

Using the documents and your general knowledge of the French Revolution, assess the validity of the following statement:

Napoleon was a son of the French Revolution, an enlightened despot, and a megalomaniac dictator.

DOCUMENT 1

Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen – Accepted by the French National Assembly in August 1789

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. Nobody nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.
4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything, which injures no one else... limits can only be determined by law.
6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.
9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.
10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.
11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

DOCUMENT 2

French Civil Code (Code Napoleon), 1799 - 1804

Of the Enjoyment of Civil Rights.

1. The exercise of civil rights is independent of the quality of citizen, which is only acquired and preserved conformably to the constitutional law.
2. Every Frenchman shall enjoy civil rights.

Of the Respective Rights and Duties of Parents and Children

213. A husband owes protection to his wife, a wife owes obedience to her husband
214. A wife is bound to live with her husband and to live with him wherever he deems proper to reside
217. A wife... cannot give, convey or mortgage or acquire property... without the husband... giving his written consent.

DOCUMENT 3

Education Law under Napoleon, May 1, 1802 (II Floréal, Year X)

Title I. Division of the Instruction.

Instruction shall be given:

- 1st. In the primary schools established by the communes;
- 2d. In the secondary schools established by the communes or kept by private masters;
- 3d. In the lycées and the special schools maintained at the expense of the public treasury.

DOCUMENT 4

Napoleon and Religious Toleration

The Emperor Napoleon to Dr. O'Meara, November 10, 1816 (from St. Helena)

My primary desire was to liberate the Jews and make them full citizens. I wanted to confer upon them all the legal rights of equality, liberty and fraternity as was enjoyed by the Catholics and Protestants. It is my wish that the Jews be treated like brothers... As an added benefit, I thought that this would bring to France many riches because the Jews are numerous and they would come in large numbers to our country where they would enjoy more privileges than in any other nation.

DOCUMENT 5

Napoleon's speech to his troops in Italy, 1796

All of you are consumed with a desire to extend the glory of the French people; all of you long to humiliate those arrogant kings who dare to contemplate placing us in fetters... 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 the scoundrels incited by our enemies. Otherwise you would not be the liberators of the people; you would be their scourge; ... Plunders 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.

DOCUMENT 6

Letter written to Jerome Napoleon, King of Westphalia, by Napoleon on November 15, 1807

What German opinion impatiently demands is that... every trace of serfdom, or of a feudal hierarchy between the sovereign and the lowest class of his subjects, shall be done away. The benefits of the Code Napoleon, public trial, and the introduction of juries, will be the leading features of your government. And to tell you the truth... I want your subjects to enjoy a higher degree of liberty, equality, and prosperity hitherto unknown to the German people. I want this liberal regime to produce, one way or another, changes, which will be of the utmost benefit to the system of the Confederation, and to strengthen your monarchy. Such a method of government will be a strong barrier between you and Prussia than the Elbe [River], the fortress, and the protection of France. What people will want to return to under the arbitrary Prussian rule, once it has tasted the benefits of a wise and liberal administration? In Germany, as in France, Italy, and Spain, people long for equality and liberalism.

DOCUMENT 7

Napoleon's Imperial Decree at Madrid, December 4, 1808

To date from the publication of the present decree, feudal rights are abolished in Spain. All personal obligations, all exclusive fishing rights and other rights of similar nature on the coast or on the rivers and streams, all feudal monopolies of ovens, mills and inns are suppressed. It shall be free to everyone who shall conform to the laws to develop his industry without restraint. The tribunal of the Inquisition is abolished, as inconsistent with the civil sovereignty and authority. The property of the Inquisition shall be sequestered and fall to the Spanish state, to serve as security for the bonded debt. Considering that the members of the various monastic orders have increased to an undue degree and that, although a certain number of them are useful in assisting the ministers of the altar in the administration of the sacraments, the existence of too great a number interferes with the prosperity of the state, we have decreed and do decree as follows....

DOCUMENT 8

Count Mole's, a Councilor of State, Minister, and peer of France, remarks on Napoleon, early 19th century

...The more I saw of him, the more I observed him, the more firmly I was persuaded that, always under the sway of the moment, he thought of nothing but his own gratification, of magnifying himself and his power without limit and without rest. Irritated by the least obstacle, sacrificing everything to overcome it, and seeking only to establish at every juncture that nothing could resist his might and his will... he was much less concerned to leave behind him a "race," a dynasty, than a name which should have no equal and glory, that could not be surpassed....
"The impossible," he said to me one day, "is a word of purely relative meaning. Every man has his 'impossible,' according to how much or how little he can do. The impossible," he added with a smile, "is the ghost of the diffident and the refuge of the fainthearted. On the lips of power, believe me, it is only a declaration of impotence."...

DOCUMENT 9

Comments from Madame de Remusat, a lady in waiting to Empress Josephine and wife of a Napoleonic official, early 19th century

At the moment when Bonaparte placed the imperial crown upon his head there was not a king in Europe who did not believe that he wore his own crown more securely because of that event.

DOCUMENT 10

Napoleon's dairy entry on December 30, 1802

My power proceeds from my reputation, and my reputation from the victories I have won. My power would fail if I were not to support it with more glory and more victories. Conquest has made me what I am; only conquest can maintain me. Friendship is only a word; I love nobody; no, not even my brothers.... As for me, you don't suppose I care; I know perfectly well I have no real friends. As long as I remain what I am, I shall have as many as I need so far as the appearance goes...

DOCUMENT 11

Napoleonic Catechism encouraged by Napoleon to be followed in Churches throughout France, 1806

Q: Are there not particular reasons, which ought to attach us more strongly to Napoleon I, our Emperor?

A: Yes; for it is he whom God has raised up under difficult circumstances to re-establish the public worship of the holy religion of our fathers and to be the protector of it. He has restored and preserved public order by his profound and active wisdom; he defends the state by his powerful arm; he has become the anointed of the Lord through the consecration, which he received from the sovereign pontiff, head of the universal church.

Q: What ought to be thought of those who may be lacking in their duty towards our Emperor?

A: According to the apostle Saint Paul, they would be resisting the order established by God himself and would render themselves worthy of eternal damnation.

DOCUMENT 12 DOCUMENT 13

Order for Suppressing the Newspapers, January 17, 1800 (27 Nivôse, Year VIII)

The minister of police shall permit to be printed, published, and circulated during the whole course of the war only the following newspapers: ... [Here follows the names of thirteen newspapers], and newspapers devoted exclusively to science, arts, literature, commerce, announcements and notices.

The minister of the general police shall immediately make a report upon all the newspapers that are printed...

All newspapers which shall insert articles opposed to the respect that is due to the social compact, to the sovereignty of the people and the glory of the armies, or which shall publish invectives against the governments and nations who are friends or allies of the Republic, even when these articles may be extracts from foreign periodicals, shall be immediately suppressed.

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres

Napoleon on his Imperial throne, 1806