



The Napoleonic Wars

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Napoleon's Life Before the Wars

Napoleon Bonaparte was born on the island of Corsica. Corsica was recently sold from the Republic of Genoa to France after wanting independence. He was born just in time to be considered French. Napoleon was anti French when he was young but his dad was accepting of French ideas. Napoleon's Parents had him sent off to a big city to attend military school. When he was 16, he was made Second Lieutenant in an artillery regiment. He wasn't content with only being Second Lieutenant, so he tried to rise the ranks. Positions were handed out based on nobility and not skill, so it was hard for him to climb the ranks.





French Revolution Leading into Napoleonic Wars

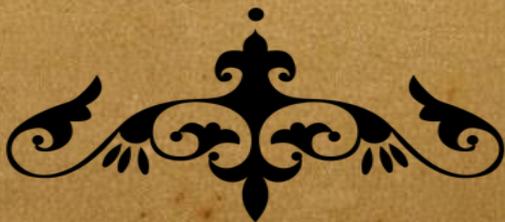
He started rising the ranks during the French revolution. He became more noticed and even got his own army. Napoleon went looking for a woman with high status and nobility. He found Josephine. She thought he was disgusting, but still married him. While France was having its revolution, tensions in the rest of Europe were rising. France declared war on most countries in Europe because during the revolution, they got rid of their monarchy which angered other countries. The other countries were monarchies and were afraid their people would rise up also.





French Revolution Leading into Napoleonic Wars

This is where the War of the First Coalition begins. It started in 1793. At first, France struggled, but then they started doing very well. They then conquered a ton of land. They took most of modern-day Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. France began to establish sister republics. Sister republics are republics established by French armies or by local revolutionaries and assisted France during the French revolutionary wars. They relied on France so much that most of them later became part of France. In 1796, they planned an attack on Vienna, Austria. It was to try and knock Austria out of the war. The two generals in the north were General Jourdan and General Moreau and Napoleon was in the south. His troops were meant to be a distraction, but they ended up being the main show. He split the enemies in two, knocking Sardinia out of the war and knocking Austria back.





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At the battle of Lodi, which took place on May 10th, 1796, he was there with his men, risking his life and fighting with them. He earned the respect of his troops. This is one of the many reasons why Napoleon was a great military leader. He ordered an almost suicidal assault on the only bridge in the town, and they took it, despite fierce Austrian resistance. While going through northern modern-day Italy, the Italians cheered his arrival. They pushed the Austrian forces so far back, that they had to make peace with him overseeing the deal. He single-handedly knocked out Austria out of the war. In the Italian Territories he conquered, he made new sister republics. He even wrote their constitutions. That is not something a general usually does. When he got back to France, he was hailed a hero.

Sister Republic - A sister republic was a republic established by French armies or by local revolutionaries and assisted by the First French Republic during the French Revolutionary Wars.





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The unpopular government sent Napoleon to Egypt, because they were scared he would get power hungry ideas. They sent him there to also maybe stop some of the UK's access to India. British admiral Nelson wrecked his troops. An Anglo-Ottoman force also defeated him. He left Egypt, leaving his troops behind. His wife Josephine also started cheating on him.

Napoleon then staged a coup, making the old government create a new Constitution. A new government was formed, making three consuls in charge. Napoleon, Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, and Pierre-Rodger Ducos. Emmanuel was one of the people who helped stage the coup. In reality, there was only 1 person in charge, Napoleon himself. He worked his way into becoming a dictator, having full control over France.

Coup - a sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government.





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While he was back in Egypt though, the War of the Second Coalition started. It started in Late 1798. Russia was not part of the First Coalition, but now they joined. During the Second Battle of Zurich, France got blasted out of a lot of their previously owned territories, but then Russia pulled out after stalling in Switzerland. Since he was in charge, he started fighting right back. In 1800, Napoleon moved his troops to Geneva, Switzerland, looking like he was going to go to take on the Austrian Forces in Germany. Instead, he moved his entire army south through the Alps, making a surprise attack on the Austrians in Genoa.



