

Conquerors: Napoleon: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 6-8

Curriculum Focus: World History

Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Program Description

Unlike the monarchs in Vienna, London, and St. Petersburg, Napoleon Bonaparte did not come by his authority via birth-right. Rather, he seized control by virtue of brilliant military strategy and excellent timing. The momentum of the French Revolution, he correctly gauged, was waning — the perfect time for a popular soldier with organizational genius to step in. Eventually he was overthrown, but not before branding history with his searing accomplishments.

Video Comprehension Questions

- What was the rallying cry of French revolutionaries? (*The rallying cry of French revolutionaries was "Liberty, equality, fraternity."*)
- When and how did the French monarchy come to an end? (*The French monarchy came to an end in August 1792. A mob entered the palace of King Louis XVI and his wife and they were taken to jail. In 1793, they were beheaded.*)
- What followed the fall of the French monarchy? (*The Reign of Terror followed the French monarchy. During this period, a quarter of a million people were slaughtered.*)
- What empire did Napoleon defeat in 1797 that made him well respected among the French people? (*By April 1797, Napoleon had driven the Austrians back and secured an armistice that gave France control of thousands of miles of new territory.*)
- How did Napoleon become the dictator and then emperor of France? (*Napoleon's allies, backed by his troops, staged a coup and seized control of the French government. Napoleon's dictatorship thus began in February 1800. In 1802, he was appointed head of state for life and in 1804 Napoleon crowned himself emperor.*)
- What happened to Napoleon's army in Russia? (*In Russia, Napoleon's army was defeated by surprise Russian tactics, the harsh winter, and a lack of supplies. They were forced to return to France.*)
- What happened to Napoleon and the French government after he abdicated? (*Two weeks after abdicating, Napoleon was exiled to Elba and the French monarchy was restored.*)
- Why didn't Napoleon's return to power last? What happened at Waterloo? (*Napoleon's return to power did not last because upon hearing of Napoleon's return, his enemies declared him an outlaw and immediately sent troops to defeat him, which they did at the Battle of Waterloo.*)

Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

Students will understand:

- The French people accepted Napoleon as a dictator two times even though they had recently gone through a revolution against monarchy.

Materials

- *Conquerors: Napoleon* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Reference works on the history of France and Napoleon
- Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. Divide students into committees of three or four so that they can have small-group discussions about Napoleon's attempt to regain power in 1815, after his 1814 exile to Elba.
2. First, tell the groups that their first assignment is to research more details about Napoleon's defeat and exile in 1814. They will be asked to discern the responses of various French men and women to those events. Have students brainstorm to come up with the kinds of resources they should locate and examine, beginning perhaps with a thorough encyclopedia article about Napoleon. Students on each committee should identify reference sources and distribute them among themselves; each student on a committee should be responsible for reading and taking notes from one or more sources, with the entire committee covering all the identified sources.
3. Next, ask students to imagine that they are living in France in 1815 at various levels of society. Within the small groups, each student should state whether he or she would welcome Napoleon back to the position of emperor in France. Each student must also give reasons for holding his or her opinion on Napoleon's return.
4. Instruct students to reach their individual statements by considering the following:
 - The goals and ideals of the French Revolution
 - Napoleon's accomplishments and failures up to 1814
 - The return of the monarchy under Louis XVIII
5. The goal of each committee is to create a consensus out of the views of its three or four members. That is, members of a committee may start off holding opposed positions about Napoleon's return but should arrive at one and only one position.
6. One member of each committee should present the committee's final decision to the class. Then give the several committee spokespeople time to work out and announce a joint statement on whether Napoleon should be allowed to return to France in 1815.



Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how Napoleon's background, early experiences in school, and the times in which he lived may have affected his character and leadership style. In the end, what part of his character do you think led to his downfall?
2. Explain the debate between aristocrats and philosophers over monarchy and democracy during the revolutionary period in France. Which side would you say Napoleon was on?
3. Analyze Napoleon's role in the French Revolution and his speedy rise to power. What were his talents?
4. What were Napoleon's first tasks as dictator? Explain and discuss why they were important.
5. Why do you think the French people accepted Napoleon as their sole leader not once but twice? After all, hadn't they just fought a revolution to end the monarchy in France?
6. Compare and contrast both times Napoleon was exiled. Was he wise to try to return to power from Elba? What do you think should happen to defeated leaders today?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students were active in class discussions; demonstrated strong research skills; worked cooperatively in their groups to come to a joint position.
- 2 points: Students participated in class discussions; demonstrated satisfactory research skills; worked well in their groups to come to a joint position.
- 1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; demonstrated weak research skills; did not work well with their groups; had difficulty coming to a joint position.

Vocabulary

abdicate

Definition: To formally relinquish a sovereign power.

Context: On April 6, 1814, a humiliated emperor is forced to abdicate the throne.

armistice

Definition: Temporary suspension of hostilities by agreement between the opponents.

Context: Napoleon has driven the Austrians back and secured an armistice, a peace treaty that gives France thousands of miles of new territory.

artillery

Definition: A branch of an army armed with crew-served mounted firearms.

Context: Napoleon is commissioned as second lieutenant in the artillery, a fortuitous choice since new advances in weaponry and tactics are about to rewrite history.



coup

Definition: The violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group.

Context: Napoleon's allies stage a coup and seize control of the government.

guillotine

Definition: A machine for beheading by means of a heavy blade that slides down in vertical guides.

Context: In 1793, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette are marched to the guillotine and beheaded.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- World History – An Age of Revolutions: Understands the causes and consequences of political revolutions in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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