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A French 6-pounder field gun—cast in Metz during 1813, which the Duke of Wellington captured during the Battle of Waterloo—is now displayed at the Tower of London. Photo by Uploadalt; license: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Napoleon once said of Britain:

Masters of the Channel for six hours, we are masters of the world.

His boasting was exaggerated (since he never ruled the world), his underestimating of Britain and her allies was misguided (as he soon found out), although his fearlessness in battle (“He who fears being conquered is sure of defeat”) was respected.

In 1810, when Napoleon was at the height of his power, his empire included countries directly under his control (like The Netherlands), countries which his forces occupied (like Spain) and countries with whom he had treaty agreements (like Austria).

By 1815, when Napoleon was in exile on Elba, monarchies throughout Europe had been restored and life (in the sense of who ruled what country) was essentially back to normal. So when the former ruler escaped from Elba, it is little wonder why the monarchies of Europe quickly marshaled their forces against him.

History records the events after Napoleon fled Elba as "The Hundred Days." As he traveled to Paris, picking up support along the way, Napoleon must have been formulating his plan of action:

- When he arrived in Paris, he overthrew Louis XVIII. Perhaps he thought the chance of empire once again belonged to him.
- He raised an army of 280,000 men and went on the offensive in Belgium.
- On June 15th, he defeated the Prussians at the Ligny.
- At Quatre Bras, that same day, he held Wellesley (known by then as the first Duke of Wellington).

At Waterloo, a village south of Brussels, Napoleon’s quest for empire ended forever. Wellington held all day against Napoleon’s attack (this is an interactive battle simulator) until the Prussian Gebhard von Blücher (the lesser-known hero of Waterloo) returned to rout the French.

By the 18th of June, 1815, the battle was over. The combined Allied Forces had ended Napoleon's quest for a "come back."

One of Napoleon’s personal aids - his equerry, Jardin Ainé - left an insightful eyewitness account of the battle. His descriptions of the battle’s end, and the effects of the defeat on Napoleon, are revealing:

Napoleon towards eight o'clock in the evening, seeing that his army was almost beaten, commenced to despair of the success which two hours before he believed to be assured. He remained on the battlefield until half-past nine when it was absolutely necessary to leave.

Assured of a good guide, we passed to the right of Genappes and through the fields; we marched all the night without knowing too well where we were going until the morning. Towards four o'clock in the morning we came to Charleroi where Napoleon, owing to the onrush of the army in beating a retreat, had much difficulty in proceeding.

At last after he had left the town, he found in a little meadow on the right a small bivouac fire made by some soldiers. He stopped by it to warm himself and said to General Corbineau, "Et bien Monsieur, we have done a fine thing."

General Corbineau saluted him and replied, "Sire, it is the utter ruin of France."

Napoleon turned round, shrugged his shoulders and remained absorbed for some moments. He was at this time extremely pale and haggard and much changed.

He took a small glass of wine and a morsel of bread which one of his equerries had in his pocket, and some moments later mounted, asking if the horse galloped well. He went as far as Philippeville where he arrived at mid-day and took some wine to revive himself. He again set out at two o'clock in a mail carriage towards Paris where he arrived on the 21st at 7 a.m. at the Elysée whence he departed on the 12th, in the same month.

Napoleon abdicated again - this time on 22 June 1815. He was exiled again - this time to the small island of Saint Helena (a British Protectorate off the western coast of Africa.)

He did not escape again, but after he died (in 1821) Napoleon's body was returned to Paris where it remains interred at the Hotel des Invalides.

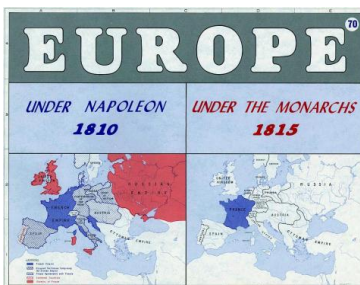
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WATERLOO-OVERVIEW-Vanity-Fair>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WATERLOO-OVERVIEW-Vanity-Fair>

Media Stream



Comparisons: France as Empire or Monarchy

Image online, courtesy U.S. Military Academy.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Comparisons-France-as-Empire-or-Monarchy>



Napoleon - Close-up Portrait Detail

Image online, courtesy Napoleon-Bonaparte-Online.de (a German-language website).

PD

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Napoleon-Close-up-Portrait-Detail>



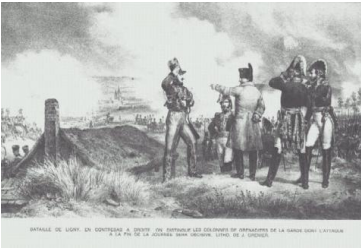
Napoleon Talks to New Recruits - 100 Days

Image online, courtesy the sabix.org website.

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Napoleon - Battle at Ligny

[Image online](#), courtesy the ligny1815.org website.

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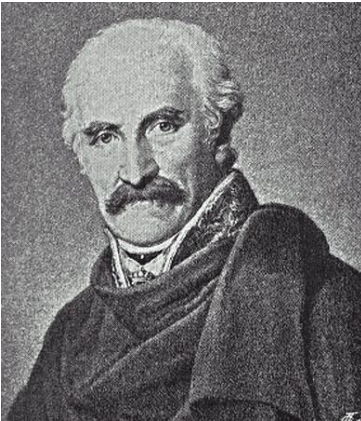


Napoleon Defeats Wellesley at Quatre Bras

[Image online](#), courtesy Wikimedia Commons website.

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Prussia's Gebhard von Blücher: A Portrait

[Image online](#), courtesy findagrave.com website.

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Gebhard von Blücher Arrives at Waterloo

Image of von Blücher, arriving at Waterloo, online courtesy Preussenweb.de (a German-language website).

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Cavalry Charges at Waterloo

Image of French and British forces fighting, at Waterloo, online courtesy [The Napoleon Series](http://TheNapoleonSeries.com).

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Napoleon after the Battle of Waterloo

[Image online](#), courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Saint Helena - Napoleon's Exile

Image online, courtesy the [Saint Helena](#) website.

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Map: Saint Helena and the African Coast

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Hotel de Invalides - Place of Napoleon's Tomb

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Napoleon's Sarcophagus in Paris

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

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WATERLOO OVERVIEW

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Bonaparte - Becomes Emperor of France

Clip from "Napoleon," a four-hour series by [David Grubin](#). The mini-series, produced by David Grubin Productions in association with Devillier Donegan Enterprises, originally aired on PBS during November of 2000 as part of the series on [Empires](#).

Written and Directed by David Grubin



Produced by David Grubin and Allyson Luchak

Edited by Seth Bomse and Susan Fanshel

Cinematography by James Callanan

Music by Michael Bacon

Narrated by David McCullough

The entire program runs 240 minutes.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bonaparte-Becomes-Emperor-of-France>

Bonaparte - Napoleon and the Battle of Waterloo

This clip, from a production entitled Napoleon Bonaparte, is part of the Conquerors series. It is directed by Nigel Maslin and production credits include:

Producer and writer: Kate Youngdahl

Executive Producer: Philip Clarke

The DVD is published by Princeton, NJ : Films for the Humanities & Sciences; copyright, 1996, Discovery Communications, Inc., all rights reserved.

Clip is online via YouTube and is provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with [the production](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bonaparte-Napoleon-and-the-Battle-of-Waterloo>

