3 Napoleon Forges an Empire

MAIN IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS NOW
A military genius, Napoleon Bonaparte, seized power in France and made himself emperor.	In times of political turmoil, military dictators often seize control of nations, as in Haiti in 1991.

SETTING THE STAGE Napoleon was a short man (five feet three inches tall) who cast a long shadow over the history of modern times. He would come to be recognized as one of the world's greatest military geniuses, along with Alexander the Great of Macedonia, Hannibal of Carthage, and Julius Caesar of Rome. In only four years (1795–1799), Napoleon rose from relative obscurity to become master of France.

Napoleon Grasps the Power

HISTORY MAKERS

**Napoleon Bonaparte
1769–1821**

Napoleon Bonaparte had a magnetism that attracted the admiration of his men. His speeches were designed to inspire his troops to valorous feats. In one speech, he told soldiers,"If the victory is for a moment uncertain, you shall see your Emperor place himself on the front line."

Bonaparte was generous in his rewards to the troops. Many received the Legion of Honor—a medal for bravery. Sometimes Napoleon would take the medal from his own chest to present it to a soldier. (He kept a few spares in his pocket for these occasions.)
A cavalry commander, Auguste de Colbert, wrote, "He awakened in my soul the desire for glory."

Napoleon Bonaparte was born in 1769 on the Mediterranean island of Corsica. When he was nine years old, his parents sent him to a military school in northern France. In 1785, at the age of 16, he finished school and became a lieutenant in the artillery. When the Revolution broke out, Napoleon joined the army of the new government.

Hero of the Hour 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 and his gunners greeted the thousands of royalists with a cannonade. Within minutes, the attackers fled in panic and confusion. Napoleon Bonaparte became the hero of the hour and was hailed throughout Paris as the savior of the French republic.

In 1796, the Directory appointed Napoleon to lead a French army against the forces of Austria and the Kingdom of Sardinia. Crossing the Alps, the young general swept into Italy and won a series of remarkable victories, which crushed the Austrian troops' threat to France. Next, in an attempt to protect French trade interests and to disrupt British trade with India, Napoleon led an expedition to Egypt. Unfortunately, his luck did not hold. His army was pinned down in Egypt, and his naval forces were defeated by the British admiral Horatio Nelson. However, he managed to keep the reports of his defeat out of the press, so that by 1799 the words "the general" could mean only one man to the French—Napoleon.

Coup d'État By 1799, the Directory had lost control of the political situation and the confidence of the French people. Only the directors' control of the army kept them in power. Upon Napoleon's return from Egypt, the Abbé Sieyès urged him to seize political power. Napoleon and Josephine, his lovely socialite wife, set a plan in motion. Napoleon met with influential persons to discuss his role in the Directory, while Josephine used her connections with the wealthy directors to influence their decisions. The action began on November 9, 1799, when Napoleon was put in charge of the military. It ended the next day when his troops drove out the members of one chamber of the

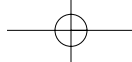**Vocabulary**
cannonade: a bombardment with heavy artillery fire.

national legislature. The legislature voted to dissolve the Directory. In its place, the legislature established a group of three consuls, one of whom was Napoleon. Napoleon quickly assumed dictatorial powers as the first consul of the French republic. A sudden seizure of power like Napoleon's is known as a coup—from the French phrase **coup d'état** (KOO day-TAH), or "blow of state."

At the time of Napoleon's coup, France was still at war. In 1799, British diplomats assembled the Second Coalition of anti-French powers—Britain, Austria, and Russia—with the goal of driving Napoleon from power. Once again, Napoleon rode from Paris at the head of his troops. Eventually, as a result of war and diplomacy, all three nations signed peace agreements with France. By 1802, Europe was at peace for the first time in ten years. Napoleon was free to focus his energies on restoring order in France.

