to feed the population

continued

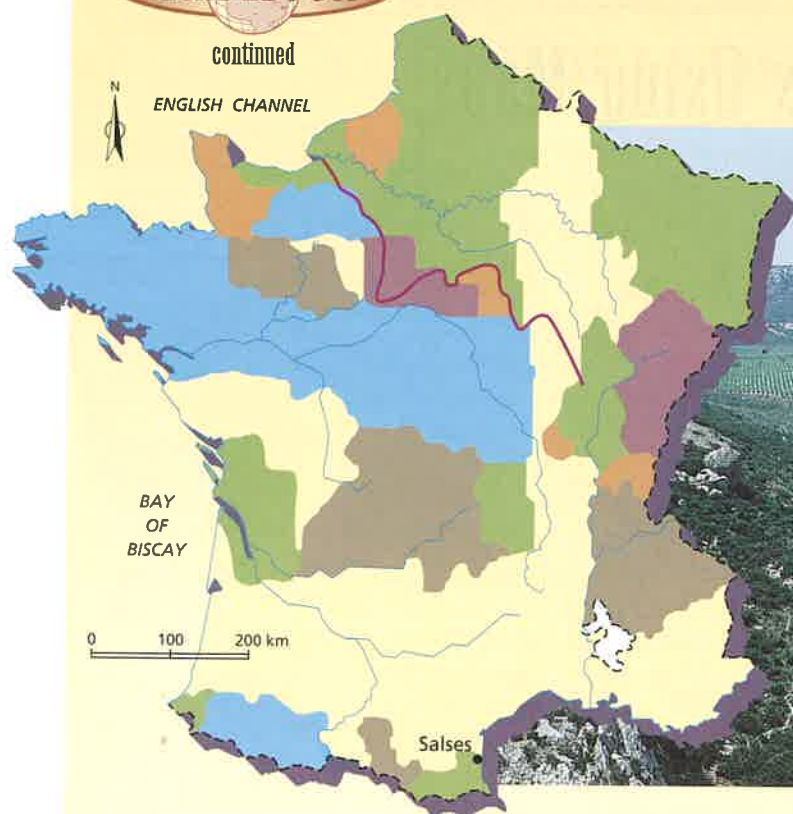


Figure 3-3 A vineyard near the southern town of Salses

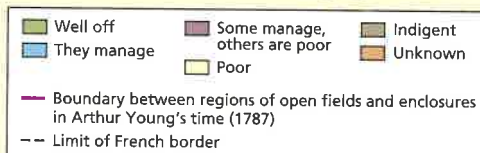


Figure 3-4 Living standards of provincial populations in seventeenth-century France. This map shows the levels of wealth in the different regions of France. Notice that living standards were highest on the flat plains at the lower reaches of major northern rivers.

YOUR TURN

- Compare Figure 3-1, a map of France's physical features, with Figure 3-2, a map of France's agricultural products by district. Then compare both figures with Figure 3-4, a map that shows the standard of living in various regions of France during the seventeenth century.
 - What products were grown in the poorest regions of France? Give some reasons why farmers in these regions were poor, referring to the text and maps for supporting reasons.
- Make a list of the conditions that might have enabled farmers to support themselves comfortably.
- With a partner, develop a hypothesis that could explain why some French farmers were relatively well-off while others were very poor. A hypothesis

is a proposed answer, based on actual evidence, to a question. Refer as well to the list you created by answering question 2.

- Can you support your hypothesis using the materials in this feature? Remember that in order to support your hypothesis, you must be able to say why something occurred with a good defence of certainty.
- With a partner, select the best statement:
 - ◆ Our hypothesis has been supported. It is unlikely that another reason could have caused this difference in income.
 - ◆ Our hypothesis cannot be discarded. There is some evidence that this reason caused the difference in income.
 - ◆ Our hypothesis must be modified or thrown out because other reasons for the disparity in income are evident.