Napoleon: Savior of the Revolution



Napoleon Bonaparte was considered by most the savior of the French Revolution by ending it and putting in place a government that brought equality and stability to a torn country.  The French Revolution was actually a series of wars that would fail because the governments put in place after the fighting would fail.  The most notorious was the Jacobins whose Reign of Terror created great upheaval in France. Napoleon instead united France, no longer would jobs be given to those merely because of social status.  The French under Napoleon would become united, strong, and most important equal.  Napoleon brought stability and direction to a country without a course.  His unification of France would have a profound impact on not only Europe, but the entire world.



Of Napoleon’s many great accomplishments his Code Napoleon is the longest lasting legacy that he has left on the Atlantic World.  Before the Revolution, France had been without one single group of laws that were standard around the country.  This caused many problems in different parts of the country and created some very unfair legal situations especially for the poor.  The Napoleon Code made the entire country to be on equal footing despite whether one was rich or poor.  The Napoleonic Code ensured that one would have a chance to gain wealth and status. It’s basic principles represented that of the entire revolution.

Napoleon was not well liked by other European leaders because many of the changes he made threatened their countries’ stability.  His reforms made even the poor feel equal.  The mains ideas of the French Revolution that carried over into Napoleon’s changes in government were Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.  This worried other leaders because it put the idea of equality in the minds of the poor in other countries.  In 1801 Napoleon officially recognized Catholicism as the main religion of France but at the same time gave religious freedom to those who were not Catholic.  Napoleon also put maximum prices on basic foods like bread and flour.  This made sure that no one would go hungry, if people are well fed they are much less likely to revolt.  Napoleon also instituted educational reforms which were based on the ideals of the enlightenment and greatly benefited France.  Napoleon understood that in order to keep peace he had to keep the entire country content in their situations.  By giving religious freedom to all, keeping food prices within the reach of the poor, and solidifying the economy Napoleon ensured that France would maintain stability for many years.



Napoleon is still considered to be one of the greatest Generals to ever live. He conquered much of Europe in a relatively short time.  He did this because he wanted to see a unified Europe that held the principles of freedom and equality.  Although Napoleon went about this unification through violence, the countries he conquered would be treated fair.  He instituted the same programs in these countries that he did in France. They received constitutions, educational reforms, and most importantly basic freedom.  Napoleon’s desire to unite Europe however would be his downfall.  It started with his blockade on Great Britain. Napoleon instituted a blockade of Great Britain in an attempt to destroy it’s economy by ruining trade.  However this backfired because Great Britain was producing materials much cheaper than the rest of Europe.  This severely hurt France by making everything more expensive. Napoleon then decided to invade Russia.  Napoleon raised an army of 600,000 troops and set out for Russia.  Napoleon’s force was unable to breakthrough the Russian lines and suffered immense numbers of casualties.  They were forced to retreat and the once seemingly unstoppable Napoleon now looked capable of defeat.  Napoleon’s pride however was unable to see this and he decided to continue through Russia despite the onset of winter.  His forces were unable to take Moscow and because of great quantities of casualties, and little supplies due to the harsh Russian winter, Napoleon was forced to retreat with a devastated army.  The rest of Europe, seeing Napoleon in this weakened state saw their chance to defeat him and, did not hesitate to attack.  On June 18, 1815 Napoleon attacked the Prussians and British at Waterloo.  Because of poor decisions by his commanders and himself Napoleon’s forces were completely defeated.  Napoleon himself was able to escape but was soon captured and his reign ended.  The royal family were placed back in power in France and Napoleon lived the rest of his life in exile on the island of St. Helena.