Napoleon Rules France

At first, Napoleon pretended to be the constitutionally chosen leader of a free republic. In 1800, a **plebiscite** (PLEHB-ih-SYT), or vote of the people, was held to approve a new constitution, the fourth in eight years. Desperate for strong leadership, the people voted overwhelmingly in favor of the constitution, which gave all real power to Napoleon as first consul.

Restoring Order at Home Under Napoleon, France would have order and stability. He did not try to return the nation to the days of Louis XVI; instead, he kept many of the changes that had come with the Revolution. He supported laws that would both strengthen the central government and achieve some of the goals of the Revolution, such as a stable economy and more equality in taxation.

The first order of business was to get the economy on a solid footing. Napoleon set up an efficient tax-collection system and established a national bank. In addition to assuring the government a steady supply of tax money, these actions promoted sound financial management and better control of the economy.

Napoleon also needed to reduce government corruption and improve the delivery of government services. He dismissed corrupt officials and, in order to provide his government with trained officials, set up **lycées,** or government-run public schools. The students at the lycées included children of ordinary citizens as well as children of

Napoleon Brings Order After the Revolution

	The Economy	Government & Society	Religion
Goals of the Revolution	• Equal taxation • Lower inflation	• Less government corruption • Equal opportunity in government	• Less powerful Catholic Church • Religious tolerance
Napoleon's Actions	• Set up fairer tax code • Set up national bank • Stabilized currency • Gave state loans to businesses	• Appointed officials by merit • Fired corrupt officials • Created lycées • Created code of laws	• Recognized Catholicism as "faith of Frenchmen" • Signed concordat with pope • Retained seized church lands
Results	• Equal taxation • Stable economy	• Honest, competent officials • Equal opportunity in government • Public education	• Religious tolerance • Government control of church lands • Government recognition of church influence

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts
Napoleon's changes brought France closer to achieving the Revolution's goals.
1. Which goals of the Revolution did Napoleon achieve?
2. If you had been a member of the bourgeoisie in Napoleon's France, would you have been satisfied with the results of Napoleon's actions? Why or why not?
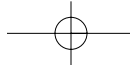
the wealthy. The trained candidates could then be appointed to public office on the basis of merit rather than family connections.

Both the clergy and the peasants wanted to restore the position of the church in France. Napoleon signed a **concordat** (agreement) with Pope Pius VII, spelling out a new relationship between church and state. The government recognized the influence of the church but rejected church control in national affairs. Specifically the French government would appoint bishops, but the bishops would appoint parish priests. The concordat gained Napoleon the support of the organized 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.** Although the code gave the country a uniform set of laws and eliminated many injustices, it actually limited liberty and promoted order and authority over individual rights. The code took away some rights that women had won during the Revolution, such as the right to sell their property. Freedom of speech and of the press, also established during the Revolution, were restricted rather than expanded. The new laws also restored slavery in the French colonies of the Caribbean, which the revolutionary government had abolished.

The emperor Napoleon appears almost godlike in this 1806 portrait by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, entitled *Napoleon on His Imperial Throne.*

Napoleon Crowned as Emperor In 1804, Napoleon decided to make himself emperor, and the French voters supported him. On December 2, 1804, dressed in a splendid robe of purple velvet, Napoleon walked down the long 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.

Napoleon Creates an Empire

Napoleon was not content simply to be master of France. He wanted to control the rest of Europe and to reassert French power in the New World. He envisioned his western empire to include Louisiana, Florida, French Guiana, and the French West Indies. He knew that the key to this area was the sugar-producing French colony of Saint Domingue on the island of Hispaniola.

New World Territories In 1789, when the ideas of the Revolution had reached the planters in Saint Domingue, they had demanded that the National Assembly give them the same privileges as the people of France. Eventually, the slaves in the colony had demanded their freedom. A civil war had erupted, and slaves under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture had seized control of the productive colony. In 1801, Napoleon decided to regain French control of the war-torn island and restore its productive sugar industry. Although he sent 23,000 soldiers to accomplish the task, the former slaves proved to be difficult to defeat, and thousands of soldiers died of yellow fever.

