



The Coronation of Napoleon by Jacques-Louis David

#1 - Napoleon is standing, dressed in coronation robes similar to those of Roman emperors. In the actual painting it is possible to see the outline of what was originally painted: Napoleon holding the crown above his own head, as if placing it on himself.

#2 - Joséphine de Beauharnais, kneeling in a submissive position as called for in the French Civil Code. She received the crown from her husband, not the pope.



#3 - Pope Pius VII is surrounded by clerics appointed by Napoleon since the Concordat. In order not to jeopardize the new balance between Church and State, the pope accepted to attend the coronation. The original sketches showed the pope with hands crossed on his lap, but Napoleon, supposedly claiming that the Pope was not present to do nothing, instructed that the painting depict him anointing the proceedings.

Napoléon Builds An Empire

Napoleonic Wars

when he became consul in 1799, France was already at war with a European coalition

he signed a peace treaty in 1802, but war broke out with Britain again in 1803

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:

from France to the Rhine in the east including the western half of Italy north of Rome

dependent states in Spain, Holland, Italy, 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



Who was Napoleon Bonaparte?

By Max Sewell

Napoleon was born in Ajaccio, Corsica, on 15 August 1769, the second of Carlo and Letizia Bonaparte's eight children. In 1778, Napoleon began his education at Autun and later attended school in Brienne, excelling in mathematics and science. Following a year's study at the Ecole Militaire in Paris, he was commissioned in the artillery in 1785. The year 1789 saw the outbreak of the French revolution, which created an atmosphere of opportunity that would not have existed under the Bourbons, and Napoleon was to make the most of it.

The first opportunity came in 1793, when Bonaparte was promoted to brigadier general for the decisive part he played in the siege of Toulon, which ousted the British from mainland France. After the coup de Thermidor in 1794, Napoleon fell out of favor and was imprisoned. After his release he ended up preserving the new government from the Parisian Mob with artillery fire, an event that has become known as the 'Whiff of Grapeshot.' A grateful government later appointed Napoleon to command of the Army of Italy. Before his departure, Napoleon married Josephine de Beauharnais on 9 March 1796.

Campaigning in Italy in 1796 and 1797, he inspired the impoverished army with the promise of "honor, glory, and riches," and enjoyed a succession of victories,

which resulted in Austria signing the Peace of Campo Formio. His display of bravery, intelligence, and leadership proved an inspiration to the common soldier and formed an enduring bond. Returning to France, he was given charge of an expedition to Egypt, control of which would threaten English possessions in India. The victory at the Battle of the Pyramids gave French control of Cairo, but the naval defeat at Aboukir Bay isolated the expedition from France. After some unsuccessful campaigning in Syria, he departed by ship with a small group of friends and sailed to France, abandoning his Army.

In 1799, public sentiment had swung against the government, and following the coup d'état de Brumaire, Napoleon became the de facto ruler of France. The country was still at war however, and after a dramatic crossing of the Alps, Napoleon defeated the Austrians at the battle of Marengo on 14 June 1800. This victory solidified his reputation of invincibility, and combined with other successes, led to a general peace.

After a decade of war, a grateful France made Napoleon Consul for Life and effective sovereign of the nation. Napoleon proved to be an equally skilled statesman and remodelled the country's economy and administration. He signed a Concordat with the Pope in 1801 which restored religion to France, but his greatest achievement was the Civil Code which in part is still used today. His growing popularity resulted in his being proclaimed Emperor in 1804. At the coronation,

Napoleon crowned himself, taking the crown from the Pope in a symbolic manner to show that power stemmed from the state and not the church as with previous monarchs.

It was an uneasy peace however, and plans were made to invade Britain by crossing the English Channel, but these were abandoned when Napoleon marched his highly trained Grand Armée into central Europe to meet the converging forces of Austria and Russia. Capturing a large part of the Austrian army at Ulm, Napoleon crossed the Danube to face the remaining Austrians and the Russians at Austerlitz. The result was a decisive victory known as the 'Battle Of Three Emperors' on 2 December 1805. Austria sued for peace, but a new coalition was formed of Britain, Russia and Prussia. Napoleon defeated the Prussians at Jena in 1806, and the Russians at Friedland in 1807.

