

## The Age of Napoleon

The violence of the Reign of Terror was over, but the leaders who took control after Robespierre were not able to bring order. Many of the new leaders were corrupt. Also, wars between France and other European powers continued. When a young army commander named Napoleon Bonaparte (nuh puh lee un vohn nuh pahrt) took power, people supported him because they hoped he would bring peace and order to France. Napoleon was a strong leader, but his ambition for power drew France into new conflicts across Europe.

**Rise of Napoleon** As a young army officer, Napoleon led France to many victories during the war with Austria and Prussia. He became a hero in France. In 1799, at the age of 30, Napoleon became the “first consul,” or leader of France. Five years later, he declared himself emperor.

During the revolution, the government had taken control of the Catholic Church in France. The pope rejected this action. Napoleon won Catholic support by negotiating an end to the conflict between the church and the government.

He also created a strong centralized government. Trained officials collected taxes and supervised public projects. Perhaps Napoleon’s most important achievement was his reform of the laws and government of France. The new **Napoleonic Code** was a set of laws that protected basic freedoms and guaranteed equality before the law. Many of the laws and legal systems in Europe today are based on the Napoleonic Code.

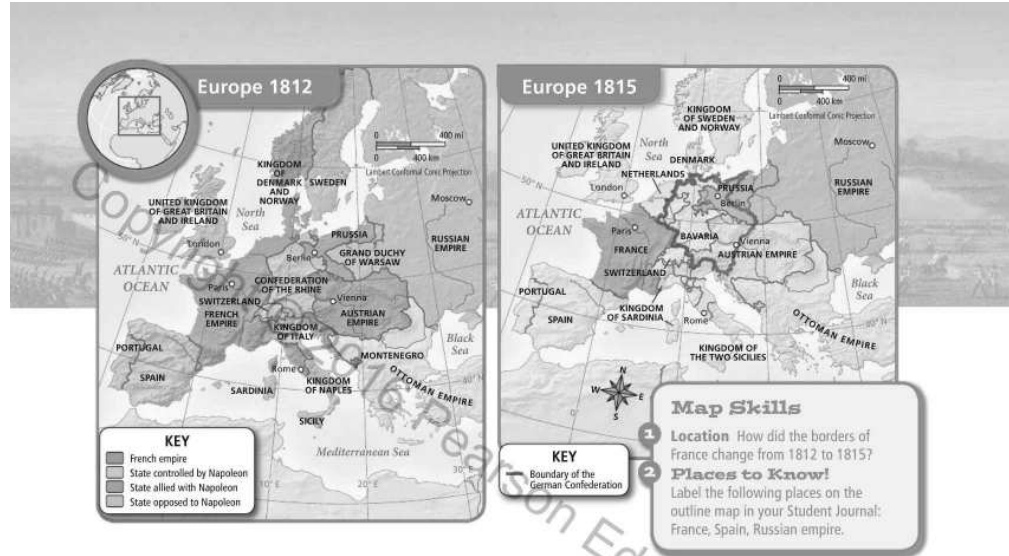


**Creating an Empire** Napoleon built the strongest, best-trained army in Europe. Under Napoleon, France was almost constantly at war. Between 1802 and 1812, France invaded Spain, Austria, and Germany. Napoleon won a number of major victories. France came to control much of Europe.

**Invasion of Russia** Napoleon’s political power was growing weaker by 1810. The never-ending wars made him less popular with the French people. Many soldiers left the army. Then, in 1812, Napoleon decided to invade Russia. This decision was a terrible mistake.

Russian soldiers tried to avoid fighting the powerful French army. The Russians destroyed crops and villages so that the French could not find food and shelter.

This portrait shows Napoleon as he rides to victory in battle (above). He wore the crown (below) when he was coronated in 1804.



**survive**, *v.*, to continue to live, to last

Although Napoleon advanced to the city of Moscow, he realized that his forces could not **survive** the harsh Russian winter. He ordered a retreat.

The French army was almost destroyed on the 1,000-mile march back to France. The French soldiers faced bitterly cold conditions and food shortages while fighting against the Russians. Nearly 400,000 French soldiers died.

**Fall of Napoleon** The disaster in Russia led to a new alliance: Russia, Britain, Austria, and Prussia joined forces against France. After a number of defeats, Napoleon was forced to **abdicate**, or step down from power, in 1814. But within a year, he returned to power.

Napoleon’s triumph was short-lived. In June 1815, French troops fought Britain and Prussian forces at the Battle of

Waterloo, in Belgium. The French were crushed. Again, Napoleon was forced out of power. This time he did not return. He was exiled to the island of Saint Helena, in the far south of the Atlantic Ocean. He died there in 1821.

**Reading Check** What actions led to Napoleon’s downfall?

## After Napoleon

European leaders faced the task of bringing order to Europe after years of war. In 1814 and 1815, leaders met in Austria at the Congress of Vienna.

**Congress of Vienna** The main goal of the congress was to bring a lasting peace to Europe. Leaders wanted to balance the power of European nations. They did

The defeated Napoleon was exiled from France after he was forced from power.



▲ Napoleon's army battles Austrian forces.

not want any one country to threaten the others as France had done. They agreed to meet regularly to negotiate peaceful solutions to their problems.

The Congress of Vienna reshaped Europe. France's borders were returned to their location before the revolution. A new confederation, or union, of German states was created. Russia, Prussia, and Austria took control of more land.

**The Revolution's Legacy** The French Revolution had a mixed legacy. It resulted in violence and disorder that ended only when the powerful Napoleon took

control of the government.

Yet the Revolution also brought positive changes, such as a focus on the importance of human rights. Across Europe, monarchs were pressured to give up some of their powers, marking the end of the era of absolute monarchs. The revolution also ended the privileges of the noblemen. For this reason, it was an effort at changing the feudal structure that had existed in Europe for hundreds of years.

**Reading Check** What were the goals of the Congress of Vienna?

## Section 4 Assessment

### Key Terms

1. Use the term *estate* to describe French society in the late 1700s.
2. What was the Napoleonic Code?

### Key Ideas

3. Who made up the National Assembly, and what was its goal in 1789?
4. What occurred during the Reign of Terror?
5. Why did France declare war on Austria and Prussia in 1792?

### Think Critically

6. **Identify Evidence** How did Napoleon become so powerful?
7. **Summarize** What was the legacy of the French Revolution?



### Essential Question

What is power? Who should have it?

8. How did the Constitution of 1791 change the power of the French monarchy? Go to your Student Journal to record your answer.

Why did people support Napoleon?

What were his accomplishments?

Why did Napoleon fail?

What was the legacy of the French Revolution?