

## NAPOLEON

The book, Napoleon by Felix Markham, is a biography about Napoleon Bonaparte, one of the greatest historical figures and legends of all time. He was born on August 15, 1769 at Ajaccio in Corsica, which is an island in the Mediterranean Sea. In 1779, when Napoleon was nine years old, he began his schooling in France. He went to a church school at Brienne-le-Chateau because his father, Carlo, wanted him to go there. It had been noted that Napoleon had excelled at math during his time at school. He remained there for eight years and during those years his father died of stomach cancer. Napoleon joined the French Army in 1785 and in 1791 was promoted to first lieutenant and then to captain in 1792. In December 1793, Napoleon was sent to Toulon, where rebels in France were being aided by the British naval fleet. Napoleon took the place of a wounded commander. The British withdrew and France took control of Toulon. Napoleon's victory was responsible for his being honored brigadier general at the age of 24. In 1797, Napoleon won the war for France with the Austrians. After defeating them at the French-Italian border, he marched over the Alps and threatened Vienna. Finally, in October of 1797, France and Austria signed the Treaty of Campoformio, which enlarged France's territory. He was hailed a hero in France. In 1798, Napoleon set sail for Egypt to stop British trade with the Middle East. The French fleet, however, was destroyed by Britain, leaving Napoleon's army stranded in Egypt. In the mean time, Turkey formed an alliance with Britain and Russia, then declared war on France. In 1799, Napoleon learned that a Turkish Army was planning to invade Egypt. Napoleon defeated the Turks and then returned to France. He was very well respected when he returned. Napoleon created political alliances and seized control of the French government and he made changes, such as, a new constitution and a three member Consulate. Napoleon made himself first consul and the other two members were merely advisors. After ten years of revolution, the French wanted one strong leader so Napoleon ruled France as a dictator. In June 1800, Napoleon led the French to defeat the Austrians at the Battle of Marengo and in 1801, Austria signed the Treaty of Luneville,

which reaffirmed the Treaty of Campoformio. After this, in 1802, Britain agreed to peace by signing the Treaty of Amiens. Russia had gotten out of the alliance against France in 1799 and for the first time in ten years, because of Napoleon, Europe was at peace. Napoleon was still not satisfied. In 1802, the French people approved a constitutional amendment that made Napoleon first consul for life. By 1803, Napoleon had become president of the Italian Republic, but he wanted to stop Britain's trade with the rest of Europe. He had anticipated war with Britain, so he sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States and war with Britain began later that year. Due to the French Senate's vote, on December 2, 1804, Napoleon crowned himself emperor. He dominated Europe with this glorious title. A new alliance had started against France in 1805 with Austria, Russia, and Sweden but later that year Napoleon demolished the Austrian and Russian armies at Austerlitz in Austria. In 1806, Prussia joined Russia in a new coalition, but again, Napoleon's forces crushed the Prussian army at Jena and Auerstedt and in June 1807, Napoleon overwhelmed Russian armies at Friedland. Also, in 1809, he defeated the Austrians again at Wagram. Napoleon was unstoppable. After each win, the Napoleonic Empire enlarged. In 1806, he made his brother, Joseph, king of Naples, his brother, Louis, king of Holland in 1807, his brother, Jerome, king of Westphalia, also in 1807. Finally in 1809, he gave his sister, Elisa, the title of Grand Duchy of Tuscany. His empire was brought to its height in 1810 when he added Holland and most of Northern Germany. Between 1806 and 1807, Napoleon set up something known as the Continental System. The purpose of this was to prevent British trade with the rest of Europe, hoping to destroy its economy. This system was established by two decrees, The Berlin Decree and the Milan Decree. The Berlin Decree forbade British ships from ports under French control and all goods belonging to or coming from Britain were seized. These actions were more of a boycott than a blockade. The Milan Decree prevented ships from neutral nations to carry British goods to Europe. Portugal, ally of Britain, refused to follow the Berlin