When the expedition to Saint Domingue was unsuccessful and the U.S. government showed interest in buying the port of New Orleans, Napoleon recognized an opportunity to make some money and cut his losses in the Americas. He offered to sell all of the Louisiana Territory to the United States, and in 1803 President
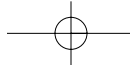
THINK THROUGH HISTORY
B. Analyzing Motives Why would Napoleon crown himself?

Jefferson's administration agreed to purchase the land for $15 million. Napoleon was delighted. He saw a twofold benefit to the sale: he would gain money to finance operations in Europe, and he would further punish his British enemies. He exulted, "The sale assures forever the power of the United States, and I have given England a rival who, sooner or later, will humble her pride."

Conquering Europe Napoleon abandoned his imperial ambitions in the New World and turned his attention to Europe. He had already annexed the Austrian Netherlands and parts of Italy to France and set up a puppet government in Switzerland. Now he looked to expand his influence further. Fearful of his ambitions, Britain persuaded Russia, Austria, and Sweden to join in a third coalition against France.

Napoleon met this challenge with his usual boldness. He rallied the troops and rode out to defeat the Third Coalition, exclaiming, "My army is formidable. . . . Once we had an Army of the Rhine, an Army of Italy, an Army of Holland; there has never been a French Army—but now it exists, and we shall soon see it in action." In a series of brilliant battles, Napoleon crushed the opposition. (See the map on page 208.) The commanders of the enemy armies could never predict his next move and took heavy losses. After the Battle of Austerlitz, Napoleon issued a proclamation expressing his pride in his troops:

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Soldiers! I am pleased with you. On the day of Austerlitz, you justified everything that I was expecting of your intrepidity. . . . In less than four hours, an army of 100,000 men, commanded by the emperors of Russia and Austria, was cut up and dispersed. . . . 120 pieces of artillery, 20 generals, and more than 30,000 men taken prisoner—such are the results of this day which will forever be famous. . . . My nation will be overjoyed to see you again. And it will be enough for you to say, "I was at Austerlitz," to hear the reply: "There is a brave man!"

NAPOLEON, quoted in *Napoleon* by André Castelot

Eventually, the rulers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia all signed peace treaties with Napoleon, whose proud and patriotic army had enabled him to build the largest European empire since the Romans'. The only major enemy left undefeated was Britain, whose power lay in its navy. In 1805, Napoleon tried to remove the threat of that navy.

The Battle of Trafalgar In his war against the Third Coalition, Napoleon lost only one major battle, the **Battle of Trafalgar** (truh·FAL·guhr)—but that naval defeat was more important than all of Napoleon's victories on land. The battle took place in 1805 off the southern coast of Spain. The commander of the British fleet, Horatio Nelson—the admiral who had defeated Napoleon's fleet near Egypt in 1798—outmaneuvered the larger French-Spanish fleet, showing as much brilliance in warfare at sea as Napoleon had in warfare on land. (See map inset on page 208.) During the furious battle, Nelson was mortally wounded by a French sharpshooter. As he lay dying aboard his flagship, Nelson heard the welcome news of British victory. "Now I am satisfied," murmured the admiral. "Thank God, I have done my duty."

The destruction of the French fleet had two major results. First, it assured the supremacy of the British navy for the next hundred years. Second, it forced Napoleon to give up his plans of invading Britain. He had to look for another way to control his powerful enemy across the English Channel. Eventually, Napoleon's extravagant efforts to crush Britain would lead to his own undoing.