Following these victories, Napoleon was at the pinnacle of his career. With a great display of pomp he met the Tsar of Russia at Tilsit and a new Franco/Russian alliance was born. Portions of Prussia were divided into new states, and Napoleon later announced a new policy of economic warfare that was to become known as the Continental System. Its goal was to destroy Britain's economic dominance by closing all continental ports to British trade. In pursuit of this policy, Napoleon sent troops to conquer Britain's ally Portugal and close the port of Lisbon. Following that success, he used those same troops to bully the

Spanish King into abdicating in favor of his brother Joseph. The Spanish revolted and Britain landed an army in Portugal to support them. Napoleon marched the Grand Armée to the Peninsula, defeated the Spaniards, and drove the British to the coast.

In 1809, another coalition was formed between Britain and Austria, forcing Napoleon to return and wage a campaign in Germany before Spain was pacified. Successful battles resulted in the French occupation of Vienna, but Napoleon suffered his first clear defeat in an attempt to cross the Danube at Aspern-Essling and come to grips with the Austrian army led by Archduke Charles. A later crossing led to victory at Wagram on 5-6 July 1809 and the signing of the Treaty of Schonbrunn.

Napoleon, still legally childless and desiring an heir for his growing empire reluctantly divorced Josephine and arranged a marriage with the daughter of the Austrian Emperor. She soon bore him a son, Napoleon II, christened the King of Rome on 20 March 1811.

Most of Europe was then an ally or under the direct control of France, but Spain and Portugal remained openly contested and large portions of the French army became embroiled in a long war that was to become known as the 'Spanish Ulcer.' Relations with Russia also deteriorated when the Tsar broke with the Continental System.

In 1812 Napoleon invaded Russia with a multinational army of 600,000 men. The battle of Borodino resulted in Napoleon's occupation of Moscow, but he was unable to bring the Tsar to terms, and was soon forced to retreat. The 'scorched earth' policy employed by the Russians combined with extreme weather caused the Grand Armée to disintegrate and the campaign ended in disaster. The defeat in Russia prompted Prussia, Sweden, and Austria to declare war on France. Napoleon raised another army but was decisively defeated at the great Battle of Nations. Napoleon fought a last brilliant campaign in France to defend Paris, but in April 1814 abdicated and went into exile on the island of Elba. The Bourbon king was restored to the French throne.

Napoleon planned his return, and in March 1815 he landed in France and regained his throne in a bloodless coup. Rather than await another invasion, Napoleon surprised Allied forces in Belgium. After initial success, Napoleon fought the Duke of Wellington leading an Anglo/Allied army at Waterloo, and was decisively defeated on 18 June 1815. Napoleon was exiled to the island of St. Helena situated in the South Atlantic Ocean, where he resided until his death on 5 May 1821. His remains were removed from St. Helena in 1840 and his body now rests at les Invalides in Paris.

When Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in France in 1799, he quickly attempted to gain control of public opinion. He did this, in part, by censoring newspapers, plays, and books. His aides were ordered to review news sources and literary works to make sure he was cast in a favorable light. Napoleon's secret police enforced his policies. The following excerpts from his correspondence reveal his desire to control public opinion.

To Fouché, June 1, 1805

I would like newspaper editors [to have] enough sense not to publish news harmful to the nation. The attention of the papers ought to be directed toward attacking England—English fashions, English customs, English literature, the English constitution. . . . Voltaire did us great harm by his constant essays in Anglomania.

It seems to me that the success of the tragedy *The Templars*⁴ is turning attention to that incident in French history. That is good, but I don't think we ought to allow plays on subjects of too recent a date. I see in one of the papers that there is talk of putting on a tragedy about Henry IV [d. 1610]. That period is not distant enough to rouse no passions. The stage needs a touch of antiquity: and I think that, without interfering with the theater too much, you ought to veto this particular play: but don't make your intervention public.

To Portalis, September 19, 1805

Inform M. Robert, a priest at Bourges, of my displeasure at the extremely bad sermon on August 15.

To Fouché, May 7, 1806

A fourth volume of Millot has just been published, containing all kinds of ridiculous nonsense and harmful to the glory of our arms. It is the height of indecency that such an ignoramus should write in the grand manner about contemporary events. Have the book suppressed.