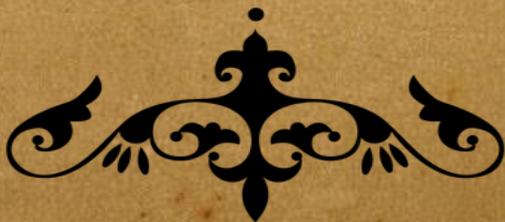
Coalition - an alliance for combined action, especially a temporary alliance of political parties forming a government or of states.





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This was the Siege of Genoa, which lasted from April to June of 1800. When he was past the alps, instead of attacking the Austrians, he went for their supply line in Milan. This forced the Austrians to meet Napoleon during the battle of Marengo, on June 14th, 1800. During this battle, the Austrians were originally beating the outnumbered French, but then, after a few hours when the Austrians were celebrating, Napoleon came back with an even bigger army. He beat them right back. Moreau then had a victory at the Battle of Hohenlinden, and Vienna was exposed. The Austrians, again, called for peace. This will be a recurring thing throughout the years. They signed the Treaty of Luneville in 1801. So far, the First Coalition and the Second Coalition wars have been victories for Napoleon.





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The UK was still at war with France though, and started taking stuff from innocent trading ships. Other countries in Europe then got made, and formed the Second League of Armed Neutrality. They then embargoed the UK. The UK then bombed ships in Copenhagen, causing the league to collapse. The UK now had a crumbling economy, so they formed the Treaty of Amiens with France on March 27th, 1802.



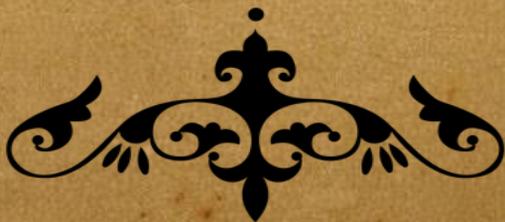
Embargo - an official ban on trade or other commercial activity with a particular country.





French Revolution Leading into Napoleonic Wars

For the first time in a long time, Europe was at peace. France's economy was also crumbling, and Napoleon fixed it by making a new national bank, creating a currency reform, and an improved taxation and welfare system. He also fixed the legal system by creating The Napoleonic Code. This code is still being used in some places today such as Belgium, Luxembourg, and Monaco. Even Louisiana's civil code of 1825, which is still in use, is heavily based off of the Napoleonic Code. He also improved infrastructure and removed corrupt government officials. One thing he didn't improve though, was women's rights. He made it worse for women in France during that time. He also improved education, making it about personal ability, rather than status. He also allowed freedom of religion, during a time when the treatment of Jews and other religious groups was very bad. This marked the end of the French revolution.



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To start off, Napoleon held a vote in 1804 on whether he should be emperor or not, instead of just first consul for life. The results, which is very shocking, came in at a 99.93% YES! 3,521,675 people said yes, and only 2,579 people said no, which is shocking.

On the second of November, a ceremony at Notre Dame was held to make him emperor. The Pope was even invited, and usually he would crown the emperor, but so the people knew it wasn't a circular power division between him and the Pope, he crowned himself. The Pope was known before to hold a lot of power over the people, and Napoleon didn't want that to happen this time.



Consul – Leader of Napoleonic France during the Consulate era. The head leader of France,



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Before Napoleon even declared himself Emperor though, the UK had already declared war on France because both sides had been violating their previous treaty. Napoleon immediately occupied Hanover, which was previously British, and then made plans for a great British invasion. This was payed for by previously selling Louisiana (The Louisiana Purchase) to the United States of America back in 1803. Napoleon gathered his troops along the English Channel. Unlike the British, France did not have a good navy. This proved to be hard on him, as he and his troops could not engage in actually combat. This kept them at bay throughout the Napoleonic Wars.



