

The goal of this exercise is for you to decide if Napoleon was a democratic reformer (hero) in line with the goals of the French Revolution or an Imperial dictator (tyrant) that held total power over the French people.

Document 1

“I can no longer obey. I have tasted command. I have tasted power and I cannot give it up. I love power.”

Source: General Napoleon Bonaparte to Andre Francois, private conversation in 1788

Document 2



Napoleon and England carve up the world between themselves.

“I am sometimes a fox and sometimes a lion. The whole secret of government lies know when to be one or the other.”

Document 3

Friends, I promise you this conquest; but there is one condition you must swear to fulfill—to respect the people whom you liberate, to repress the horrible pillaging committed by scoundrels incited by our enemies. Otherwise you would not be the liberators of the people; you would be their scourge. . . . Plunderers will be shot without mercy; already, several have been. . . .Peoples of Italy, the French army comes to break your chains; the French people is the friend of all peoples; approach it with confidence; your property, your religion, and your customs will be respected. We are waging war as generous enemies, and we wish only to crush the tyrants who enslave you.

Source: Napoleon's Proclamation to His Troops in Italy (March-April 1796)

Document 4

“Of all our institutions public education is the most important. Everything depends on it, the present and the future. It is essential to the morals and the political ideas of the next generation. Above all it is essential to equality. I was not always a ruler. Before I became a ruler, I was a subject, and before that I was a student. I can never forget how powerfully the sentiment (*feeling*) of equality influenced my mind and excited my heart.”

Source: Napoleon Bonaparte, 1802, shortly after being appointed Consul (leader) of the French Republic

Document 5

“It is said that I love power. Well, does anyone have any cause for complaint? Never have the prisons been so empty (*crime been so low*) and the people so safe. The government is strong, my hand is steady (*stable*), and my enemies are sensible (*smart*) enough to know that I shall not slacken the reins (*loosen my grip on France*).”

Source: Napoleon Bonaparte, 1804, shortly after being crowned emperor of France

Document 6

“The benefits of the Code Napoleon (*Napoleonic Code*), public trial, and the introduction of juries will be the leading features of your Government. And to tell you the truth, I believe these things will help you consolidate (*strengthen, secure*) your rule over the Germans more than the most resounding (*dramatic, decisive*) military victories. I want your subjects to enjoy a degree of liberty, equality, and prosperity never before known to the German people. And they will love you for this.”