The French Empire During the first decade of the 1800s, Napoleon's victories had given him mastery over most of Europe. By 1812, the only major European countries free from Napoleon's control were Britain, the Ottoman Empire, Portugal, and Sweden.
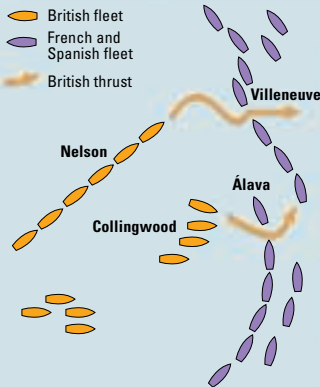
As the map on page 208 shows, Napoleon controlled numerous supposedly independent lands in addition to those that were formally part of the French Empire. These included

The French Revolution and Napoleon **207**

French Empire and Battles, 1805–1813

French Empire
Controlled by Napoleon
★ Major battle

SWEDEN

KINGDOM OF DENMARK AND NORWAY

Borodino (1812) ★   • Moscow

Baltic Sea   Neman R.

★ Friedland (1807)

0   500 Miles
0   1,000 Kilometers

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

North Sea

PRUSSIA
• Berlin

GRAND DUCHY OF WARSAW

RUSSIAN EMPIRE

The Battle of Trafalgar, Oct. 21, 1805

British fleet
French and Spanish fleet
British thrust

Villeneuve
Nelson
Álava
Collingwood

ATLANTIC OCEAN

London •

Brussels •
• Amiens
• Paris
Versailles •   Seine R.

Elbe R.

CONFEDERATION OF THE RHINE

Leipzig (1813) ★
Jena (1806) ★
★ Ulm (1805)

Rhine R.

★ Austerlitz (1805)

★ Wagram (1809)
• Vienna

AUSTRIAN EMPIRE

Loire R.

SWITZ.
Milan •   ITALY
Po R.

ILLYRIAN PROVINCES

Danube R.   Black Sea

By dividing Villeneuve's formation, Admiral Nelson captured nearly two-thirds of the enemy fleet.

PORTUGAL

Tagus R.   • Madrid

SPAIN

F R E N C H   E M P I R E

CORSICA

• Rome

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

SARDINIA

Naples •   KINGDOM OF NAPLES

• Trafalgar (1805)
• Gibraltar

Mediterranean Sea

SICILY

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

1. **Region** What was the extent (north to south, east to west) of Napoleon's empire in 1812?
2. **Location** Where was the Battle of Trafalgar fought? What tactic did Nelson use, and why was it successful?

Spain, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and a number of German kingdoms in central Europe. The rulers of these countries were Napoleon's puppets; some, in fact, were his brothers and in-laws. Furthermore, the powerful countries of Russia, Prussia, and Austria were loosely attached to Napoleon's empire through alliances. Not totally under Napoleon's control, they were easily manipulated by threats of military action.

Ironically, Napoleon's power and military threats actually made the conquered peoples more conscious of their loyalty to their own nations. The French empire was huge but unstable. Napoleon was able to maintain it at its greatest extent for only five years (1807–1812). Then it quickly fell to pieces. Its sudden collapse was caused in part by Napoleon himself.
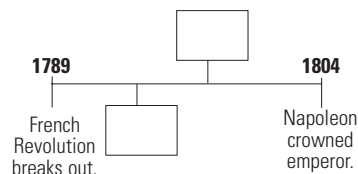
Section 3 Assessment

1. **TERMS & NAMES**

Identify
• Napoleon Bonaparte
• coup d'état
• plebiscite
• lycée
• concordat
• Napoleonic Code
• Battle of Trafalgar

2. **TAKING NOTES**

Create a time line showing events leading to the crowning of Napoleon as emperor of France.

1789 ─────────── 1804

French Revolution breaks out.   Napoleon crowned emperor.

Which of these events did Napoleon cause?

3. **FORMING AN OPINION**

There is an old question: "Do the times make the man, or does the man make the times?" In your opinion, was Napoleon the creator of or the creation of his times?

THINK ABOUT
• the government after the Terror
• Napoleon's defense of France
• Napoleon's popularity

4. **ANALYZING THEMES**

Power and Authority To keep his empire together, Napoleon had to deal with forces both inside and outside the French Empire. In your judgment, which area was more crucial to control?

THINK ABOUT
• the length of the period of civil unrest in France
• the power and activities of the other European nations