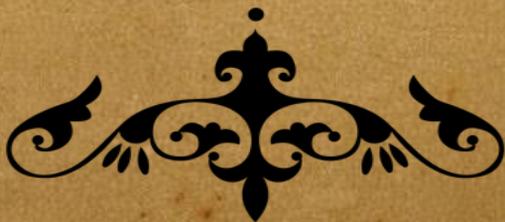
Louisiana Purchase - The Louisiana Purchase was the acquisition of the territory of Louisiana by the United States from Napoleonic France in 1803,





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One thing the UK was able to do now, was throw money at the situation. They were willing to pay anyone who would go to war with France. Countries such as Austria, Russia, Naples, and Sweden, all went to war with France, causing the War of the Third Coalition in 1805. He reorganized his army into corps, which were basically small armies with their own infantry, artillery, and cavalry. These small corps were able to act more independently. Instead of using heavy supply trains, they lived off the land, which made them extremely quick. These armies then outmaneuvered his enemies, isolated them, and then they attacked. Part of the coalition's plan was for the Russians to meet up with the Austrians, and then attack Napoleon's armies together. Napoleon was all the way over in Bouillon, which was all the way across France, but in a number of weeks, he got himself and 200,000 men over across the country to stop them. He then attacked Austrian General Mack in the Battle of Ulm, which lasted from the 16th to the 19th of October 1805, and captured 50,000 Austrians. One famous quote from Napoleon from this battle was, "I have destroyed the Austrian Army by simply marching."





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He then next approached General Kutuzov from Russia.

The Russians then hatched a plan. Instead of facing Napoleon in hand to hand combat, they found his one weakness, which will come back to bite him later. It was by running away. Napoleon then chased Kutuzov through Austria into Vienna. The Austrians and Russians then turned back to fight Napoleon. During the Battle of Austerlitz, on December 2nd, 1805, Napoleon was set on the high grounds, and tricked the Russians and Austrians by pretending to retreat. He even evacuated the high grounds to make himself look weak. A thick fog then came in, and the Russians and Austrians took the bait. They spotted Napoleons very weak looking troops, and descended to go attack them. Little did they know, that's what Napoleon was waiting for the whole time.



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Then, out of the fog, Napoleon emerged with his whole army. Napoleon launched a huge uphill central assault on them through the fog. They crushed the allies, and while the Russians were escaping through the ice, he ordered his artillery to fire on the lake of ice, causing an unknown amount of Russian soldiers to die. Austria, again, had to make peace with France. The war of the Third Coalition ended after the French Conquest of Naples in 1806. This was the third time in these wars that Napoleon had to put Austria in their place, so this time, instead of letting Austria off Scott-free, he made them give up land, pay a significant amount of money, and promise to never go to war with France again.





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Russia, the UK, and Sweden were all still at war with Napoleon, but none offered a big enough threat. Napoleon, now having a ton of power over Europe, started making big changes. He started giving out conquered land to family and friends. He also established a new country where modern day Germany would be, called the Confederation of the Rhine, with himself as their protector. Francis II, seeing his influence in the German area being wiped away, dissolved the Holy Roman Empire.

Now the UK attacked Spain, which was an ally of France since 1804. Napoleon thought the combination of his and the Spanish fleet would be able to take down the British, but the UK just proved they were the king of the seas. Napoleons hopes for a future British invasion were now diminished, knowing he could not stand against the UK's naval forces.



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Now, the Prussian king was under pressure from his wife to go to war with Napoleon, since he controlled Hanover, which they wanted. In October, 1806, Prussia went to war with France. This started the war of the Fourth Coalition in 1806. Without telling its allies, Prussia sent a letter of Ultimatum demanding Napoleon remove all his forces out of the German area. Napoleon, not liking their demands, went in. Prussia's army was old, and not up to modern times. At the twin battles of Jena-Auerstedt, France lost 12,000 troops, while Prussia lost 22,000, and got another 18,000 captured by the French.

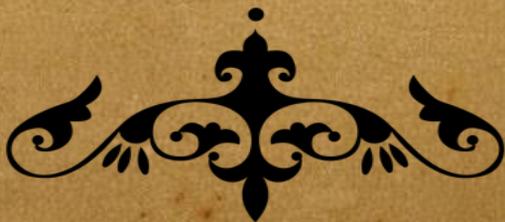
Prussia – A country that lasted from 1772 to 1918. This country is different from Russia. Most of it is now in modern day Poland and Germany.





