

To Tell the Truth

Number 1: My name is Napoleon Bonaparte

Number 2: My name is Napoleon Bonaparte

Number 3: My name is Napoleon Bonaparte

MC: And here is Napoleon Bonaparte's story. He says, "I, Napoleon, was the greatest general of my time. I rose to power in the 1790s during the French Revolution. As Emperor of France, my goal was to create a world-wide empire stretching west to America and east to India and Australia. My troops defeated foreign armies one after another until most of Europe fell under French control. I developed new techniques for waging war, directed complicated military maneuvers, and gained a reputation for being one of the outstanding generals in history. At the height of power, 42 million people were subject to my rule." Signed, "Napoleon Bonaparte." We will start the questioning with panelist number 1.

Panelist 1: People are more familiar with your military and political accomplishments than they are with the earlier years of your life. Can you tell us something about your parents and family?

Number 1: My parents owned a small shop in Paris where they made and sold clothing. I was the oldest of three children. When I was growing up, mother and father used to complain about how we and other middle class families were treated unfairly by the French government. Too many special privileges were given by King Louis XVI to the clergy and nobility. This is why I later became involved in the French Revolution.

Number 2: My mother died when I was very young, so I hardly remember her. My father was a gunsmith, and as I grew older he made me his apprentice. My skill in making and using guns eventually led me to join the French army. I was an only child.

Number 3: I was the fourth of thirteen children. My father was a lawyer. My mother was beautiful and intelligent. We were members of the nobility.

Panelist 2: Would you say you grew up much the same as other French youngsters of the 1700s?

Number 1: Yes, because most French citizens belonged to the middle class as we did. I helped my parents at the clothing shop, and spent the rest of my time being like other kids.

Number 2: My boyhood was uneventful - - with one exception. On the day that Louis XVI was crowned King, his coach passed near where I lived on its way from Paris to the palace at Versailles. Because French kings were absolute monarchs who wasted

taxpayer's money on wars and on themselves, I spat at Louis' coach. His guards grabbed and beat me, and left me bleeding along the roadside. I vowed that I would help the revolutionaries overthrow Louis. But I never dreamed that I would someday rule France in the place of a king.

Number 3: At age 10, my father sent me to military school. I was not a superior student, but did excel in mathematics and history. These were lonely times, and I kept much to myself. Other boys bullied me and caused me to further withdraw. Quite a bit of my time alone was spent dreaming of future conquests and the glory that might be mine.

Panelist 3: Briefly, what were a few of your personal qualities as a young man?

Number 1: I was honest, hardworking, and believed that all Frenchmen should be treated equally.

Number 2: I was hot-tempered and always wanted to do things my way. I feared no one, but did respect my father. Teachers at school would probably describe me as a wise guy.

Number 3: I had confidence in my judgment, and the determination needed to carry out decisions.

Panelist 4: How did you become a high-ranking officer in the French army?

Number 1: By knowing the right people and by being in the right place at the right time. I joined a local revolutionary group that helped me get to know political leaders who opposed the king. When the French Revolution broke out, these revolutionary leaders chose me to be one of the commanding officers in their army. My orders were to overthrow Louis and his supporters.

Number 2: I became a high-ranking officer by proving my skill on the battlefield. I was an excellent marksman and had great natural ability in planning campaigns and battles.

Number 3: I studied military tactics and rose through the ranks as a private, corporal, sergeant, second lieutenant, captain, major, brigadier general, and general.

Panelist 5: During the Revolution, you led French armies against countries whose kings wanted to keep a monarch on the French throne. Your many victories soon proved to all that you were a gifted commander. What was your secret for winning battles?

Number 1: I always planned a battle with utmost care. Good planning even made it possible to defeat an enemy whose army outnumbered mine.

Number 2: The secret of victory was a well-trained, well-supplied, army that had confidence in me.

Number 3: I won battles by finding a weak point in the enemy line and attacking there with the full strength of my army. In this way, the enemy line would collapse at that point, and my troops would conquer one half of the divided enemy, then the other half.

Panelist 6: What event or events led to your becoming a national hero?

Number 1: I became a popular figure by commanding the army that backed politicians who forced Louis XVI from the throne. The politicians later had Louis beheaded. I was eventually named dictator of the new French Republic that replaced the king.

Number 2: Several governments rose and fell during the French Revolution. Confusion and fear swept the country as rival groups competed for power. The French people looked for someone who could end the turmoil and restore peace to their troubled land. Since I was the most successful French general at the time, citizens demanded I take control of the government.

Number 3: My fame came from defeating Austrian armies in northern Italy. Later, while fighting in Egypt against the Turks and British, I suddenly returned to Paris and seized power. I set up a new government headed by myself as first consul.

