

Writing Assignment #2: Napoleon DBQ

Historical Background:

Napoleon Bonaparte was a military general who crowned himself as the first emperor of France and conquered much of Europe in the early 19th century.

Prompt:

Was Napoleon a democratic reformer who advanced the goal of the French Revolution, or was he an imperial dictator that held absolute power over the French people?

Directions:

Read and annotate each document. Answer the questions that follow each document. Then, complete the graphic organizer for putting your paragraph together. Lastly write a Step Up to Writing paragraph answering the prompt. Your response must include your argument, the counterargument, and a rebuttal. You must type your response.

The Documents

Document 1

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

"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 hot 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 a war as generous enemies, and we wish only to crush the tyrants who enslave you."

1. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.

Document 2

Source: Napoleon Bonaparte in a speech shortly after being appointed leader of the French Republic, 1802

"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 of equality influenced my mind and excited my heart."

2. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.

Document 3

Source: Napoleon Bonaparte in a letter to his brother Joseph, who Napoleon had made King of Spain, 1804

“I will be master everywhere in France and of everything, as long as I have breath in my body. Your character is quite different from mine. You like flattering people, and falling in with their ideas. I like people to please me, and to fall in with my ideas. I am master today.”

3. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.

Document 4

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

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

4. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.

Document 5

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

“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.”

5. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.

Document 6

Source: Letter from Moreau, a political prisoner, to Napoleon, 1804

“You swore to establish a government, not depending upon the life of one individual, not tyrannical but firm, stable and liberal; bestowing freedom on Frenchmen, and worthy to obtain by gratitude from foreign nations, that confidence and esteem, which your predecessors and yourself have commanded by the dread of your bayonets. When I shortly afterwards went to lead armies -- disorganized and defeated -- your last words were: 'I know your love of your country; be victorious, and France shall force admiration, even from her rivals and foes, by the liberty she enjoys at home, and by the generosity of her external negotiations!' How have you respected these fulfilled these promises? How have you respected these oaths? In my degraded country, I see nothing but cringing slaves and proud tyrants; base placemen and infamous spies.”

6. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.

Document 7

Source: Napoleon Bonaparte speech, December 1812

“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.”

7. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.

Document 8

Source: Napoleon Bonaparte in a letter, 1812

“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.”

8. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.

Document 9

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

“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.”

9. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.

Document 10

Source: Napoleon in a conversation with his doctor, Barry O'Meara, following Napoleon's final defeat and exile, 1817

“I have always been of the opinion that the sovereignty should lay with the people. In fact, my imperial government was a kind of republic. I was called the head 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.”

10. According to this passage, is Napoleon a democratic reformer or an imperial dictator? Explain.