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France kept moving in, taking Berlin and a ton of other land. It was now winter, and Napoleon expected both sides to calm down, but Russia launched a sneak attack on the French. These attacks included the Battle of Eylau, which was fought from 7th to the 8th of February in Blizzard Conditions. The French Army was being tore through, and they would have lost greatly if it wasn't for a cavalry charge, which spared them. Russia and France both agreed it was better if they didn't do any more fighting until winter was over. Right as winter ended, they went back to war. The Russians were pushed back to Friedland. During the Battle of Friedland, the Russians positioned themselves in a bad spot in front of a river. The French then pushed them back, causing most of the Russians to drown. This marked the end of the Fourth Coalition.



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After the Battle of Friedland, Russia called for peace. They met on a raft in July of 1807 to make the Treaties of Tilsit. Napoleon and Alexander I, Emperor of Russia, actually got along well. Napoleon and Alexander I got along so well, that this painting was made of them. They had a lot a mutual respect between each other, and Napoleon even told his wife that, if Alexander were a woman, he would marry her. The treaty they signed made Russia give up barely any land, and also made Russia a French ally. Russia then started the Finnish war against Sweden from 1808 to 1809.



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Only the UK remained, as it was the only country now posing a threat against France. Prussia was divided and lost most of its land, so they became allies. The UK was being an annoyance to Napoleon because they were wrecking French trade and ruining their ports. And again, they threw money at the situation and paid France's enemies. Back in 1806, Napoleon put in place a blockade that no countries on continental Europe could trade with the UK. This was to try to wreck their economy. The UK hit right back by blowing up Copenhagen, again. This put Denmark on France's side, and made them allies.

Blockade - an act or means of sealing off a place to prevent goods or people from entering or leaving.



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A lot of countries still traded in secret with the UK. Spain was one of the main offenders, and also did not want to be allies with France anymore. France caught on to this. Napoleon invited the Spanish Royals to France to try to fix their government, since the Spanish Government was a mess currently. His plan was actually to take over Spain, which he did. Napoleon made his brother the King of Spain. Spain was now his puppet state. Napoleon thought the Spanish people would be overjoyed at his arrival, but they weren't. They started revolting against Napoleon and his brother. Instead of just fighting the regular Spanish and Portuguese forces, they had to watch out for guerilla fighters.

Guerilla - a member of a small independent group taking part in irregular fighting, typically against larger regular forces.





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The UK then took the opportunity to attack the French troops still fighting in Spain and Portugal. The UK were now defeating the French army on land. Napoleon went to Spain in person for a small bit of time, but he needed to leave because he was needed elsewhere. This is the Peninsular War, which lasted from 1807 to 1814.

Seeing Napoleon's France Weakened by the Peninsular war, the UK payed Austria again to join and declare war on France. This started the War of the Fifth Coalition in 1809. This war was very short. They defeated Austria relatively quick, but it wasn't very easy. Napoleon was now having to rely on inexperienced conscripts for his army since he was running out of men. Austria also had been studying Napoleon's Tactics, and started reforming their own army. Since Austria had lost, they had to give up a ton more land. Not long after the war, Napoleon and the Leader of Austria, Francis, came up with an agreement. Napoleon would marry Francis' daughter.





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Austria made this deal because if France was going to keep on winning, they might as well be on his side. So, through their marriage, Austria and France were now allies. Sweden also overthrew their own king and put in Napoleon's own marshal, Marshal Bernadotte, in charge. Bernadotte, now being the Crown Prince of Sweden, went under the name Karl Johan. He was still under Charles XIII of Sweden though, as Charles was the new king. Sweden, after all that just happened, was now on Napoleon's side.

Russia, now having a worse economy because of the blockades, started trading with the UK again. This led to Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. Napoleon gathered the most troops he could and attacked Russia. The troops he had totaled an estimated 650,000 troops, which was an insane number for the time. The Russians, however, had a plan. It was to run away and scorch the earth behind them. Since Napoleon's troops relied on the land, this was a difficult task for them. They would have to use heavy supply trains to move around, slowing them down, and making them unable to outmaneuver their enemies.