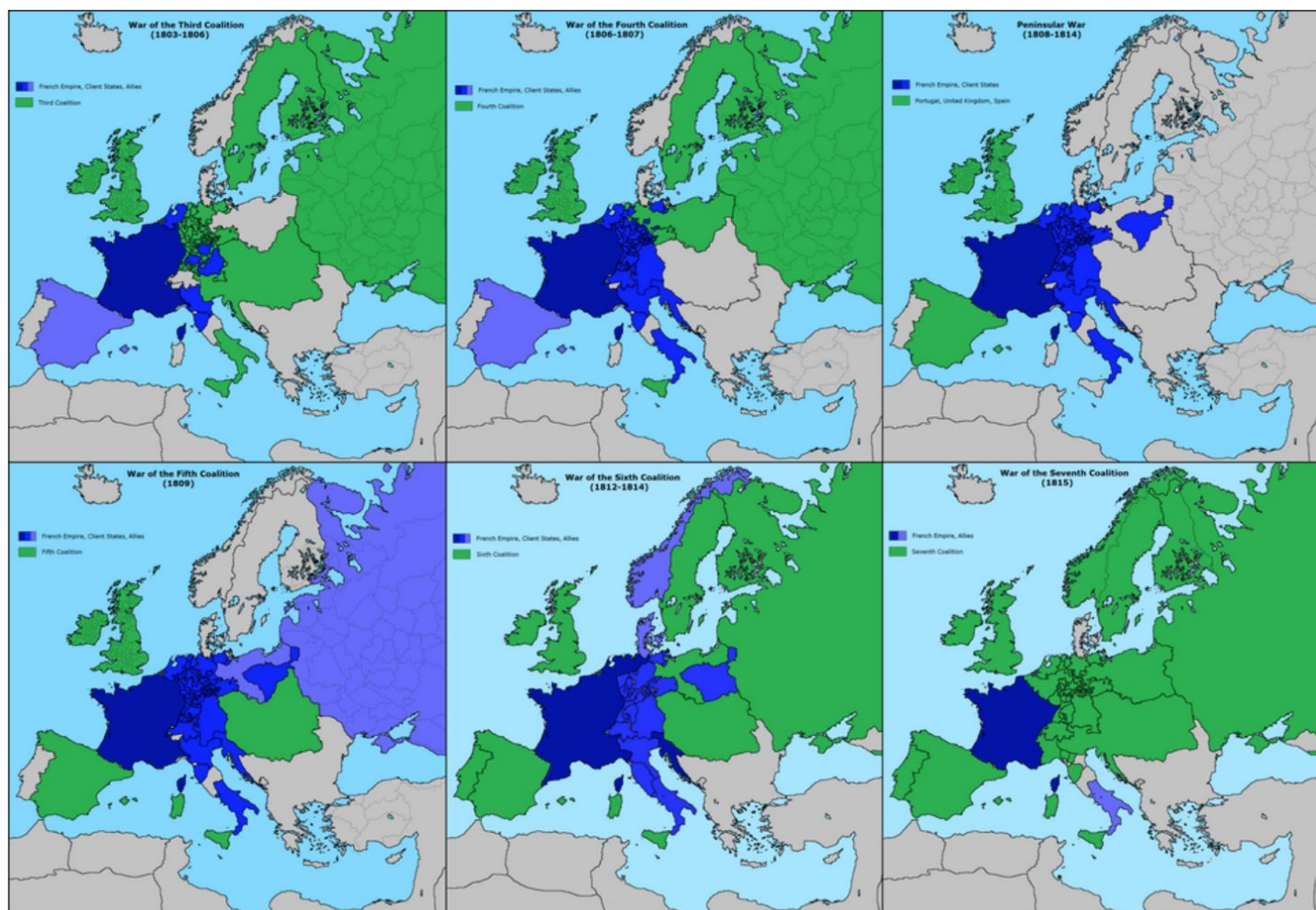
Source: Napoleon Bonaparte, in a letter to his brother Jerome. Napoleon appointed Jerome as the new King of Prussia after conquering the Prussians

Document 7

“I have always considered Louis XVI’s death to be a crime, and I thought so before I became a ruler myself. Since I have worn a crown I have shown clearly enough that I mean to close the door on revolution (*stop it from happening*). The sovereigns (*kings*) of Europe are indebted to me for stopping the revolutionary storm that threatened their thrones.”

Source: Napoleon Bonaparte, December 1812

Document 8



Document 9

"I closed the gulf of anarchy and brought order out of chaos. I rewarded merit regardless of birth or wealth, wherever I found it. I abolished feudalism and restored equality to all regardless of religion and before the law. I fought the decrepit monarchies of the Old Regime because the alternative was the destruction of all this. I purified the Revolution."

Source: Letter, Napoleon Bonaparte, 1812

Document 10

"My rise to power was not the result of a conspiracy or a crime. It was the result of the peculiar (*strange*) circumstances of the times, and because I fought successfully against the enemies of my country. What is most extraordinary (*special*), though, and I believe unmatched in history, is that I rose from being an average soldier to the astonishing height of power I possessed (*being emperor*) without having committed a single crime to obtain it."

Source: Napoleon Bonaparte, written in in 1817 during his exile on St. Helena

Document 11

"I have always been of the opinion that the sovereignty (*power to rule*) should lay with the people. In fact, my imperial government was a kind of republic. I was called the head (*leader*) of it by the voice of the people. My policy was that careers should be open to talent. No one should get special treatment based on birth or fortune, and this system of equality is the reason that your English monarchy hates me so much."

Source: Napoleon, in a conversation with Barry O'Meara in 1817. O'Meara was Napoleon's doctor on the island of St. Helena following Napoleon's final defeat and exile.

Document 12



Source: Memoirs of Philippe Paul se Segur describing the grim scene as the remnants of Napoleon's Grand Army returning home after the devastating Russian winter that destroyed his forces.

"In Napoleon's wake was a mob of tattered ghosts draped in... odd pieces of carpet, or greatcoats burned full of holes, their feet wrapped in all sorts of rags... We stared in horror as those skeletons of soldiers went by, their gaunt, gray faces covered with disfiguring beards, without weapons... with lowered heads, eyes on the ground, in absolute silence."

