Lauren Palotay
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Napoleon – Hero or Villain?

**Intro sentence:** Napoleon Bonaparte, who ruled France in the early 19th century, was a conqueror, reformer, and emperor. _**Partition:**_ 1. To some degree, Napoleon was a hero for providing stability and positive reforms to a country ravaged by a decade of revolution. 2. But Napoleon can also be considered a villain, as he ruled with absolute power and denied his people several rights, including freedom of speech. _**Thesis:**_ Thus, while Napoleon was predominantly a hero, he was a villain at times in his attempt to gain complete control of France.

Napoleon can be considered a hero because he enacted many positive and needed reforms in France. After nearly a decade of Revolution, France was in great need of stability and the corrupt and unpopular Directory government was not effective. Napoleon took power in a coup d'etat in 1799, and spared no time in taking absolute power for himself. _With this power, Napoleon enacted many reforms that will make him a hero to France._ First, he changed the way officers in the government and military received jobs. Before Napoleon, people got jobs because of their status or family connections, but as a common man, Napoleon did not agree with this system. Instead, he made sure people received positions for their ability, not their class. Napoleon also set out to simplify the French law, and he organized it his Napoleonic Code, making the law easier to access and understand by French people. Napoleon also pleased the peasants by reestablishing France's relationship with the Catholic Church. The leaders of the

French Revolution had broken the country's ties with the pope but Napoleon signed the Concordat, which made the French people view him as a hero. He even built much needed bridges and established schools for the children of France. *These reforms were even more significant considering how unstable France had been for over a decade. Thus Napoleon can easily be considered a hero.*

Even though Napoleon was heroic in many ways, he still took rights away from the people and thus was villainous in some ways. While Napoleon did allow the French people to vote for him in a plebescite, he was the only candidate considered for his lofty position and would have stayed in power whether the French people wanted him or not. *This went against democratic ideals. The French Revolution had tried to take power from the king and give it to the people, and Napoleon took all the power himself, acting as an absolute ruler and tyrant.* Napoleon was popular with the people because of his positive reforms but also because he controlled the press. When he was a general, he made sure only positive stories of his success, not his defeats, made it into the newspapers. During his reign he would not allow freedom of the press or freedom of speech if people tried to speak out against him. And while his Napoleonic Code was good for organizing the law, it took rights away from women who were essentially made the property of their husbands. Napoleon also mercilessly crushed rebellions in European countries he took over, like Spain. *Thus, Napoleon was a villain in many ways, as he took the rights away from many people to keep power.*

Napoleon was predominantly a hero – he accomplished much needed changes in France and made the people happy even though he stripped away their rights to do it. Although he was a tyrant, Napoleon changed society in France for the better. But he was not perfect, and accomplished these things because he took absolute power and is not a good example of a democratic leader. The positives and negatives of Napoleon's rule make him a controversial figure.