The Napoleonic Wars

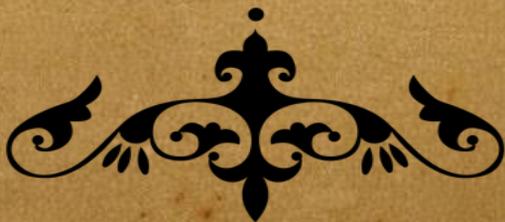
Napoleon and his troops, which were an estimated 130,000 at this time, chased the Russians all the way back to Moscow, where then the Russians turned on him, and attacked. This battle was the Battle of Borodino, which was the single deadliest day of the Napoleonic wars. The death count of this battle was over 74,000 troops, an estimated 30,000 from Napoleon's side and an estimated 44,000 from Russia's side. Napoleon, winning the battle, now had Moscow in his own hands. Napoleon had it, with one exception. It was now up in flames. Napoleons supplies were dwindling, and he didn't have much time there left. He sent Alexander a letter, requesting he surrender. Alexander thought, didn't respond. Napoleon then waited for a letter for a month, but didn't get anything. Winter started to come, and Napoleon knew what was coming. Napoleon was now racing time to get out of Russia. The Russians were picking off troops from Napoleon' army as he was leaving Russia. Napoleon then heard stories of the French people plotting against him in Paris, and left his troops to go there. An estimated 600,000 French troops died in that one attack.





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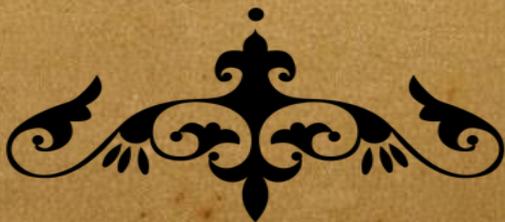
The rest of the leaders in Europe saw a chance to attack weak France, and took it. Prussia switched sides and Russia started attacking the Duchy of Warsaw, which was a French Client State. Austria then switched from being Napoleon's ally to being neutral. Even Sweden, governed by one of Napoleon's old marshals, declared war on France. This is the beginning of the War of the Sixth Coalition in 1813. The countries in the coalition had been reforming their armies, and now were a lot better. The UK had also started paying a lot more money to those countries that were at war with France. Napoleon ramped up his factory output, and added over 100,000 troops, which were mostly teenagers. Napoleon also had a lack of horses, which would make fast attacks extremely hard to do. Napoleon had pushed back the Russian and Prussian troops enough though that they chose to make a temporary truce to discuss what to do. Austria was the mediator and tried help the sides fix their issues, but it didn't work. Austria then joined the coalition. The Plan of the coalition was simple. When Napoleon got close to them, they would run away from him.





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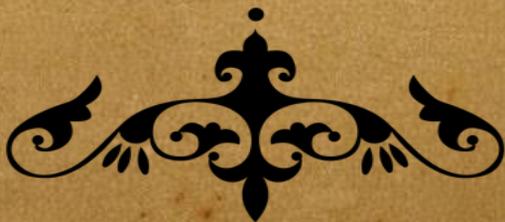
The other troops from the sides would then come in and attack some of his troops. This plan worked amazingly for the coalition, and pushed Napoleon all the way back to Leipzig. They all then came in for an attack on Napoleon. This was the Battle of Leipzig, and was another one of the deadliest battles of the Napoleonic Wars. Napoleon was facing off against 4 other countries for 4 days, but him and his army was no match for the 4 countries combined. Napoleon then ordered all his troops to escape through the only bridge over the river. This may seem like a good idea, but the bridge was blown up early, and over 30,000 French troops were captured. Spain was also recently taken back over, and with the help of British forces, they started to advance into France. Austria also had been making advancements towards France, and Naples, which was on Napoleon's side, switched. The German states Napoleon had taken over were now going against him. Swedish and Russian troops invaded Denmark, and made them switch sides also. The Netherlands were also liberated from France's rule.





