

AIM: Was Napoleon a friend or foe of the French Revolution?

DO NOW: Please answer the question in the space provided on your Notes Sheet.

Q: What were some of the goals of the French Revolution?

Q1: Who was Napoleon Bonaparte? How did he rise to power?

Napoleon Bonaparte was born in 1769 on the island of Corsica. In 1785, at the age of 16, he finished military school and became a lieutenant in the artillery. In October 1795, fate handed the young officer a chance for glory. When royalist rebels marched on the National Convention, a government official told Napoleon to defend the delegates. Napoleon's gunners greeted the thousands of royalists with a cannonade. Within minutes, the attackers fled in panic. Napoleon became a hero and was hailed as the savior of the French republic.

In 1796, the Directory appointed Napoleon to lead an army against Austria and the Kingdom of Sardinia. Crossing the Alps, he swept into Italy and won a series of victories. A popular general by 1799, Napoleon helped overthrow the weak Directory in a **coup d'état**, or revolt by military leaders to overthrow a government. At first, Napoleon pretended to be the chosen leader of a free republic. In 1800, a vote of the people approved a new constitution, the fourth in eight years. The constitution gave all real power to Napoleon as first consul.



Q2: Describe some of the reforms that Napoleon brought to France.

Napoleon's first task was to get the economy on a solid footing. He set up a fairer taxation system and established a national banking system. Napoleon also took steps to end corruption and inefficiency in government. He dismissed corrupt officials and set up government-run public schools called **lycees** to provide the government with trained officials. Graduates were appointed to public office on the basis of merit rather than family connections. He also signed a **concordat** (agreement) with the Pope, recognizing the influence of the church but rejecting church control in national affairs. This gained Napoleon the support of the church as well as the majority of the French people.



Napoleon thought that his greatest work was his comprehensive system of laws, known as the **Napoleonic Code**. The Code made all citizens equal before the law. It provided for trial by jury and religious freedom. Because of these reforms, the people of France approved of Napoleon even though he was a dictator. He gave them order, stability, and the kind of equality that the Revolution had called for. However, the Napoleonic Code actually limited freedom of speech and of the press.

In 1804, Napoleon decided to make himself emperor, and the French voters supported him. On December 2, 1804, Napoleon walked down the aisle of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. The pope waited for him with a glittering crown. As thousands watched the new emperor took the crown from the Pope and placed it on his own head. With this arrogant gesture, Napoleon signaled that he was more powerful than the church, which had traditionally crowned the rulers of France.

Q3: How did Napoleon create an empire?

Shortly after Napoleon took control of the government, he defeated Austria and made peace with Britain. But in 1803, the treaty with Britain fell apart. Britain persuaded Austria, Russia, Sweden, and Naples to renew the fight against France. The resulting battles are known as the Napoleonic Wars.

In these wars, Napoleon showed his military genius by leading his armies to victories over Austria, Russia, and Prussia. All of Italy, except for areas ruled by the pope, came under Napoleon's control. So did the Netherlands. He abolished the Holy Roman Empire, and grouped most of the German states together in the Confederation of the Rhine. By 1812, the only areas of Europe free from Napoleon's control were Britain, Portugal, Sweden, and the Ottoman Empire. In addition to the lands of the French Empire, Napoleon also controlled numerous supposedly independent countries. The rulers of these countries were Napoleon's puppets; some, in fact, were members of his family. Furthermore, other powerful countries were loosely attached to Napoleon's empire through alliances. Although not totally under Napoleon's control, they were easily manipulated by threats of military action.



Q4: Describe the reasons for Napoleon's downfall.

Napoleon's own personality proved to be the greatest danger to the future of his empire. "I love power," he once said, "as a musician loves his violin." In his efforts to extend the French Empire, Napoleon made three disastrous misjudgments.

In November 1806, Napoleon ordered a **blockade** to prevent all trade and communication between Great Britain and other European nations. Unfortunately, the blockade weakened British trade but did not destroy it. In addition, Britain responded with its own blockade. This weakened the economies of France and other land under Napoleon's control. In 1808, Napoleon sent an army through Spain to invade Portugal. When Spanish towns rioted in protest, Napoleon deposed the Spanish king and put his brother Joseph on the throne. This move outraged the Spanish. For five years, bands of Spanish fighters, known as **guerillas**, struck at French armies in Spain. The British sent troops to aid the rebels. Napoleon lost about 300,000 men during this **Peninsular War**. Another factor was Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. As Napoleon's armies invaded from the west, the Russians retreated eastward. The "scorched earth" policy of the Russians, in which they burned crops and villages as they retreated, left the French troops hungry and cold. Most of Napoleon's army was lost during the long Russian winter.

Most people in conquered states looked on Napoleon's armies as foreign oppressors. Inspired by nationalism, people across Europe revolted against French rule. An alliance of Russia, Britain, Austria, and Prussia defeated Napoleon in 1814, forcing him to step down. Napoleon returned to power in 1815, but the British and Prussians defeated him at the decisive **Battle of Waterloo**. This battle ended Napoleon's reign, and he lived the rest of his life in exile.

Q5: Explain the quote from Napoleon. Do you agree with him? Why/why not?

"Such work as mine is not done twice in a century... I have saved the Revolution as it lay dying. I have cleansed it of its crimes, and have held it up to the people shining with fame. I have inspired France and Europe with new ideas that will never be forgotten."

– Napoleon at St. Helena