

# Napoléon Bonaparte



Napoleon's father, Carlo Buonaparte, was Corsica's representative to the court of Louis XVI of France.



Napoleon Bonaparte, aged 23, Lieutenant-Colonel of a battalion of Corsican Republican volunteers

Napoléon was born in 1769 in Corsica. His family was not rich, but Napoléon was talented and won a scholarship to a famous military school.



*Napoleon Bonaparte at the Royal Artillery School in Auxonne*  
François Flameng

Napoléon was commissioned as a lieutenant in the French army, but he was not popular with his fellow officers.

Napoléon read what French philosophers had to say about reason and studied famous military campaigns.

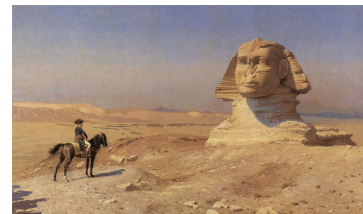
Napoléon became a captain in 1792 and only two years later, at age 24, the Committee of Public Safety made him a brigadier general.

## Napoléon's Early Successes



*A Whiff of Grapeshot* - Felicien von Myrbach

In 1797 Napoléon returned to France a military hero. He knew the French could not successfully invade Britain, so he suggested striking indirectly at them by taking Egypt.



*Napoleon Bonaparte Before the Sphinx*  
by Jean-Léon Gérôme

By 1799, when the British defeated the French naval forces supporting Napoléon's army in Egypt, he returned to Paris and took part in the coup d'état that overthrew the Directory.

Napoléon became "First Consul" and appointed officials, controlled the army, conducted foreign affairs, and influenced the legislature. In 1802 Napoléon was named "Consul For Life."

Two years later he crowned himself Emperor Napoléon I.



*Bonaparte, First Consul*  
by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres

## Napoléon's Domestic Policies

In 1801 Napoléon came to an agreement with the pope: Catholicism would be recognized as the majority religion of France if the pope would not ask for the return of church lands seized in the revolution.

With this agreement, the Catholic Church was no longer an enemy of the French government.

Napoléon placed the French educational system under the control of the federal government and created lycees, universities, and technical schools.

He created the Bank of France and required every French citizen to pay taxes.

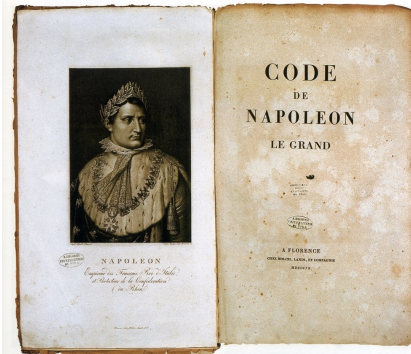
*Napoleon Crossing the Alps*  
by Jacques-Louis David, 1805



## The Napoléonic Code

Before the revolution, France had almost 300 different legal systems. In 1804 Napoléon condensed these into seven law codes.

The most important was the Civil Code, or Napoléonic Code, which preserved equality of all citizens, the right of the individual to choose a profession, religious toleration, and the abolition of serfdom.



During the revolution, women had gained new rights.

The Civil Code undid these laws.

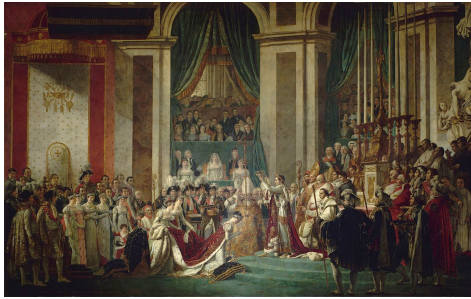
Women were legally “less equal than men:”  
all their property belonged to their husbands

they could not testify in court

it became more difficult for them to get a divorce



# Napoléon Builds An Empire



The Coronation of Napoleon by Jacques-Louis David

When Napoléon became consul in 1799, France was at war with a European coalition. In 1802, he signed a peace treaty, but war broke out with Britain again in 1803 and Britain was soon joined by Austria, Russia, Sweden, and Prussia. Napoléon's Grand Army defeated the Austrian, Prussian, and Russian armies.

Napoléon's Grand Empire was composed of three major parts:

the French Empire extending to the Rhine in the east and including the western half of Italy north of Rome dependent states, which were kingdoms in Spain, Holland, and Italy and the Swiss Republic, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and several German states allied states, or countries defeated by Napoléon and then forced to join his side in the wars



# Napoléon's Continental System



The Continental System forbid British goods from reaching the European continent.

The Continental System failed. Allied states resented having their trade regulated by Napoléon. Some smuggled, others resisted.

*Napoleon is the barber who shaves the powers of Europe in his shop. John Bull (England) looks in through a window.*

*A bill on the wall: 'Nap. Boney shaver general to most of the Sovereigns on the Continent [sic] - shaves expeditiously and clean a few Gashes excepted, is ready to undertake any new Customer who is willing to submit to the above.'*



"Who shaved as well as any Man, almost not quite" September 1806

## The Fall of Napoléon

*Nationalism, the sense of unique identity of a people based on common language, religion, and symbols, was one of the most important forces of the nineteenth century. European peoples conquered by Napoléon became united in hatred.*

Napoléon had to punish the Russians for ignoring the Continental System so that other nations would not ignore it as well. His army entered Russia in June 1812, but the Russians retreated for hundreds of miles, burning their own villages to keep Napoléon's army from finding food.



*The Moscow Fire* unknown German artist

Moscow was ablaze when the Grand Army arrived. With no food or supplies, Napoléon abandoned the Russian capital in late October and led the “Great Retreat” across Russia. Soldiers starved and froze along the way: fewer than 40,000 of the original 600,000 soldiers survived the journey.

*Napoleon's withdrawal from Russia*  
by Adolph Northen



Other European states to rise up and attack the crippled French army. Paris was captured in March 1814 and the victorious powers exiled Napoléon to the island of Elba and restored Louis XVIII to the monarchy to France.

## The Return (and defeat) of Napoléon

Napoléon soon left the island of Elba and slipped back into France.



*Napoleon returned from Elba*, by Karl Stenben

Napoléon addressed the troops sent to capture him by opening his coat and saying:

“Soldiers of the 5th regiment ... if there is a man among you [who] would kill his Emperor, here I am!”

Shouting “Long live the Emperor!” the troops took his side.

On March 20, 1815, Napoléon entered Paris in triumph.

Napoléon raised another French army of devoted veterans who rallied from all over France.

At Waterloo in Belgium on June 18, 1815, Napoléon met a combined British and Prussian army and suffered a bloody defeat. The victorious allies exiled him to St. Helena, where he remained in exile until his death in 1821.