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Now, the Russian, Prussian, Spanish, British, and Austrian Armies were all going after Paris and to attack France in general. Napoleon's Army, now small from not having enough troops, started to defend their country. The Russian, Prussian, and Austrian Armies all split up to attack France, but because Napoleon had a small army, he could move quicker. He used this to his advantage to kick back the Russians and Prussians first. Then, he kicked back the Austrians and Russians. The Russian troops were partnered with both the Prussian and Austrians troops. Even though Napoleon was winning, he couldn't be everywhere at once, which hurt him. Even if he knocked the Prussians and Russians back, the Russians and Austrians would just advance. Napoleon tried to go behind and attack from there, but it just let them get to Paris faster. When the troops from Russia, Austria, and Prussia arrived, the French people in Paris cheered.



The Napoleonic Wars

Paris had fallen, and now, Napoleon had lost. Napoleon signed a letter to abdicate his position as Emperor of France. France was now a Monarchy again. Napoleon was then exiled to the island of Elba, which is a small island off the coast of Italy. Once learning of his fate, he drank poison, which he had been keeping around his neck all these years. The poison, however, didn't kill him because it went out of date, and instead, he got a bad stomach ache. Napoleon was surprisingly allowed to rule over the island, and was even given the title, Emperor of Elba. He started ruling over Elba, and introduced legal reforms and better infrastructure. While he was on the island, his ex-wife Josephine, had died. He was deeply saddened by the news. Napoleon, bored of the island life, surprisingly just left the island and brought around 1,000 troops with him.





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He started his journey to Paris. Many people were happy of his return, and when troops were sent to stop him, they joined him. Most people didn't like monarchy anymore, so this was very good for Napoleon. The king, hearing of this, left to Belgium, leaving Napoleon unopposed. He was now, again, the ruler of France. To make sure no more wars happened, he tried to negotiate with the other countries to ensure peace but it didn't work.

The other countries from previous wars, hearing of this, called Napoleon the illegitimate leader of France. However, this time, they didn't call war on France. They called war on Napoleon himself. This is the start of the Seventh Coalition in 1815, otherwise known as the Hundred Days War. The countries of the Coalition had been making plans to invade France from all sides, like they did previously. The biggest threat at the time was the British and Prussian troops already at his border, and he thought if he could knock them out, maybe they could negotiate.





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The Prussians and British troops amassed around 220,000 troops, while Napoleon only had around 125,000. He thought if he could divide and conquer like previously, it would work. He defeated the Prussians and turned on the British troops, but because of miscommunication between the generals, his plan failed, and the Prussians and British troops fled north where they could communicate easily. Napoleon sent a small force to hold off the Prussians, while he and his main troops went to attack the British troops at the battle of Waterloo, one of the most famous battles of the war. During the battle, Napoleon was able to capture a farmhouse right in front of the British line, and was able to wreak havoc from there. As Napoleon sent his Imperial Guard to finish the British Troops off, the Prussians came. The British troops held Napoleon back, and with the Prussians help, knocked Napoleon and his army back. This was the final battle of the Napoleonic Wars. Napoleon knew he couldn't do anything to stop them. He was finally defeated.



After the Napoleonic Wars

Napoleon was then sent off to Saint Helena, an island in the Atlantic Ocean, far away from any other land. This is where he would spend the rest of his life. His house was a medium sized wooden built house, which was no where close to the Royal Palace in France that he used to live in. The UK didn't want him escaping at any cost, and put 2,000 troops on the island. A little much for such a small island in my opinion. He was also guarded by 2 ships circling the island. While on the island, he started writing down all the great things he did in his life and all his achievements. Napoleon died at the age of 51 from stomach cancer. He was buried in a tin coffin, which was inside of a mahogany coffin, which was then put inside of a lead coffin, which was lastly put inside another mahogany coffin. They wanted to make sure he wouldn't escape again like he did on the island of Elba. This time though, I don't think he had a chance, because well, he was dead.





After the Napoleonic Wars

Napoleon's remains were then moved to Paris, and are now there for display. Napoleon's mark on history will never be forgotten. Most importantly, his code of law, The Napoleonic Code, still influences a lot of law around the world. As we leave off here, I would like to quote Napoleon on a line that seems fitting, "There is no immortality but the memory that is left in the minds of men.... To have lived without glory, without leaving a trace of one's existence, is not to have lived at all."



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-Napoleon