Despite his defeat and the end of his empire one cannot discount the many great affects Napoleon had on the Atlantic World.  His institution of Laws that ensured freedom and equality would set a trend throughout the world.  Many revolutions that occurred after the French would model their constitutions and beliefs on those first set by Napoleon.  Freedom of religion, equality, centralized government, and strong economies were the new goals for those who wanted new regimes.  Napoleon gave not only the French, but all who fought for revolution a direction to follow.  The systems he put in place ended the tumultuous years of the reign of terror and solidified equality for the poor in France.  His military conquests are still studied today at the best military academies in the world.  Despite his fall at Waterloo, Napoleon’s legacy moved on and still impacts our world today.

Napoleon Assignment

Directions: Use Green highlighters to highlight evidence to support the main claim/argument

Answer these questions on your own sheet of paper.

1. Write a four sentence summary of the reading
2. Point of View: What is the authors point of view of Napoleon? (4 sentences)
3. How did Napoleon fix the problems the third estate faced (2-3 sentences)
4. Describe the mistakes that Napoleon made which led to his defeat. (3-4 sentences)
5. Paragraph 4: Use context clues to define “immense” in paragraph 4

Napoleon: Dictator of France

The word dictator refers to a person who has absolute power, especially a ruler who has absolute, unrestricted control in a government. This definition proves that Napoleon was definitely a dictator, as he took power for himself. However, there were dictatorship characteristics that Napoleon did not enforce so strictly, or even ideas of freedom which he allowed, such as religious freedom. After Napoleon finally brought peace in Europe in 1802, he started on leaving his mark internally on France. One of the first internal affairs was his -“life consulship”. He declared himself leader of France for the rest of his life, leaving him with absolute power in France as no one could challenge him as “Life Consul”. Then he furthers his position as a dictator by having the right to nominate his successor, which would leave an unelected leader, also known as a dictator, and also proves that Napoleon was unchallenged in France. This takes away the idea of the people of France being able to elect their own leader that appeared in the “Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen.” After centralizing power he then sets about by strengthening his power.

The new constitution of France seems to disprove that Napoleon was a dictator. For instance the Constitution that he sets up is a form of representative democracy, with a separation of powers such as the Council of State, who help draw up legislation, and the Legislature that get to vote on such legislation. However this did not give the people as much of a vote as it seemed, with the main bodies of government being formed by people Napoleon bribed to control. Even if they did not agree with Napoleon he could go over their head on the matter and do what he wanted anyways. To his credit, Napoleon did promote the idea of democracy not dictatorship. However, the voting system he set up was not democratic in the slightest. Napoleons system only allowed those people to vote who paid for the right to vote. This did not allow poor people to vote or women. Even then it is questionable whether the elections were fair, many people fearing punishment for voting against napoleon because voting was not secret. The people in charge of counting votes would increase the number of people voting for Napoleon to please him.

Napoleon did allow religious tolerance in France for all religions, and allowed religion to be freely exercised in France, by the great majority of citizens. Nevertheless it strengthened Napoleons powers, as public worship had to be "in conformity with police regulations" and the church became controlled by the government, whereby the clergy became servants of the government, being bound to the government by oath. The Organic Articles gave even more power over the church to Napoleon because it limited the Popes control over French bishops while state control increased. Napoleon even standardized church ideas, which were taught in schools, which scares the people into obeying Napoleon as the ideas make him seem like a God. In conclusion it was clear that Napoleon was a dictator as he centralized power around himself, especially in his style of government and the constitution he sets up, where all power is given by Napoleon, and no-one could challenge that power. Even the freedom reforms introduced were fake to keep control of the people, and his real intentions were to make people loyal and obey him, either through fear of the police state set up, or giving people a small taste of freedom to keep the people happy.

Napoleon Assignment Day 2:

Directions: Annotate the text by highlighting evidence to support the idea that Napoleon is a hero in Green. Highlight evidence to support the idea that Napoleon is a dictator in Yellow

Answer the following questions

1. Summarize the reading in four sentences
2. Point of View: In 4 sentences! What is the second author’s point of view of Napoleon?
3. Argumentative writing: In 6 sentences! Argue whether or not Napoleon was the savior of France, or if Napoleon was a dictator of France. Use evidence from the text!!