Panelist 7: How did the French people react to your becoming dictator?

Number 1: They were happy that the reign of Louis XVI was over. But some feared I might use one-man rule much as Louis XVI had. Others were jealous of my vast political power - - this led to an assassination attempt which nearly succeeded. Two of my fingers were shot off. I became self-conscious of the wound and afterwards regularly kept the injured hand hidden in my coat.

Number 2: The name "Napoleon" was known throughout France and the rest of Europe. I became Emperor of the French amid wild enthusiasm and celebration.

Number 3: The people voted me first consul for life. A year later, the French senate gave me the title "Emperor." I was even given the right to choose my successor.

Panelist 8: What do you think would be a fair description of your appearance?

Number 1: Above average height, plain facial features, a rugged build, and an overall neat appearance.

Number 2: Average height, handsome face with determined eyes, but a little overweight.

Number 3: I am rather short, have thick eye brows and a small mouth, and look quite unimpressive.

Panelist 9: A period of peace followed your takeover of the French government. But your desire to conquer more lands and dominate Europe soon plunged France into years of warfare. At one point you even sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States to finance new military campaigns. After capturing foreign lands, what steps did you take to keep these areas under French control?

Number 1: A new government would be set up which included both local representatives and French military personnel.

Number 2: I always kept a French general and several thousand soldiers stationed in the captured territory. Their job was to oversee the government and put down any revolts which might occur.

Number 3: I put my brothers, sisters, and friends on the thrones of Europe.

Panelist 10: How would you describe the relationship between you and your soldiers?

Number 1: They had confidence in my ability and were willing to follow me anywhere.

Number 2: I think they feared me to some extent. But more importantly, they respected my talent and felt I would lead them to great victories.

Number 3: My men adored me. I was their idol.

Panelist 11: What nickname did the soldiers have for you?

Number 1: The "Old Fox."

Number 2: They called me "Blood and Guts."

Number 3: I was "the Little Corporal."

Panelist 12: Besides being a military genius, you were a talented government official. What were some of your accomplishments as Emperor of France?

Number 1: I organized a system of laws called the "Code Napoleon", established French colonies in Africa, started a fair method of taxation, supported business expansion, and increased religious freedom.

Number 2: I brought to an end years of wasteful spending by 18th century French kings. As government spending was reduced, so were taxes. Privileges given to the First Estate and Second Estate were done away with. Schools, hospitals, and roadways were built.

Number 3: I prepared a legal system known as the "Code Napoleon", established a strong central government, founded the Bank of France and the University of France, and started the Legion of Honor to honor soldiers and citizens for contributions to France.

Panelist 13: In the early 1800s, few countries in Europe remained free of French control. Only Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, and Sweden were keeping you from becoming master of the continent. But you never succeeded in conquering all of Europe. What event kept you from achieving this goal?

Number 1: Our navy was defeated at Trafalgar off the Spanish coast by Lord Nelson. This was a critical loss for us because it left the British in control of the seas. Without superior seapower, there was no way we could expect to cross the English Channel and invade Great Britain. It also weakened our chances of defeating Prussia, Russia and Sweden.

Number 2: Our good fortune came to an end in a disastrous invasion of Russia. As we drove the Russians back, they destroyed everything of value so nothing useful would fall into our hands. When we reached Moscow, where we hoped to spend the winter, we found that the city had been set on fire by the Russians. With no shelter available, there was no choice except to march back to France through snow and bitter cold. Most of our 600,000 soldiers either deserted or were killed or captured. France's army never recovered from this terrible defeat.

Number 3: The turning point in the European wars was our unsuccessful Russian invasion. This defeat left us with an army of old men and young boys. Our veteran troops had been wiped out.

Panelist 14: Great Britain, Russia, Spain, Prussia and Sweden formed an alliance that finally brought about your defeat. Louis XVIII was then put on the French throne, and you were sent to the tiny island of Elba off the Italian coast to spend the remainder of your life. But you soon escaped from Elba and made a dramatic return to France. Excited officers and soldiers rallied behind you as Louis fled from Paris. Your return to power -- known as the "Hundred Days" -- ended, however, when Britain's Duke of Wellington crushed French forces at Waterloo. What happened to you after this final defeat?

Number 1: To prevent any further trouble, the Allies prepared to execute me by firing squad.

Number 2: I was imprisoned in London, guarded round the clock, and not allowed to have visitors.

Number 3: I was sent to a lonely island off the coast of Africa to spend the rest of my life. Friends and family deserted me. I spent time writing about my personal life and military career.