Decree, but in 1807, the French gained control of Portugal and took over certain parts of Spain. French forces took control over Madrid in 1808 and Napoleon removed King Ferdinand VII from the throne and made his brother, Joseph, king of Spain. Spanish and Portuguese forces rebelled against French rule. Soon after this war began, British troops joined in the fight against France. By 1814, tens of thousands of French troops had died and the remaining French forces driven off the peninsula. This war was known as the Peninsula War. In 1810, Russia had been withdrawn from the Continental System by Alexander I. Napoleon felt France was threatened by this action. Napoleon set up an army of 600,000 men and in 1812, he went into Russia, but the Russians denied battle. Napoleon pushed on to Moscow only to find the city nearly empty. Soon, large parts of the city were destroyed by fires set by retreating Russians. Napoleon still waited for Alexander in Moscow, with the bitter cold coming, in order to offer peace, but he never came. Due to starvation and exposure, 500,000 of Napoleon's men died. When he returned to France, the people still supported Napoleon, but his failure gave encouragement to his enemies.

As far as his personal life, it is known that in 1796, he married Josephine de Beauharnais, a beautiful French widow with two children. By 1809, however, Napoleon still had one problem on his hands, what would happen to his empire after his death considering he had no heirs and his wife was now 46. After much thought and heartache, Napoleon decided to divorce Josephine and in April of 1810, he married an 18-year-old girl named Marie Louise. In 1811, as hoped, the couple had a son they called Napoleon, who was given the title, king of Rome. He now faced an even bigger problem. Napoleon was threatened with the alliance of Austria, Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Sweden. This was the cause of the collapse of the Napoleonic Empire. In 1813, Napoleon arrived in Germany with a new army and fought against the allies. His forces were outnumbered. The two sides fought at Leipzig in October, but Napoleon was defeated and he retreated to France. The enemy alliance still pursued him and in March 1814, they captured Paris. Napoleon still wanted to march on, but this was in disagreement with the French government so Napoleon wrote an abdication on April 4, 1814. It was signed on April 6 and on that same day, the Senate voted to recall Louis XVIII.

Napoleon was exiled from France, but was guaranteed the title of Emperor, on the small island of Elba off the northwest coast of Italy. His wife and son went to live with her family and Napoleon never saw them again. At Elba, Napoleon planned his return to France. In February 1815, Napoleon sailed to France and then marched to Paris, gathering supporters along the way. The men sent to arrest him, joined him. Louis fled when he approached and on March 20, Napoleon entered Paris where he was cheered by the crowds again. He claimed that this was the happiest moment of his life. Napoleon proclaimed a new constitution that limited his powers. He was ready for a quick and resounding victory due to a divided and apprehensive nation at his hands. Once again, a battle was going to commence. Napoleon marched into Belgium and hoped to defeat Britain's separate armies of the Duke of Wellington and Blucher of Prussia. Napoleon defeated Blucher and on June 18, Napoleon attacked Wellington at Waterloo in one of history's most remembered battles. There were amazing charges by the French cavalry and it seemed as if the British would collapse. Unexpectedly, Blucher showed up and reinforced the British. The French were overpowered and suffered the defeat. Napoleon fled to Paris and on June 22, he abdicated again. Napoleon's return from Elba until the day of his second abdication is known as the Hundred Days. There was no alternative for Napoleon but to be put on the British battleship, Bellerophon. Since it was decided that Napoleon was their prisoner, he! was sent to the barren British island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic. Napoleon lived on St. Helena for the rest of his life. At around 2 am on May 5, 1821 Napoleon uttered his last words, "France, armee, tete d'armee, Josephine." At 5:51 pm that day, he was pronounced dead. Napoleon was buried, as he wished in his will, in Geranium Valley, in full military attire. This book shows us the great road Napoleon paved for France, through good times and bad, and finally the downfall of the majestic empire. Napoleon was a great war hero, but he always was on a quest for peace. The book showed in great detail the life and accomplishments and also his emotions and troubles throughout it all. Napoleon will be remembered forever as a great war hero and more importantly, as a legend

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