

F. The Reign of Terror

1. When the French executed Louis XVI, most of Europe joined together in a great alliance against France.
2. The leaders of the revolution then broke into two groups. One was the moderates, who wanted to avoid violence; the other was the radicals who wanted no compromises and were willing to use violence against anyone who opposed them.
3. The radical revolutionaries created the “Committee of Public Safety,” which may sound good, but it was actually an organization that spent much of its time deciding who to execute using the guillotine!
4. Its leader was a man named Robespierre, and as long as he was in charge, France suffered a “Reign of Terror”. Anyone who criticized Robespierre was executed.
5. This went on for months, until Robespierre himself was arrested and executed in 1794, just as he had done to so many others.

G. Napoleon Saves the Directory

1. After the death of Robespierre, the leftover moderates created a government known as the Directory, with five directors at the head.
2. But Robespierre's death had created a vacuum of power. The Revolution seemed to have no great leaders left. Many people now wished for the return of the monarchy.
3. Supporters of Louis XVI's brother, who now called himself Louis XVIII, tried to attack the government, along with a mob of desperate Parisians. (Louis XVIII took that name, rather than Louis XVII, because Louis XVI had had a son, who died while imprisoned during the Revolution.)
4. This attack on the Parliament was stopped by an officer named Napoleon Bonaparte, soon known simply as “Napoleon” who fired “grapeshot” into the attackers.

H. Napoleon's Early Successes

1. After saving the Directory, Napoleon was put in charge of the “Army of Italy.”
2. Although the government was bankrupt and could not pay the soldiers, Napoleon motivated them to fight on by promising them “honor, glory, and riches” from their conquests.
3. In 1796 Napoleon invaded Italy and defeated Austria in a series of battles.
4. Austria now made peace with the great general by the Treaty of Campo Formio of 1797. It gave Belgium and northern Italy to France as part of the deal to avoid being attacked by Napoleon.
5. Next Napoleon tried to conquer Egypt. He wanted to use it as a base to attack the only remaining enemy of France, Britain, and its empire in India. He reasoned that cutting off Britain from its trading empire would prevent it from gaining the wealth that fueled its military power.
6. Although Napoleon reached Egypt and conquered it with his army, his plans were dashed by the British navy commanded by Lord Nelson at the Battle of the Nile in 1798. His fleet was annihilated, and his forces were not well prepared to fight in the heat of the Middle Eastern desert.
7. Napoleon escaped from this difficult situation, and returned to Paris. He was welcomed as a hero, and took over the government from the Directory, which had nothing to show for itself in his absence.
8. He and his supporters created the Constitution of 1799, which produced a government known as the Consulate. (It was led by three “consuls,” a title once used by officials in the ancient Roman Republic. Napoleon was “first consul.”)

9. Since the Directory had lost control of northern Italy, Napoleon returned there. A swift victory was achieved by a surprise attack over a difficult pass through the Alps.
10. Upon his return, he was elected "First Consul for Life" of France.

I. The Continental System

1. Because of his great victories in Europe, Napoleon had defeated all France's enemies but Britain. Even Britain, however, had tired of war, and the Peace of Amiens of 1802 brought a brief respite to the continent.
2. Before long, however, Britain and France were back at war, and Napoleon could see that Britain was France's greatest adversary. It became his most important goal to defeat this enemy.
3. Having failed to strike at India, Napoleon now constructed a massive fleet, with the hope of invading Britain.
4. Lord Nelson once again destroyed his plans, as a British fleet destroyed France's latest fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.
5. Unable to strike at either India or Britain, Napoleon resolved to use his army to take over the continent, and deny British merchants access to Europe's markets. His plan to cut Britain off from all trade with Europe is known as the "Continental System."
6. He defeated Austria and Prussia, to dominate central Europe.
7. Then, he made a deal with the Tsar of Russia, Alexander, to divide up Europe, and jointly enforce a refusal to trade with Britain.
8. Meanwhile, Napoleon had to fight the Peninsular War against Portugal, and Spanish independents, to try to enforce the Continental System in Iberia.
9. For a while, the deal held, but the tsar eventually reneged on the deal because Russia wanted trade with England and defied Napoleon on this point.

J. Napoleon's Downfall

1. In 1812, Napoleon assembled an army of 700,000 men (the largest in European history up to that time) to invade Russia.
2. As this army marched into Russia however, it began to run out of food, especially because the Russian burned all their crops rather than let the French get a hold of them.
3. By the time Napoleon entered Moscow (which was deserted) most of his army had starved to death. Only 100,000 remained!
4. Retreating from Moscow in the Russian winter, Napoleon lost more men. He barely escaped from Russia with 10,000 soldiers left.
5. Seeing that France was now greatly weakened, Prussia, Russia, Austria, and Britain all worked together. They defeated him in the Battle of Leipzig, also known as the *Battle of the Nations* of 1813, and finally forced his surrender in 1814.
6. He was exiled to a small island off of Italy called Elba.
7. When he escaped and rallied a new French army against his enemies, he was defeated once and for all at the Battle of Waterloo of 1815.
8. This time, he was exiled to the island of Saint Helena in the south Atlantic, where he lived the remainder of his days.



Napoleon's retreat from Moscow in the Russian of 1812 winter devastated the remainder of his army, and led to his ultimate defeat.